

FVM 2032: TV Pilot

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Welcome

Everything for **FVM 2032: TV Pilot** in one place — readings, assignments, worked examples, pilot scripts, and show bibles.

Use the **search box** (top of the sidebar) to find anything: a term like *cold open*, an assignment name, a show title, or a line from a script.

- **Guides** — the core readings on TV formats, structure, and scene craft.
- **Assignments** — what to turn in and how.
- **Examples** — worked loglines, grids, beatsheets, and breakdowns.
- **Your Pilot** — interactive worksheets for your own show: loglines, grid, beatsheet, outline, bible. Saved privately in your browser.
- **Pitching** — the pitching guide and Billy Ray's WGFestival talk.
- **Scripts** — pilot scripts to study and break down.
- **Show Bibles** — real series bibles from working shows.

Guides

TV Formats & Types of Shows

TV Formats

What type of show and who produces the show determines how the show is constructed.

- Genre
 - Drama, comedy, horror, action, soap, etc.
- Format
 - Broadcast TV (NBC, ABC, CBS, FOX, WB)
 - G, PG, & PG-13 rated content with commercials.
 - Cable (HBO, TNT, TBS, HBO, STARZ)
 - G, PG, PG-13, and R-rated content with or without commercials.
 - Streaming (Paramount+, Netflix, Amazon Prime, Apple+) can be any content with or without commercials.
 - G, PG, PG-13, and R-rated content with or without commercials.
 - As of today, most streamers show no commercials or limited commercials.

Types of Shows

Procedurals

Procedurals are usually your cop, medical, and law shows that feature “closed episodes.” A closed episode is a TV show in which the A-story (the case, the murder, the fire, the problem etc.) is solved by the end of the episode. The A-story for procedurals, like *The Good Wife*, is always the case. The A-story for *CSI* is always the murder. Procedurals are one-hour shows.

Serials or Arc Shows

Serials are any show with an ongoing storyline that arcs the whole series. (*The Game of Thrones*, *Queen Sugar*, *True Detective*, *Breaking Bad*, *Avatar*). Serials are generally one-hour shows.

Dramadies

Dramadies are serials with laughs. (*Barry*, *BoJack Horseman*, *Atlanta*, *Fleabag*, *The Bear*) Dramadies are usually a half-hour show but there are exceptions like *The Marvelous Mrs. Mavel*.

Comedy

Comedy is what its name suggests. Comedies are a mix of procedural, serial, and laughs.

Comedies can be serials but almost always closed episodes. Generally, by the end of a comedy episode, a problem has been solved. Generally, by the end of a comedy's season, the characters have had arcs. (The Office, Blackish, Curb Your Enthusiasm, Rick and Morty)

A Simple and Short History of Television

- Even before radio was conceived, television technology was invented in 1897 by Ferdinand Braun when he invented the cathode ray tube (CRT).
- 1907 was the first time the cathode ray tube was used to produce images.
- The first televisions were sold in late 1920s in the US, UK, and Russia but only scanned at 30 lines so the picture quality and sales were poor.
- NBC and CBS were the first to transmit broadcasts; in New York in 1930's using a transmitter on top of the Empire State Building. But almost no one owned TV's at this point.
- July 1st, 1941 the FCC authorized commercial broadcasting and NBC had the first televised commercial with a shaky,

10 second Bulova watch commercial that aired before a Brooklyn Dodgers, Philadelphia Phillies baseball game.

- On December 7th, 1941 Pearl Harbor was attacked and was the first major news story broken on television.
- While its' technology and popularity were dormant during WWII, television sales picked up, about three years after the end of WWII, starting in 1948.
- .05% of US households had a television in 1946, 55.7% in 1954, and 90% by 1962.
- In 1954 RCA introduced a color television set but they (affordability) didn't become popular until about 1964.
- By 2000 a billion televisions had been sold.

Television to you

Television had a rough start. Besides the bad technology and cost, the first issue with television was that it lacked the talent to create consistently entertaining shows. The most talented entertainers and producers were still working on Broadway and radio.

Still, viewers had a sense of "astonishment and glamour" in the infancy of television.

It wasn't until the 1950's, The Golden Age (1948 – 1959), that TV really took off. TV networks tried a lot of different programs: live shows, variety shows (vaudeville), comedy shows, dramas, and whodunits.

It is called the Golden Age because everything associated with television was new and changing; for example, the (situational comedy) or sitcom was created. News, sports, and politics figured out its role in TV during this time.

There is said to be a re-emergence of a Golden Age of television right now. With so many network, cable, streaming, and internet channels available – the viewer and creator have a bundle of choices.

Unlike film, where there are maybe 200 minor-to-major releases per year, television offers a bundle of opportunities to write big, small, and audience-specific shows.

Pilot scripts are the thing right now. Agents, managers, producers, showrunners, competitions, and fellowships want to read your pilots.

Spec scripts used to be the primary way to get into TV, now it's more about the pilots.

Because of this, I think you should all consider your pilot as an introduction to you, your ability, and your writing style. You should, by the time you leave this program, have 2-3 pilots written. In other words, don't let this pilot be your last.

Lastly...

ACCORDING TO THE WGA (WRITER'S GUILD OF AMERICA) IN 2019

TV NOW

Broadcast TV

- Ad-supported, free, over-the-air TV plus cable (58 million)
- CBS, FOX, NBC, WB
- MTV, TNT, Comedy Central, BET, Hallmark, OWN, ESPN
- 40.3% (and dropping) of all TV usage in the US in June 2024

Free Ad-Supported Streaming TV (FAST)

- Free, ad-supported streaming TV
- Linear, scheduled programming similar to cable but without fees or contracts
- A \$9 billion market in 2024
- Pluto TV (80 million+)
- Tubi (80 million+)
- Roku Channel (83.6 million)
- Freevee (80 million)
- Xumo (40 million)

Advertising-Based Video On Demand (AVOD)

- Ad-supported and on-demand
- Host proprietary libraries of studio-licensed movies and shows.

- Most FAST add AVOD's becoming a hybrid of the two.

Subscription Video On Demand (SVOD)

- Subscription-based.
- Netflix (277.65 million worldwide)
- Disney+ (153.8 million)
- Max (99.6 million)
- Prime (200 million worldwide)
- Hulu (50.2 million)
- Apple+ (25 million)

Transactional Video On Demand (TVOD)

- Pay per view. Download to rent.
1. For more on American TV History = [Click Here](#)
 2. Media Pay Report from Deadline Article = [Click Here](#)

A Writer's Guide to TV Structure

Structuring the One-Hour Drama

Foundations (A, B, C Stories)

Most hour-long dramas weave multiple plotlines together, organized by importance:

- **The “A” Story:** The main plotline.
- **The “B” Story:** The second most important plotline.
- **The “C” Story:** A smaller, tertiary plotline.

The Teaser (Cold Opening)

The **teaser**¹ is the material shown before the opening credits. Its primary function is to grab viewers “faster than the enemies, which are the remote, mouse, or esc button”.

The Four-Act Structure (Broadcast)

The traditional template for a one-hour network drama, built around commercial breaks. Each act must end on a **cliffhanger**² to keep the audience from changing the channel.

Basic Four-Act Grid

(T)	ACT I	ACT II	ACT III	ACT IV
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				

4-Act Structure Breakdown (by Page Count)

Act	Pages
Act 1	~17
Act 2	~13
Act 3	~15
Act 4	~15

¹ Dramatic material before the titles, designed to hook viewers immediately.

² A moment of jeopardy, a shocking reveal, or a dramatic turning point.

The 5 and 6-Act Structures (Broadcast)

Some networks mandate five or six acts to create more commercial breaks, resulting in a “speeded pace” with shorter acts.

5-Act Structure Breakdown

Each act is roughly equal, about 12 pages.

6-Act Structure Breakdown

Each act is roughly equal, about 10 pages.

The Character-Driven Approach (Streaming)

Instead of building to act-break cliffhangers, shows without commercials often break stories “**by character**”. The primary concern is keeping you watching the next hour, so the most important cliffhanger is the one at the very end of the episode.

Structuring the Half-Hour Episode

While sharing principles with one-hour dramas, the half-hour comedy (sitcom) has its own distinct, fast-paced structure, typically running about 22-25 pages.

Half-Hour Structure Breakdown

Section	Pages
Teaser	~2
Act One	~8
Act Two	~8
Act Three	~6
Tag	~1

Teaser (1-2 pages)

A short, punchy opening scene that happens before the title credits. It’s often a self-contained joke or situation that grabs the audience’s attention and sometimes introduces the episode’s theme or A-story problem in a lighthearted way.

Act One (approx. 8-10 pages)

This is the setup. The main goal or problem of the A-story is introduced, and the character’s plan to achieve that goal is set in motion. The B-story is also typically introduced here. The act ends on a turning point where the initial plan hits a significant snag.

Act Two (approx. 8-10 pages)

The “muddle in the middle.” The characters try to solve the problem from Act One, but their efforts only make things worse. Complications escalate, new obstacles arise, and

plans backfire spectacularly. This act ends at the character's lowest point, where the situation seems hopeless or has reached maximum chaos.

Act Three (approx. 6-8 pages)

The resolution. The characters make one last, often desperate or unconventional, attempt to fix everything. The A and B stories are resolved, and the characters learn (or fail to learn) a lesson. The climax of the story happens here.

Tag (1 page)

A very short scene after the main story has concluded. The tag is almost always a final joke that provides one last laugh, often calling back to a smaller joke from earlier in the episode. It serves as a fun, conclusive beat before the credits roll.

Scene Functions

(Shorthand)

Advance the Story/Plot

1. This should go without saying, but nearly every scene has to move the story forward.

Evoke Mood/Tone

1. What kind of movie are we watching? This scene function lets us know.

Bond Audience to Character

1. Make us care about your characters. It's oh so more than just saving cats

Convey Genre –

1. Some scene's main function is simply to relay genre conventions.

Establish/Heighten Tension

1. This scene tightens the screws on a character to create dramatic tension.

Establish/Escalate Conflict

1. This one should go without saying as well, but some form of conflict dominates these scenes.

Create a Setback

1. This is a scene in which a character's goal is thwarted.

Raise the Stakes

1. Similar to heightening tension, these scenes broaden or intensify the consequences should our hero (or any character) fail.

Reveal Backstory/Exposition

1. Challenging scenes to write, here's where we learn about things that happened before the movie started. See: Exposition dump. Also See: monologuing. Also See: avoid both those. Embed a Set-Up (plant)
2. Set-up and payoff – our powerful one-two punch. Obviously; this is the first one.

Reminder of a Set-Up

1. If the set-up occurred a while ago, might want to use this scene function to remind us of it.

Payoff a Set Up

1. If you're going to go to the trouble of setting up, might as well pay it off.

Teach a Character

1. This is a scene in which the character learns something or gains a new insight.

Offer Alternative Perspectives

1. An important scene function, these moments keep the movie from becoming propaganda. As such, these scenes allow opportunities for the audience to create meaning in the story.

Display Eye-Candy

1. Like the name suggests, give us something visual to dazzle our eyes.

Establish a Character Trait

1. These next three are related, and all of them have to do with character building...

Reinforce a Character Trait

1. This function confirms our suspicions about a character's personality.

Further Reinforce a Character Trait

1. Just in case we missed it. Actually, this one is less about the audience missing the trait and more about reconfirming that we were right about a character's personality.

Portray Character

1. Much like the other character functions of a scene, it's a basic function.

Provide Irony

1. How bittersweet this function is – like ray-eee-ain, on your wedding day, which technically isn't really irony, but who's counting?

Add Humor

1. All the world loves a clown.

Raise Dramatic Questions

1. These pique our interest to discover the answer, which conveniently is another function of scenes.

Answer Dramatic Questions

1. Similar to set-up and payoff. Can't have a Q&A with the audience, without the A.

Provide Surprise

1. Boo!

Create Suspense

1. When we absolutely, positively gotta know, these scenes extend the moments between question and answer to leave us begging to know more.

Build Anticipation

1. Similar to suspense, this function serves to set us up for the awesomeness to come.

Get a Reaction

1. One order of shock value to go, please.

Create Contrast

1. A scene function that works with other scenes or within a long scene to change tempo, pace, or any other element you can contrast to generate interest.

Transition Time or Place

1. Perhaps this scene is showing time elapse, or bridging us to another setting.

Misdirect an Audience or Character

1. This function purposely misleads to create interest, proving that red herrings still taste great!

Provide Texture

1. Similar to creating mood and tone, texture refers to adding layers to the story, rounding out its world and characters.

Develop Subtext

1. This function makes us have to read between the lines.

Create Parallel Action

1. Thank you, Edwin S. Porter.

Explore metaphor and symbolism

1. Why should writers of literature have all the fun?

Explore Theme

1. With all due respect to Samuel Goldwyn, if you want to send a message, use this scene function.

Types of Scenes

The Expository Scene

As the name implies, the main function of this scene is to provide backstory and information the audience will need to follow the story. Remember, if a movie is a slice of the story, then there were events that occurred before the movie started. This status quo is shown to the audience in expository scenes.

Backstory is useful to help us see the change the narrative will bring about, build anticipation for the conflicts to come, and enable us to see how the Inciting Incident will overturn the status quo. It's also useful to help us understand the rules of the world.

In the beginning of your movie limit backstory to just the bare minimum we need to understand the story at this time. You can use expository scenes later to expand the depth of the story.

The Signature Scene

Similar to the Expository Scene, this type of scene is used to establish who a character is in a nutshell. It's often our first introduction to a character. As you might expect, these occur early in the movie.

As an introduction, these scenes may include a bit of backstory or show the character in some sort of character-defining action. Either way, we should come out of this scene with the sense of – 'Oh, he's THAT guy.' Or... 'Oh, she's THAT kind of person.'

Obviously greater depth will be provided later in the movie, but for now, the Signature Scene announces to the audience a big-time character has arrived in the movie.

Set-Up and Payoff Scenes —————

The primary purposes of these scenes are to set story elements in motion for later payoffs. Set up and payoff scenes engage the audience by generating anticipation and suspense.

Remember, the audience is actively putting elements together as the story progresses. At their base level, these scenes give the audience something to assemble. These are among the most powerful tools available to get the audience into a movie.

A set up without a payoff is called a widow. A payoff without a setup is called an orphan. Avoid BOTH.

Set ups without payoffs frustrate an audience and make the story appear aimless. Payoffs without setups make the story appear arbitrary, convenient and contrived. Neither of these is good. Typically the first half of the movie is dominated by set up scenes and the second half is dominated by payoffs. By the time you reach the third act, the movie will consist almost exclusively of payoffs.

Obstacle and Complication Scenes

Scenes are driven by goals, both within the scene and overarching throughout the story. Just as the name says, Obstacle Scenes place things in the way of a character to keep him or her from achieving a goal.

Complication Scenes serve the same effect (make life difficult for a character), but they foreshadow and set up obstacles for later in the film. They can also be the results of a previous Obstacle Scene in which the obstacle is overcome, but this leads to even more trouble (a complication.)

The Victory Scene

Obstacles may be overcome within the Obstacle Scene, or this moment can stretch over into a separate Victory Scene. After the hard work overcoming an obstacle, it's time to celebrate! These are also measures of a character's growth and progression toward attaining a goal. It can also serve as contrast to the previous scene, and the scenes to follow.

The Setback Scene

Here a main character fails to overcome an obstacle. It's typically a temporary failure, but the setback helps to plant doubt in the mind of the audience that our intrepid character will actually succeed.

Give the audience enough of these and they may actually believe your hero may not triumph at the end of the movie – but if the hero perseveres through all these setbacks, it shows tenacity, a very endearing character trait for most members of the audience.

If handled properly, Setback Scenes also demonstrate how powerful the antagonist is, giving the overall narrative a sense of unpredictability.

The Discovery Scene

In this scene, a character discovers a vital piece of information, a clue, something valuable he or she will need to solve the problem presented in the movie. This moment of discovery typically inspires the hero to continue the quest, or sends him or her in a new direction. These types of scenes often come at or near major structural beats in the story. The revelations gained in these scenes alter the story as we know it. These scenes may also come as a result of a Setback or Victory Scene. The setback leads to discovery, or the victory leads to discovery. A subset of the Discovery Scene is the Inspiration Scene.

Inspiration Scene

This type of scene is a specialized form of discovery in which characters discover something within themselves that inspire changes within the characters. Perhaps a flaw is discovered, or a hidden ability. Whatever is discovered, these moments may serve to make

characters rethink their choices, their treatment of others, their lives, plans, etc..., which often leads to...

The Decision-in-Action Scene

Often as a result of a Discovery or Inspiration Scene, a character will make a decision and put that decision into action. Scenes of this type are the result. These scenes may sometimes reflect a major change in story direction as our newly-inspired character takes charge. These scenes are often prime movers of plot and story. They are also often combined within Discovery Scenes.

The Transitional Scene

These typically short scenes serve as transitions to smooth out major jumps in narrative time, space or story threads. Keep them short as they are typically very short on dramatic action as well. Remember, scenes link together to create a seamless movie narrative, but occasionally when making large jumps the linkages need a little bit of help to function. These scenes are often the solution.

The Dazzler

Can be a standalone scene or a form of Transition Scene in functionality, these are our big money scenes that often exist just to show off the power of cinema. Chase sequences, action scenes, beauty shots and flyovers, thrills and spills. The main reason for these scenes is to show off really cool images to the audience. May seem trite or banal, but they make for great trailer moments. Besides eye candy has a joy all its own!

Specialized Scenes

There are a number of specialty scenes that serve specific purposes as the narrative calls for.

Montage Scenes - These show a change over a series of short scenes. Useful when you want to bridge time and show a change but don't want to expend a great deal of narrative weight on these moments. Typically silent (aside from the rousing soundtrack).

Series of Shots - Similar to a montage, a series of shots typically is relegated to showing the completion of a specific task broken down into mini-scenes or shots. Almost always silent.

Flashback Scene - Typically a subset of Expository Scenes, but may also be used to go inside the mind of a character. Dangerous because they take the audience out of the real-time story thread and remind us all that we're watching a movie.

Dream and Fantasy Scenes - Can serve to create their own sense of a story's mystery unfolding, taking us into the subconscious of a character. The same dangers inherent in flashbacks also apply here, but they can be useful so long as they provide new information to the audience.

Before The Pages

To-Do List Before You Start Writing Pages

- Read or re-read William Rabkin's *Writing The Pilot*.
- Think about your Characters. Think about your Scenes. Think about your Act Breaks.
- Think about pace.

Character

The Teaser and every scene should inform us about who your character is. World-building or your concept may get people to tune in, but character gets people to stay. All the time. Every time. Concepts, ideas, and worlds get an audience's attention — Character keeps it.

What does this mean? What does your character want? What are the conflicts getting in the way of that want? Is the conflict internal or external? If it's internal, then what is the external goal or problem?

IT CAN'T ALL BE INTERNAL. THERE SHOULD BE AN EXTERNAL GOAL OR EXTERNAL AND URGENT PROBLEM CAUSING CONFLICT WITH, AND BETWEEN YOUR CHARACTERS.

I'm proud of all of you for creating your storylines, Beatsheets, and outlines. You have all the "then this happens" down or close to it. But I will never get to "then this happens" if I don't care about who it happens to. Character. Character. Character. Write it on your hand. Tape it to your screen. Tattoo it on your arm.

Character. Character. Character.

Scenes

On average, every scene is around two pages. By that logic, a half-hour script (30 pages) is 15 scenes, and an hour script (60 pages) is 30 scenes. This is not an exact science, just a rough estimate. If your pilot or show moves at a very fast pace, you may average closer to 1 scene per minute. If you are consistently writing three pages or longer scenes, then more than likely, your scenes are too long. Scenes should have a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Scenes should always have at least 2 of these three things:

1. A character with a goal or objective
2. Conflict (use external conflict to highlight the internal conflict)
3. A Love Song for the Character or for the Audience — the moments when we fall in love with our characters, or our characters fall in love with themselves. Can also be a Hate Song.

Act Breaks

Guide 1: From *Writing The TV Drama*

	Ends around
Teaser and Act 1	page 17
Act 2	pages 25–30
Act 3	pages 35–40
Act 4	pages 45–54

Sonny's List

- Every beat is an action. A character “realizing” something is not a scene.
- Each scene involves a character who wants something but faces resistance.
- The antagonist must be as strong and motivated as the protagonist — the more equal the sides, the more suspense. See the world from your antagonist's viewpoint also.
- Aim at the turning point where the protagonist must make a difficult choice.
- Anchor your story with the worst-case scenario three-fourths through. This is where the protagonist seems to fail and must overcome his internal problem to deal with the opposition.

Guide 2: From *Inside The Room*

- **Teaser** — A situation is introduced that will compel your characters to act and the audience to watch. A good teaser lets the audience know not only the subject of this week's story but also the episode's stakes.
- **Act 1** — All elements are put into place. It's in Act 1 — usually the longest act — that the full ramifications and scope of the problem introduced in the Teaser are realized. B and C stories kick off in the first act.
- **Act 2** — Things get progressively worse. Our heroes thought they had a handle on things, and boy were they wrong.
- **Act 3** — One last element joins the mix and makes things worse. Even the B and C stories aren't going the way characters had hoped.
- **Act 4** — You thought things were bad in Act 3?! Psshtt, not even close.
- **Act 5** — Hey, there's a way out of this mess! In the nick of time, the brightest minds come up with a way to save a life; a case, a family, a prom.

Guide 3: From Shonda Rhimes's Masterclass — Chapter 9, Writing a Script: Structure

“Structuring your script really means making sure that you are servicing the story you are trying to tell.” — Shonda Rhimes

Before you begin writing your script, it's important to understand how a standard, one-hour television drama is structured. Typically on network television, there are about five acts roughly lasting about 11 pages each. Here is how Shonda views the structure of each of the acts:

- **Act 1:** Introduce your characters and present the problem
- **Act 2:** Escalate the problem
- **Act 3:** Worst case scenario happens
- **Act 4:** Begin the ticking clock
- **Act 5:** Characters reach their moment of victory

It is helpful to think about how you want each of your acts to end as you begin to lay out the structure of your episode. Work these out ahead of time and properly set your story up for them, rather than dumping a twist at the end of each act just for excitement's sake.

The other essential components of your episodes are your A, B, and C storylines. The A storyline involves your main character and is the core of your show, your B storyline is secondary and helps the narrative keep moving forward, and the C storyline, sometimes referred to as "the runner," is smallest and holds the least weight.

Take it further: In the era of streaming television, structuring a story around commercial breaks is no longer absolutely necessary. If you are writing a TV show that you envision on one of these streaming platforms, how do you think you should be approaching structure?

Slow Down, Speed Up, and Let It Breathe

A half-hour show with 13 episodes will be about 7 hours of TV for an entire season (Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, and other streamers). That's 3–4 full features and around 400 pages of writing. For network TV, a half-hour show is about 13 hours and 900 pages of writing. That's about 6–7 full features.

Oh, you're doing an hour show? Then that's 13–23 hours of TV, or half of all the Marvel movies. In other words, you're trying to create enough content in one season that it took Marvel 6 years to do. That's anywhere between 800–1550 pages of writing.

Plot, plot, and more plot

Chill, slow down, and let the story breathe.

Chill and take the camera away from the protagonist and show us the lives of the other characters. Remember that B and C-story?

The story feels a bit flat? A bit uninteresting? Too slow?

Speed it up with... Character.

Character goals. Character conflict. Character arcs. Is there urgency in your character achieving these goals? A deadline? Due date? Is time running out? Do your character's flaws create their own set of problems and hurdles?

Are you tired of me typing the word character???

What is this show about?

Stop fighting it. Mimic another show. One day I'm sure you will break the mold. But today, for right now, break the mold with a strong teaser, strong characters, and strong concept. You have to know the rules before you can break them.

By the end of the episode, your audience should know what to expect every week.

If it's a procedural, an audience will expect the doctors, lawyers, police, or firefighters to solve a new case every week. If it's a comedy, they will expect our funny, odd characters to create, then fix as best they can, a new problem every week. If it's a combination of the two, then the audience will expect our characters to get closer to solving the "crime" while also introducing us to their lives and the world they live in. If it's a soap, an audience will expect twists, turns, and a bunch of diabolical backstabbing. Your audience will root for the good guys and hate the rest.

You got a big reveal at Episode 5 — shoulder shrug — who cares if the audience isn't interested enough to get to Episode 5.

Scene by Scene: Ask First, Write Later

Before you write any scene, ask:

- Why does this scene exist?
- Are the characters in this scene necessary?
- Does the scene have adequate conflict?
- Is it clear what the person driving the scene wants?
- Where is the scene located?
- Is the scene an act out?
- Is the scene part of a B or C-story?
- Is there something surprising about the scene?

Taken from Inside The Room by Linda Venis.

Shonda Rhimes Teaches Writing for Television: Chapter Reviews Taken from Masterclass PDF

Click a chapter to expand it.

i Chapter 2: Teach Yourself TV Writing

“You cannot be a writer if you are not a reader. You cannot be a TV writer if you are not a TV watcher.”

In television, the writer is king. Unlike in film, where the director has final say, a television writer’s vision is exactly what will make it to the screen. It’s one of the few places in entertainment where the writer has that much control, and is what makes TV such an exciting medium. It is the writer who decides everything from the story, to the set design, and even what a character wears. To be a successful television writer, a deep knowledge of television history is crucial. You should be watching as much television as you possibly can. If you are writing a medical drama, you must have an understanding of past medical dramas to understand why they worked or failed. A few years ago, there were rigid rules to writing for TV in terms of format. You had to have an “A,” “B,” and “C” story and your episode had to be a certain length. With so many diverse platforms for shows to live on now, any format of storytelling is acceptable. Even so, Shonda recommends that you know the rules so you understand which ones you are breaking.

i Chapter 3: Finding an Idea

“Ideas are everywhere. The only difference between a writer and another person is that we notice them.”

Ideas for stories can and should come from everywhere. Being more aware of the world around you can help you find the seeds of an idea. Listen to conversations around you, from people in the elevator to those in a coffee shop. Pay attention to what’s happening in the news and think about how you can use it to tell your story. To figure out if an idea is suited for television, ask yourself if it has an ending. If you know the conclusion to a character’s journey or story, it may be better suited for a film. If the idea sparks hundreds of more ideas, then you might have the beginnings of a long-running TV show. When coming up with ideas, it is wise to consider outside forces such as what is happening in the current cultural climate, and what networks might be looking for. This does not mean you have to change your idea, but it can be helpful to keep in mind.

i Chapter 4: Developing the Concept

“An idea is a seed. It’s a whisper. It’s a ‘what if?’ A premise is a story.”

As you develop your idea, it’s important to understand the difference between an idea and a premise. An idea, Shonda explains, could be, “a show about surgical interns.” The premise for *Grey’s Anatomy* specifies that it’s a show about *female* surgical interns, and that it’s about their friendship, competition, and the fact that one of them might be sleeping with her boss. A premise is your idea fleshed out into a clear and concise vision for the show that you can state in a few sentences. For Shonda, everything is character driven. Understanding who her characters are and what their journeys will be makes structuring her show that much easier.

i Chapter 5: Researching Your Story

“Research is about making your world real.”

Good research is the key to bringing the world of your story to life for the audience. Research not only provides the details to realistically portray a profession or environment, but it can also spark ideas for settings, episodes, and character development. You should decide what level of authenticity you need for your story. When speaking with experts, it’s important to be a listener, not a talker. Set aside your preconceptions and try to understand their world from their perspective. No detail is too small. Learning about the day-to-day life of a surgical intern informed many decisions in the **Grey’s Anatomy** pilot, from where the characters would gather, to which surgeries would be featured.

i Chapter 6: Creating Memorable Characters: Part One

“If you can create a character that feels like a real person, you have won.”

For Shonda, characters are the heart of storytelling. Memorable characters are essential for a show to resonate with an audience. Start with the basics—age, job, where they live—and then delve into what emotionally drives them. What was their childhood like? How is their relationship with their parents? To ensure all characters are three-dimensional, especially if they are of a different gender than yourself, it’s important to have compassion and rethink your perspective. Well-written characters feel human and relatable, making viewers forget they are not real people.

i Chapter 7: Creating Memorable Characters: Part Two

“Your character has to be an active participant in their own life.”

Television allows for a multitude of characters to interact, so don't create your ensemble in a vacuum. Ask yourself how each character harmonizes with the others, and how they affect the main character. Characters should be active drivers of the story, not just reactive to events. Make them the deciders of their own fate. Character development must happen naturally over time; don't force characters through exciting plot points without considering what their natural next step would be. The story should serve the character's journey.

i Chapter 8: Pitching Your Show

“When you're pitching, you are the show. You are the only representative of your show that they have.”

To get your show on air, you must learn to pitch it effectively. A great pitch is well-structured, visual, and quickly conveys your concept and characters. A good pitch, lasting 5-10 minutes, should cover the premise, the world, the characters, the pilot episode's events, the tone, and the number of planned episodes. Shonda warns against mentioning specific actors or music, as this can distract from your story. Remember that networks want a show they can sell, so think of creative ways to describe your show in market-friendly terms.

i Chapter 9: Writing a Script: Structure

“Structure is your friend. It is the framework upon which your story is built.”

Before writing, it’s important to understand the structure of a standard one-hour TV drama. On network television, a script typically has five acts of about 11 pages each. Plan your act endings ahead of time to properly set up the story. Episodes also consist of A, B, and C storylines, with the A story being the core plot involving the main character.

Act 1: Introduce characters and the problem.

Act 2: Escalate the problem.

Act 3: The worst-case scenario happens.

Act 4: A ticking clock begins.

Act 5: Characters achieve a moment of victory.

i Chapter 10: Writing a Script: Process

“Find the process that works for you. There is no right way to do this.”

Before you begin the physical act of writing, Shonda recommends creating a beat sheet and an outline. A beat sheet lays out the important moments and what needs to happen in each act. The outline expands on the beat sheet, detailing the specific scenes you will write. This provides a guide to follow as you write your script. Visualizing the final scene can help structure the entire episode. Every writer’s process is different, so find a method that works for you.

i Chapter 11: Writing a Script: Effective Habits

“A writer is a runner. You are running a marathon. You have to keep your muscles in shape.”

Just like a runner, a writer should write every day to keep their creative muscles strong. There is no perfect method, but finding rituals or creature comforts—a specific drink, a favorite chair, certain music—can help the process. If you experience writer’s block, try keeping two creative projects going at once so you can switch between them. Develop a writing schedule that works for you, whether it’s early mornings or weekend binges. The most important thing is that you are making progress on your script.

i Chapter 12: Writing a Script: The Pilot

“The pilot is the promise of your show.”

You don’t have a TV show without a compelling pilot. The pilot is crucial for hooking an audience and setting up your characters and season-long storyline. Shonda suggests choosing a character to act as the audience’s guide, introducing the world and other characters without relying on clunky exposition. Successful pilots all share one thing: a fantastic opening that grabs viewers and says something important about the show. Take great care in crafting your opening scene to ensure it leaves a lasting effect on the audience.

i Chapter 13: Writing Authentic Dialogue

“Dialogue is one of the most important tools you have as a writer.”

Dialogue is one of the most critical parts of TV writing, and no word should be wasted. It’s one of the best ways to reveal who your characters are. Shonda crafted the speech patterns of characters like Cristina Yang and George O’Malley to be deliberately different and calibrated to their personalities. To improve, learn how people speak in real life by observing conversations, noting speech patterns, and seeing how people often speak imperfectly, leaving sentences unfinished or cutting others off.

i Chapters 14-20: Case Studies: Grey's Anatomy and Scandal

“Look at it, figure out what works, figure out what you like. And then go apply that to your own work.”

Now that the fundamentals are understood, it's time to break down the pilots for *Grey's Anatomy* and *Scandal*. Shonda advises writers to consider the following for their own scripts:

Think about **setting as a symbolic place**, not just a location.

Use a character as a **guide for the audience**.

Create an **exciting opening** that makes people lean in.

Ground story choices in character.

Avoid clichés.

Know your **characters' secrets** before you start writing.

Plan your **act breaks** ahead of time.

i Chapter 21: Editing Your Script

“The editing process is what makes a script great.”

Once you've finished your first draft, the all-important editing stage begins. While every writer's process is different, the goal is the same: ensure scenes resonate, dialogue is original, the story is interesting, and there is no excess exposition. Shonda offers several tips:

Read your dialogue out loud to hear how it sounds.

Cut anything that doesn't further the plot.

Seek honest, external feedback and listen to what readers don't understand to problem-solve.

i Chapter 22: Beyond the Pilot: Writing a Series

“Fulfill the promise of your show.”

Many pilots get made, but few become hit series. To keep an audience watching, Shonda advises you to fulfill the promise of your show. The second episode should feel like the pilot all over again, reinforcing the story you promised the audience. Stick to that promise until you’ve earned the audience’s trust. Be creative and use your best ideas now; don’t save them for future seasons you might not get. Ensure every element has a payoff and that plotlines are grounded in what is natural for your characters to do next.

i Chapter 23: Scandal Case Study: “It’s Handled”

“Let your dialogue do more than one thing at once.”

The airport hangar scene between Olivia and Rowan Pope in *Scandal* is a powerful example of how dialogue reveals character relationships. The dialogue also offers insight into Olivia Pope’s motivations. The script shows Olivia’s inability to speak while her father reprimands her, revealing his power and the language he uses to shame her. This demonstrates how to use dialogue on multiple levels to advance the plot and reveal character.

i Chapter 24: Breaking into the Industry

“Your writing is your currency.”

There’s no single rulebook for making it in Hollywood, but there are ways to increase your chances of success. If you get an assistant job, maintain a positive attitude even with mundane tasks, as no one wants to work with someone grouchy. Build relationships not only with executives but also with your peers, who may provide opportunities as they rise in their careers. Most importantly, remember that your writing is your most valuable asset. Writing is a job you don’t need to be hired to do, so write every day and focus on creating original content.

i Chapter 25: Working in a Writer's Room

“A writer's room is a magical place.”

A writers' room can be creative and fulfilling, but also intimidating. Shonda provides tips for success: If you're unsure what to do, volunteer to write on the whiteboard. Always be ready with ideas and comments to show you have valuable opinions. Don't pitch plot ideas just because they sound exciting; instead, center your pitches around what would be a natural next step for a character. Support your fellow writers and embrace the unique culture of the room.

i Chapter 26: Working in TV Production

“It's your job as the writer to know your show better than anybody else.”

Working in TV production is a thrilling experience, especially when it's your own script coming to life. If your first pilot is produced, you'll face a steep learning curve. Rely on the experts around you, especially your line producer, to understand budgets, scheduling, and crew responsibilities. As the writer, provide clear action descriptions in your script. When hiring actors, vet them well, as you may be working with them for many years.

i Chapter 27: Showrunning

“You are the keeper of the vision.”

A showrunner holds the overall creative authority and management responsibility for a TV series. They oversee scripts, production decisions, final edits, and serve as the face of the show. Despite the administrative duties, a showrunner's core task remains telling a great story. There's no way to learn the job without doing it, but the principles of being a showrunner—negotiation, time management, and communication—can be applied in everyday life.

i Chapter 28: Life of a Writer

“You are a writer. So write.”

A writer writes every day. Period. This is the necessary tradeoff. It doesn't have to be a lot, and it doesn't have to be great, but by writing something, you are already ahead of those who haven't written in weeks. Writing is a difficult and lonely process, so it's important to celebrate the good moments, like finishing a scene or receiving a compliment. Dismiss the notions of work/life balance and the idea that you don't belong; if you are in the room, you belong there.

i Chapter 29: Shonda's Journey

“The only limit to your success is your own imagination.”

Shonda's love for language and storytelling began early, fostered by supportive parents. Her father's wisdom, “the only limit to your success is your own imagination,” became a guiding principle. Throughout her journey, which included non-writing jobs, Shonda stayed focused on her strength: telling a compelling story. She remained open to opportunities, seizing the chance to write for television after working on films. She never allowed the fact that there were few women or black writers in the industry to deter her.

Assignments

A, B, & C Storyline Loglines and Synopsis Assignment = 15 Points

Directions:

Loglines

You will write a logline of 2-3 sentences that gives a broad idea of your A-Story, B-Story, C-Story, etc.

Synopsis

You will write a more detailed 1/2 page synopsis for your A-Story, B-Story, C-Story, etc.

Note: The loglines give you the shape of your story ideas.

The synopsis allows you to fill in the shapes with details.

Give yourself time. Prepare. Prepare. Prepare.

Submit completed work as a PDF in the Discussion Board.

The Grid (fill-in worksheet)

Break your episode down scene by scene. Number each scene, give it a short description, and tag the storyline — **(A)**, **(B)**, **(C)**.

Name: _____ Show / episode: _____

#	Teaser / Cold Open	Act I	Act II	Act III	Act IV	Act V / Tag
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						

The Grid Breakdown Template

TEASER / COLD OPEN	ACT I	ACT II	ACT III	ACT IV

TEASER / COLD OPEN	ACT I	ACT II	ACT III	ACT IV

Pilot Script Breakdowns

Purpose and Goal:

This assignment will prepare you for the upcoming TV Pilot outline you will complete. It also provides tools to use, learn, and master for your future writing and helps you become aware of your best writing process.

Instructions:

PART 1 – BREAKDOWN USING THE GRID

- Pick a pilot episode script to break down.
 - Read the script and break the episode down from the script only.
 - The script must also have its Act Breaks written in the script, or at least be a show with commercials. Sorry-not-sorry streamers.
- Use THE GRID to briefly describe every scene's plot points and character actions. Then, find and break the scenes into their appropriate act breaks.

PART 2 – STORYLINES

- Write a logline for each storyline you identify in the pilot episode.

PART 3 – CHARACTERS

- For each identified character with a storyline, write a two to three-sentence paragraph synopsis of who your character is in the pilot episode only.

Beatsheet Assignment

Instructions:

1. You will write a brief yet concise scene by scene list of the essential story beats, or plot points for each of or your A-Story, B-Story, C-Story, etc.
2. You will also “break your story” by highlighting potential act breaks for each of your A-story, B-story, and C-story.

Breaking Your Story

“Breaking Your Story” is determining where would be a good place to end an act or go to commercial. At the end of an act break you want to keep the audience from turning away from the show. Find the moments in your storylines that present strong plot, emotional, or mystery moments that have the potential to hold an audience’s interest until the commercials are over.

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The Bible Assignment

FVM 2032 - THE TV PILOT

Instructions:

You will write a TV Bible for the show you have created using the available TV Bibles in our Shared Folder as an Outline.

For this assignment, you will create and complete the following sections:

1. An Introduction – This should give the reader a sense of what your story is about. BE ENTERTAINING. BE ENGAGING.

For example, read Stranger Things “Introduction, The Montauk Conspiracy, and Story” or The Wire “Overview.”

2. A Character Section

For example, read Stranger Things “The Kids, The Outsider, The Teenagers, and The Adults,” or Grey’s Anatomy “The Doctors.”

3. A Plot Section

For example, read Stranger Things “Story and Structure,” or Fargo “The Arcs.”

4. A Tone or Style Section

For example, read Stranger Things “Horror, Tone, and Style,” True Detective “Suspense and Humanism.”

And one of the following:

5. Series Section

1. For Hour Long Pilots

1. Summarize in detail your first two episodes: Pilot Episode and Episode 2.

1. For example, read Grey’s Anatomy “Episode 1” or The Wire “Episode 101.”

2. Sketch out the remainder of your Season 1 with A,B,C Storyline loglines.

3. A minimum of 10 episodes is required for the entire Bible.

1. For example, read True Detective “One,” or Scrubs “Pilot.”
2. Half Hour Pilots
 1. Summarize in detail your first four episodes: Pilot Episode, Episode 2, 3, and 4.
 1. For example, read Grey’s Anatomy “Episode 1” or The Wire “Episode 101.”
 2. Sketch out the remainder of your Season 1 by A, B, C storyline loglines.
 3. A minimum of 10 episodes is required for the entire Bible.
 1. For example, read True Detective “One” or Scrubs “Pilot.”

What is a TV Bible?

Early in the year, we pitched story ideas. The idea of a pitch is to persuade and excite the audience (listener) into the world of your story. A pitch should excite, entertain, and connect the listener to the promise of your show. At the end of your pitch, a listener should be able to see the endless possibilities of your show or curious enough to ask.

A pitch sets the stage. A pitch is a hook.

The Bible, then, is a more detailed pitch extended out over your show’s entire season or series.

When creating your Bible, you are trying to answer the questions, “Why are you telling this story? And why now?”

“Why are you telling this story?”

This question is answered by the funny, kooky, straight-laced, and weird characters populating your story. It highlights their wants, needs, fears, flaws, problems, secrets, and motivations.

“And why now?”

This question is answered by the world, the style, the time, and the tone of your story. This answer requires you to declare your story as being different than anything else produced. Here, you compare and contrast the different parts of your show to other shows, highlight the differences, and focus on the audience’s emotional draw.

Suggestion

I suggest you pick a Bible from our folder and use its structure as an outline. As you write more Pilots and more Bibles, you will eventually create your own style. There is no universal way to write a Bible, but most Bibles contain the same elements. So if you are unsure of what those elements are, what it should look like, or their overall feel, use the Bibles provided as an Example.

Examples

Example: The Good Wife — Loglines, Grid & Outline

Loglines

A-Story

After a deadlocked jury, JENNIFER COMBS, 29, a working mom, is retried for the murder to her ex-husband in a faked carjacking. Desperate and heartbroken from imprisonment and estrangement from her daughter, Lilly, 4, who she hasn't seen or spoken to in a year. Who can help her?

B-Story

ALICIA FOLLICK, 30's, the good wife and mom, restarts her life as a lawyer at Stern, Lockhart & Garvin, after an embarrassing sex scandal involving her powerful husband. With the help of the firm's private investigator, KALINDA, Alicia investigates and eventually wins the Jennifer Combs case, all while juggling mom duties, work duties, potential rivalries, and love interests, slowly becoming more confident in each.

C-Story

DAVID FOLLICK, 30's, resigns as District Attorney and is sent to jail, where he tries to hold onto his good wife, Alicia.

D-Story

JACKIE FOLLICK, Alicia's mother in law, tries to manage the house and grandkids now that Alicia has gone back to work. Out of touch, and raised in a different era, Jackie flounders, innocently, being the good mother. I don't know how old Jackie is, but I'm sure she would consider it rude if you asked.

E-Story

CARY, Alicia's unbeknown rival, hogs all of SONIA, 20's, Cary and Alicia's shared assistant's time.

The Grid Breakdown

Pilot Outline

Pilot Outline October 24, 2008

By Robert King & Michelle King TEASER

COLD OPEN

Prolouge

A press conference. Standing at a podium is a nervous official reading a statement: “As of today, I have tendered my resignation as District Attorney of Chicago. I am determined to fight these charges and regain the trust of my family.”

Oh, one of *those* press conferences. Scandal. In the key of Elliott Spitzer. The grim official is DAVID FOLLICK (40), a backslapping Bill Clinton: smart, political, funny, calculatedly seductive. But we move in on our real hero.

His wife. Standing beside him.

ALICIA FOLLICK (late-30s). Proper. Pretty. She’s always been the good girl—the good girl who became the good wife, then the good mom: in her navy St. John suit: devoted, struggling never to outshine her husband. She tries to keep a neutral expression on her face as David continues: “This charge that I had some kind of untoward relationship with these call girls is ludicrous. I have never abused my office. I have never taken bribes. I have never...” This isn’t sounding good: financial *and* sexual indiscretions.

A mortified Alicia glances up at the room, the hordes of reporters. Surreal. She looks toward David, notices a half-inch piece of lint on his sleeve. She focuses on it, obsesses on it, finds herself reaching up to remove it when a hand takes hers. Oh, it’s David, done with his statement, escorting her from the room, away from the shouting reporters, into...

...a backstage green room where four political advisors immediately sweep around him: “We’ll set up an interview with the Tribune—” “We’ll need Alicia to do an interview on Good Morning, Chicago—” Alicia eyes them from across the room. Eyes the lint on David’s suit. David crosses to her to ask quietly, “Are you alright?” And...

...SLAPPPPP!...

Alicia slaps him so hard she almost knocks him over. He falls to one knee, looks up at her stunned. But Alicia, very controlled, very proper, just straightens her coat, grabs her purse, and leaves.

END COLD OPEN

First Day

Three months later.

Alicia waits, alone, in the 27th floor conference room of Stern, Lockhart & Garvin, a mid-level Chicago law firm. Opening a new chapter in her life, she’s desperate to forget the last one: wearing a new Nanette Lepore suit, new shoes, new hairstyle: looser, more career woman than political wife. She looks up at...

...a clock: 9:45. Conference room still empty. Okay, something's wrong. She goes to the door, asks a secretary: "I'm sorry, it's my first day; isn't the staff meeting at 9:30?" The secretary nods. Alicia: "Is everyone just late?" The secretary shakes her head: "You're in the wrong conference room. It's up one floor."

BAM— Alicia blasts into the stairwell—shit—runs up the stairs two at a time, accidentally drops her new binder; it rattles down several flights. Screw it. She continues on. Snags a stocking racing through a 28th floor door into the upstairs reception. Interior decoration all trying to warm up the skyscraper look with hints of Stickley, Falling Waters.

"Which way to the conference room?" The receptionist points through double doors. Alicia bangs through them, leaving the two receptionists trading a look. "Is that her?" The other nods. "Her hair's different." As...

The first day

...Alicia passes corner offices, secretarial stations, coming to the identical *upstairs* glass-walled conference room; the only difference, this one packed with people, seated, standing. The full staff. Partners, associates, paralegals. Forty-five people.

Shit. Alicia grimaces—the worst thing for her is to be late. She slips in the back, unnoticed behind a screen of standing junior associates, all tall, young. Late 20s seems to be the age du jour here. Someone notices her. CARY (26), her competition. Formidable. Harvard grad. Runway model handsome.

The meeting wraps up, Alicia trying to piece together what she missed. A massive civil suit fell into the firm's lap the night before. A pharmaceutical company fired their representation. "We'll need a full-court press to impress them. So associates need to take the lower priority cases. Jonah, you'll take Harbor; Janice, you'll get a continuance on trial readiness. And Alicia, you'll take the pro bono."

Alicia looks up at this: What? Something she missed.

There it is listed on a squeegee board: "pro bono retrial." But the meeting is breaking up. Alicia sees one of the partners starting out the door, rushes after him: "Will." And...

4 . Will.

...WILL GARVIN (38) turns with a smile. He always has a smile. Will is someone who makes it all look easy—life, law, sex—even when it's not: he's on his second divorce, and isn't sure he likes the law anymore. He and Alicia had a crush on each other at Georgetown Law, and still comfortably tease and joke as if no time passed.

As they walk, rush, Will discusses Alicia's pro bono case as if she were already up to speed: Ideally we wouldn't want you to jump into a trial like this, but we need to free up our first string for this civil case; so you think you'll be all right with it?

Alicia just stares at him: "Oh, yeah, no problem." Good, because Will was the one who suggested the retrial be handed off to her. It's a low priority pro bono case, the firm just donating its billable hours. It's also a retrial, so the defense strategy is pretty much set in stone from the first trial. So you'll be fine.

Alicia nods, tries to find out more, but her cell rings "The Bitch is Back." Will laughs: Who gets "The Bitch is Back?" Oh, her mother-in-law. Alicia's daughter has a wicked sense of humor and set up the ring tones. Will laughs, asks what Alicia's ring tone is, but they're interrupted by a woman passing: "We'd better do this now. Let's go."

Oh, she's pointing to Alicia. Do what? Alicia follows...

5. Dawna.

...senior partner, DAWNA LOCKHART (56), into her impressive corner office overlooking the Chicago River. Tough, powerful, self-assured, over-busy, Dawna is a SEX IN THE CITY feminist, always dressing like a million bucks, and multitasking with calm efficiency: answering phones, yelling orders out to her male assistant, and now...

...filling Alicia in on the law firm's expectations: promptness, teamwork, and absolutely no office politics! "We're all rowing together or we're all sinking." But there's something about Dawna's tone: her condescension. She eyes Alicia trying to take notes, talks fast, then pointedly repeats it slowly so Alicia can catch up.

She has a packed box all ready for Alicia: the retrial files. Dawna was the original lawyer on the case—defending an indigent woman accused of killing her ex-husband and making it look like a failed carjacking. Dawna made a silk purse out of a sow's ear with this trial: it was a 1st degree murder charge with some "bad facts," and Dawna ended up with a deadlocked jury: 6 to 6. She's not even sure why the D.A. is retrying, except he's new and intent on proving himself.

Alicia continues to take notes, or try to take notes as Dawna's dog, an aging Jack Russell terrier, jumps up on her, nuzzling and sniffing. Dawna suddenly yells mid-sentence: "Justice!" Alicia looks up: what—? Oh, the dog's name.

Dawna finishes by talking about the petition she filed for bail. The hearing is today at four—JUSTICE, down! We could ask for a continuance, but that would keep the accused in prison for another month. The two are interrupted by...

...the other new associate, Cary, needing a briefing on the civil case. He was given the plumb assignment of second chair. Alicia can see the difference in the way Dawna treats him: warmer, more patient. Clearly he's Dawna's protégé.

Alicia is dismissed, exits with the file box, catches her breath. Dawna's male assistant doesn't even look up, offering her a lint roller. Oh, Alicia sees her skirt covered with dog hair. Starts to roll it off as...

6. Cary.

...Cary exits, offers to help Alicia with her file box. Sure. Cary chats as the two continue on to the elevator, and down a level to their neighboring offices.

He asks how she's holding up after the scandal of the last three months. "Wow, you must be strong. After all that, I'd be hiding in a cave." Alicia just eyes this kid, not sure if he has an agenda or not. He talks about the phenomenon of Comeback Moms, and how he really respects her for that—to return to the workplace after so many years away, raising kids.

His mom is thinking of doing the same.

Alicia sees a small metal clip on his pant leg, offering "You might want to do something about that." Oh, Cary quickly slips it off. Was he wearing that at the staff meeting? He bikes to work: that's why the clip. You know, for the environment.

The two come to their neighboring offices where they share the same assistant, SUZANNE (25), a calculatedly perky and ambitious college grad. She clearly has a boss-crush on Cary, already working to unpack his office, as she yells over her shoulder to Alicia an afterthought, "The investigator came by to fill you in."

Alicia nods, starts to enter her office when Cary offers her a last "Let the best man win." Alicia stops: what? Oh, Cary quickly backtracks: Sorry, I shouldn't have said anything. Forget I said a word. And he enters his office. Gone.

Alicia stares at his closed door, frowns. As she is eyed by...

7. The crime.

...a woman sitting in Alicia's tiny office. KALINDA SHARMA (27), the investigator.

An East Indian stunner. A Bollywood Erin Brokovich. Sexy, no-nonsense, driven, sexually free, independent, a cool temperament. She has a boyfriend who's a cop, another who's a rap star, a girlfriend who's a political op. (Her bisexuality never commented on: just an unremarkable fact of life.)

She's there to take Alicia through the crime. Pulling exhibits from the trial box—gory crime scene photos, autopsy diagrams, evidentiary reports—she explains...

It started a year ago. A carjacking. Or at least that's what the cops thought at first. There had

been a series of grisly carjackings in the upscale Chicago suburb of Wilmette.

Thieves would target an expensive parked car, fix a clip to its fuel line, follow the driver a mile until he ran out of gas, pretend to be Good Samaritans, rob the driver and passenger, shoot them in the face, dump their bodies, and take the car.

But right away there was something suspicious about this newest crime scene.

For one thing, the car wasn't upscale. Why would carjackers target a rusting Honda? For another, there was no clip on the fuel line. And last, and most tellingly, the passenger was only shot in the leg. This was JENNIFER LARCH (29), the accused, a pretty but painfully shy mother and grammar school teacher. Alicia studies her picture: recognizes that lost, hunted, and overwhelmed look on her face.

Jennifer claimed the driver, her ex-husband, MICHAEL, struggled with the carjacker, and that's why she was only shot in the leg. But the police began to think the crime was a murder disguised as a foiled carjacking. Jennifer, they believed, was the one who shot and killed Michael, then injured herself. And...

8. To the courthouse.

...as Kalinda and Alicia start toward the Cook County Courthouse for the bail hearing, Kalinda continues...

Jennifer, instead of using her cellphone to call for help for her dying ex-husband, drove a half-mile to a gas station payphone. She said she couldn't get any cell reception, but the police began to believe that Jennifer drove in order to dump the murder weapon. So Jennifer was arrested and charged with 1st degree murder. Her motive? She was in an ugly custody battle with Michael over their 4-year-old daughter.

9. In court.

The defense table. Alicia goes to it. Sits. An actress shoved out on stage. Waiting for the judge. Her cellphone rings Guns n' Roses "Sweet Child of Mine." She quickly slaps it off.

The prosecutor enters. MATAN BRODY (29), African-American, cocky, likes the power if not the paycheck of an A.D.A. He looks over at the defense table, sees Alicia. What the—? He looks again.

The wife of the *ex*-D.A.

He elbows the other A.D.A., SANDRA PAI, a tough Asian lawyer in angular pantsuits, points, whispering: "Wow, they must really be broke—he has his wife working." The two stroll over to...

...Alicia, offer their hellos, sympathies, the air thick with *schadenfreude*. Matan worked under Alicia's husband in the D.A.'s office, and met Alicia at Christmas parties. He asks how David is doing, congratulates her for landing on her feet, compliments her strength, observes the phenomenon of moms returning to the workplace, etc. And Alicia, used to this routine tour of the inanities, gives her usual stock polite answers.

Matan and Sandra return to the prosecution table, trying to suppress grins, can't help it. Like shooting fish in a barrel.

The accused is escorted in. Jennifer. Startled, she sees Alicia: where's Dawna? Alicia starts to explain she's a replacement from the same firm, but Jennifer cuts to the chase: How long have you been practicing? Alicia pauses, admits she worked for two years out of law school, but this will be her first case in 13 years.

Jennifer crumbles. She's been abandoned.

The judge enters. His Honorable COLIN BOGIRA (62). Not the happiest man in the world. Ex-Marine. Losing his hair. Nicotine gum wrappers covering his desk. He barely looks up, turns to the defense table: "Okay, let's hear it."

Alicia stands. Opens her mouth, pauses. Where are the words? She utters an "um," but that's all she gets out as Matan interrupts: Illinois has great difficulty with granting bail, your honor, due the cruelty of the crime, and Jennifer's threat, in the midst of a custody hearing before the murder, to run off with her daughter.

Alicia, always the good girl, keeps trying to interrupt "Your honor, I... Your honor..." But there isn't much politeness in Chicago criminal courts, the prosecutor barreling on: "The people are ready to retry this right now, Your Honor. If Mrs. Follick is so intent on getting her client out why doesn't she just agree to a speedy retrial?"

And Judge Bogira looks up at the name—"Mrs. Follick?" Really?

He smiles, waves for Matan to shut up, turns to Alicia: "So, Mrs. Follick, your husband and I never quite got along." Uh-oh, Alicia starts to clear her throat, interject, but Bogira waves her off too... "—but if the prosecution thinks that will in some way prejudice me against your client, he is sorely mistaken. Bail granted."

And that's it. Alicia stands there. She didn't even get out a full sentence, and she won. Jennifer offers her a handshake: thank you. No problem, Alicia nods. She's a lawyer now —*again*.

ACT ONE

10. The interview.

Back at the office, Kalinda and Alicia question Jennifer who is thrilled to have her first good cup of coffee in a year.

Alicia tries to get her assistant, Suzanne, to take notes, but she's busy prepping Cary for an evidentiary hearing. So Alicia takes notes while dealing with a human resource drone who continually enters, exits, needing her "new employee" info: social security numbers, I9 forms, driver's licenses. Kalinda finally shoves a chair in front of the door.

Jennifer has only one thing on her mind: seeing her 5-year-old daughter. After her arrest, she lost custody to her in-laws. The worst thing was having no one visit her in prison.

Promising to work on reversing the custody decision, Alicia can't help but feel a kinship with Jennifer: especially when Jennifer talks about how overnight she went from being an ordinary housewife to a murderer; and how the press used family photos of her making lion faces at her daughter to make her look unbalanced. Alicia gets it.

Kalinda, meanwhile, interrupts, having no time for this emotional crap. The Achilles heel of the case, to Kalinda's mind, is Jennifer's claim to have seen the carjacker's red pick-up truck approach from across an empty Walmart parking lot. The prosecution easily showed Jennifer was lying, by playing the Walmart's security video. No truck.

Could Jennifer have been mistaken?

No, Jennifer apologizes, sticking to her story—even though it hurts the case. Alicia studies her throughout: her body language, what she does with her hands. This is something Alicia is good at: ferreting out lies. She says it's because she's raising two teenagers. (Although, as the always-blunt Kalinda points out, it didn't work so well with her husband.)

Interview over, Alicia and Kalinda set tasks. Kalinda will try to undercut the surveillance tape; Alicia will question the jurors from the first trial—the ones who agreed to post-verdict interviews—in order to tweak her presentation for the second trial. She tries to get her assistant to phone the jurors to set up interviews, but Suzanne is busy now taking notes on a Cary teleconference. Great, Alicia sighs.

11. The competition.

Heading down to her car in the underground garage, Alicia sees Will returning from lunch. She starts to wave when she sees a pretty paralegal laughing with him, seemingly intimate. Oh. Alicia, feeling uncomfortable, hangs back, trying not to be seen, but her cell phone rings—"The Bitch is Back." Damn. Will hears it, turns, laughs: What are you doing there?

He hurriedly tells the paralegal to go on ahead, and escorts Alicia to her car. Alicia looks over at him, decides to ask. Cary mentioned ‘Let the best man win.’ What’s he talking about? Is there something I should know?

Will starts cautiously. There was some reluctance to hire someone like Alicia, someone with so much scandal baggage, so Will argued to the other senior partners that they hire *both* Alicia and Cary, give them six months to prove themselves, and whoever doesn’t, fire. Alicia thanks him for believing in her. Then she gets in her car, shaken.

12. The foreman.

DePaul University. Classes out. The jury foreman, DR. DOWNING, a Jeffrey Toobin-like history professor, rushes from class to class as Alicia runs to catch up. Intent on doing well, we see a new intensity in her eyes as she asks him about the trial evidence: what worked for him, what didn’t. She’s trying to fine-tune for the next trial.

To Alicia’s pleasure, Dr. Downing says everything worked. It was a great case. Very convincing. The witnesses were believable, solid. In fact, he voted for conviction right from the start.

Alicia stops: Wait, what?

He voted for conviction right from the start. Yes, but, I’m with the defense.

Oh. The professor looks at her anew: I thought you were with the D.A.’s office. How can you represent that murderer?

Shit. Alicia charges on: But why do you think six other jurors found her not guilty? The judge polled the jury afterwards and you were equally deadlocked 6 to 6.

No, from the very beginning: the jurors voted 11 to 1 to convict: on the very first ballot. Five jurors eventually went over to the “not guilty” side because they wanted out of that jury room; they needed to prove to the judge they were hopelessly deadlocked. They weren’t convinced, they were exhausted.

Alicia stares at him: Uh-oh.

13. The hold-out.

Alicia phones Kalinda about this newest hitch. The deadlock wasn’t necessarily even. It started as an 11 to 1 vote until one heroic juror convinced five others to peel off to her side. Alicia’s visiting the heroic female hold-out right now. Kalinda tells her to get all her particulars: race, income, education, so they can gear jury selection toward her profile.

A woman’s voice comes from inside the hold-out’s apartment, “Let yourself in.” Alicia enters, finds an apartment filled with cats. Hundreds of them. Covering TV sets, couches, and large stacks of newspapers. A woman exits the bathroom in a mumu. FANNY (60),

angry: “I don’t like the plumbing. It makes noises at night.” Fanny seems to think Alicia is the plumber.

Correcting her, Alicia asks her cautiously about the case. Oh, yes, Fanny remembers everything about it. She liked the defense attorney. She had very pretty clothes.

Uh-oh. Alicia asks why she voted “not guilty.” Well, it was mostly because she hated the other jurors. They took her sandwich. They said they didn’t, but she knows they did. Who else could have taken it? Well, she sure showed them.

Alicia stares at this woman. Oh my god. She realizes, unless they get a jury full of crazy cat ladies, they’ll lose.

ACT TWO

14. David.

Tamms Minimum Security Prison. An old brick prison. Some trees. Barbed wire. Not exactly Club Fed, but not bad either. Families talk with prisoners in a cafeteria-like visiting area, except for...

...one prisoner sitting alone at a table. He looks up, pleased, seeing his visitor approaching: it’s Alicia. David grins “Well, this is a surprise.”

We recognize him from the press conference. David looks good, wearing his khaki prison uniform well: like a three-piece suit. Two months into a two year plea bargained sentence for selling lighter sentences to drug dealers, he’s still the handsome, impressive D.A., with a sense of humor, sly seductive manner. Sometimes it’s hard to hate him.

When they said there was a visitor, he thought it was his mother. Alicia explains: she hasn’t visited him because... well, she had to deal with the house sale, moving, getting the kids into public school, finding a job.

David finally pushes her to admit the real reason. She was angry—is angry.

David nods. Having seen the kids a few days earlier, he wants to know how they’re *really* doing. Well, Grace, their 13-year-old, says she’s alright with the switch to public school, but schoolmates discovered her background and played her “*the* tape.” David winces: damn. David Jr. (14), on the other hand, is making lots of friends. He’s using the scandal and infamy for its celebrity-value. Alicia’s not sure whether that’s a sign of health or something else.

David takes Alicia’s hand, knows this is hard on her, but he’s innocent. She shoots him a look: come on. David amends— innocent of the abuse of office charges. Alicia never gave a shit about that. It’s the fact that there is a tape out there of him talking about sucking the toes of a 22-year-old hooker!

They start to argue until Alicia interrupts herself: No, no, she's not here to fight. She has a client who talked about how hard it was to be in prison and have no family visiting. So that's why she's here.

Yeah, the kids told David her new job was going well. Who's the judge? Bogira. David laughs: Bogira hates me. Alicia nods: she knows. But David immediately reverts to schemer mode. Bogira likes the ladies. Wear something revealing in court. That black outfit you have. He'll love that. Alicia shakes her head: that's not her.

David was the original D.A. on the case, and he starts to remember there was something about the case: what was it? Early on the cops followed a false lead, but then they discovered Jennifer's custody motive, and turned to her pretty quick.

Alicia looks up, interested: what false lead?

Nothing much. Some trace evidence on the victim's clothes. Nothing came of it. The cops "pitted" it. You know, deep-sixed it. Never reported on it because it was irrelevant.

Alicia stares at him, thinking.

15. The murder scene.

The murder scene. Mundane in the daylight. An empty windswept turnout near Lake Michigan. Kalinda "walks the scene," taking pictures, as Alicia fills her in on the possibility of trace evidence that went nowhere, but was left out of the discovery.

Kalinda nods: Interesting. You could push the police corruption angle. Yep, Alicia nods, already going there, or even accuse the D.A. of withholding evidence. It might be enough to raise reasonable doubt even without a cat lady.

In a better mood, the two cross toward the Walmart parking lot, where Jennifer saw the pick-up approach. They eye the three surveillance cameras, and start to think it through: If Jennifer is telling the truth, then the pick-up crossed here: in full view of the cameras.

So why didn't it appear on the surveillance tapes?

16. The security video.

Kalinda and Alicia approach the harried and defensive Walmart Security Guard. And this is where Kalinda is at her best: ratcheting up her flirtatious Erin Brokovich side, transforming a man's defensiveness into puppy dog agreeability.

Alicia just stands in awe of her.

The guard takes them upstairs to his office overlooking the sales floor, shows them the surveillance tape from the night of the murder. No approaching red pick-up truck. Is there any way the cassette tape could have been mislabeled with the wrong date? No. But even if it were, the guard made his nightly rounds at 11:00 just before the carjacking. And he saw no pick-up. As Kalinda continues to question him, Alicia notices...

...the outer secretary's office. A desk covered with framed baby pictures. A trash can filled with Diet Cokes. Alicia considers it, buys two Diet Cokes from a machine, approaches the heavyset secretary, LANIE (45), offers her one, lying: "The machine accidentally gave me two."

The two chat. Lanie, like Alicia, returned to work after raising a family. Her only gripe: the company keeps giving raises to idiots who don't follow the rules—just because they're men. Alicia knows the feeling: "Which men?" Lanie considers it, closes the door on the security guard to really talk.

17. Home life.

Day over, Alicia returns to her small downtown apartment, her cellphone ringing again "The Bitch is Back." Alicia yells through the door: "I'm here." And...

...JACKIE FOLLICK (65) whips the door open. A blue blood force of nature. Always elegant, always domineering, an Ike-era widow intent on whipping her grandkids into shape. Jackie complains about Alicia not answering her calls. She picked up an application for a private school. Grace is still being bullied at school and David Jr. just brought home a new public school friend who seems "unclean."

Alicia patiently tells her she doesn't have the money for a private school as she runs the WalMart surveillance tape on her VCR. Jackie insists, Catholic schools are cheaper, but Alicia, needing another TV to run a second surveillance tape, goes in search of it.

GRACE (13) doesn't have it. A girl caught at that age between gawky and pretty, Grace is surfing her bedroom computer. Alicia asks her about the bullying at school. Grace rolls her eyes—grandma is being melodramatic. She whispers: Please, make her go away.

Alicia laughs, tells her to reprogram the ring tones, then goes to her son's room finding...

...DAVID JR. (14), a shy AV-kid trying to seem tougher than he is, with his new friend. A girl. TALIA (15). Pretty, but overly pierced. Talia is thrilled to meet Alicia, treating her and David like celebrities. Alicia shoots a scolding look at David Jr., then rolls his TV out—she needs it. David tries to close his bedroom door, but Alicia shoves it open again: uh-uh-uhhh.

Alicia simultaneously rolls two surveillance tapes on side-by-side TVs as Grace enters, eating a bowl of nighttime cereal: "What are we looking for?" Alicia shrugs, eyes the Walmart parking lot on the side-by-side sets. No pick-up truck. Alicia gets Grace's

help in rewinding one of the images to the security guard crossing the lot. Nothing interesting.

Unexceptional. Until...

...Alicia yells “stop.” Grace freezes the image. Alicia leans in toward the TV, smiles. Points at the frozen screen: “That!” It’s a plastic grocery bag blowing across the lot.

18. First witnesses.

First day of trial. Court 307. Alicia takes a deep breath then enters.

Matan questions the first prosecution witness. CINDY (30). The widow. Devastated. Teary eyed. Talking about the loss of the love of her life. She’s a witness used primarily to make a jury understand the emotional stakes. And...

...Alicia, sitting at the defense table, checks the jury. It seems to be working. The jury moved. All smart, college educated. Not a single crazy cat lady. Damn.

Matan also gets Cindy to undercut Jennifer’s claim that Michael was thinking of reconciling with her. Alicia objects: opinion, not in evidence. Bogira overrules her. Alicia frowns, looks at her conservative pant suit: damn, maybe David was right.

Time for Alicia’s cross. Alicia starts to ask Cindy why Michael had asked to stop custody proceedings if they weren’t thinking of reconciling, but she can’t get the full sentence out because Matan keeps objecting: “No foundation.” The Judge sustains. Alicia isn’t sure what she did wrong. She tries rephrasing it, but “Objection. No foundation.” “Sustained.”

Alicia just stands there, the court’s eyes upon her. Trial work is like a geometry of language. Alicia finally gets out one uninterrupted question, then sits. Not good.

Kalinda, watching in the gallery, isn’t happy, but...

...Matan and Sandra, at the prosecution table, suppress grins. Piece of cake. They call their next witness. A police detective. BRIGGS (50). The first one at the scene. He explains why they immediately suspected Jennifer. There was no fuel clip used to force the car over. Instead there was a nail driven into the rear tire, and the victim pulled over because of the slow leak.

Matan asks: Has he ever, in his professional capacity, heard of carjackers causing a leak in a tire to force a car to the side of the road? No. That defeats the whole purpose of a carjacking. You can’t steal a car with a flat.

Alicia eyes the jury. That’s working well too. Damn.

“Your witness.” Alicia stands, takes a moment, asks the Detective: “What’s ‘the pit?’”

Matan looks up, surprised at the question. Detective Briggs is too, pausing: Excuse me? “What’s ‘the pit’?” Matan objects. The judge asks on what grounds. Matan has no idea: just knowing he doesn’t like the look on the detective’s face. “Relevance.” Overruled.

Kalinda, in the gallery, leans forward. On to something here.

Alicia offers the detective helpfully, “Isn’t the pit the slang for where the police sink evidence they think is irrelevant to a crime scene?” The detective reluctantly nods: he’s heard the slang used before. “And when you refer to “putting something in the pit” are you referring to expunging evidence from the discovery offered to the defense?”

The detective tries to explain: at every scene there are irrelevancies: leads that look like they will pan out, but are never pursued by cops. Discovery only requires handing over the police reports and accompanying evidence. The stuff in the pit is as irrelevant as, well, “whether the stock market was going up or down at the time of the killing.”

Alicia asks: Was there any evidence at the carjacking scene that was dropped in the pit? Matan objects: “Prejudicial.” The judge motions for Matan and Alicia: In chambers.

19. In chambers.

Heated voices inside.

Judge Bogira asks Alicia: What’s going on? Alicia answers she’s putting on a case. Yes, but this isn’t the case put on at the first trial. Alicia nods simply: that’s correct. Matan interrupts: counsel is trying to prejudice the jury by suggesting there was police corruption where there was no police corruption. Alicia: that’s for the jury to decide.

Judge Bogira eyes Alicia. She’s tougher than he thought. He nods: Okay, Mrs. Follick is taking another tack. It’s within her rights. Let’s see where she takes this. But there are no new names on the witness list, so she’s going to have to pursue this with the witnesses she has.

Matan leaves angrily. Alicia starts to follow when Judge Bogira calls her back: Know what judges hate more than anything? Having their time wasted. Don’t waste my time. Alicia nods.

ACT THREE

20. In trouble with the partners.

Alicia is escorted in to see the firm’s three senior partners—Will, Dawna, and the bullet-headed founder of the firm, CORMAC—and they’re not happy. Dawna is downright pissed. Alicia’s task was simple. Follow the strategy of the first trial. Instead, she’s trying to make a name for herself by going with a risky ad-hoc strategy.

No, Alicia interrupts. The first jury didn't deadlock 6 to 6. It was really 11 to 1, and five caved just to get out of the jury room. This is a slap at Dawna. Alicia realizes she's making an enemy in her, but she has to explain why she changed the strategy. Cormac suggests the partners discuss it in private, and as Alicia is excused, we stay with...

...the partners: Dawna arguing they should put Cary in as first chair; bump Alicia down to second. But Will defends Alicia: she did what any of us would do: follow the winning strategy. Dawna just doesn't like her.

But Dawna interrupts calmly, logically: No, what she doesn't like is how she, Dawna, worked for the last twenty years to break the glass ceiling and become one of the town's first female partners, only to see a sweet little mom, like Alicia, who spent the last decade popping out kids, take advantage of the opportunities she created to botch a winning strategy. If Will wants to sleep with her, go sleep with her, but this is business.

A tense silence. Will calmly throws it back in her face: You're just afraid her strategy will beat yours. The two start to argue furiously when Cormac steps in, breaks it up. He'll be the tie-breaker. He'll decide who stays on the case.

21. The trace evidence.

Kalinda, meanwhile, flirtatiously convinces a crime lab technician not to wait for the subpoena, and show her the trace evidence from the scene that was kept out of the discovery. Okay, he relents, showing her what was found on the victim's clothing.

A half-dozen blonde hairs—short—a half-inch long.

They didn't come from his head. Or Jennifer's. Or anyone in the victim's household.

Reading the report, Kalinda finds it interesting that the hairs were found on the victim's left coat sleeve. Kalinda demonstrates: that was the arm the driver would've used to struggle with the carjacker. Are the hairs from the carjacker's head?

The smitten lab technician disagrees. The hairs couldn't have been from the carjacker. Why not?

They're not human.

22. Report to me.

Kalinda returns to fill in Alicia, but Dawna pulls the investigator aside. She wants Kalinda to report to her. Anything Kalinda finds out, she wants to know first so she can keep track of what damage Alicia is doing. What happened with the trace evidence?

Kalinda eyes Dawna, not liking her. She calmly lies: Nothing yet; we're subpoenaing the evidence. Good, Dawna nods: Show it to me first. Kalinda just smiles: sure.

23. Updating.

Meanwhile, Alicia, waiting nervously in her office, yells out to Suzanne to get Kalinda on the phone. But Suzanne isn't there, returning from a Starbucks run with Cary's coffee.

Frustrated, Alicia finally pulls her aside. You're *both* our assistants, not just Cary's. So do your job. But Suzanne is completely honest: *this is my job*. If I don't do what Cary asks, he can get Dawna to fire me. Before Alicia can argue with her...

...Kalinda pulls Alicia into her office to tell her about the non-human hairs. Alicia finds this odd too: Could it be from a pet? Did Jennifer or Michael have dogs or cats? No, they didn't.

Could it be from a fur collar? Kalinda nods, possible, but not a synthetic hair, it'd have to be real. She has a friend who works at a private lab who can tell her with more specificity what animal hair it is. She'll take it there.

Kalinda starts to warn Alicia about the office politics, decides against it. But Alicia brings it up: there's a chance she's being bumped to second chair. Either way, you should pursue this. Kalinda nods: sounds good.

There's a moment between them. Just a moment. Kalinda offers: Kill him in court. And we're...

24. The security guard.

...in court, the Walmart security guard on the stand. Very official looking, in uniform. His answers crisp, authoritative. Alicia eyes the jury: they're impressed.

Matan takes him through the night's surveillance video. There you are in the video, right? Yes, I do a circuit of the Walmart every hour. And at 11:00, I saw no pick up truck. Just me crossing the parking lot there.

Will enters the courtroom, sits in the gallery beside Kalinda who whispers, asking what the partners decided. Will shakes his head: not good. But he stops, sees standing at the back: a dignified suited man, tall, handsomely graying at the temples. GREG CHILDS (45). The new D.A. A Chicago Gavin Newsome. "What's the D.A. doing here?" Kalinda shrugs: "They're worried." Will considers this as...

...Alicia stands for cross-examination, wearing the black dress David suggested. She sets up two new video monitors next to the first one, and explains the first monitor is the surveillance from the night before the murder, the second the night *of* the murder, the third the night after. She freezes all three images at the moment the uniformed guard was crossing the lot. Is that you? Yes, the guard acknowledges. Alicia forwards one of the monitors to a minute later when...

...a plastic bag blows across the parking lot. Freezes it. She forwards the second monitor to the same time code, freezes it. The third monitor to the same moment, freezes. And there on all three monitors is an identical plastic bag blowing across the parking lot.

Alicia turns to the guard: “These are copies of the same tape, aren’t they?”

Matan looks up, appalled. The guard tries to deny it, but Alicia lets the three images run forward, side-by-side, the shopping bags blowing across the lot identically.

The jury furiously takes notes as Will starts to grin. He looks back at D.A. Childs exiting unhappily.

Alicia continues to question the guard, dragging out what the secretary, Lanie, told her. The weeks around the murder were so cold, the winds off Lake Michigan were so biting, and the superstore’s parking lot was so uneventful, the guard never made his hourly circuit. He never recorded the surveillance cameras because he didn’t want his bosses to know he never made the circuit. So when the police asked for that night’s surveillance tape, the guard just copied tapes from the week before. So, unfortunately there is no tape of the night of the murder.

Court over, Will greets Alicia happily. She just saved her career. If the other partners want to push her out of first chair, he will quit.

ACT FOUR

25. The D.A.’s office.

A morning strategy meeting at the D.A.’s office. The new D.A., Greg Childs, isn’t happy. He does everything politely, including this: ripping Matan and Sandra a new one.

How could they be beaten by Follick’s wife? Matan and Sandra argue this isn’t about her. She’s not smart enough for this defense. They’re really fighting David. He’s using his wife to embarrass the new D.A.’s office.

26. Chemical analysis.

Alicia and Kalinda visit the private lab doing analysis on the non-human hairs. Kalinda used to date the technician, RODNEY, a short, balding but brilliant scientist. Alicia smiles: wherever they go, Kalinda has dated someone; and none of them hold a grudge.

Rodney shows them the tests he did. He can’t trace the hair back to a particular dog, but he can tell what breed: greyhound. Also of interest: coating the hair is a substance called *alco ectolin*. A lotion for muscle and joint pains. Alicia sighs, concludes: we’re looking for an elderly greyhound owner?

27. Thinking it through.

Back at the office, Alicia updates Will on where they stand. Even if they had a rebuttal witness, Judge Bogira has held them to their current witness list. Is their case strong enough to send to the jury with a rebuttal?

Alicia worries about the detective. The jury believed him. It doesn't make sense that carjackers would target the victim's rusting Honda. Will nods: And why *would* the carjackers sink a nail into the rear tire? But Alicia pauses, getting an idea...

What if we accept it's not a carjacking? What if we don't fight the prosecutor's evidence pointing toward a faked carjacking? Will shakes his head: then you're arguing the prosecution's case.

No, what if someone else killed Michael and made it look like a carjacking?

Will begins to see where she's going: Jennifer wouldn't have had to find a way to pull the car over. She was *in* the car. She could just ask Michael to pull over. But someone else would've had to put the nail in that tire. Meanwhile...

...Alicia sees her assistant, Suzanne, returning to her desk, again with a Starbucks run for Cary. Alicia whispers to Will: Do me a favor; squeeze my left shoulder. Will, always-accommodating, smiles, complies as...

...Suzanne peers in, sees the closeness of Alicia to a senior partner. Suzanne considers it, knocks at the door: Sorry to interrupt, but did either of you want Starbucks? Alicia smiles: No, I'm fine.

28. Michael's enemies.

Kalinda and Alicia question Jennifer about what enemies Michael might have had. Any business problems? No. Any arguments with friends? No. Any debts? No. Kalinda suggests they phone Michael's widow, Cindy, to ask her the same questions. Alicia gets her cell number from the witness list. Phones. Cindy answers, and Alicia starts to reply when she stops, looks up at Kalinda. What? Alicia hears in the background...

...the yap-yap-yap of dogs.

Alicia asks Cindy where she is so they can ask her a few quick and simple questions.

29. Cindy.

The dog races. Greyhounds sprinting around a track, chasing a decoy rabbit.

Kalinda and Alicia start into the stadium when Alicia stops, points toward a staff parking lot. A red pick-up truck parked there.

The two approach, see a large tattooed man taking dog cages from the bed carrying them inside. Kalinda and Alicia follow, find the man working as a trainer: rubbing down the greyhounds after racing. Kalinda looks at the lotion: *alco ectolin*. The hefty trainer looks up to see them, asks: Are you looking for my sister?

Kalinda and Alicia smile and nod. Yep.

ACT FIVE

30. Back in the stand.

Alicia recalls Cindy as a witness, and questions the teary-eyed widow about her finances. Did she and Michael sign pre-nups? Matan objects, but Judge Bogira overrules: you can answer. Yes, they did sign pre-nups. And Michael had how much in savings?

More objections; more overruling. Cindy doesn't know how much. Alicia has all the data ready: Cindy would've lost Michael's half-million in savings if they divorced. Also Michael had a million dollar life insurance policy. So if Michael truly were thinking of reconciling, then Jennifer wasn't the one with the motive. Cindy was.

Cindy turns cold, argues that the police checked her out: she had an alibi for that night. But Alicia presents evidence about her brother's vehicle: a pick-up truck. She presents evidence of calls made from her brother's cellphone to her home five minutes after the murder. She presents evidence of Cindy putting money in her brother's account.

Cindy has answers for every charge but her cool starts to evaporate. She gets angry, as...

...Matan and Sandra just stare straight ahead, trying not to reveal what they're thinking: fuck.

31. Waiting for the verdict.

Alicia sits in her office, waiting for the verdict, taking off her shoes, rubbing her feet. Not used to so much time on high heels. "The Bitch is Back" rings on her cellphone. Alicia smiles, answers.

It's Jackie, cooking a roast, wondering whether Alicia will be home for dinner. Alicia laughs, then has to explain to an offended Jackie why she's laughing. It's the call she always made to David. Jackie just shakes her head, not understanding her humor. Alicia takes a moment, offers sincerely: thanks for stepping in, Jackie, when no one else would. Jackie quickly reacts the way she always does to gratitude: defensively: of course, she would; why wouldn't she help?

Alicia smiles: she'll be home by seven. She hears a knock at the door. It's Suzanne, the always-helpful Suzanne, offering pleasantly: the jury is in.

32. The verdict.

Silence. The bailiff hands the verdict to Judge Bogira. He reads it, nods, gives it to the bailiff to read out loud, as... Alicia takes Jennifer's hand under the table, squeezes it

comfortingly; and Matan and Sandra at the prosecution table brace themselves; and D.A. Childs stands at the back, calmly waiting.

“Not guilty.”

Stunned, not what she expected, Jennifer squeezes Alicia’s hand back, and jumps to her feet, crying. She can’t help herself, tears pouring.

33. Afterwards.

Jennifer hugs Alicia, thanking her. Free now. Able to get her life back. She hears a shout behind her. “Mom!” Jennifer turns to see her five-year-old daughter running to her, jumping in her arms, the two weeping.

34. Next case.

Will slips a bottle of champagne on Alicia’s desk, starts to leave when he bumps into Alicia returning. Will congratulates her. Alicia thanks him for standing up for her.

Silence. Romantic, tense energy.

Then Will starts out. Turns back. Oh, forgot something. She’s going to sit second chair to him on the civil case. And that’s it. Will exits. Alicia smiles. Starts to collect her things when she sees her screen-saver kicking in on her laptop. A montage of family pictures, dissolving: Kids at Christmas, kids at the Grand Canyon. And...

...there he is. David, smiling. And Alicia’s smile disappears

Example: The Grid (Pose)

TEASER OR COLD OPEN	ACT I	ACT II	ACT III	ACT IV
DANCE STUDIO (D)Vogue is going out of style, and Damon's dance class is empty. So is his paycheck.	BIANCA'S (A)Bianca and Fredricka are in a dispute.	BIANCA'S (F)Angel gets news she is the new Bebe girl.	FREDRIKAS (A,B,C,D,E)Pray, Elektra and the 3 pull off caper.	SNAIL SALON (A,B)Bianca & Fredrika meet face to face. Fredricka threatens
BALLROOM (B)Vogue is going out of style and Pray Tell notices Ricky down in the dumps because the "Lookey Loos" are gone. (B)PrayTell Gives pep talk.	BIANCA'S Bianca tells story of: (C,D,E) F/B of Lulu at strip club. F/B of Damion and Ricky on the couch. (B)Everyone is down. Pray Tell plans a "caper" to lift their spirits.	FREDRIKAS (C,D,E)The (3) measure house.	BIANCA'S (F)Happy, Damion discovers Angel and Lil Papi drug use. Dinner (ALL)Everyone together for dinner. Everyone down is up. (E)Now Ricky gives pep talk.	BIANCA'S (C)Bianca and Lulu share moment. Lulu feeling good. Re- enrolls in school.
	BALLROOM (B)Pray Tell reveals "caper" and Lulu, Ricky, and Damion must	DUNGEON (C)Lulu convinces Elektra to give money and helps		DOCTORS Hall (B,E)Pray and Ricky wait for results.

TEASER OR COLD OPEN	ACT I	ACT II	ACT III	ACT IV
	figure out how to pull it off.	Elektra in return.		Ricky makss pass at Pray.
	BIANCA'S (C,D,E) The (3) figure a plan to pull off caper but how do they get the money to do it?	NIGHTCLUB (F)Angel and Lil Papi celebrate by getting high.		Office (E)Ricky HIV positive
		ANGEL'S (F)Angel and Lil Papi say "I love you."		Hall (B)Pray consoles Ricky.
		HOTEL (A,B,C,D,E)Pray, Bianca, and the (3) prepare for caper. (E)Ricky confesses he may be HIV positive.		BEBE SHOOT (F)Angel and Lil Papi high at shoot. Ms. Ford scolds Angel. Photog set her up.

STORYLINES

A-Story: Bianca battles in the public eye with her rich, homophobic landlord Fredricka.

B Story: Pray Tell takes on the role as 'elder.'

C-Story: Lulu struggles with drug addiction and depression.

D-Story: With Vogue going out of style, Damon struggles to redefine his dancing life.

E-Story: Ricky is diagnosed HIV positive.

F-Story: On the high of being the new Bebe girl, Angel discovers the low of drug use and the modeling industry.

CHARACTERS

Here you will describe each of the main and minor characters in the episode. Please include the character's goals, problems, and humanity.

The Grid Breakdown: Abbott Elementary 1x01

TEASER OR COLD OPEN	ACT I	ACT II	ACT III	ACT IV
1 Counting fails (B)	9 Rug rolled up; where do kids sit? (A)	21 THs: the one rule (D)	36 Workshop; Janine walks out (B,C)	<i>No Act IV.</i> <i>TAG:</i>
2 TH: Janine intro (B)	10 TH: why a rug matters (A)	22 Schwartz fired; janitor covers (C,D)	37 Barbara defends her; all leave (B)	44 Janitor's TikTok following (C)
3 Old history book (C)	11 Barbara silences room; ignores invite (B)	23 Janitor teaches (D)	38 Boy asleep on rug; calling speech (A,B)	
4 TH: no money; stadium goes up (C)	12 Lounge: Jacob; trauma bond (B)	24 Ava: email me (A,C)	39 Stadium rug heist (A)	
5 Montage: 3 teachers (B,D)	13 Meet Melissa (B)	25 TH: Janine's emails (A)	40 Rugs in; "feel like a teacher" (A,B)	
6 Montage: fire; teacher quits (B)	14 All 3 need rugs; ask budget (A)	26 Gregory arrives (C,D)	41 Gregory stays (C,D)	
7 Axe throwing: "on top of things" (B)	15 Ava arrives (C)	27 How Ava got the job (C)	42 Rug laid; toilet fixed (A,B)	
8 Kid pees on rug (A)	16 Aide + rugs refused (A,C,D)	28 Rug email; kid throws up (A)	43 Ava thanks Janine for gift (B,C)	
	17 Barbara: none of you last 2 yrs (B)	29 Bathroom: meets Gregory (C,D)		

TEASER OR COLD OPEN	ACT I	ACT II	ACT III	ACT IV
	18 Jacob + Janine regroup (B)	30 Barbara: rugs aren't coming (B)		
	19 TH cut off: a fight (B,D)	31 PA promise; fake apology (A,B)		
	20 Schwartz kicks a kid (D)	32 Money went to Ava's sign (A,C)		
		33 Regroup; Gregory blames principal (B,C)		
		34 Emails superintendent (B,C)		
		35 Emails go to Ava; PA: workshop (B,C)		

Built from the Revised Network Draft (01/29/21). In that draft the school is Harrity and the characters have different names; the aired names are used here. A few cutaways (the axe-throwing studio, the trashcan fire) may not be in the broadcast cut. The act breaks don't move.

The Four Storylines

A — Janine needs a rug. The engine: a small, concrete, winnable want that stands in for everything the school doesn't have.

B — The young teachers want the old teachers' respect. Where the show actually lives. Janine and Barbara carry it.

C — Ava. Incompetence at the top, and the underfunding it makes worse. The obstacle and most of the comedy.

D — Replacing Ms. Schwartz. The shortest line, and the one that delivers Gregory. It resolves inside the episode; the others don't.

The Spine: Scene by Scene

Forty-four scenes, talking heads counted as scenes.

#	Where	What changes	Story
COLD OPEN			
1	Janine's classroom	Janine mid-lesson on sentence structure; a student hits another and she counts with no effect. Her authority is the first thing established, in the negative.	B
2	Talking head	Janine names herself and her tenure, and calls surviving the district an accomplishment.	B
3	Janine's classroom	The history book is years out of date; she's printed the missing presidents herself.	C
4	TH + stadium b-roll	No money in the district, while a stadium goes up nearby. The episode's thesis and its ending, stated in the first two minutes.	C
5	Montage — classrooms	Melissa in control, Barbara reading, Ms. Schwartz drowning. Three teachers characterized without dialogue.	B,D
6	Montage cont.	Jacob puts out a fire; a teacher walks out with a box. Turnover established as the norm.	B
7	Axe-throwing studio	Janine says she finally feels on top of things.	B
8	Janine's classroom	A student pees on the rug because the toilets don't work. The want is born.	A
ACT ONE			
9	Janine's classroom	She rolls up the rug; the kids ask where they'll sit now. The cost lands on children, not on her.	A
10	Talking head	Why a rug matters to a primary classroom. She sells the stakes of an object worth about forty dollars.	A
11	Janine's classroom	Barbara asks her to turn the music down, then silences the room in three words. Janine's admiration — and her invitation to drinks — both go unreturned.	B
12	Teachers' lounge	Jacob and his Twitter; Janine's talking head reframes their friendship as trauma bonding.	B
13	Teachers' lounge	The corner-store argument; Melissa introduces herself and asks whether the crew works with police.	B
14	Teachers' lounge	All three young teachers need rugs. Janine proposes going to the school budget — a private want becomes a group ask.	A

#	Where	What changes	Story
15	Teachers' lounge	Ava arrives, delighted by the cameras. Two talking heads set the room's opinion of her.	C
16	Teachers' lounge	Ms. Schwartz asks for an aide and is refused on cost; Janine's rug ask is refused with her; Ava holds Barbara up as the teacher who never complains.	A,C,D
17	Teachers' lounge	Barbara's case for resourcefulness over support, Melissa's guy for everything, and the challenge: none of you last two years.	B
18	Teachers' lounge	Jacob and Janine regroup. She won't accept the diagnosis.	B
19	Janine's classroom	Talking head insisting the young teachers are capable — interrupted mid-sentence by a student reporting a fight.	B,D
20	Hallway	Ms. Schwartz has kicked a student. Barbara's counting joke lands on Janine's advice from ten minutes earlier.	D
ACT TWO			
21	Hallway — talking heads	Three teachers agree on the one unbreakable rule. Comic runner doing exposition.	D
22	Hallway	Janine blames the missing aide; Barbara blames Schwartz. Ava announces the firing and a substitute, with the janitor covering in the meantime.	C,D
23	Schwartz's classroom	The janitor teaches. One shot, no dialogue needed.	D
24	Hallway	Jacob wants the district told; Ava refuses and offers an emergency budget request instead. She tells them to email her. Janine's engine finally starts.	A,C
25	Talking head	Janine's confidence about her own emails. Setup for how badly this goes.	A
26	Administrators' office	Gregory arrives to sub. Four separate character beats off one entrance. His talking head reveals he wanted the principal job.	C,D
27	Ava's office	How Ava got the job. The show's biggest single laugh doubles as the reason nothing at this school works.	C
28	Janine's classroom	She's writing the rug email when a student throws up.	A

#	Where	What changes	Story
29	Bathroom	Janine misreads Gregory, calls security, then trades students with him. The toilet plant is set here. Two leads meet over bodily fluids.	C,D
30	Barbara's classroom	Barbara tells her the rugs aren't coming and to do the job in front of her. Their disagreement is finally stated as two philosophies.	B
31	Barbara's classroom	The PA promises improvements. Janine performs Barbara's imaginary apology.	A,B
32	Schoolyard	The money went to a sign with Ava's photo on it. Every dollar spent. Barbara doesn't have to say anything.	A,C
33	Hallway	Janine, Jacob and Gregory regroup in defeat; Gregory names the real problem as the principal.	B,C
34	Janine's classroom	She emails the superintendent. Her stated motive isn't the rugs — it's not letting Barbara be right.	B,C
35	Hallway	Barbara and Melissa reveal that those emails bounce back to Ava. Ava's voice comes over the PA calling a trust workshop.	B,C
ACT THREE			
36	Teachers' lounge	The workshop. Ava works the room for criticism of Janine and everyone refuses, including a student she brought in. Janine confesses and walks out.	B,C
37	Teachers' lounge	Barbara defends her, admits she'd forgotten why the job matters, and leaves. Everyone follows. The turn.	B
38	Hallway	A boy asleep on Janine's floor, because the rug is softer than his bed. The rug stops being a prop. The calling speech, then Melissa's guy is invoked.	A,B
39	Stadium loading dock	They steal a rug, get caught, and Janine talks their way into more. The stadium from scene 4 pays the school back.	A
40	Hallway	Rugs carried in. Janine says she finally feels like a teacher — answering scene 7's version of the same claim.	A,B
41	Hallway	Gregory decides to stay. The D-story resolves and hands the series its second lead.	C,D
42	Janine's classroom	She lays the rug and reads to the kids; then fixes the toilet off a tutorial. Want granted, conditions unchanged.	A,B

#	Where	What changes	Story
43	Janine's classroom	Ava thanks Janine for a gift she didn't give. Barbara and Melissa did it for her, and won't say so to her face.	B,C
TAG			
44	Exterior — night	The janitor films Ava's TikTok, then reveals he's the one with a following.	C

Example: Barry — Loglines, Synopsis & Beatsheet

Loglines

A-Story

An aimless but deadly hitman, BARRY, gets assigned a new hit, and attempts to complete the task.

B - Story

Barry discovers acting and must decide if acting is his purpose.

C- Story (Runner)

NoHo Hank, a quirky gangster, wants Ryan, a struggling actor sleeping with his boss's girlfriend, dead.

Synopsis

A - Story

BARRY is an aimless but deadly hitman. Contemplating his purpose, Barry is given a new assignment from Fuchs, his job connect and friend. Barry goes to LA and meets NoHo Hank, an almost too friendly gangster, to give him his assignment. Barry finds when and where to kill his next mark, Ryan. After a series of detours, Barry and Ryan end up working together – as actors. By the end of the night, Barry and Ryan are almost friends. Unfortunately, NoHo Hank has been following Barry and is displeased with Barry and Ryan's friendship. Fuchs shows up the next day and presses Barry he must kill Ryan. "This is what you do. This is who you are." Barry regroupes and finds Ryan – ready to kill – when he discovers Ryan is already dead - shot from a nearby car. Barry sees the killers and asks, "What's going on? As he approaches the car, the killers try to kill Barry, but they are too slow reloading, and Barry kills them.

B- Story

After killing his latest victim, Barry contemplates his life and takes his time going back to his normal life. Once he does, his hitman contact Fuchs admonishes him for it before giving Barry a new assignment. Barry tries to talk to Fuchs about his purpose – but Fuchs already has another job.

On his new hit job, Barry stumbles on Sally rehearsing. Confused and intrigued, Barry follows Sally into the acting studio and watches Sally fail and then kill her monologue. As he's watching Sally, Ryan (his hit) asks if Barry could help him out with his monologue. Barry doesn't know what to do – but helps Ryan (badly). When it's done, Sally asks Barry to come out with the actors. Barry refuses at first, but Sally convinces him otherwise. At the

bar, Barry meets the rest of the acting crew, but Sally is centerstage – he likes her. Before he leaves, she asks him to take Ryan home. Barry agrees. When Barry drops Ryan off, he and Ryan have a talk about acting. Ryan seems like a nice enough guy and he actually listens to and encourages Barry about acting (something Fuchs did not). At the end of the conversation, he and Ryan hug it out.

The next day Barry is informed he was seen hugging Ryan and his job is to kill him. Barry attempts to tell Fuchs about acting, and maybe it's his purpose. Fuchs tells him it isn't and to do his job. Barry agrees but before he does, he goes to see Gene, the acting coach, and get his opinion. When Gene tells Barry he is awful because he's not honest. Barry gives up and tells Gene everything. But Gene believes it's a monologue and sees 'the truth.' in it. He invites Barry to the studio.

At the end of the night, Barry meets a waitress and asks what's in her hand. She says a script, and then says, "I'm an actor" in which Barry replies, "Me too."

C- Story

NoHo Hank hires Barry to kill Ryan. Ryan is an actor who is sleeping with NoHo Hank's boss girlfriend. After he shows Barry who to kill, he follows Barry to see if Barry is doing his job when he discovers Barry and Ryan hugging it out. NoHo Hank tells Fuchs but decides Barry can't be trusted and kills Ryan themselves. When Barry discovers this, NoHo Hank and his armed man try to kill Barry but fail.

Beatsheet

A- Story

1. Barry doing his job, then contemplates his job.
2. Barry gets a new assignment from Fuchs.
3. Barry goes to LA. Meets NoHo Hank and gets a picture of the hit.
4. Barry stalks Ryan.
5. Ryan asks Barry to help with his monologue. Barry agrees.
6. Barry and Ryan share a moment. Hug.
7. Barry gets reprimanded for his time with Ryan.
8. Barry refocuses and finds Ryan... dead.
9. Barry sees NoHo Hank and someone else. They killed Ryan already, and they try to kill Barry, but Barry kills them first.

B-Story

1. Barry meets Sally and follows her into the studio.

2. Barry tries to leave, but Sally asks him out.
3. Barry gets to know the actors and falls for Sally.
4. Sally asks Barry to take Ryan home.
5. Barry talks to Ryan.
6. Barry tries to talk to Fuchs but fails.
7. Barry talks to Gene.
8. Barry tells the waitress he's an actor.

C-Story

1. NoHo Hank asks Barry to kill Ryan.
2. NoHo Hank follows Barry and sees Barry and Ryan together.
3. NoHo Hank doesn't trust Barry, and kills Ryan themselves.

The Grid Breakdown

TEASER	ACT ONE	ACT TWO	ACT THREE	ACT FOUR
(A)Barry does his job, then contemplates his job. (B)Barry takes his time getting back to his normal life.	(A)Fuchs admonishes Barry, then gives him a new assignment. (B)Barry tries to talk to Fuchs about his purpose. Fuchs already has another job. LA (A&C)Barry meets NoHo Hank, an almost too friendly gangster.	(A)Barry stalks Ryan. Finds when and where to kill him. (B)Barry stumbles on Sally rehearsing. Confused. Intrigued. ACTING STUDIO (B)Barry follows Sally in. Watches her fail, then kill	(B)Sally asks Barry to come out with the actors. He refuses. She convinces him. THE BAR (B)Barry meets the acting crew. Sally is centerstage. He likes her. (B)Sally asks Barry to take Ryan home. Barry agrees. DROPPING RYAN OFF	NEXT DAY (C)NoHo Hank tells Fuchs. (A&B)Barry is told to kill Ryan. Tries to tell Fuchs acting might be his purpose. Fuchs: "This is what you do. This is who you are." (B)Before he does, Barry sees Gene. Gene: he's awful because he's not honest. (B)Barry tells Gene everything. Gene thinks it's a monologue. Sees the truth. Invites him to the studio.

	(C)Ryan is sleeping with Hank's boss's girlfriend. (A&C)Hank shows Barry who to kill: Ryan.	her monologue. (A&B)Ryan asks Barry to help with his monologue. (A&B)Barry doesn't know what to do. Helps. Badly.	(A&B)Barry and Ryan talk about acting. Ryan listens and encourages him. Something Fuches did not. (A)Barry and Ryan hug it out. (C)NoHo Hank has been following Barry. He sees the hug.	(C)Hank decides Barry can't be trusted. (A&C)Barry finds Ryan, ready to kill. Ryan is already dead. Shot from a nearby car. (A&C)“What's going on?” The killers are too slow reloading. Barry kills them. END OF THE NIGHT (B)A waitress with a script: “I'm an actor.” Barry: “Me too.” Ends on (B)
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Primo: Episodic Breakdown

A scene-by-scene breakdown of the *Primo* pilot. Hover or tap the footnote markers for setup/payoff notes.

Teaser

- Primo is looking at a picture of a girl.³
- He is texting someone named Miguel, “How many uncles?”.
- The audience meets the uncles and Primo’s mom.⁴

Act I

- Rafa is shown to be smart and is considering applying to a college program, holding a blue sheet of paper.⁵
- Rafa discusses what to do with a friend.
- Rafa visits his Mom, who seems to be up to something and asks, “Is that the new neighbor, Mya?”.⁶
- It’s revealed that Mom knows about the college application, and the uncles begin to debate the idea of college.⁷
- Rafa and Mya have a conversation about college, where he explains his relationship with his uncles.
- The family throws Rafa a surprise party where he is presented with a sports jacket. He finally tells them about the application, which leads to another debate among the uncles.

Act II

- Rafa discovers that his Mom is broke.⁸
- Mom criticizes the uncles for being over the top, which leads to them fighting over a cake.
- Rafa confronts his Mom about the cost of college, but she reassures him that she’s “got this”.⁹
- Rafa throws his application away.¹⁰

Act III

- Rafa seeks out his “Construction Uncle,” who then brings in the rest of the uncles, resulting in chaos.¹¹

³SETUP: Establishes a potential romantic interest

⁴SETUP: Introduces the large, diverse family cast

⁵SETUP: Introduces the central goal/conflict of the episode—the application

⁶PAYOFF: The girl from the picture is revealed to be Mya

⁷SETUP: Establishes the family’s chaotic dynamic as the primary obstacle

⁸SETUP: Raises the stakes and introduces a major logistical obstacle to the goal

⁹PAYOFF: The financial setup is immediately addressed, leading to Rafa’s next action

¹⁰PAYOFF: In a moment of despair, Rafa gives up on the goal

¹¹PAYOFF: The family’s chaotic dynamic escalates to its peak

- Primo gets upset because no one is listening to him.
- Mom confronts the uncles, telling them, “What I want is for you to leave him alone and let him make up his own mind”.¹²
- Primo has a conversation with Rollie, who breaks down the situation and is described as “the Uncle we least expect”.¹³
- Primo makes the decision to apply to the program.¹⁴ The uncles show their support.¹⁵

Tag

- Apostrophe.

Student Storyline Analysis

The fill-in worksheet (A/B/C storyline loglines and scene beats, with Save as PDF / Word) lives on its own page:

Open the Primo worksheet

¹²PAYOFF: Mom’s mysterious behavior is explained; she wants Rafa to have agency

¹³PAYOFF: An unexpected family member becomes crucial to resolving the plot

¹⁴PAYOFF: The central conflict is resolved

¹⁵PAYOFF: The uncles’ conflict is resolved, and they now support Rafa

Your Pilot

Your Pilot

Everything you build for your own show lives here, in order: loglines → beatsheet → grid → outline → bible. Fill in the title card once and it shows on every worksheet.

The worksheets are interactive on the website (fvm2032-tvpilot.pages.dev/ws-home).

Loglines & Synopsis

One logline and one synopsis per storyline. Start with A, B, and C; add more if your pilot needs them.

This is an interactive worksheet on the website (fvm2032-tvpilot.pages.dev). In print it's a prompt sheet.

For each storyline (A, B, C, ...): a 2–3 sentence **logline**, then a half-page **synopsis**.

Story Builder: Beatsheet → Grid → Outline

Three steps, one page, one file. Write the **beats** for each storyline (short — a logline for each beat). Drag them into the **Grid** to build your acts; drop a beat on another to combine them into one scene. The **Outline** then lists your scenes in order, and that's where each one gets written out fully — dialogue, motivation, how it turns.

Interactive on the website (fvm2032-tvpilot.pages.dev/ws-story). In print:

1. **Beatsheet** — for each storyline, numbered beats, one action each, act breaks marked.
2. **The Grid** — Teaser / Act I–IV / Tag: place every beat, tagged (A)(B)(C); combine beats into scenes.
3. **Outline** — the scenes in grid order, each with a title and a full synopsis.

Series Bible

The five sections of the Bible assignment. Write in the boxes, or use them to plan and write the long version in a doc. The reminders point at the real bibles to study for each section.

This is an interactive worksheet on the website (fvm2032-tvpilot.pages.dev). In print it's a prompt sheet.

Introduction · Characters · Plot · Tone/Style · Series (Pilot + Episode 2 summaries, then Season 1 loglines).

Pitching

Perfecting the Pitch with Billy Ray (WGFestival 2021)

Watch on YouTube

Scripts

Show Bibles

Links & Further Reading

- TV Format Fundamentals — Writers Guild Foundation resource center. How the major TV formats are built.
- TV Writing — a huge free library of TV scripts and show bibles, organized by series.
- ‘Lost’ Illusions: The Untold Story of the Hit Show’s Poisonous Culture — Vanity Fair, May 2023. What a writers’ room can look like when it goes wrong.



The second crucial element at the party will propel the plot: Walter sees stacks of bills from a drug raid on TV and is struck by what's available. Hank's offer to take Walter on a ride along to "get a little excitement in your life" prepares for Walter's next step.

5) In bed that night, Skyler is uninvolved with the hand job she offers her husband, more interested in her eBay auction. She's even in charge of his sexuality. It could seem as if he will be stuck in this rut forever . . . except that we've seen the teaser. We know change is coming. We know Walter will take a tremendous risk, though we don't know how that will happen. Again, placing suspense in the teaser is essential to every scene that follows.

6) Walter collapses at the car wash. The early script draft ends Act One on this cliffhanger, wondering what's going to happen to Walter, and still wanting to make sense of that teaser. Actually, this is not a case of hitting bottom. The scenes that follow reveal that he has inoperable lung cancer. He's going to die but that's the beginning, not the end of his life. It's the catalyst he needs to be able to change.

Whether the version you see places the first act break at this point or elsewhere, or if you're bingeing or watching a DVD with no breaks, you can see how much has been loaded in the first act. This accounts for 17 pages out of a 58-page draft, divided traditionally into a teaser plus four acts.

Watch the rest of this pilot! Notice how much that was planted in Act One pays off and how characters accrue dimension with every beat. Look out for the second half of the bookend in the teaser. Think about how the toughest dramatic moments are modulated by a comedic note, as happens in the doctor's office. By the end of the pilot, you will be anxious to binge the next episode, and that means it has done its job.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO NEXT:

Read and analyze all the good television scripts you can find from many different series. Sure, you've watched TV all your life, but observing how episodes are crafted on the page prepares you to work as a writer.

Once you have a solid sense how the best dramas are constructed, you're ready for the steps to write your own, which I'll show you in the next chapter.

end, you can reverse to establish the opposite in the beginning. At the end of five seasons, Walter will be powerful and Skyler will be powerless. But in the opening of Act One he's thoroughly controlled by his wife and she scolds him, "I don't want him dicking you around — you get paid till five, you work till five." Think about that line. His work schedule is what *she* demands. And her choice of words "I don't want him dicking you around," undermines him specifically as a man.

(2) The second beat is in the high school where Walter teaches chemistry to students who give him as little respect as he gets at home. But here is a peek at the man he can be and who he finally becomes: energized, passionate, someone who has the inner potential to be strong. That's important if you start a character at a low point. No one roots for the pathetic shlub who can't root for himself. Feeling sorry for a victim leads to disgust, not engagement. But if you give the wounded character the spark of potential, people can believe a quest will follow.

This classroom scene signals the theme of the series: "Chemistry is the study of change," he tells the students. "It's the cycle of life . . . growth then decay then transformation." It's not unusual to find a statement of the creator's intent somewhere in a pilot, and as long as it occurs naturally within the world of the show, it can reveal a journey to deeper meaning than the actions on screen at that time might suggest.

3) The car wash. When Walter is told to wipe down the tires of the very students who were rude in class, he has reached the bottom of his humiliation. This character has nowhere to go but up. But how? Think of the parallel in an action film — the hero is chained to an immovable object while the monster approaches. That sort of jeopardy works if (only if) enough spunk has been established that we anticipate the character could somehow escape.

4) In the surprise birthday party, the seeds of Walter's transformation are planted, though he is not yet ready for the man he will become. It's a loaded scene, rich with characterization of secondary roles (especially Hank) that will figure in the entire series. The first essential element is Walter's awkwardness with Hank's gun that Walter is surprised is heavy. "That's why they hire men," Hank quips, to party laughter. Here it is again, the unmaning of Walter White, and that will change by the end of this pilot.



Those five short beats quickly ramp up suspense using a basic storytelling progression: Anticipation — Expectation — Surprise. That is, viewers are led to *anticipate* an event, which holds people through the set-up. As the action advances, we come to *expect* certain outcomes. Instead, the story turns (twists), generating a sense of *surprise* that then begins a new sequence of suspense. You can readily create tension on screen that way, as this teaser demonstrates.

Also, consider the use of humor in this heavy episode. Here's another age-old practice: increase the impact of tragedy by setting it against a comic foil. Shakespeare played his fools and foolishness — sometimes for belly laughs from the audience of his day — in his most tragic plays. Here, the episode begins with a moment that is almost comedy even in the presence of death.

This teaser is a flash-forward, as we'll soon discover. *Breaking Bad*'s style of introducing a curious future event in the teaser becomes an ongoing texture of other episodes in this series. It's a risky choice because the audience can get confused, but when the flash-forward is used to intrigue viewers and set the basis for storytelling, it becomes a skillful ploy. This technique is also called a "book end" that applies to a structure that returns to an early scene to complete it later in the episode.

At the start of Act One, we'll discover another reason for starting "a month later."

ACT ONE

(1) Walter White's life a month before the teaser was uninspiring. Nothing in the first page of the first act would lure a casual viewer to continue with this show. Actually, plenty is revealed that becomes essential later — White shared in a Nobel Prize in chemistry, years before; now his world is filled with mundane details of family life. The contrast between the man we saw in the teaser and this one makes this domestic morning provocative. We're still wondering why the teaser happened, anxious to watch until it's revealed.

Continuing with Act One on screen, study the breakfast scene for its craft. Who is driving this scene? Who "wears the pants" in this family? The answer is Skyler, Walter's wife. Starting at this point in their relationship is essential to creating a long arc. In planning character development, once you know where a character will be emotionally and psychologically at the

ANALYSIS

THE OPENING

On screen, look at those flying pants! Framed against the rocks and clear blue sky of Albuquerque, this has become an iconic image. Think about why this is impressive. First, it's outrageous. Anything that throws the audience off will raise questions: Why is this happening? What does it mean? Whose pants are those? So the teaser generates involvement immediately. It also previews the attitude of this show. Clearly, it has a sense of humor. Also danger. Also jeopardy. Also a character probably in dire straits (or at least in dire need of pants). All that is accomplished with nothing but the stunning opening image.

Yet, in the early draft of the script, the flying pants are not specified. This is an example how even a brilliant script was improved in a later version. A few other things changed from the draft script to the shooting script. Early in the development process, *Breaking Bad* was set in California. The move to New Mexico was purely a financial decision. Still, location impacts the writing. The beautiful and bleak Southwest desert gives this series additional layers of metaphor as well as opportunities for actions. Everything matters when creating the screen experience.

This teaser is a single dramatic sequence that can be considered one beat, though it's comprised of several scene headings. In planning an important opening like this, I recommend beginning by making a mini-outline, placing each beat to maximize suspense. Make your own list of the turning points in these first pages to the end of the teaser.

Did you get these? 1. A terrified man in a gas mask drives a Winnebago filled with dead bodies, drug paraphernalia, and money as it careens on an empty desert road. 2. The Winnebago gets stuck and the man stumbles out, where he hears sirens approaching. 3. Reacting to the sirens, he goes back in for a gun, his wallet, and camcorder. 4. As sirens get louder, he records an apology to his family. 5. He readies the gun to shoot the first cop he sees. When the rest of this situation plays later in the show, we discover the sirens aren't even coming for him, and pass him by. Meanwhile, notice how much we learn about Walter White through his actions and the urgent message to his wife and son. The dramatic context allays the exposition that could otherwise risk being an information monologue.



6.

WALTER, JR.
What's--that?

SKYLER
Sizzle-lean. We're watching our
cholesterol.

WALTER, JR.
Not--me! I want--bacon!

SKYLER
Eat it.

Walter, Jr. picks at his breakfast, annoyed.

WALTER, JR.
What's this--even--made of?!

He looks to his dad for backup. Walt shrugs, ambivalent.

WALT
Eat it.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

J.P. Wynne High School. Home of the Fightin' Skyhawks. Two thousand-plus students, many of them in overflow trailers.

Into the faculty lot motors a 1991 Nissan wagon. It was a piece of shit when it rolled off the assembly line, and has not improved with age. It parks in a handicapped space. A handicapped placard hangs from the rear-view.

Walt climbs out from behind the wheel, checks his watch. He's late. Walter, Jr. struggles to get out of the passenger side. He fumbles with his crutches and his backpack.

WALT
All set?
(off his son's nod)
Alright, see you at home.

Walt grabs his briefcase and hurries toward the building, leaving his son to work it out for himself -- which is, again, exactly how Walter, Jr. wants it.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Hours later. This is a chemistry classroom -- black-topped lab tables with gas spigots. Walt is lecturing to seniors.

5.

~~INT. WHITE HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING~~

Walt is dressed for work -- Dockers and a short-sleeve dress shirt courtesy of Target. An American flag pin on his tie. He and Skyler eat their breakfast in silence.

Skyler glances up, sees Walt puzzling over his bacon.

SKYLER

Sizzle-Lean. We need to think about our cholesterol.

WALT

Huh.

Skyler's cute in a way most guys wouldn't have noticed back in high school. But not soft-cute. Not in the eyes.

She's dressed for staying home -- she's five months pregnant and just beginning to show.

SKYLER

When'll you be home?

WALT

Same time.

SKYLER

I don't want him fucking you around tonight. You get paid till six, you work till six. Not seven.

Seventeen year-old WALTER, JR. enters the kitchen, dressed for school, hair still damp from the shower. The CLICK... CLICK of his forearm crutches precedes him into the room.

Walt and Skyler's son is a sweet-faced teenager who appears to have cerebral palsy. He moves slowly and awkwardly, and grinds his teeth as he labors to talk. But he's a smart kid.

WALT

Hey.

Just seating himself at the table is a trial for Walter, Jr. His parents don't give him the slightest help. They treat him as if he were able-bodied, which is how he wants it.

SKYLER

You're late.

He shrugs. She gets up, serves him breakfast. Walter, Jr. squints at the plate she plops down before him.



4.

ACT ONE

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

No president ever slept here. No millionaire ever visited. This is a three-bedroom RANCHER in a modest neighborhood. Weekend trips to Home Depot keep it looking tidy, but it'll never make the cover of "Architectural Digest."

We're in Ontario, California -- the Inland Empire. LEGEND: "ONE MONTH EARLIER."

INT. WHITE HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dark and silent. SKYLER WHITE, late 30s, sleeps peacefully. Beside her, her husband Walter is wide awake.

Walt reaches over and presses a button on his Sharper Image alarm clock. It projects the time in glowing blue numbers on the cottage cheese ceiling: 5:02 AM.

Walt lies motionless. Brain churning. He presses the button again, staring straight up. 5:02 turns to 5:03.

Close enough. Walt rises without waking his wife. He exits.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - SPARE BEDROOM - NIGHT

We hear an o.s. SQUEAK-SQUEAK as we drift through this room. We pass an empty crib, Pampers, a baby monitor still in its box. There's going to be a new addition to the family.

We come upon the source of the SQUEAKING. It's Walt balanced on a Lillian Vernon stair-stepper, just three easy payments of \$29.95. Walt plods up and down in the darkness like he's marching to Bataan.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Walt sits down on the edge of the tub. We're watching his face in the bathroom mirror. He masturbates. Judging by his expression, he might as well be waiting in line at the DMV.

Walt double-takes, catching sight of himself. Distracted, he examines the sallowness under his eyes. He draws at the loose skin under his chin.

Staring at himself long and hard, Walt loses his erection. He gives up trying, pulls up his sweat pants.

3.

UNDERPANTS MAN

My name is Walter Hartwell White.
I live at 308 Belmont Avenue,
Ontario, California 91764. I am of
sound mind. To all law enforcement
entities, this is not an admission
of guilt. I'm speaking now to my
family.

(swallows hard)
Skyler... you are... the love of my
life. I hope you know that.
Walter Junior. You're my big man.
I should have told you things, both
of you. I should have said things.
But I love you both so much. And
our unborn child. And I just want
you to know that these... things
you're going to learn about me in
the coming days. These things.
I just want you to know that...
no matter what it may look like...
I had all three of you in my heart.

The sirens are WAILING now, on top of us. WALTER WHITE, the
underpants man, turns off the camcorder. He carefully sets
it on a bare patch of ground by his feet. Next to it he sets
his wallet, lying open where it can be seen.

CLOSE ON the wallet -- a photo ID card is visible. Walt's
smiling face is on it. It identifies him as a teacher at
J.P. Wynne High School, Ontario Unified School District.

Walt pulls the chrome pistol from the back of his waistband,
aiming it across the tall weeds. It glints hard in the sun.

Flashing red LIGHT BARS speed into view, skimming the tops of
the weeds. Heading straight for us.

Walt stands tall in his underpants, not flinching. Off him,
ready to shoot the first cop he sees...

END TEASER



2.

EXT. COW PASTURE - CONTINUOUS

The Winnebago comes roaring over a berm and down into a deep gully. Too deep. BAM! The front bumper bottoms out, burying itself. WAAAAAAH! The rear wheels spin air.

The engine cuts off. Silence again. The Winnie's door kicks open and out stumbles underpants man. He yanks off his gas mask, lets it drop.

He's forty years old. Receding hairline. A bit pasty. He's not a guy who makes a living working with his hands. He's not a guy we'd pay attention to if we passed him on the street. But right now, at this moment, in this pasture? Right now, we'd step the fuck out of his way.

Underpants man looks at the RV. End of the line for that. He listens hard. Out of the silence, we hear... SIRENS.

They're faint, a few miles off -- but growing louder. Our guy knows he's boned with a capital B. He HOLDS HIS BREATH and leaps back inside the RV.

INT. WINNEBAGO - CONTINUOUS

A chrome 9mm is clutched in the hand of one of the dead Mexicans. Underpants grabs it, tucks it in his waistband.

His unconscious passenger, still strapped in his seat, lets out a groan. Underpants leans past him, yanks open the glove box. He comes up with a WALLET and a tiny Sony CAMCORDER.

EXT. COW PASTURE - CONTINUOUS

Ducking outside, he starts breathing again. A short sleeve DRESS SHIRT on a hanger dangles from the Winnebago's awning. Underpants pulls it on. He finds a clip-on tie in the pocket, snaps it to his collar. No trousers, unfortunately.

He licks his fingers, slicks his hair down with his hands. He's looking almost pulled together now -- at least from the waist-up. All the while, the sirens are getting LOUDER.

Underpants figures out how to turn on the camcorder. He twists the little screen around so he can see himself in it. Framing himself waist-up, he takes a moment to gather his thoughts... then presses RECORD.

TEASEREXT. COW PASTURE - DAY

Deep blue sky overhead. Fat, scuddy clouds. Below them, black and white cows graze the rolling hills. This could be one of those California "It's The Cheese" commercials.

Except those commercials don't normally focus on cow shit. We do. TILT DOWN to a fat, round PATTY drying olive drab in the sun. Flies buzz. Peaceful and quiet. Until...

... ZOOM! WHEELS plow right through the shit with a SPLAT.

NEW ANGLE - AN RV

Is speeding smack-dab through the pasture, no road in sight. A bit out of place, to say the least. It's an old 70's era Winnebago with chalky white paint and Bondo spots. A bumper sticker for the Good Sam Club is stuck to the back.

The Winnebago galumphs across the landscape, scattering cows. It catches a wheel and sprays a rooster tail of red dirt.

INT. WINNEBAGO - DAY

Inside, the DRIVER's knuckles cling white to the wheel. He's got the pedal flat. Scared, breathing fast. His eyes bug wide behind the faceplate of his gas mask.

Oh, by the way, he's wearing a GAS MASK. That, and white jockey UNDERPANTS. Nothing else.

Buckled in the seat beside him lolls a clothed PASSENGER, also wearing a gas mask. Blood streaks down from his ear, blotting his T-shirt. He's passed out cold.

Behind them, the interior is a wreck. Beakers and buckets and flasks -- some kind of ad-hoc CHEMICAL LAB -- spill their noxious contents with every bump we hit. Yellow-brown liquid washes up and down the floor. It foams in a scum around...

... Two DEAD BODIES. Two freshly deceased Mexican guys tumble like rag dolls, bumping into each other.

Completing this picture is the blizzard of MONEY. A Von's bag lies leaking twenties. Fifteen, twenty grand in cash wafts around in the air or floats in the nasty brown soup.

CLOSE on the driver's eyes. He's panting like a steam engine. His mask FOGS UP until finally he can't see.



they can impress by opening with a weighty theme, when they're actually avoiding the challenge of impelling an arc. The best teasers tend to be the best drama.

Before we get into content, remember that a TV drama script looks just like a theatrical screenplay. Most screenwriting software will give you format options, so choose "standard," "screenplay," or whatever term your system uses for writing movies. Final Draft and Celtx are commonly used throughout the industry.

ABOUT THIS EXCERPT FROM *BREAKING BAD*

The pilot of *Breaking Bad* is often cited as the "perfect" model. Vince Gilligan, who wrote the script, involves his audience in the complex reality of Walter White from the first instant and never lets up as this character develops from "Mr. Chips to Scarface," from a meek chemistry teacher to a violent drug lord. Gilligan said, "Television is historically good at keeping its characters in a self-imposed stasis so that shows can go on for years or even decades. When I realized this, the logical next step was to think, how can I do a show in which the fundamental drive is toward change?"

If you haven't watched all five years of this series yet, you should treat yourself. For a writer, the ability to entice viewers into rooting for a protagonist as he morphs into an antagonist requires both skill and the kind of artistry that encourages creative risks. Along with a few other classics (especially *The Wire*), *Breaking Bad* is part of this century's great American literature.

We're going to look at a small portion of the pilot. The pages that follow are from a writer's draft dated May 2005. The show first aired on AMC in 2008 — a three-year gap. Some of that delay was caused by the writer's strike. But I mention the dates so you will take heart if you have an important script on the shelf. It can still happen when the time is right if it's good enough.

Read the Teaser and the first page of Act One. Simultaneously, run the show on a DVD or download. We will compare the written script to the produced version, and then we'll switch to analyzing the rest of Act One from the screen.

TEASERS

One of the excerpts you'll read in this chapter is from *Breaking Bad* that opens with a "teaser," though not all series begin with one. A reaser, also called "a cold opening," refers to dramatic material before the titles (before the name of the series and credits). It may be a one-minute "hook," or as long as ten minutes that includes several scenes, making it nearly as full as a traditional whole act. In any style, it exists to grab viewers faster than the enemies, which are the remote, mouse, or esc button. The notion is to open the hour with an action, image, situation, or character that provokes enough anticipation to keep viewers through the title sequence and into the first act.

However, increasingly, networks have dumped title sequences along with theme music, preferring to grab viewers with uninterrupted drama. The "tease" is the story itself, and titles scroll over Act One.

Often, a teaser sets out the problem of an episode. For example, on a detective show, the crime to be solved may be enacted or discovered in the teaser. Other crime procedurals open with the cast arriving at a crime scene after the deed is done. Of course, each show is unique.

In many law and medical shows, a case arrives and incites the events of the episode. But in *Grey's Anatomy*, for example, where emphasis is on the ensemble cast, teasers have sometimes shown the continuing characters waking, getting ready for work, or traveling to work, launching their personal stories that will spin out in the episode.

Even in the Marvel Comics realm that depends on elements of super power action, their best shows including *Jessica Jones* and *Luke Cage* often use their teasers to remind viewers of the show's psychological world instead of beginning a plot.

I Love Dick on Amazon is built on the inner lives of the characters and relies on dissections of the rarified culture of academic critics observed through the eyes of a self-aware woman. Fitting the style of this show, episodes may open with intimacy that is analyzed and even include philosophical dialogue.

If you're a new writer, though, I recommend sticking with story rather than message. A swiftly propelled dramatic tension will lure a reader to turn the page and a viewer to see what happens next. Real storytelling is difficult, and I've seen too many students fool themselves into thinking



Chart 3.2 Example of a Character-Driven Episode With No Act Breaks

These are all the scenes in your hour episode (28 is just an estimate)



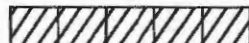
"A" Story: Start with your main character and plan this entire story. Figuring back from the character's goal in this episode, list all the A-story scenes. They are represented here by 14 filled-in squares.



"B" Story: Plan the story for the second important character and list all the scenes. They are represented here by 9 dotted squares.



"C" Story: Plan the least important story. It can be added after the others are in place. It is represented here by 5 squares with lines.



Now weave all the stories, beginning by laying out the main character's path, and keep shifting until the rhythm maximizes the dramatic impact of the whole episode. Of course, the order of scenes will depend on your own stories, so the result won't be the same as this chart. It is only an example!



than network shows) that might mean planning around 28 beats (scenes) in contrast to 20 to 25 for network episodes. A = 14 beats. B = 9 beats. C = 5 beats. Of course, that's not a recipe for any particular script, just a way of analyzing. In a show with long scenes that average 5 minutes each in 60 minutes you might find yourself planning only 12 beats total (60 divided by 5 = 12). That could lead to something like this: A = 6. B = 4. C = 2. Again, these are not prescriptions, just estimates of how many beats may be available for your outline.

After you know your stories, weave them into a pattern for the episode. No rule exists for their order; it's an intuitive process discovering which story elements move the narrative forward and which scenes complement others. Here's a simple tip: figure out the realistic time frame for each beat — early morning, midday, evening, night. You can be as specific as is useful — some shows count hours and minutes as a dramatic device. Then you can color code the scenes for time. If you have two beats of the A story in the morning, and you realize you've put a night beat from the B between them, either you need to change the scenes so they're all at the same time or move the wrong-time beat elsewhere.

I like to do the weave on paper, either with post-its I can move around or index cards. Others prefer to weave on screen. Some people use different colors of cards or different computer highlighting so they don't lose sight of the story balances. For example, you probably don't want to lose the A story halfway through because it was all clumped at the beginning (unless that's actually your intention for some reason). Usually, you want to be sure the A appears near the beginning and at the end but the artistic decisions are up to you . . . and the showrunner. These systems are meant as a ladder not a limit. Remember, screenwriting is an art.



to hire only women directors, DuVernay said, "I wanted people with my sensibility, who care about things I care about. People who make films that I love and I knew would embrace the luxurious pace and the attention to detail and the love of nuanced characters."

I asked a friend who is on a prestige series (that she asked me not to identify) how her writers' room breaks stories. Her show has no commercials so the episodes have no visible acts. Keep in mind that movies have often been discussed as having three acts (beginning, middle, end), in which Act Two is twice as long as Acts One and Three, so in old fashioned terms, Act One of a movie is 30 minutes, Act Two is 60 minutes and Act Three is 30 minutes. Translating to hour drama, Act One would be 15 minutes, Act Two would be 30 minutes, and Act Three would be 15 minutes. But as soon as you add a midpoint in the center of the second act (a usual dramatic turning point) you get a regular four-act structure. With that context, here is her answer to how her writers' room navigates without act breaks:

"The show reverts to a three-act structure. We break the beats by character and then do a weave. We put everything up on whiteboards where each character has a beginning, middle, and end, which is why I say it has kind of a three-act structure. Although in truth, we don't break anything by acts at all. We break it by character. Typically the big reversals are in the A story so we break that first, and don't worry how the other characters' stories fit into it if they're not inherently a part of it. The reversals are built into what journey the main character takes in each episode. The reversals tend to come where you'd expect — page 40 to 45 out of a 55-page script."

For off-network shows, I've made an alternate chart you'll find on page 86. This approach responds to the different goals of these platforms. Consider what a network show needs: viewers who will return after commercials. The challenge there is to build cliffhangers at act breaks to hold on to the audience that can easily switch channels, especially at the half hour. In contrast, Netflix (for example) is concerned only about keeping you watching the next hour. Streaming outlets don't expect the audience to switch channels midway, so they'd avoid an impression of breaking points during the episode. They do care about the cliffhanger at the end of the hour, though, so the character arcs are constructed to lead to that endpoint.

For the next chart imagine your A, B, C stories are built around the main cast, each of whom has an arc within the episode that leads seamlessly to a cliffhanger at the end. The stories can be balanced in many ways. In a hypothetical prototype for an episode that runs close to a full hour (longer

never met on shows I don't know were turning up at meetings with the grid from this book. Sometimes they knew where it came from, sometimes a colleague had just handed it to them on a piece of paper. So this little grid I invented for myself — and for you — has taken on a life of its own.

As useful as the grid may be, you always want to be flexible to find the form that best expresses the story.

I asked some friends on the staffs of current shows how they handle act breaks in the writers' room. One who works on a long-running heavy action series explained: "The show used to be in four acts and we had a very long Act One. So we split Act One in half — three scenes and four scenes. It used to be six to seven scenes for Act One. Now it's a teaser and two small acts. We do that because at the end of Act One we need an action beat."

I also put the question to Peter Blake, a writer on the staff of *House*, which is no longer running but is still an outstanding model of procedural drama. He said: "What I do and I recommend to all the other writers on *House* is write in a four-act structure and then add two act breaks. The doctors will go down a path — what is this disease? Then you have a diagnosis. They have a theory and at some time a treatment for that theory. And at the end of the act, it doesn't work. That's a really simple way to break the act. The audience has to be involved enough that they're not going to turn off at the act breaks. Generally, I would beat out a very simple medicine story. Then I'd beat out the personal story. I use index cards and shuffle them around. I'd see which of the later acts is the longest and I'd divide that in half."

CHARACTER-DRIVEN STRUCTURE

Writers on streaming platforms and premium cable — shows with no commercial breaks — have mostly abandoned the traditional act structure in favor of breaking stories according to character. That approach affects the rhythm of the hour and can allow a slower development.

The swing to a slower pace began with *Mad Men* (that did have act breaks on AMC). Now check the length of scenes in *Transparent* and other shows that recall the rhythms of art films formerly seen mainly at indie festivals.

Queen Sugar embodies that style. Creator Ava DuVernay, known for *Selma* (which was nominated for a best picture Oscar), wrote the pilot and first two episodes of the show's first season on OWN. Asked about her decision



cliffhangers to the beats right before to fill in the actions that led to the jeopardy or collision. That reverse technique may help you figure out your outline. (I'll explain more about outlining in the next chapter.)

5- AND 6-ACT STRUCTURES

More than a decade ago, the traditional networks mandated six acts instead of four for all their shows. You can guess why: more commercial breaks. I don't know any writers who liked this change which seemed pushed by desperation to pump revenues when network advertising rates are declining and the audience can watch on sites that omit commercials altogether. After that mandate, the rhythm of shorter acts spread throughout television; you can sense that speeded pace, especially on action shows, even when the commercials are absent.

Like it or not, you need to find out how to reconfigure your structure if the show you're speculating has four, five, or six acts. I suggest you begin with the four-act idea. Then take what used to be the teaser and lengthen it to around ten pages to create a new Act One. Be sure you open directly into the story with jeopardy or action or a provocative issue because this is where you need to hook the audience (and the reader).

Each of the succeeding acts will be shorter than in a four-act plan — roughly ten pages each. In a six-act structure, with acts only around eight pages long, think in terms of Act Six being a tag or the final shoe dropping, or a twist. You might see an Act Six that runs as short as five minutes. Look at *The Walking Dead* as aired on AMC (rather than streaming it) and time the amount of dramatic material that plays between selling cars. Hint: it's not much, maybe only three scenes fit in an act towards the end.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE . . .

. . . The more they remain the same. After all the uproar about going to five, six, even seven acts in an hour series, the pendulum has swung back to the template in the grid. I asked around and discovered two phenomena: First — writers are planning their stories in the traditional four acts and adjusting to five or six in a later draft. In some cases when the series has no commercial breaks, the writer simply drops out the act break headings when the finished script goes to the next production phase. (More about off-network structure later.) Second (and this amazed me) — writers I've

USING THE GRID

If you're using the grid to help you understand the form of an episode on TV, I suggest you begin by recording the show or get it online so you can pause and go back. Watch it all the way through and name the A, B, and C stories (or whatever number of stories your show has). Attach each story to one of the main cast, and then summarize that particular arc in a sentence. Keep going, creating a "logline" for each story.

Once you've figured out the stories, re-play the episode. This time, write a letter in each of the boxes on the grid. For example, if Act I, Scene 1 is about the "B" story, put a B in that box. As the grid fills out, it will probably look sort of like a checkerboard with A, B, C (or other) stories following each other in a somewhat random pattern.

You'll notice that the cliffhanger that occurs at the end of an act might not always be a suspenseful moment in the A story; it might be a turning point in the B story, for example. You'll also see that sometimes one of the stories continues for several beats in a row, especially if it's following a "line of interest" the writer didn't want to interrupt. On other occasions, you'll see one story interposed between beats of another; this might be used to convey a sense that time has passed between the beats in the first story (this skipping is also called an "ellipsis").

No rules exist for how this "checkerboard" should look, so don't get hung up trying to match the order of scenes. You're serving the dramatic tension of the stories, not some outside system. The point is to recognize the way parallel stories complement each other.

The grid may also help you track the arcs, and especially if your show is part of a serial, you might be surprised that one of the storylines ends in Act Three, or the C story doesn't begin until Act Two, or Act Four is entirely about resolving the A story. That's all okay. Again, the structure serves the story within the general parameters of a four-act episode with cliffhangers. So learn from other shows but don't copy.

If you're using the grid to create an original script, your first foray into the grid might be to jot notes about key points in the boxes: how the show opens, the "worst case" cliffhanger at the end of Act Three, and how the show will end. You might do that for the A story only, or for both A and B stories, leaving room to think about the C later. Particularly with the act breaks, it's helpful to reverse-engineer, stepping backwards from the



Chart 3.1 Basic Four-Act Grid

	ACT I	ACT II	ACT III	ACT IV
(T)				
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				

The titles on the top are the teaser (“T”) plus four acts of an hour episode. Remember from Chapter One that on network television and basic cable (but not on streaming or premium cable) commercial breaks occur roughly every 10 to 15 minutes. Dividing 15 minutes into 60 minutes gives you the four acts. Now, an hour drama doesn’t really run an hour — it’s actually less than 50 minutes after commercials. And each act isn’t really 15 minutes — more like 12. Dividing 12 minutes into 48 minutes gives you four acts also. But for planning a first draft script, figure that Act One ends around page 17 or 18 if the show has a teaser (more about teasers below); Act Two ends around page 30; Act Three at 45; and Act Four around 60 (or anywhere from 50 to 60).

On the left of the grid, you see numbers one through seven. Those are the scenes in each act. Why seven? Well, you won’t always have seven, in fact. Five solid scenes could fill out an act in some cases; and in “vignette” shows where scenes are quick, you might find yourself counting up to nine or ten. The basis for the list of seven is the two-minute scene. Back to arithmetic, if an act is 14 minutes, and each scene is around two minutes, 14 divided by 2 = 7.

city — Baltimore or New Orleans or 1970s Times Square, New York — is the “world,” but within it are cultures that have their own characters and rules. In all cases, the episodes don’t shatter into disconnected stories, ~~no matter how separate are the arcs, because the writer’s vision creates~~ a unifying attitude and tone. The disparate stories ultimately collide and create layers for each other in *American Crime* as well as in the Simon shows.

The largest (or most resonant) story is called “A.” The second most important story is “B.” And the third “C” story is sometimes comic relief in an otherwise serious show, or may be a “runner,” such as a recurring incident or character issue. However, in the case of *American Crime*, no character or issue is included for comic relief. Like any description of writing methods, those distinctions are flexible. Among variations, you may find A and B stories that are equal in weight, shows where a C story in one episode is a seed beginning a major arc in subsequent episodes, and shows that normally have three stories but might turn up with two or four. Again, I’m giving you a sense of the overall design, not laying down the law.

Some series may have more than three stories — *Orange Is the New Black*, *Transparent*, and *Game of Thrones* are also examples. And some are primarily “A” story only, for example *Better Call Saul*, *Mr. Robot*, and *Jane the Virgin*. Before you speculate a show, carefully study how it’s crafted.

Each series has its own ways, but I’ve come up with a generic grid that fits many shows on broadcast and basic cable, though it does not apply to certain streaming shows especially if the length of each episode varies widely. I use it to analyze sample episodes in my classes, and here’s a blank one you can apply to the excerpt printed in this chapter. For practice, try it while you’re watching TV. But here’s a hint: for five acts look for which two acts are the shortest. Sometimes five acts are simply Act Four divided in half. Other shows divide Act One instead. This creates the appearance of five acts while actually writing a long teaser that is called Act One, though the result is the same as writing a traditional four plus teaser. If you count pages (or time the acts), it’s easy to figure out how shows are accommodating themselves to this basic structure. Once you get the hang of it, you can also use this simple chart in the early planning stages of an original script. (Chart 3.1)



fewer pages, and when they write more than two pages, their scenes tend to lose focus or become redundant.

Historically, screen scenes used to be long, more like stage plays. If you look at great movies from the 1940s, like the ones starring Humphrey Bogart, you'll see some scenes that run five or even seven pages. They reflect a different era where the slow evolvement of a dramatic moment, gradually experienced, was part of the pace of life. Currently, that's part of the pendulum swing I mentioned above to longer, slower styles where scenes are paced to explore subtle nuances, and may sometimes be several minutes long.

But we're focusing here on what's useful to developing your craft to work in mainstream outlets. You need to master the skill to write tightly focused moments. Consider the speed of computers, where you're growling at the screen if a function takes two seconds. An electronics-savvy populace is quickly bored. If audience attention drifts, or is way ahead of where you're going with the story, you've lost your moment. On television, a one-minute beat is more welcome than a three-minute scene, and if you're starting page four of a single encounter, that's a red flag.

Notice also that I'm using the words "minute" and "page" interchangeably. That's just shorthand. A minute per page may be an average, but it's not always accurate. Pages of dialogue move faster, while action eats up lots of time. As with all my construction advice, I'm pointing out a general design, not policing whether you color outside the lines!

A, B, C STORIES

For a great example of a show that uses parallel storytelling, screen *American Crime* by John Ridley that aired on ABC from 2015 to 2017. In the pilot of the first season, the three storylines are not subplots, but independent tales each involving a distinct cast. Since they occur within the same area — Modesto, California — and they each open windows to the thematic spine as the series develops, the stories are sometimes interwoven, sometimes blended, sometimes juxtaposed. Clearly, they are part of the same show, though each inhabits a separate culture within the "world" of the show.

We've witnessed this storytelling approach before, notably in *The Wire*, *Treme*, and *The Deuce* all created by David Simon, where the

protagonist who wants something and drives the action to get it through conflict with an opposition, usually an equally motivated antagonist. That's just a basic statement of story plotting. If you're stuck on this point, then take a break and refresh yourself on screenwriting before you move on to TV. Seriously. Writing television drama isn't easier than movies, even though each episode is shorter than a theatrical film; it's more difficult because it requires all the same elements compressed in a tighter form.

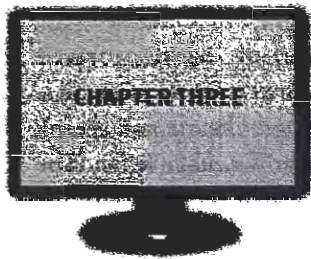
When you look at the script pages that follow you'll notice that television dramas use the same format as theatrical screenplays, and it's the same whether you're writing for traditional networks, basic or premium cable, or streaming. Notice the capitalized locations. These are "sluglines," also called "scene headings," but they are not scenes in the dramatic sense. For example, an establishing shot outside a building is not a full dramatic scene, though it is a location that physical production needs to plan. For our purposes, a dramatic beat may encompass one or more sluglines; the key is identifying a step of the story, not a shot. You'll see examples later in this chapter, but don't stop with those. You should read as many well-written scripts as you can find and study the shows that are made from them.

With a basic Google search, you can easily find episodes of shows that have already run, especially if the series has won awards. Your first visit might be to the website of the show's network that probably offers the pilot free. Other resources include Amazon, Netflix, Hulu, iTunes, Roku, Apple TV, and DVDs. Some sites require membership for a small monthly fee; some charge a little to "own" the episode. I'm going to ask you to follow along with the analysis of one great pilot by watching simultaneously. You can do this.

Scripts are also available, though not as easily. The Writers Guild Foundation Library in Los Angeles has all the award-nominated scripts and they can be read in the Library (though not removed). Many educational organizations have sample scripts too. I don't want to list all the sites that advertise scripts for sale (and sometimes for free) because I'm wary of copyright infringement. But, hey, the scripts are out there, and if you're going to write for television, you need to be familiar with how the pros put their stories on the page.

THE 2-PAGE SCENE

I use the two-page scene as a target for students partly because inexperienced writers have difficulty accomplishing a complete dramatic beat in



HOW A SCRIPT IS CRAFTED

Constructing your episode may seem daunting at first, but hour dramas — especially primetime network shows — tend to follow a general template. Your insights into character, talent with dialogue, inventiveness in storytelling, and the depth of meaning are all creative qualities beyond any system. But I've found that using a basic pattern can actually release your artistry because you don't have to worry whether the underlying skeleton will hold up.

Initially, I even advise students to try to separate their right brain and left brain functions — the creative and the analytical. We know how we are as artists, ready to run off with the circus, or an emotional explosion. Those moments when passion takes over are gifts, and if you're touched by a cinematically hot encounter between characters, go ahead and write it down. The best writing is like trying to catch the wind anyway. But then put that piece of writing aside and return to engineering your script in the cold light of the left brain.

Even if you could somehow begin at page one and steam your way through to page 50 in a single creative breath (and I don't think anyone can), television series don't work like that. As you'll discover in Chapter Five, you'll be collaborating with a staff and will have to submit an outline or beat sheet (more about those in Chapter Four) prior to writing your teleplay.

THE DRAMATIC BEAT

Before we go further, keep in mind the nature of a screenplay scene, as I'm sure you've learned in screenwriting classes or books. A dramatic scene is the essential building block of storytelling on screen and should have a complete dramatic structure. That means each scene has a motivated

Except it wasn't. On the walk to the gallows, the award nominations started flooding in. Critical acclaim. People wanted more. But what more? As the industry tale goes, one of the interns on the staff (who later became a writer/producer, herself) wrote a new scene. Don goes home and there's the family waiting, just as in the early draft. But it's in his imagination. The house is empty. Don sits alone on the stairs of his empty house. And tune in for next season because his troubles are only just beginning.

More often, the producer bets on the show and opts for the cliffhanger, while the staff hangs on their own cliff. This happens during:

APRIL

HIATUS

Vacation — yay! For a network series writer, spring is like summer and winter holidays rolled into a mass getaway. The hiatus might last three months from March until July, or be as limited as a month and a half — April to late May. If your season has only 13 episodes, your whole writing job may last as little as four or five months. If the staff is assured they're coming back, this is a fling of freedom. If everyone's worried, the agents sniff around for another staff. In any case, the break is total. Many shows lock their offices and leave nothing but an answering machine; even the receptionist is gone after intense weeks of long hours, non-stop.

This brings us all the way back to where we started, as the cycle spins around and around and around.

MAD MEN - “Guy Walks Into An Advertising Agency”

Beatsheet

A-Story - DON

1. Announcement that Putnam executives will be visiting the next couple of days. Don is surprised by the announcement.
2. Pete, Paul, and Harry are told by Hooker that they have to give a presentation the next day. (Setting up their anxiety).
3. Don meets with Roger and Cooper to discuss what it could mean, and Cooper theorizes that they want to try out Don, and will offer him a position in London (and NYC?). Roger and Don are cordial, but Cooper insists they heal whatever is between them, and forces them to go to the barber together.
4. Ken declares his new account by driving in a John Deere mower-- much to Pete's chagrin.
5. Don and Roger clear the air at the barbershop, and Don insists they are good.
6. Joan goes over the details for the next day's visit with Hildy. Hooker tries to assume control of the conversation/situation.
7. Don comes home and runs the idea of London by Betty: she likes.
8. Don lies in bed thinking about London and tomorrow.

-
9. The executives (Powell, Ford, and a young and charming Guy McKendrick) arrive and are welcomed by Hooker and Joan.
 10. Hooker takes them on a tour and Guy's charisma wows everyone in the office.
 11. The three executives meet Don, Roger and Cooper separately, but don't reveal anything. Don's not sure what to think, but he definitely doesn't trust them.
 12. Lane meets with Ford and Powell, and they reveal they're sending him to Bombay.
 13. Guy runs a meeting with all the main players at Sterling Cooper, and reveals a new re-structuring with himself at the top. Don's not going to be promoted.
-

14. Full of confidence (and hubris), Guy announces to the office that they can have the rest of the day off as a party-- celebrating the restructuring and Joan's last day.
15. During the party, the young executives look longingly at Guy, and resolve to go kiss up to him.
16. During the party, people are getting increasingly tipsy (especially Smitty).
17. During the party, Peggy tries to talk to Don, but he shoots her down. He's called away to a call in his office.
18. Don takes the call from Hilton's secretary, trying to arrange a meeting. Nothing keeping him here, Don says he'll be right over.
19. Roger complains to Cooper about the new order of things, but Cooper tells him this is what he signed on for when he pushed to sell.
20. At the party, Peggy tries to tell Joan goodbye, and they are interrupted by Smitty driving the lawnmower in. Then the lawnmower is driven over Guy's foot, and everyone freezes except for Joan.
21. Don meets Hilton and realizes he's the mysterious man from the country club (earlier episode). Hilton asks for Don's advertising advice and Don makes a play for his business.

-
22. The young executives freak out in the aftermath of the accident - especially Ken. (Maybe Harry too, with his TV prospects ruined?) Roger calms them down-- secretly pleased at the outcome.
 23. Don meets Joan at the Emergency Room and finds out Guy lost his foot. Ford and Powell come in with Lane and make clear Guy will no longer be taking over.

B-Story - JOAN

1. The secretaries meet after the announcement and reveal that Joan's last day is tomorrow (and about Greg's expected promotion), and that they are going to throw her a surprise party.
2. Joan goes over tomorrow's visit with Hildy, when Hooker inserts himself and intentionally reveals Joan's surprise party. Joan warns him not to come crying to her after she's left.
3. Greg arrives late to the special dinner Joan prepared, drunk, and confesses that he didn't get the promotion (and even worse?). Joan is supportive, but is alarmed to hear that she will need to keep working, because they'll need the money.

-
4. Joan greets the Putnam Executives, and her charm compared with Hooker's petty smugness, is clear.

-
5. Guy's announcement to the office about the party includes a salute to Joan, and a wish for her future happiness. Joan is taken off guard and can't help crying (knowing what she knows), but then gains her composure and thanks everyone.
 6. At the party, Peggy tries to tell Joan how much she's meant to her, but they're interrupted by the lawnmower accident. Joan snaps to action, while Hooker looks on totally aghast and helpless.

-
7. Don joins Joan at the hospital, and she tells him the news about Guy. He gives a fond farewell to her, and she leaves for home.

C-Story - SALLY

1. Don catches Sally with her light still on at night, and she tells him she's afraid of the dark.
2. Bobby asks Betty to touch Baby Gene, but Sally doesn't want to.
3. Don and Betty discuss Sally's resentment of Baby Gene, and the dark thing.
4. Sally lies in bed, unable to go to sleep.

[Possibly skip Act 2?]

5. Betty gives Sally a gift "from" Baby Gene, but Sally is skeptical of it.

6. Don finds the gift in a bush outside the house and puts it back in Sally's room.
7. Sally wakes up, sees it and screams.
8. Sally confesses to Don that she's afraid of Baby Gene because she thinks he's Grandpa Gene reincarnated.
9. Don and Betty argue about what to do, or who's at fault? Sally apologizes for her outburst.
10. Don talks with Sally about Baby Gene and assures her that he's totally normal: just a kid with a horrible name.

D-Story - LANE

1. Lane announces to the office that Putnam executives from London will be visiting over the next couple days, and implores them all to put on a good face for the visit.

2. Ford and Powell meet with Lane and reveal they are sending him to Bombay, because of the great job he's done here. He has a hard time showing any pleasure, and they counsel him to grin and bear it.
3. Guy announces in the meeting that Lane will be going to India, and Lane nods graciously.

4. Guy is taken out by the lawnmower.

5. Lane is managing the situation at the hospital, and, after Ford and Powell confirm he'll be staying before they leave, he reveals to Don how relieved he is.

E-Story - PETE

1. Pete hears about the visit the next day from the Putnam Executives.
2. Hooker tells Pete and others that they'll need to make presentations, and Pete panics slightly.
3. Pete is chagrined to see Ken arrive with his new account: John Deere, just in time for the meeting from the London executives.

4. Pete meets Guy and the other executives, and is a bit in awe of Guy and his charm.
5. Pete learns in the meeting that he is getting a new boss-- Guy McKendrick; and that Ken has the edge over him.

6. Pete watches Guy during the party and resolves to go get to know him.... Or to at least not let Ken get too close.
7. Guy is run over by the lawnmower

8. Pete and the others in the aftermath. Ken is upset, but Pete is sanguine. He's not going to get in trouble over this, but Ken might.

Teaser	Act 1	Act 2	Act 3	Act 4
1. Reception. Midge gives funny speech at her own wedding about...	1. City+Butcher's. M tells Butcher she got the rabbi for Yom Kippur. Pays for disgruntled customer's order.	1. Apt/Parents'. M goes upstairs to pick up Ethan + Esther. Intro Zelda. Rose worried about baby's forehead. Asks how long J will do stand-up.	1. Taxi. Silence. J is devastated, blames M for sweater joke bombing.	1. Police Station. S bails M out, after 20 minutes in jail.
1A – Bryn Mawr and her time there	2. Apt Bldg+Apt. M gives doormen, etc, cookies. Pulls out brisket. Reassures J about time at club.	2. Sitting Room. Imogene + M—I and Archie will come to hear J's act. J comes home. M hears Bob Newhart's act—same as Joel's!	2. Bedroom. She finds him packing her suitcase: he's leaving her. He tells her this isn't life he wants and he's having affair. He leaves.	2. Bar. S takes M for drink. She tells her she was brilliant—wants her to do stand-up and she'll manage her. M leaves
1B—Club M + 5 others bleach pubic hair. She runs outside naked.	3. J's Office. J tells customer famous joke. Intro Penny. Changes for club. Intro Archie. M arrives, they leave.	3. Kitchen. M tells J Newhart stole his act. J tells her he borrowed it from BN and everyone does it.	3. Parents' Apt. M tells A+R that J left her. They go crazy and blame her.	3. Ext Bar. M finds notebook. Idea takes hold...
1C – Meeting Joel	4. Gaslight Café. M tries to give brisket to Baz, rebuffed by Susie who calls her BS on sick kids. Baz gives J new time.	4. Kitchen (dif day). J calls frantic: no time, needs brisket. A+I coming. M calms him down.	4. M's Apt. M gets drunk on Yom Kippur wine. Notices pyrex missing. Goes out in rain. Takes subway...	4. Montage --Gaslight watching acts. --Party. --S's apt to say yes --writing jokes in subway
1D – Burlesque Club – J shows her stand-up: Lenny Bruce	5. Gaslight Café. J does set while M takes notes. Laughs, except for Susie.	5. Ext Ofc + Taxi. M is late. J is frantic. Sweater has holes in it.	5. Gaslight Café. Drunk, M takes stage and is hilarious. Susie is impressed. Flashes breasts and gets arrested (w/ LB).	5. Police Station. Next morning. M bails out LB. Asks if he loves stand-up. He says it's terrible job, but he can't not do it.
1E – M+J have sex after he's proposed.	6. Ext Gaslight. S returns pyrex. Glowers at J.	6. Gaslight Café. M tries to give brisket for time, but only S. Asks S for better time and she asks why J isn't asking.		
1. Ends with chaos after she drops “shrimp” bomb on Rabbi.	7. Taxi. M goes over act while J sleeps. She works on new intro lines.	7. Gaslight Later. J hasn't been called. About to leave when he's called. He bombs.		
4 years later...	8. Bedroom. M gives J ideas. Bed. She then gets up to remove make-up... gets up early to reapply and do hair, before he wakes up.			

THE MARVELOUS MRS. MAISEL – Pilot Episode
Written by Amy Sherman-Palladino

31 Scenes; 79 page shooting script; 57 min

A Story: Miriam “Midge” Maisel seems to have the perfect life, until her husband leaves her, sending her over the edge and causing her to discover her unknown genius.

B Story: With Midge’s help, Joel tries to make it as a stand-up comic.

C Story: Susie looks for something to make her significant.

D Story: Midge and her parents plan for Yom Kippur with the rabbi and 30 people.



A Hitchhiker's Guide to Pitching

Even though every story is unique, here are some general rules to follow when pitching:

1. Introduce yourself and give a brief explanation of your personal connection to the story. This will help the exec connect with you and the project.
2. Give the basic info: Title, Genre, Format, Logline, and Tonal Comps.
 - a. For Tonal Comps, you want to pick movies or TV shows that are relatively recent and that are a good representation of the feel and tone of your project. Not necessarily the plot.
3. Give us some background on the Characters.
 - a. You should absolutely talk about your Protagonist and Antagonist for both Features & TV.
 - b. For TV, consider adding one or two other Series Regulars. Don't spend as long on them as the Protagonist, but give us an idea of how you plan to populate the world.
4. Give us a Synopsis of the plot, but don't go into every little detail or subplot.
 - a. For Features, tell the main story beats to create the spine of the movie.
 - b. For TV, tell the main story beats and illustrate why we begin the show at this moment.
 - i. After the pilot synopsis, time permitting, spend some time discussing either sample episodes or the arc for season one to show that this idea has legs as a TV show.
5. At the end of the pitch, it's often a good idea to touch back on the themes of the movie/show and reiterate what you're trying to say.
6. Thank the exec for their time and answer any questions they might have.
 - a. Some questions an exec may ask are:
 - i. What inspired you to write this? (if you didn't address this at the beginning)
 - ii. Who do you see as the main character?
 - iii. What other projects do you have? (prepare 30-second elevator pitches for this)

THE GOOD WIFE

by

Robert King & Michelle King

Characters David
Alicia

Political Ops

January 29, 2009

TEASER

TEASER + 4
TEASER AND 4 ACTS

A VIDEO IMAGE of...

...a packed press conference. A lower-third chyron trumpets "Chicago D.A. Resigns" as the grim D.A. approaches a podium, his wife beside him. He clears his throat, reads:

DAVID FOLLICK

Good morning. An hour ago, I resigned as States Attorney of Cook County. I did this with a heavy heart and a deep commitment to fight these scurrilous charges. At the same time, I need time to atone for my private failings with my wife, Alicia, and our two children.

Oh, one of *those* press conferences. Scandal. In the key of Elliott Spitzer. DAVID FOLLICK (40) is a back-slapping Bill Clinton: smart, funny, calculatedly seductive, and now at the end of his career. But he's not our hero. Our hero is...

...his wife, ALICIA (late-30s) standing beside him. Pretty. Proper. She's always been the good girl-- the good girl who became the good wife, then the good mom: devoted, struggling not to outshine her husband. We move in on her as we hear...

→ NOT EVEN IN THE SCRIPT
INTRO
DAVID FOLLICK (CONT'D)
I want to be clear. I have never abused my office. I have never traded lighter sentences for either financial or sexual favors.

Ugh. We suddenly enter the video, and we're there with... Alicia as she looks out at the excited reporters, the phalanx of cameras all clicking, boring in on her.

DAVID FOLLICK (CONT'D)

But I do admit to a failure of judgment in my private dealings with these women.

Dying inside, Alicia tries to keep a neutral expression on her face as we see what she sees: the edge of the podium... the crisp paper David reads from... his black coat... his sleeve.

DAVID FOLLICK (CONT'D)

The money used in these transactions was mine, and mine alone. No public funds were ever utilized.

There's a piece of lint on his sleeve. A half inch long. Alicia just stares at it. The whole world tied up in that lint.

Expectation vs Reality
or...?
Change the lens —
end up with a
new story

minor = the what
major = the who

DAVID FOLLIICK (CONT'D)
Alicia and I ask that the press
please respect our privacy. Give us
time to heal. With the love of God
and the forgiveness of...

Etc. Alicia only half-listening now. Sound dull, distant.
Her hand reaches slowly, unconsciously, toward the lint when--

--David clasps her fingers. Oh, he's done. He guides her
offstage away from the reporters' shouted questions, into...

EXT. GREEN ROOM - COOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE MEDIA ROOM - DAY

...a backstage green room where two political ops sweep up:

POLITICAL OPS
We need to do the Tribune first--
Channel Four wants a sit down. We--

But Alicia still eyes the lint on David's sleeve. David looks
toward her, sees how strangely removed she is.

DAVID FOLLIICK
Are you alright?

Alicia looks up at him, and...

...**SLAP!** She slaps him so hard David falls to one knee,
looks up at her stunned. But Alicia, very controlled, very
proper, straightens her blouse, reaches for her purse, calmly
and coolly exits into... BLACK. And she will be a legend...

"Six months later."

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - 27TH FLOOR - LAW FIRM - DAY

Alicia waits, alone, in the 27th floor conference room of a
mid-level Chicago law firm. Opening a new chapter in her
life. She wears a new suit, new shoes, new looser hairstyle:
more career woman than political wife. She looks down at...

...a new leather binder where she's written a one word heading:

Goals

Okay, goals. What goals? She stares at it. Glances up at a
clock: 9:45. Where is everyone? She goes to the door:

ALICIA
Hi, sorry, this is my first day.
Isn't the staff meeting at 9:30?

An overbusy SECRETARY nods, clicking away at a computer.

Lint is representation and
expectation of "g-girl, g-wife,
g-mom"
Slap is the reality - slap out
of the status quo. It is the

(Literally written in the
script)

SECRETARY

You're in the wrong conference room. It's up one floor.

Alicia stares at her, and-- shit!--

INT. EMERGENCY STAIRWELL - TRIBUNE BUILDING - DAY

--BAM-- she slams into the stairwell, races up the stairs two at a time, accidentally drops the leather binder-- it rattles down a half-dozen flights. Screw it. Alicia bursts into--

INT. RECEPTION - 28TH FLOOR - TRIBUNE BUILDING - DAY

--the firm's reception. "Stern, Lockhart & Garvin."

ALICIA

Which way to the conference room?

TWO RECEPTIONISTS point through double doors. Alicia bangs through them as the receptionists trade a look:

RECEPTIONIST #1

Is that her?

(the other nods)

Her hair's different.

INT. WORKSTATION ROW - 28TH FLOOR - DAY

Alicia races past workstations, offices. Everything designed in Greene & Greene colors in an attempt to warm up a cold skyscraper build-out. Alicia slows as she sees...

...the glass-walled conference room. Packed with 45 seated and standing associates, partners, paralegals! Shit, shit, shit. She's late! She slips in...

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - 28TH FLOOR - LAW FIRM - DAY

...the back, unnoticed behind a screen of standing junior associates, all tall, young. Late 20s seems to be the age du jour here. One notices her, smiles to himself. CARY (27). Her competition. A bright and shiny Harvard grad. Looks like a male model. At the front, a firm Partner wraps up:

WILL

--Anyway, Schering-Plough fired their last firm for this very reason. So, until further notice, your personal lives have been canceled.

Chuckles from the room. WILL GARVIN (38). Handsome. A guy's guy. One of the "Top 50 Chicago Bachelors." Makes it all look easy-- life, law, sex. Another partner takes over:

DAWNA

This is a complicated, multi-jurisdictional class action. So we'll need some of you to help out with the lower-profile client-work to free up our top litigators.

DAWNA LOCKHART (56). A tough, smart feminist. Dresses like a million bucks. The top litigator at the firm, and in town.

WILL

And by "lower profile," Dawna of course means "crucially important."

(the room laughs)

Ed, you'll take witness prep on Highway redistribution. Don, you're on the Brighton criminal. And Alicia, you'll take the pro bono.

Alicia looks up. What? What pro bono? It's on a squeegee board at the front-- "pro bono"-- but she missed the discussion.

WILL (CONT'D)

Everyone else, your task is to show Schering-Plough our A-game. Okay? Let's do this.

And that's it-- the associates all start out, gabbing, as Alicia sees Will slip out the other door. Chasing...

INT. WORKSTATION ROW - 28TH FLOOR - DAY

ALICIA

Will.

Will turns, smiles. A warmer smile than usual. Some kind of history between them or is he always this nice?

WILL

Alicia. Sorry, I didn't introduce you in there, but everything's moving fast with this class action.

The two walk and talk-- everything on the run at this firm:

ALICIA

I just wanted to say thanks for the opportunity, Will. It's a real life saver.

WILL

Hey, no, thanks for coming on board. Hope you're alright with this pro bono. How'd it sound?

Alicia stares at him. Ummmm.

ALICIA
Interesting.

WILL

Good. Don't be nervous. You worried about the "bad facts?"

ALICIA

The... ?

"The Bitch is Back" plays. Oh, damn, Alicia's cellphone. She digs it out of her purse, snaps it off, as Will laughs:

WILL

Who gets "The Bitch is Back"?

ALICIA

My mother-in-law.

(Will laughs)

My daughter programmed it.

WILL

What's your ringtone?

ALICIA

My--? I don't think I want to know. My kids aren't too happy with me getting my mother-in-law to help out at home. So these bad facts...?

WILL

Right, I have to go into a meeting, but--

(sees Dawna down the hall)

Hey, Dawna, are you briefing Alicia?

(Dawna nods)

Good, you're in good hands. So we'll have dinner, catch up.

And Will's gone. A whiplashed Alicia jogs to catch up with Dawna now. Moving fast:

DAWNA

So Will speaks highly of you. He says you graduated top of your class at Georgetown. When was this?

ALICIA

Fifteen years ago.

DAWNA

Uh-huh. And you spent two years at...?

Do we like her here?
Relatable? Empathetic?

aha!

It's Network TV

Someone is almost ALWAYS doing something while talking - walking, eating, drinking...

It's to distract you from all the talking.

ALICIA
Crozier, Abrams & Abbott.

DAWNA
Right. Good firm. Why'd you leave?

ALICIA
I... Well, I had kids. My
husband's career.

Dawna nods. Alicia eyes her, not sure if there's a tone.
There doesn't seem to be. Passing her assistant:

DAWNA
Brian, can you get Mrs. Follick the
files?

INT. DAWNA'S CORNER OFFICE - 28TH FLOOR - LAW FIRM - DAY

And they enter Dawna's large corner office. A Jack Russell
Terrier trots up. Dawna pets it as she slips on a headset.

DAWNA
I want you to think of me as a
mentor, Alicia. It's the closest we
have to an old boy's network in this
town: women helping women. Okay?

ALICIA
Okay.

DAWNA
When I was starting out, I got one
great piece of advice: "Men can be
lazy. Women can't." And I think
that goes double for you. Not only
are you coming back to the workplace
fairly late, but you have some very
prominent baggage with this scandal.

She nods to a photo of herself with Hillary Clinton...

DAWNA (CONT'D)
But, hey, if *she* can do it, so can you.

Dawna smiles. Alicia smiles back as-- thump-- Brian drops a
FILE BOX beside her.

DAWNA (CONT'D)
Thanks, Brian. Like many law firms
we donate 5% of billable hours to
pro bono work so the indigent have
options other than the public
defenders office.
(MORE)

DAWNA (CONT'D)

Sadly I'm long past my acceptable billable hours on this one; so I need to hand off the retrial.

Alicia takes notes, finds a mugshot taped to the top of the box. Not what she expected. A sweet woman in her late 20s.

DAWNA (CONT'D)

Jennifer Combs. 29 years old. A working mom. Taught second grade. Accused of killing her ex-husband in a faked carjacking. Prosecution thought it was a slam-dunk 30 to life, but the jury came back last week deadlocked.

We are sitting and talking but ...

Alicia keeps trying to take notes, but the terrier sniffs and nuzzles at her lap.

DAWNA (CONT'D)

Six jurors voted to convict; six not. I'm not even sure why the D.A. is retrying, except he wants-- Justice!

Alicia looks up. What?! Oh, the dog's name. *ha!*

DAWNA (CONT'D)

--he wants to prove himself. So nothing fancy. Stick to my strategy from the first trial. It worked for reasonable doubt and a deadlocked jury. Okay?

Alicia nods, but Dawna sees Brian outside talking with CORMAC (58), the third partner, bullet-headed, says very little, but when he does, he's the voice of God.

DAWNA (CONT'D)

Okay, we'll have to cut this short. Our investigator can get you up to speed for the bail hearing at 3.
(yelling out)
Cormac, I'm ready.

ALICIA

The bail hearing-- *it's today?*

DAWNA

Yes, we could delay, but that would leave Jennifer incarcerated for another month. Don't worry, you'll be fine. The D.A.'s not going to argue against a recognizance release.

INT. WORKSTATION ROW - 28TH FLOOR - DAY

And-- bang-- Alicia's out the office door, standing there with the file box. The assistant Brian offers a lint roller. Oh. Her skirt covered with dog hair.

ALICIA

Thanks.

Alicia starts to brush it off when she notices Brian's computer: a "You Tube" video paused there. The infamous David Follick press conference. Brian quickly clicks it off. Embarrassed.

BRIAN

Sorry. I like your hair this way.

What is this?

INT. EMERGENCY STAIRWELL - TRIBUNE BUILDING - DAY

Alicia pushes into the stairwell. Needs a moment to herself. Drop her office face. Looks down toward her fumbled leather binder. "Goals" still written there. She starts down toward it. When...

CARY

Hey, need some help?

Cary. Peering down the stairwell.

INT. WORKSTATION ROW - 27TH FLOOR - DAY

Cary carries the file box toward their neighboring offices:

CARY

I know we're the two new associates, and we should be at each other's throats, but I just want to say... I'm in awe of what you're doing.

Alicia studies him. Is this guy for real? Calculated?

CARY (CONT'D)

Raising a family, then jumping right back into this. [My mom's thinking of doing the same thing.]

great line.

The what is happening but the magnet of the story is the who.

ALICIA

(stares at him)

...Great.

SONIA

I'm almost done, Cary. Latte on your desk. Hi, Mrs. Follick.

ALICIA

Hi.

SONIA (24), their shared assistant, rushing past, rolling a FILING CABINET into Cary's office. An overbusy Michelle Williams-like college grad.

CARY

It looks like we share an assistant. So tell me when I'm hogging her, okay? And let the best associate win.

(starts into his office)

ALICIA

Excuse me?

Cary turns back, sees her confusion.

CARY

Let the-- Oh. Nothing. I--
Nothing.

What is this?

And he enters his office. Alicia frowns: what the fuck was that? She pushes her door open and finds...

INT. ALICIA'S OFFICE - DAY

...a woman sitting in her chair, flipping through a file. Sexy. Casual clothes. Alicia pauses, checks the name on her door.

KALINDA

Don't worry, it's yours.

(standing)

Kalinda Sharma. The in-house.

ALICIA

Oh, right, the investigator. Dawna said you'd take me through the pro bono. Alicia Follick.

Alicia offers a hand. KALINDA SHARMA (25) barely shakes it. An East Indian stunner. Bollywood Erin Brokovich. No-nonsense, independent, a cool temperament, nonchalantly bisexual.

You want representation - write it in.

KALINDA

You're David Follick's wife?

ALICIA

That's right.

KALINDA

I worked with him at the D.A.'s office. He fired me.

What is this?

Oh. Alicia stares at her. This is getting old.

ALICIA

Look, I'll give you his address if you want to complain; but I have a bail hearing at three, so can we do this?

Tougher than she intended. Kalinda stares at Alicia, gets up, goes to her, and... takes the file box. And...

...CUT TO LATER: She slaps a crime photo on the desk. A car beside Lake Michigan splattered with blood.

KALINDA

It started a year ago. A carjacking. That's what the cops thought at first. Part of that series of carjackings in Wilmette last year. Thieves would target upscale cars...

Kalinda lays out three separate crime scenes: BMWs, Lexus.

KALINDA (CONT'D)

...fix a clip to the fuel line, follow the driver a half mile until he ran out of gas, murder the occupants, then take his car.

Kalinda hands Alicia grisly photos of victims shot in the face, gauging her response. Not what she expected. Alicia more fascinated than appalled.

KALINDA (CONT'D)

At first it looked like this newest carjacking was just another in the series. The only problem: the car wasn't upscale. An old 2001 Honda. Also, there was no clip attached to the fuel line. And, last, the passenger was only shot in the arm.

(an injured Jennifer)

Jennifer Combs. She said her ex-husband struggled with the carjacker-- that's why she was only shot in the arm, and her ex-husband was killed.

Alicia notices something in her file:

ALICIA

She taught at Francis Parker.
(Kalinda looks over at her)
It's a good school.

Scenes back to back
all adding or escalating
conflict. And yet,
the episode is still
developing.

Why do we have
to get to this
court stuff
so fast?

Kalinda just stares at her. Okay. Continues:

KALINDA

The cops began to think it was actually a murder disguised as a botched carjacking: Jennifer killed her ex-husband, then shot herself in the arm.

Alicia studies Jennifer's mugshot. She looks like Alicia at the press conference: overwhelmed, vaguely etherized.

EXT. COOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

ALICIA

The weapon?

Alicia and Kalinda cross toward the criminal courthouse:

KALINDA

Never recovered. The cops theorized she threw it into Lake Michigan. They dragged the lake, never found it. Gunpowder residue was inconclusive.

INT. ELEVATOR - COOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

ALICIA

And her motive?

The two whispering at the back of a courthouse elevator:

KALINDA

She was in a custody battle with her ex-husband. He remarried and wanted custody of their 3-year-old.

MIA's "You're Good" starts to play. Oh, damn. Another ringtone. Alicia reaches into her purse.

ALICIA

Sorry, my daughter.

INT. HALLWAY - PUBLIC SCHOOL - CHICAGO - DAY

Her daughter, GRACE (13), between classes, moving in a stream of kids almost all talking on their cells. Mildly plump, caught at that age between gawky and pretty.

GRACE

Hey, mom. I want to ask you a question, but I don't want you to freak out, okay?

This is the
driver of every
episode.

"The Case"

INTERCUT with...

INT. THIRD FLOOR HALL - COOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

ALICIA

Uh-oh.

Alicia now in a courthouse metal detector line with Kalinda.

GRACE

Forget it, I'll ask Zach.

ALICIA

No, no, what?

GRACE

Some girl said dad slept with a hooker my age, and I just--

ALICIA

What?!

GRACE

They were playing that tape in computer lab: dad with what's her name, Tina...?

Alicia closes her eyes: fuck. As a guard gestures:

COURT GUARD

Ma'am, you'll have to turn that off.

GRACE

And some girl said her dad was a cop, and he said one of the hookers was my age.

ALICIA

(steps out of line to talk)
First of all... they were all over twenty. And, second: isn't there a teacher--? Why are they playing that in computer lab?!

GRACE

It was the bleeped version. Don't worry, Mom. It's not like I don't know this stuff. Look, I've got History. I'll see you tonight.

And-- *click*-- that's it. Alicia shakes her head-- hates when Grace plays it blase. She sees Kalinda impatient to continue. She rejoins her, moving through the metal detector.

conflict, character,
with an added something
why? what is it?

And she's so nonchalant
about it. Imagine the types
of characters you could put
here...

KALINDA

Dawna's defense was simple. The cops never looked for a carjacker. They immediately suspected Jennifer, and ignored everything else. It worked. The jury deadlocked.

Alicia nods as Kalinda pushes into Courtroom #402, looks back at Alicia pausing at the door, intimidated. Staring in. No judge yet. Bailiff and lawyers chatting. Play before curtain.

KALINDA (CONT'D)

What?

ALICIA

Last time I was in court was thirteen years ago.

KALINDA

(dry)

Wow. I was twelve.

ha! → 3rd? reference to her age = conflict.

ALICIA

(looks at her)

Is that supposed to boost my confidence?

And Alicia enters, starts up...

INT. COURTROOM 402 - COOK CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE - DAY

...the aisle. It feels weird, opening the gallery gate, crossing to the defense table, setting her documents on it.

A prosecutor looks over, looks again. MATAN BRODY (29), African-American, cocky, likes the power if not the paycheck of an A.D.A. He shoots a whisper to the other A.D.A.:

MATAN

That's David Follick's wife.

What?! SANDRA PAI (27), a tough Asian lawyer, looks over. Matan stands, crosses to Alicia, air thick with *schadenfreude*:

MATAN (CONT'D)

Alicia! My god! How are you doing? Matan, remember? From the D.A. Christmas party?

ALICIA

Oh, yes, right. Hi.

MATAN

You're at "Stern, Lockhart & Garvin"?

ALICIA
Yeah. First day.

MATAN
Wow, wow. Wow! Oh, this is Sandra
Pai. She's new-- I mean, since
David. How's he doing, by the way?

ALICIA
David? Fine.

MATAN
Say hello for me, will you? He
gave me my first job, you know?
Look at all this.
(her documents; chuckling)
You're gonna bury us. I don't know
how you do it, Alicia. I'd be
huddled up in a ball somewhere.

Alicia nods, used to these passive-aggressive compliments, as--
KLANG-- a security vestibule opens, the accused led out.

MATAN (CONT'D)
Well, back to work. Good luck.

And Matan and Sandra slip back to their table. Sit. Stare
straight ahead, and allow themselves... grins.

SANDRA PAI
Shooting fish in a barrel?

MATAN
Turtles.

Meanwhile, JENNIFER COMBS, is led to the defense table.
Alicia stands, startled. She's lost a third of her weight.
Almost nothing left of the 2nd grade school teacher.

JENNIFER COMBS
Where's Dawna?

ALICIA
I-- Dawna asked if I would step
in, Jennifer. I'm Alicia Follick,
one of the other lawyers at the
firm.

JENNIFER COMBS
Step in?! For how long?

ALICIA
For the retrial.

JENNIFER COMBS

(gasps)

Oh my god.

Alicia tries to reassure her, but everything's moving too fast:

BAILIFF

All rise. The Criminal Court of Cook
County is now in session. The
honorable Judge Colin Bogira presiding.

clock...

JUDGE BOGIRA (62) enters. Not the happiest man in the world.
Ex-Marine. Losing his hair. His bench covered with paper
clips nervously twisted into various shapes.

JUDGE BOGIRA

Be seated. Okay, let's hear it.

The prosecutors look over at Alicia. Oh. She stands. Um...

ALICIA

I... Your honor...

She sorts through her documents. Matan, seeing an opportunity,
jumps to his feet (Chicago trials a contact sport):

MATAN

Your honor, just to refresh your
memory, the accused, Ms. Combs, was
deemed a flight risk due to an
earlier custody hearing--

ALICIA

Your honor, I just--

MATAN

--where she threatened to run off
with her daughter.

JUDGE BOGIRA

Yes, and yet just last week, a jury
deadlocked on these charges 6 to 6,
Mr. Brody. I know our new D.A. wants
to look tough, but why are you
fighting this?

MATAN

The People are prepared to retry
this case right now, your honor. If
Mrs. Follick is so intent on getting
her client out, why doesn't she
agree to a speedy trial?

The judge looks up at the name. Grins. As if a dirty word:

JUDGE BOGIRA
Mrs. Follick?

ALICIA
 (sighs: here we go)
 Yes, your honor.

JUDGE BOGIRA
 The wife of our "esteemed" ex-D.A.
 Your husband and I never quite saw
 eye to eye, ma'am. In fact, I think
 he got exactly what he deserved.

Alicia winces. So does Jennifer sitting beside her.

ALICIA
 Your honor, as you can see, I--

JUDGE BOGIRA
 Mrs. Follick. Don't talk.
 (Alicia doesn't)
 --but if the prosecution thinks
 this will in some way prejudice me
 against your client, he is sorely
 mistaken. Nice try, Matan.
 (Matan shrugs: worth a try)
 Ms. Combs is granted pre-trial
 release with electronic monitoring.
 She's restricted to her home,
 attorney's offices, and transit in
 between. Given that this is a
 rerun, I'll set a trial date for
 next week. Are we all happy? Good.

Bang-- he quickly hits his gavel, and that's it. Alicia just
 stands there, not sure what hit her. A stunned Jennifer
 stands, shakes her hand:

JENNIFER COMBS
 Thank you.

ALICIA
 (doesn't know what to say)
 I... sure.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONESUPER
LONG TEASER

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LAW FIRM - (NEXT DAY) - DAY

An electronic monitor. It blinks away on Jennifer's ankle as Kalinda and Alicia take notes, listening:

JENNIFER COMBS

We had a nice time. Michael talked about missing his daughter, and about the life we had together. He wanted to drive along the lake, but we got a flat. He was getting out to fix it when I saw... a red pick-up truck.

(pained)

Do we need to do this again?

KALINDA

Mrs. Combs, we're looking for inconsistencies in your testimony. So yes.

Jennifer swallows. Alicia eyes her, sees how hard this is.

JENNIFER COMBS (O.S.)

The driver came up to Michael's window. He was wearing a ski mask, and I... I didn't see the gun until Michael grabbed it. There was this shot, and I saw... Michael's face... (pauses, unbearable)

ALICIA

Do you want to pause for a minute?

Kalinda shoots an irritated look toward Alicia.

JENNIFER COMBS

No. Just if there were some water.

INT. WORKSTATION ROW - 27TH FLOOR - DAY

Alicia leans out the conference room door:

ALICIA

Sonia, can you get us some water?

Sonia, at her workstation, covers her headset, whispers:

SONIA

I'm taking notes on Cary's call.

ALICIA

How long?

BUT ALSO, WE'RE
HERE. THIS IS
THE PLOT ALMOST
EVERY WEEK -
THE CASE, AND

SOMEHOW WE'VE
MANAGED TO WORK
THAT IN BY ACT ONE.

SONIA

5 minutes. But then I've got his depo.

Alicia frowns, shoots a look toward Cary in his office.

ALICIA

Okay, tell me when you're done. And
I need some filing cabinets in my
office.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - 27TH FLOOR - LAW FIRM - DAY

Alicia returns to the conference room with bottled water,
finds Kalinda mid-questioning: more confrontational.

KALINDA

But that's the problem. You say the
red pick-up truck came from here--
(a crime scene map)
But there's a Walmart surveillance
camera here. And the prosecution
played it to make you look like a liar.

JENNIFER COMBS

I'm not lying.

KALINDA

Then you're mistaken, or something,
because the tape doesn't show a
truck. And that's why we're facing
a retrial now, and not an acquittal.

ALICIA

(clears her throat, warmer)
What Kalinda is saying is-- couldn't
you have been mistaken? Couldn't
the car have come from... here?

Another part of the map. Jennifer stares at it, and a tear
rolls down her cheek. Kalinda rolls her eyes, backs away:
too much estrogen for her, as Alicia approaches, sees
Jennifer has a small worn photo. LILLY (3).

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Is that your daughter?
(Jennifer nods, shows her)
She's beautiful.

JENNIFER COMBS

They won't let me see her. My in-
laws-- they have custody, and I--
(chokes up)
In one day. Everything.
(MORE)

JENNIFER COMBS (CONT'D)
 My job, my life, my daughter.
 Everything gone. What am I going
 to do?

Jennifer cries. Alicia eyes her sympathetically.

*Out of all the types of
 cases, why this one?*

ALICIA
 You're going to take it one day at
 a time, Jennifer. We got you
 housing. Go there, take a shower,
 take a nap, don't turn on the TV.
 Do you like reading?
 (Jennifer nods)
 I'll get you some books. Fiction is
 best. You won't feel like putting
 on nice clothes or make-up, but
 force yourself to. Not for court,
 for you. The superficial things
 matter more than anything right now.

Jennifer wipes her eyes, nods, as Kalinda studies Alicia: for
 the first time authoritative. Something she lived.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
 Meanwhile, I'll petition the court
 for visitation rights. Okay?

JENNIFER COMBS
 If they could even send some
 pictures. The worst thing in prison
 was not having photos of her.

Alicia nods. Takes a second to consider this.

JENNIFER COMBS (CONT'D)
 Do you think I have a chance?

ALICIA
 I think the jury deadlocked 6 to 6.
 I think Dawna's strategy-- arguing
 that the police were so quick to
 focus on you, they never pursued the
 real carjackers-- is a good one.
 And I think we have the advantage of
 interviewing the first jurors to see
 how to improve our case. So, yes, I
 think we have a very good chance.

JENNIFER COMBS
 Thank you. It's hard.

ALICIA
 I know.

JENNIFER COMBS
Does it ever get easier?

ALICIA
(considers it)
No.

Jennifer smiles. Likes her brutal honesty.

*Alicia relatable to
to the client.*

ALICIA (CONT'D)
But you do get better at it.

INT. WORKSTATION ROW - 27TH FLOOR - DAY

Alicia sees Kalinda staring at her as they exit the room.

ALICIA
What?

KALINDA
Nothing. You go interview the
jurors; I'll try to figure out how
a surveillance camera can lie--

LAUREN YOST
Alicia?

Alicia turns, sees a woman approaching. LAUREN YOST (35), a
fit, pretty, and elegant Highland Park mom.

ALICIA
Lauren?

LAUREN YOST
Look at you. I love your hair.
Phil and I are here doing some
estate planning. What about you?

ALICIA
I work here.

LAUREN YOST
You're kidding! That's great.
You know, Jeanie asks all the time
about your Gracie: "When are we
gonna' get together again?" And I
keep saying "We've got to call."

ALICIA
That would be great.

LAUREN YOST
So let's do it. Okay? It's been
too long.

And Lauren starts off. Alicia turns, sees Kalinda smiling.

KALINDA

Let me guess. "Too long" means
right after your husband's press
conference?

Alicia nods. Kalinda chuckles knowingly:

KALINDA (CONT'D)

My job would be a hell of a lot harder
if people weren't so predictable.

INT/EXT - DEPAUL UNIVERSITY - DAY

A lecture hall, class over, students rushing out. Alicia
questions DR. DOWNING (55), a dignified grey-bearded prof.

DR. DOWNING

That's right. I was the jury foreman.

ALICIA

And you don't mind answering a few
questions, Professor? It helps us
refine our case for the retrial.

DR. DOWNING

No, certainly. But I don't think
you'll need much refining. Your
case was very strong, very logical.

Good. Alicia, taking notes, follows him into the hall...

DR. DOWNING (CONT'D)

In fact, I'm not even sure why the
other side went to trial. I voted
for conviction right from the start.

ALICIA

Good, I just--
(looks up)
You mean, acquittal.

DR. DOWNING

No. Conviction.

ALICIA

(pauses, hesitates)
But, I'm with the defense.

Dr. Downing suddenly stops. Stares at her.

DR. DOWNING

Oh.

And he continues off. Alicia frowns: shit. And--

INT. CHICAGO MUSEUM OF ART - DAY

--Alicia, more nervous now, interviews a MUSEUM CURATOR (34), intelligent, pretty, backing up from a large canvas being hung.

ALICIA
You were a "guilty" vote?

CURATOR
Yes. I mean, it was pretty obvious
she did it. Sorry.
(to the workers)
To the left more.

ALICIA
So can you tell me how many voted
for conviction right from the start?

CURATOR
Eleven.

ALICIA
What?

CURATOR
Eleven. There was just one hold-
out. Juror #9. We argued with her
for three whole days.

INT. CHICAGO LIBRARY - DAY

ALICIA
But the judge polled the jury, and
you deadlocked six to six.

Alicia now interviewing a wispy MALE LIBRARIAN, pushing books
through the stacks, whispering:

LIBRARIAN
Yes, well, the judge was only going
to declare us deadlocked if we
evenly split, so some of us agreed
to change our votes to "not guilty"
just to get out of there.
(Alicia stares at him: uh-oh)
If it weren't for Juror #9, we
would've convicted. She didn't
convince us, she exhausted us.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

A worried Alicia talks with Kalinda on her cell:

ALICIA
I'm checking her out now. She's
the only reason Jennifer isn't
facing 30 to life.

KALINDA (O.S.)
Get her details: age, employment,
college level. We can gear jury
selection to her type.

Alicia nods and...

INT. MRS. DURETSKY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Cats. Everywhere. In a small apartment. Alicia stares at
them as she calls into the kitchen:

ALICIA
No tea for me, Mrs. Duretsky. So
the other jurors said you were the
only hold out? Is that correct?

MRS. DURETSKY (65) enters. In a mumu. Doesn't inspire a lot
of confidence, pouring milk into various plates.

MRS. DURETSKY
Yes. They all thought they were so
much smarter than me. But my vote
counted just as much as theirs.

ALICIA
Uh-huh. Can you tell me exactly *what*
in the defense's case convinced you?

MRS. DURETSKY
Well... the whole thing really. I
tend to look at people and size
them up pretty quickly. That lady--
I liked her.

ALICIA
The defendant: Jennifer?

MRS. DURETSKY
No, no, the lawyer. She never put
on airs. I liked that.

Alicia studies her-- a twinge of "uh-oh."

ALICIA
The defense lawyer argued the police
never pursued the actual carjacker--
was that the reason you voted "not
guilty?"

MRS. DURETSKY

What?

ALICIA

She presented evidence the police never pursued a carjacker. Was that what made you hold out?

MRS. DURETSKY

Oh, I don't know about that. I just tend to get a *feeling*.

(lifts a cat)

Don't I, Mrs. Pringles?

Alicia stares at her. Oh fuckin' shit. *ha!*

INT. ALICIA'S MERCEDES - NIGHT

Alicia. She sits depressed in her dusty Mercedes, staring straight ahead. Parked in the building's antiseptic and bright underground garage. She takes out...

...Jennifer's mugshot, looks at it. Damn. When... "Bitch is Back" plays. She sighs. Her mother-in-law. Answering...

ALICIA

Hello? What's wrong, Jackie?

Alicia listens, but she hears laughter, looks up, sees... *Exp Vs Real*

...Will and a sexy 26-year-old PARALEGAL laughing intimately, heading home, stopping right in front of her windshield. Um, Alicia slumps down in her seat, trying not to be seen. Not sure why she cares, but she does. Quieter...

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Look, Jackie, she's at a new school. She's left all her old friends. I just need you to go easier on Grace.

INTERCUT with...

INT. KITCHEN - ALICIA'S APARTMENT - DAY

...JACKIE FOLLICK (65), her mother-in-law. A blue blood unstoppable force of nature. An Ike-era widow. Always elegant, always domineering. Unpacking packing boxes...

JACKIE

All I said was: I could help her shop for pants that would make her look slimmer, that's all.

Alicia closes her eyes. Dammit.

ALICIA

Grace is at a perfectly healthy weight right now, and I don't want her to have any body image issues.

JACKIE

She'll only have "body image issues" if she keeps *gaining* weight.

Alicia silently screams "Fuck you" at her phone when...

WILL

Alicia?

Oops. A smiling Will peering toward her. Hey. Alicia waves weakly. Will motions for the Paralegal to go on ahead, starts up to her window...

ALICIA

Look, I have to go, Jackie. Let's talk about this when I get home.

And she hangs up as Will arrives...

WILL

Hey. So I heard the bail hearing went well. Congratulations.

ALICIA

Thanks.

WILL

Yeah. You heading home?

ALICIA

I am.

(something on her mind)

Will, can I ask you a question?

WILL

Sure. It's my real hair.

Alicia smiles. Two old friends.

ALICIA

You know the new associate Cary?

WILL

The one in the Brioni?

(Alicia shoots him a look)

What? I'm observant.

ALICIA

Yes, the *one in the Brioni*. He
said "Let the best associate win."
What's he mean by that?

Will frowns, shrugs:

WILL

What he means is something I
thought we weren't making public.

ALICIA

What?

WILL

We only have one associate position
open. We agreed to hire two
applicants, and in six months
decide which one to retain.

ALICIA

So it's a contest? Me or Cary?

Up the stakes.

WILL

It was that or a cage match.

(smiles)

I'm just glad your pro bono's going
well.

ALICIA

(forces a smile)

Me too.

EXT. TAMMS MINIMUM SECURITY UNIT - (NEXT DAY) - DAY

A prison. Trees. Grass. More Club Fed than Folsom.

INT. VISITORS SECURITY VESTIBULE - DAY

Alicia waits. We're not sure why she's here: a prison waiting
area. She looks down at the leather binder in her lap. The
one word there: "Goals." She clicks her pen, writes under it
one word... "Survive." Nods. Sounds about right.

GUARD

Visiting hours are almost over.

She looks up. A GUARD waiting.

INT. VISITING AREA - TAMMA MINIMUM SECURITY - DUSK

He escorts her toward the cafeteria-like visiting area.
Families with loved ones. Only one prisoner not being
visited. He sees her and...

...smiles. David. Oh, that's why she's here. We recognize him from the press conference. He looks good, wearing his uniform like a three-piece suit. Still handsome, impressive.

DAVID FOLLICK
They said a visitor, but I thought Mom.

ALICIA
I've been busy.

DAVID FOLLICK
It's good to see you.

He reaches out, awkwardly hugs her. She nods, stiff.

ALICIA
I need you to sign some things.

Oh. David nods, moderately disappointed. Business. They sit.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
We didn't get everything we wanted on the house. It's a bad time to sell.

DAVID FOLLICK
(sees the number: ouch)
I see that.

ALICIA
Most of it will go to court costs. We'll pay for rent out of my salary, and the kids will have to stay in public school.

DAVID FOLLICK
How are they? Mom says she's helping out around the house.

Alicia digs into her purse as David signs:

ALICIA
They're good. Grace is fighting your mother over clothes. And Zach is using you to make friends at school-- I'm not sure if that's a sign of health or something worse.

DAVID FOLLICK
He's "using me?"

ALICIA
"Funny or Die" has a skit about you. I guess it's cool. Here.

*You almost
Forgot about
him...*

Alicia slides some photos across to David. He looks at them. Grace and Zach. Touched:

DAVID FOLLICK

Thanks.

He reaches a hand across, covers hers. She pulls away.

DAVID FOLLICK (CONT'D)

I know it's been hard, Alicia. You have to believe me, I'm innocent.

(She looks up: are you
fucking kidding me?)

--of the abuse of office charges.

ALICIA

(getting quieter)

You think I give a good goddamn about that, David? There's a tape of you sucking the toes of a 20-year-old hooker playing in Grace's computer lab, and you think I care about the small print in your employment contract!

DAVID FOLLICK

I was set up, Alicia! The D.A. set me up--!

ALICIA

Oh, stop it, David! Just--!

No. Look, I'm not here to fight.

She collects the papers. Starts to stand. David, not wanting her to go.

DAVID FOLLICK

Mom said you're on your first case. Congratulations. The Combs case, right? Who's the judge?

ALICIA

Colin Bogira.

DAVID FOLLICK

You're kidding. He hates me.

ALICIA

I know.

DAVID FOLLICK

Wear something revealing. He has a thing for the ladies. That black dress I got you in Houston, wear that.

Alicia looks at him, shakes her head, chuckles. He's amazing.
An intercom blares: "*Visiting hours have now concluded.*"

DAVID FOLLICK (CONT'D)
(delaying her)
You know there was something weird
about that case: the Combs case.
There was a rumor going around that
something got buried: "pitted."

Alicia pauses. Can't help it.

ALICIA
What?

David takes a moment to think as families pass, leaving.

DAVID FOLLICK
I don't know. Something important.
Evidence or testimony.

Alicia considers it, sees a guard approach.

ALICIA
I should go.

DAVID FOLLICK
Thanks for playing the bread-winner
for a while, Alicia. I know you're
not really built for this stuff.

Alicia looks up at him. He didn't even mean it as an insult--
which makes it worse.

DAVID FOLLICK (CONT'D)
It won't last forever. Ryan thinks
if this appeal goes well, I should
be out in a year. Then things can
go back to normal.

Alicia stares at him. Sees the guard waiting.

ALICIA
You know what, David? It took me a
decade to realize it. But I *am*
built for this stuff. And we're
never going back to normal.

And, with that, Alicia falls in beside the guard, starting
away. With each step, we see it on Alicia's face. A growing
determination.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. WESTERFIELD DRIVE - CHICAGO - (DAYS LATER) - DAY

Alicia. A new side to her. Passion. Arguing with Kalinda:

ALICIA

Look, the cops focused on Jennifer even *before* they did a chemical analysis of the trace evidence; so what if they only did an analysis of what *fit* their theory?

Kalinda snaps photos of the crime scene: a windswept industrial road beside Lake Michigan.

KALINDA

And what if they didn't? What if--
(Alicia holds up a paper)
Okay, what's that?

ALICIA

Page one of the crime lab summary. I was digging through the discovery. Look at the top corner.

Kalinda leans in, sees a Xeroxed slanted line.

KALINDA

Looks like a staple.

ALICIA

It is a staple.

KALINDA

And that's odd *because*?

ALICIA

There was no page two.
(Kalinda looks at her)
Why did they need a staple if there was no page two?

KALINDA

(takes a second)
You think they kept page two out of the discovery because there was something incriminating?

ALICIA

I think either they did, or it would be helpful in court to *imply* they did.

Kalinda eyes Alicia. A new Alicia. Liking this version.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
Look, Jennifer's innocent, but if
we can get her off on a process
question, that's still justice.

KALINDA
So just so I'm clear: we're a day
away from trial and you're thinking
of dropping the old strategy?

ALICIA
Dawna barely convinced a cat lady
to acquit. So, yes.

KALINDA
(takes the lab report)
Okay. I'll check into it.

Alicia nods: good. They turn to the Walmart parking lot.

KALINDA (CONT'D)
So a pick-up truck is crossing a well-
lit, empty parking lot and for some
reason Jennifer's disorientated, and
thinks it's coming not from that
direction, but *that* direction.

They compare the views. Nothing alike.

ALICIA
I don't believe it.

KALINDA
Me neither. So how is a truck
missed by *that* surveillance camera?

A camera on the side of the Walmart. Alicia shrugs:

ALICIA
Mismarked surveillance tape?

Kalinda looks at her, considers it. Interesting. She
crosses to her car, takes off her jacket, drops it inside,
unbuttons the two top buttons of her blouse. Preparing.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

KALINDA
Working. *These* are better than
subpoenas.

Alicia smiles.

INT. WALMART SALES FLOOR - DAY

The security guard. MITCHELL (40). Tall, skinny, reads SOLDIER OF FORTUNE for the articles. He looks at Kalinda and her breasts, trying not to look at Kalinda and her breasts:

KALINDA

We just need to see how the surveillance system works, and we'll be out of your hair in five minutes.

Alicia glances at Kalinda. She's good. Turning it on.

MITCHELL

Five minutes?

She nods. Okay, Mitchell starts up his office stairs, waves for them to follow. Alicia looks over at Kalinda impressed:

ALICIA

Why did my husband fire you?

KALINDA

He accused me of working two jobs.

ALICIA

Were you?

KALINDA

Oh yeah.

Alicia smiles. And they follow him.

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - WALMART STORE - DAY

A surveillance image of the nighttime parking lot. It plays on Mitchell's computer in his office overlooking the sales floor.

MITCHELL

See, the computer automatically records the surveillance, and marks the date and time.

KALINDA

This is the night of the murder?

MITCHELL

Yes. But even if the computer *did* mismark it, I make an hourly sweep around the lot, and I didn't see any pick-up. Look, that's me-- at 11:03-- just before the murder--

The surveillance image: Mitchell crossing the nighttime lot. Kalinda and Alicia frown. A dead end.

KALINDA
Can we get copies of these?

MITCHELL
Sure. *Lanie! I need some disks!*

LANIE (45), a slightly hefty secretary in the outer office. She rolls her eyes, irritated:

LANIE
Alright.

Alicia notices this. Notices Lanie's desk. Framed kid photos, a "Curves" gym bag, a dozen crushed Diet Cokes in the trash. Alicia looks toward Kalinda, getting nowhere with Mitchell. Alicia starts out.

INT. SECURITY BREAK ROOM - DAY

Ka-lump-- she buys a Diet Coke from a vending machine; drops in more quarters-- *ka-lump--* buys another.

INT. SECRETARIAL WORKSTATION - SECURITY OFFICES - DAY

ALICIA
Hi. Your machine gave me an extra Diet Coke. Want one?

Lanie glances up at Alicia leaning in her door:

LANIE
Aren't you one of the lawyers?

ALICIA
I'm just helping out. If you want.

The Coke. Lanie shrugs-- sure-- takes it. They pop the tops, drink. Alicia nods toward her photos:

ALICIA (CONT'D)
Look at all those kids. Wow, they're gorgeous.

LANIE
Thanks. Two kids. Two grandkids.

ALICIA
I have two teenagers. Tell me it gets easier.

LANIE
I'd be lying.

They laugh. Mitchell, hearing their laughter, slams his office door. Alicia and Lanie trade a joking look.

ALICIA
Is he always that charming?

LANIE
He's fine. Just a lazy mall cop.

They laugh. Lanie leans in, gossips:

LANIE (CONT'D)
When school's out, and all the high school girls come over here, mall cop's the first one down on the floor, showing off his gun. But, night shift, he can't get his fat ass out of his chair. I'm the first one in in the morning, and I'm always waking him up.

ALICIA
(studies her)
Really...?

EXT. ALICIA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A downtown apartment building. Middle class nice. Doorman. Surrounded by a sea of traffic, sirens. On the 7th floor...

INT. LIVING ROOM/DINING ROOM - ALICIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

...Alicia studies the video of the WalMart parking lot on her computer, sipping red wine.

Her 3 bedroom apartment. It's a bit crowded, but pretty. Everything doing double duty: Alicia's desk in the corner of the dining room. A few packing boxes still unpacked. Behind her, Jackie enters, in pearls and apron, sets the table:

JACKIE
Do you really have to work?

ALICIA
Another ten minutes.
(calls into the next room)
Zach! I need your laptop!

JACKIE

When David's father was on the Illinois court, he never brought a single case home. Not once.

ALICIA

He was a judge, Jackie; I'm a junior associate. *Zach!*

ZACH

Mom, I just raised my wanted level.

ZACH (14) enters, upset at interrupting "Grand Theft Auto."
A shy AV-kid trying to seem tougher than he is.

ALICIA

I'm proud of you, dear. I just need to play two computer disks side by side. Can you set up your laptop next to my desktop?

Zach shrugs, starts to set them up as Alicia sees Jackie slipping back into the kitchen.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

How's your sister? Any more fights with grandma?

Zach shrugs: noncommittal, but noncommittal-yes. Okay, Alicia gets up, kisses him on the head, starts into the hall.

INT. GRACE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alicia peers into Grace's room. Posters of Obama everywhere.

ALICIA

How're you doing?

GRACE

I want her dead.

ALICIA

(smiles)

Me too; but not yet. Help me out. Which one for court tomorrow?

She holds up a black slinky dress. Clearly David's choice.

GRACE

Are you serving cocktails in court?

Alicia smiles. Holds up a conservative blue pantsuit.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Better. Why can't Zach and I watch ourselves?

ALICIA

She's only here a couple hours a day, Grace.

GRACE

A couple of very damaging hours.

Alicia smiles, kisses Grace on the forehead:

ALICIA

You will survive.

INT. KITCHEN - ALICIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A boiling pot of water. Pasta. Jackie cooking. A good cook. Across the island from her, Alicia chops carrots.

JACKIE

I talked to David. He said you dropped by.

ALICIA

I did.

JACKIE

I'm glad. He's hurting in there. He's very brave, but he's hurting.

Alicia is silent, chopping. Jackie looks toward her.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

He needs you to forgive him, Alicia. I know it's hard but he needs it.

ALICIA

He doesn't need that, Jackie. He needs me to go back to who I was. And I won't do that.

JACKIE

What are you saying?

Alicia sets down her knife, looks at her.

ALICIA

I spent fifteen years not asking him a single question.

(MORE)

ALICIA (CONT'D)
 Doing his laundry, cleaning his house, accepting his reasons for staying overnight in the city. Because I loved him. Because I... *admired* him. Because I didn't want to end up like my parents: divorced and bitter. And he--

The door opens. It's Grace. She looks between the two.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
 We'll be done in a second.

Grace shrugs-- something being discussed. She grabs a piece of bread, exits. Alicia lowers her voice:

ALICIA (CONT'D)
 And he took everything I did, every minute of our marriage, and he...
 (still hurts)
 ...ripped it open for those cameras.

JACKIE
 David didn't want that.

ALICIA
 He wanted a prop, Jackie. He didn't want a wife. I looked at him at that press conference, and I realized... I don't know this man.

JACKIE
 It takes time, Alicia. Give it time.

ALICIA
 No, Jackie. I woke up, and I'm not going back to sleep. If I ever have to go through something like that again, I want it to be because of something *I* did. I'm not going to live or die by someone else's mistakes.

Stay awake Alicia!

Jackie looks at her, wants to say something, but Zach calls:

ZACH (O.S.)
Mom, I got it running.

INT. LIVING ROOM/DINING ROOM - ALICIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Two identical views of the parking lot. Playing on side-by-side laptop and desktop screens. Alicia and Zach watch.

ZACH
What is it?

ALICIA
Video from the night of the murder.

ZACH
Cool, like "Faces of Death."

Alicia glances over, sees Zach studying grisly autopsy photos. She reaches over, slaps the file closed. Zach shrugs, nods toward the screens.

ZACH (CONT'D)
What are you looking for?

ALICIA
I'm not-- [sure]

But something catches Alicia's eye. On the laptop.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
Zach. Can you freeze it? *There.*

He clicks a key. Alicia leans in toward the frozen image, studying a small plastic shopping bag blowing across the lot. Suddenly excited.

ZACH
What? What is it?

ALICIA
Proof.

ZACH
Of what?

ALICIA
Mall cop wasn't there.

EXT. COOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE - (THE NEXT DAY) - DAY

A sunny day. Leaves falling from the trees. And...

INT. HALLWAY - COOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

...Kalinda rushes toward court, passing a herd of lawyers:

LAWYER
How's Mrs. D.A. doing?

Kalinda offers a shrug as she pushes into...

INT. COURTROOM 402 - COOK CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE - DAY

...court. Bogira on the bench. Jury seated. A dozen court watchers. Kalinda joins them in the gallery, eyes Alicia and Jennifer at the defense table.

MATAN

And you were married to the victim
for how long, Mrs. Combs?

The first witness on the stand. CINDY COMBS (30). Plainly-dressed. Pretty, but not botoxed.

CINDY

Two years. Until...

Her voice cracks. Matan gently sets a Kleenex box in front of her as Alicia checks the jury. They seem moved. Not a cat lady in sight. Damn.

MATAN

How did you hear of his murder, if
you don't mind me asking?

CINDY

I was visiting my family in Miami,
and the police phoned. It was-- I
still can't believe it.

MATAN

In her opening statement, the
defense alleged that your husband
was intending to reunite with the
accused-- that in fact that's why
they were going to dinner the night
of the murder. Is that true?

CINDY

No. She told him she wanted to
talk over the custody situation.
Michael was *worried* about Jennifer.
He thought she was... obsessed--

ALICIA

Objection, your honor.

JUDGE BOGIRA

On what grounds?

ALICIA

(hesitates a second)
"Hearsay?"

JUDGE BOGIRA

Nice try, Mrs. Follick. I'll allow.

Alicia frowns. Smooths her collar. Maybe the blue conservative pantsuit was a mistake. She sits, sees Jennifer's worried expression. Nods comfortingly to her.

CINDY

Michael agreed to have dinner with Jennifer because he was afraid of what she might do if he didn't.

MATAN

Thank you, Mrs. Combs. Your witness.

Alicia stands, bumps her knee-- oww-- backs away from the table, covering for it. Nervous:

ALICIA

Now, Mrs. Combs, you stated that Michael wasn't considering reuniting with Jennifer, and yet--

MATAN

Objection.

JUDGE BOGIRA

Sustained.

Alicia pauses. Isn't sure what she did wrong.

ALICIA

In your testimony, Mrs. Combs, you claim that Michael thought my client was dangerous, but isn't it--

MATAN

Objection.

JUDGE BOGIRA

Sustained. Keep trying, Mrs. Follick. You'll hit on it.

ALICIA

I-- Mrs. Combs. Isn't it true your husband changed his mind about fighting my client for custody of their daughter?

CINDY

Yes.

ALICIA
Wouldn't that suggest your
husband's attitude had softened--?

MATAN
Objection.

JUDGE BOGIRA
Sustained.

Alicia starts to ask more, decides against it:

ALICIA
Thank you.

An uncertain Alicia sits, offers a smile to a nervous Jennifer worrying this isn't going well. Matan and Sandra, meanwhile, try to swallow their grins. A bailiff hands a note to Alicia. She opens it, reads: "Calm down." Alicia turns to the gallery, nods to Kalinda. And...

INT. COURTROOM 402 - ONE HOUR LATER - DAY

A police detective. BRIGGS (45). Dudley-Do-Right upstanding.

SANDRA PAI
And why was this carjacking not like
the other three, Detective Briggs?

DETECTIVE BRIGGS
Well, there was no clip on the fuel
line to force the car over.

SANDRA PAI
This was a detail kept from the press?

DETECTIVE BRIGGS
Well, we didn't intentionally keep
it out, but someone imitating the
carjackings wouldn't know to do it.

SANDRA PAI
Instead, the victim pulled the car
over because he had a flat?

DETECTIVE BRIGGS
Yes, ma'am. A nail had been driven
into the rear passenger wheel.

SANDRA PAI
I see. Now why is this something a
carjacker would never do, detective?

DETECTIVE BRIGGS

Well, it sort of defeats the whole purpose. I mean, how do you steal a car with a flat?

Alicia shoots a look toward the jury, all intently making notes on their pads: obviously a good point. Damn. Jennifer leans toward Alicia, whispers:

JENNIFER COMBS

It's not going well, is it?

ALICIA

(whispers back)

It's early.

SANDRA PAI

Your witness.

Alicia stands. Takes a moment. Calms herself.

ALICIA

Detective Briggs, what is "the pit"?

Matan and Pai look immediately up from taking notes: huh?

DETECTIVE BRIGGS

Excuse me?

ALICIA

In police circles, what is "the pit"?

MATAN

Objection, your honor?

JUDGE BOGIRA

On what grounds?

MATAN

On the grounds that... relevance.

JUDGE BOGIRA

Well, let us see how relevant this becomes, shall we? Detective.

Kalinda, in the galley, leans forward, nods-- good-- as Briggs clears his throat, not happy with this:

DETECTIVE BRIGGS

The pit? The pit is police slang for evidence that is thought irrelevant to a crime scene.

ALICIA

And when an officer is referring to "dropping something in the pit" or "pitting it" he refers to what?

DETECTIVE BRIGGS

Excluding it from the crime scene narrative. But this is only the case with irrelevant details. We never exclude pertinent evidence.

ALICIA

Was anything from the Combs crime scene pitted?

MATAN

Your honor, objection!

INT. JUDGE BOGIRA'S CHAMBERS - DAY

In chambers. A wall of words. Matan and Pai yelling. As Bogira studies the xeroxed staple on the lab report.

JUDGE BOGIRA

Okay, okay. So, Mrs. Follick, none of this was in the first trial. Is it your intention to pursue a new defense?

ALICIA

Yes, your honor.

Bogira eyes Alicia, steelier than he thought as Matan explodes:

MATAN

Counsel is trying to mislead the jury with a claim of police corruption--!

JUDGE BOGIRA

Oh, shut up, Matan. Is she right? That's the question. Did you bury something?

MATAN

I-- We all know what's going on here. David Follick was a corrupt D.A. If evidence was buried, *he* buried it; and now *she's* benefiting from *his* knowledge!

JUDGE BOGIRA

Which still leaves you with a possible second page missing here!

(MORE)

JUDGE BOGIRA (CONT'D)

I'll give you until Monday to produce it, along with any evidence it references, then I'll rule on admissability. And you, Mrs. Follick, I'm not sure if you're being fed this stuff or you're doing it on your own, but I'm not going to allow a fishing expedition in my court. Understand?

ALICIA

I do, your honor.

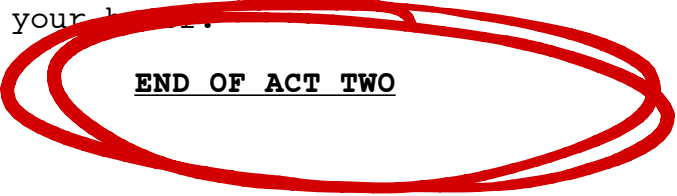
JUDGE BOGIRA

You seem to be learning quick, Mrs. Follick, congratulations. But you'll find there's only one rule in trial work. Don't waste the judge's time. Are you wasting my time?

ALICIA

Never, your honor.

END OF ACT TWO



ACT THREE

INT. DAWNA'S CORNER OFFICE - 28TH FLOOR - LAW FIRM - DAY

Tense. Alicia stands before the partners: Dawna, Will, and a Solomon Cormac. Door closed.

DAWNA

The directive was simple: follow the strategy of the first trial. Instead you're pushing for trace evidence that might not even help your case.

Alicia tries to stay strong, certain:

ALICIA

I interviewed the first jury and they voted 11 to one to convict, so I--

DAWNA

Excuse me, that's not true. It was evenly split.

ALICIA

No. Half the jurors switched votes only when they couldn't get a "troubled" juror to deliberate.
(Will looks up: really?)
So it was my judgement to change strategies.

Dawna. She studies Alicia. Angrily. A personal slap.

DAWNA

Was it your *judgment* not to update us?

INT. WORKSTATION ROW - 28TH FLOOR - DAY

Alicia finds herself out the door. Looks at her hand. Hates that it's shaking. When...

ALICIA

Alicia!

Alicia sighs. An approaching Lauren Yost.

LAUREN YOST

We've gotta stop meeting like this.
(laughs)

ALICIA

Hey, Lauren.

Alicia starts off, but Lauren follows...

LAUREN YOST

We're just finishing up the estate documents today. But you know who I ran into downtown? Deena Hart. I told her I saw you, and she said she was going to give you a call so the three of us could have lunch.

ALICIA

Lauren, I don't mean to be rude, but... Deena isn't going to call, and we're not going to have lunch. And that's fine. Really, it is.

Lauren stares at her. The honesty of this pretty blinding.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Everybody's moved on. It's not a good or bad thing. It's just what happens. It's great to see you. I have to get back to work.

And Alicia continues off. Lauren watches her go: the smallest edge of guilt there. While...

INT. DAWNA'S CORNER OFFICE - 28TH FLOOR - LAW FIRM - DAY

...the partners deliberate...

DAWNA

She's a junior associate who doesn't *think* she's a junior associate. Her husband was the D.A., she lived in Highland Park. It's not just trying to teach an old dog new tricks. It's trying to teach an *entitled* dog new tricks.

WILL

Oh, come on, Dawna. She's trying to win a case. You mentor these women until they start competing with you.

DAWNA

What?! Excuse me?!

CORMAC

Okay, okay. What are your recommendations?

DAWNA

I think we should reprimand Alicia, and put Cary in as first chair.

Cormac turns to Will: You? Will considers it.

WILL

You know one thing we haven't talked about? What if there is something in this missing trace evidence?

And...

INT. CRIME LAB - DAY

KALINDA

Just a peek, Danny. Come on.

It's Kalinda smiling flirtatiously with DANNY (32), a nervous Wallace Shawn type, outside the crime lab. Kalinda dressed to accentuate everything that needs to be accentuated.

DANNY

No. How'd you even get in here?

KALINDA

I still have friends in the D.A.'s office. Come on, I know the judge ordered you to look through the raw Combs evidence. What'd you find?

Danny stares at her, and...

INT. DANNY'S WORKSTATION - CRIME LAB - DAY

DANNY

Hairs. Brown. A half inch long.

Danny whispers nervously as Kalinda peers through a microscope.

KALINDA

Pubic hairs?

DANNY

No. Not curled. Don't touch that.

KALINDA

And you checked their residences?

DANNY

There were no matching hairs in the accused or victim's house. Now you have to go. Please.

KALINDA

Where were these found?

Danny sighs, checks a report:

DANNY
On the deceased. His left coat arm.

KALINDA
(incredulous)
And the cops think *this* is
immaterial to the case?! They're
found on the arm used by a driver to
struggle with a carjacker, and--?

DANNY
These didn't come from any carjacker.

KALINDA
How do you know?

DANNY
They're not human.

Kalinda. She stares at him. What?

INT. ALICIA'S OFFICE - DAY

Jennifer. She hungrily flips through new photos of Lilly, now
a year older. She laughs at her in a witch costume.

JENNIFER COMBS
Thank you. Thank you.

Alicia, still distracted, nods, smiles. Standing in her office
now stacked high with files and exhibits. Still no filing
cabinets. A phone rings out at the secretarial workstation.

JENNIFER COMBS (CONT'D)
That's her. Isn't it?

ALICIA
Sonia, can you send it in?

But the phone still rings. Alicia leans out her door, finds...

INT. WORKSTATION ROW - 27TH FLOOR - DAY

...Sonia gone-- in the conference room across the hall,
taking notes on Cary's deposition. Shit. Alicia answers it:

ALICIA
Alicia Follick's office. Hold on.

Alicia frowns at the buttons on the phone. Not sure which
one to push. There. No. Another.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
Pick it up, Jennifer.

INT. ALICIA'S OFFICE - DAY

And a nervous Jennifer takes a deep breath, picks up.

JENNIFER COMBS
Hello.

LILLY COMBS (O.S.)
Mommy?

Jennifer breaks down, crying. Hearing her daughter's voice.

JENNIFER COMBS
Baby, it's me.

Alicia at the door finds her eyes wet too. Can't help it.

LILLY COMBS (O.S.)
*Where are you, mommy? I miss you
so much.*

JENNIFER COMBS
I know, I miss you too. I just-- I
hope I can see you. I want to see
you.

LILLY COMBS (O.S.)
I want to see you too.

Alicia wipes a tear from her cheek, slowly...

INT. WORKSTATION ROW - 27TH FLOOR - DAY

...steps out, quietly closing the door. She sees Sonia
rolling a FILING CABINET toward her.

ALICIA
Oh, good. I'm overflowing in here.

SONIA
Actually, Mrs. Follick... ah...

She wheels it into Cary's tidy office. Oh, come on!
Alicia's frustration bubbles over:

ALICIA
We need to talk, Sonia.

SONIA
I know. I just-- I have to get
back to the deposition.

ALICIA

No, *stop*. You're both our assistants. You're not just working for Cary.

SONIA

I know, Mrs. Follick, but I need this job, and Cary...
(trying to be polite)
...he's definitely going to be here. I'm sorry.

And she rushes off. Alicia just stands there, when...

KALINDA

It's not human.

Alicia turns to find Kalinda approaching. What?

KALINDA (CONT'D)

The trace evidence. It's hair from an Italian greyhound. Neither Jennifer or Michael had pets. And here's something else. There's a chemical on the hair. *Alco ectolin*. A lotion for muscle and joint pain.

ALICIA

(peering at her notes)
That's the chemical number?

KALINDA

No, his cell. I agreed to drinks.

Alicia looks up, smiles. Starting to love Kalinda.

ALICIA

So we're looking for a greyhound-owning senior citizen?

KALINDA

"We"? I hear you're being bumped to second chair.

Alicia stares at Kalinda. A surprise. She looks around. Sees the Assistant Brian nearby. They lower their voices:

ALICIA

When?

KALINDA

Tomorrow. Cary's being transitioned in. They go back to the first strategy.

Alicia takes a second. Considers it.

ALICIA
Then that leaves today.

Kalinda nods. A moment between them.

KALINDA
So go kill him.

INT. COURTROOM 402 - COOK CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE - DAY

The Walmart surveillance. It plays on a courtroom monitor.

MATAN
This is at 11:03, the night of the
murder, Mr. Mitchell. And that's
you crossing the lot, correct?

The Walmart security guard, looking crisp, professional.

MITCHELL
Yes, sir, that is correct. It's
part of my job to make a circuit of
the lot every hour on the hour.

Alicia (wearing the black dress now-- whatever it takes)
checks how Jennifer is doing. She looks down at the photos
of Lilly in her hand, still glowing.

MATAN
And you saw no mysterious pick-up
truck? No evil carjackers racing
past you? Nothing the defendant
claims she saw? Correct?

MITCHELL
That's correct.

Will enters the gallery, sits behind Kalinda. Whispers:

WILL
How's it going?

KALINDA
Can't tell yet. If we undercut *him*,
we're halfway home. But we still
have to throw together a defense.

Will nods, sees a man at the back of the court. Leaning
against the wall watching. Will whispers:

WILL
What's the D.A. doing here?

The new D.A. GREG CHILDS (45). A Chicago Gavin Newsome. Dignified, tall, humorless, and handsomely greying.

KALINDA

What do you think? They're worried she's working for her husband.

Interesting. Will turns back to Alicia now standing for cross-examination. A bailiff wheels two monitors next to the first.

ALICIA

Thank you. Now, Mr. Mitchell, we have three images here. The middle one is the night of the murder. The left is the surveillance from the night *before* the murder. And the right is the surveillance from the night *after* the murder. Correct? Can you see the dates on all three?

MITCHELL

Yes, I can. That's correct.

ALICIA

Good. And, as you said before, here you are-- let me roll these forward a bit-- here you are crossing the lot at 11:03 on the night of the murder? And here you are...

But Alicia pauses, sees Greg Childs. Eyeing her. A long second.

JUDGE BOGIRA

Mrs. Follick?

Alicia nods, continues. More intent, biting into it:

ALICIA

And here you are, Mr. Mitchell, doing the same the night before and the night after the murder. Making a circuit of the parking lot. It must get old?

MITCHELL

No, ma'am. My job may not pay as much as yours, but I love it.

Matan and Sandra watch Alicia. Where is she going with this?

ALICIA

Okay, now let's fast-forward the image another forty-five minutes, shall we? There. What do you see?

MITCHELL

Nothing.

ALICIA

No, there. Do you need to move closer?

MITCHELL

Oh. It looks like a shopping bag.

ALICIA

Actually it is. A plastic shopping bag. It was windy that night. And it blew across the lot at 11:48.

MATAN

Your honor, objection, what does this have to do with anything?

JUDGE BOGIRA

Beats me. But I'm interested. Aren't you, Mr. Brody? Overruled.

ALICIA

Now let me fast-forward these other two monitors-- the night before the murder and the night after-- to the same time code.

She does so, and-- click-- she freeze-frames all three. And there it is-- the same plastic bag blowing across the lot.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

What do you see?

MITCHELL

(appalled)

I-- I don't know.

ALICIA

I think you do know, sir. Either you have a plastic bag that blows across your lot every night at 11:48 or these are copies of the same tape.

Matan and Sandra close their eyes: oh shit. As Judge Bogira suppresses an appreciative snort, and the jury all immediately turn to make a note on their pads.

Will's grin widens as Alicia clicks "play" on the three monitors. And the exact same bag blows across the lot.

MITCHELL

I didn't-- It's not what it looks like!

ALICIA

I understand, sir. It's not that you *willfully* misled the police?

MITCHELL

No, right-- correct.

ALICIA

It's just that it's cold out at night? And sometimes you don't make the circuit of the lot?

MITCHELL

Yes.

ALICIA

So, on nights you don't go out, you don't record the actual surveillance image; you just set your computer to duplicate the night before in case the manager checks it, is that correct?

MITCHELL

I-- Yes.

Will grins, looks back, sees D.A. Childs exiting unhappily.

ALICIA

So just to be clear: there is no recording of the night of the murder, and you were never in a position to see or not see a pick-up truck with carjackers?

(Mitchell nods, destroyed)

Was that a yes, sir?

MITCHELL

I'm sorry. Yes.

Jennifer takes a deep breath. The truth.

ALICIA

No further questions.

Matan and Sandra just stare straight ahead, destroyed. As Alicia turns toward her seat, looks for Greg Childs. He's gone. Alicia nods-- good-- then she sees Will, smiling.

She offers a quick smile back, sits. Pats an appreciative Jennifer's hand. Better than therapy.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. ALICIA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Will and Alicia. Late night bull session. Alicia's office is an ever-growing chaos of files. Still no filing cabinets.

WILL

So, you've got no rebuttal witnesses?

ALICIA

Just Jennifer.

WILL

And you're wondering whether
demolishing the key prosecution
witness didn't just save your ass
as first chair-- congratulations,
by the way--

(Alicia smiles, nods)

--but was enough for reasonable doubt?

Alicia nods. A second of silence as they think.

WILL (CONT'D)

You know what I don't like?

ALICIA

The nail in the tire?

WILL

Yeah. And the old Honda. It just
doesn't *feel* like a carjacking. It
feels like a murder made to look like
a carjacking. Is that a couch?

A couch standing on its end in a corner.

ALICIA

Yeah, maintenance brought it by.
Go for it.

Will lowers the couch. Jumps on it. Looks around.

WILL

You need a maid in here.

But Alicia pauses, a new thought nudging her.

ALICIA

Okay, what if it wasn't a carjacking?

WILL

Then you lose.

ALICIA

No, no, what if we don't argue against their case. We agree it was a murder made to look like a carjacking-- but Jennifer just wasn't the one who did it?

WILL

Sounds like you're reinventing the wheel.

ALICIA

(getting excited)

No, all they've proven is it wasn't a carjacking, not that Jennifer was the shooter. I need to offer up another suspect. Who are Michael's enemies? Who would want him dead?

Alicia finds a number, dials, sees Sonia pausing at the door:

SONIA

Hi. I just wanted to say: congratulations, Mrs. Follick. I heard you did well in court.

ALICIA

...Thank you.

Sonia starts to say more when Cary calls: "*Sonia!*" She smiles, embarrassed, starts off. Will shoots a look toward Alicia-- what was that about? She shakes her head-- nothing.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

Yeah, hey, Kalinda. What do we know about the victim's enemies? No, it just seems like we need to point to a suspect.

Will gets up, whispers:

WILL

Sounds like a late night. Let's do dinner tomorrow.

Alicia nods, regretfully. Watches Will leave. He looks good from this angle. Sexy. He turns the corner. Gone.

ALICIA

No, look, let's talk to the wife-- Cindy-- ask if he had any money troubles?

(MORE)

ALICIA (CONT'D)
No, the thing is: we don't need a
wodunit, just a coulda-dunit.

EXT. COOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Morning. Bright and beautiful.

INT. HALLWAY - COOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Kalinda and Alicia exit a courthouse elevator, hurriedly walk
and talk their way through documents as they head toward court:

KALINDA
That's from the TRW; and that's the
family history.

ALICIA
Where are the credit card receipts?

KALINDA
Here. But they're going to object
the whole way. You'll need to just
string together some implications--

GREG CHILDS
Mrs. Follick, do you have a moment?

They both stop, see a stone-faced D.A. Childs in their path.

ALICIA
I-- sure.

Alicia nods to a reluctant Kalinda: go ahead. Kalinda knits
her brow: you sure? Alicia nods. Kalinda continues off.

GREG CHILDS
I don't think we've ever met. I'm
Greg Childs.

ALICIA
We've met.

Alicia not smiling, not offering a hand. Okay, no
pleasantries. Childs looks around: no one within ear-shot.
Time for the adults to talk.

GREG CHILDS
You know he's using you, don't you?
David blames me for his downfall.
He thinks I set him up. He's using
you to get to me.

ALICIA
How do you figure?

GREG CHILDS

Mrs. Follick, please. He told you about the missing trace evidence. He told you about "the pit."

(Alicia smiles)

Don't make yourself collateral damage here. For your own sake.

ALICIA

Mr. Childs. The day you leaked that sex tape to the press, and forced me to shield my kids from every cable news station playing it in 24-hour rotation-- *that* was the day I became collateral damage. You think you have to worry about my husband, Mr. Childs? You've obviously never made a woman angry before.

(smiles politely)

But good luck in court.

And Alicia starts away confidently. Childs watches her go.

INT. COURTROOM 402 - COOK CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE - DAY

Cindy Combs back on the stand. Still pale, a pained woman. Alicia approaches, smiling, wind at her back from the Childs talk. *Plop*-- she slaps the Kleenex box in front of her.

ALICIA

Mrs. Combs. Did you and the deceased sign a pre-nuptial agreement?

CINDY

A--? Yes. For tax purposes.

ALICIA

Just so I'm clear: if the deceased were to divorce you-- let's say in order to reunite with his first wife--

MATAN

Objection.

JUDGE BOGIRA

Sustained.

ALICIA

If he were to divorce you, *you* would be cut off from his pre-marital savings, is that correct?

MATAN

Objection. Relevance.

JUDGE BOGIRA

Sustained. Move it along, Mrs. Follick.

ALICIA

Mrs. Combs, as you testified earlier, you were in Miami at the time of the shooting, visiting family. So the police never suspected or questioned you?

CINDY

Of the murder? No, of course not.

ALICIA

What about your brother?

Matan jumps to his feet:

MATAN

Objection, your honor! Come on! This whole line of questioning is a smoke screen!

JUDGE BOGIRA

Mr. Brody, why don't we wait for a whiff of smoke before we call it a screen, please. I'll allow.

ALICIA

The police never questioned your brother, isn't that correct, Mrs. Combs?

Cindy frowns. This is not going to a good place. Detective Briggs, meanwhile, in the gallery, watches, curious.

CINDY

There was no reason to question him.

ALICIA

Because he lives in Miami?

CINDY

Because Danny had nothing to do with this!

Alicia shoots a look toward the jury: Cindy's new abrasive tone not going over well. Jennifer, meanwhile, watches confused: where's Alicia going with this?

ALICIA

Mrs. Combs, the judge has admitted into evidence the buried--

(MORE)

ALICIA (CONT'D)

(sees Matan jumping up)
--strike that-- the "previously
unreleased" trace evidence. He has
also admitted into evidence the
crime lab's finding that these
greyhound hairs were covered with a
chemical compound called *alco*
ectolin." Have you heard of this?

CINDY

The chemical? No.

ALICIA

Well, neither had I. It turns out,
it is a lotion. A lotion used at
dog racing tracks to ease--

MATAN

Objection. Not in evidence.

JUDGE BOGIRA

Sustained. You might want to stay
standing, Mr. Brody. I have a feeling
we're nearing your smoke screen.

Detective Briggs leans forward in his seat listening as...
Alicia gives herself a second, slows it down, makes the words
count:

ALICIA

Mrs. Combs, isn't it a fact that, a
year ago, at the time of the murder,
your brother worked at a dog track--?

MATAN

OBJECTION!

JUDGE BOGIRA

Sustained.

But Alicia eyes the jury, all intently taking notes.

ALICIA

No more questions, your honor.

And she returns to her table, sits. Jennifer leans toward
her, whispers...

JENNIFER COMBS

Are you saying Cindy had Michael
killed?

ALICIA

No. I'm *implying* it.

Jennifer studies Alicia as, behind them in the gallery,
Detective Briggs gets up, starts out of court.

INT. ALICIA'S OFFICE - DAY

Alicia and Kalinda sit in her office, feet up. Still a mess.
Still no filing cabinets. Quiet.

ALICIA
So if they come back today?

KALINDA
It's "guilty." Guilty verdicts
come fast. "Not guilty" verdicts
come slow.

ALICIA
So I'll be optimistic, and take a nap.

They both sit back, relax, feet up on the desk. Kalinda sees
Alicia's laptop: the screen saver playing old family vacation
photos. One of David, smiling, swim-suited. A happier time.

KALINDA
You know what I don't get.
(Alicia looks over at her)
Why you stood by him. I would've
stuck a knife in his heart.

Alicia. She studies her. It's sort of not rude from Kalinda.

ALICIA
I always thought I would too. When
I heard about those other scandals,
those other wives, I thought-- how
can you allow yourself to be used
that way? And then it happened.
And I was...
(looks for the right word)
...unprepared.

The two women look at each other. A moment. When Sonia
knocks at the open door.

SONIA
Sorry to bother you, Mrs. Follick.

KALINDA
(winces: damn)
The jury's in?

SONIA
No, Judge Bogira wants to see you
in his chambers.

Alicia and Kalinda trade a look. What?

INT. JUDGE BOGIRA'S CHAMBERS - DAY

The silent chambers. Alicia stands in front of Bogira's desk, waiting. He's not there. She shoots a look toward Matan sitting quietly in the corner. Something weird here.

A second. And Judge Bogira enters. Takes off his robes.

JUDGE BOGIRA

Well, Mrs. Follick.

(how to start)

Chicago Homicide has decided to
reopen its investigation into the
murder of Michael Combs.

Alicia's eyes widen. What?

JUDGE BOGIRA (CONT'D)

Detective Briggs, doing an admirable
amount of due diligence, confirmed that
Cindy Comb's brother, Danny, not only
had access to his employer's pick-up
truck on the night of the murder, but
the dog hairs admitted into evidence
matched those found at his workplace.
The D.A., in his radiant wisdom, has
decided to withdraw the charges against
your client and pursue a case against
Cindy Combs. Isn't that right, Mr.
Brody? All I need is a yes or no.

MATAN

(not happy)

Yes.

JUDGE BOGIRA

Good. Then in ten minutes I'm
dismissing the jury. Any
objections? Good. We're done here.

Alicia can't believe it. She stares at them. And turns,
walks from the room.

INT. HALLWAY - COOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Jennifer is pale, crying. She can't believe it either. She
walks slowly to Alicia and holds her, collapses against her.
Both in tears.

JENNIFER COMBS

Thank you.

Alicia just shakes her head, hugs her back, wipes the tears from her face when... a voice comes from behind them...

LILLY COMBS

Mommy.

A small happy voice. Jennifer closes her eyes overwhelmed as she turns to see a little girl approaching. Lilly. Sweet. In Sunday best. She runs. And Jennifer bends down and picks her up. Crying. And...

...Alicia watches, moved.

INT. WORKSTATION ROW - 27TH FLOOR - NIGHT

The office is dark. Just sparkling skyscraper lights outside. The sound of a floor buffer somewhere. Alicia walks toward her office, high heels off, talking on her cell:

ALICIA

No, it just went a little late,
Jackie. That's all.

JACKIE (O.S.)

I made a pot roast, and I wanted
to know if you're coming home for
dinner.

Alicia laughs. Jackie looks up, confused.

JACKIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

What? What did I say?

ALICIA

Nothing. That's just the call I
always used to make to David.

JACKIE (O.S.)

Well, I don't understand your humor.

Alicia smiles, opens her door, finds her office...

INT. ALICIA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

...perfect. Files all packed away into three new filing cabinets. Couch. Arm chair. Pictures on the wall. Alicia crosses to her desk.

JACKIE (O.S.)

Are you there?

ALICIA

I'm here. See you in about an hour.
(stops her from hanging up)
(MORE)

ALICIA (CONT'D)
Hey, Jackie. I don't think I've
really said this up til now, but
thanks for stepping up.

JACKIE (O.S.)
Of course I would. Why wouldn't I?

Alicia smiles: Jackie at her most defensive when complimented.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
See you at nine.

And Jackie hangs up. Alicia sits. A new chair too. Nice.

WILL
Oh.

It's Will. At her door. Leaving a bottle of champagne.

WILL (CONT'D)
Sorry, I didn't know you-- Just an
office token. You did great.

ALICIA
Thanks. I did, didn't I?

Will laughs. Alicia takes the champagne, looks at the label
as Will stands in the door. Neither knowing what to say.

WILL
Oh, one more thing. As your boss.

ALICIA
Yes, sir.

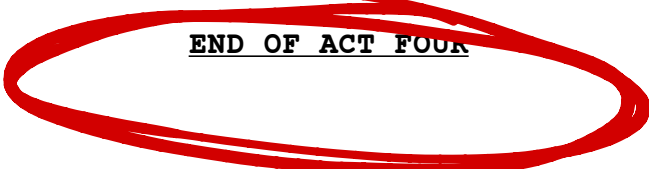
WILL
You've been made my second chair in
the civil case. See you tomorrow
at 9:30. Staff meeting.

ALICIA
Be there.

Will smiles, pauses there a second. Then slips away.
Alicia, alone, grins. She puts her feet up on her desk. And
glances toward her laptop, playing screen saver photos.
Dissolving to a photo of...

...David. And Alicia's smile slips away as she stares at him.

END OF ACT FOUR





LOVECRAFT COUNTRY

AMERICA'S
DEMONS
EXPOSED!

EPISODE #101
"SUNDOWN"
WRITTEN BY
MISHA GREEN
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY
MATT RUFF

STUDIO/NETWORK 05/22/18

The epic TITLE MUSIC from "**THE JACKIE ROBINSON STORY**" (1950) carries us into...

1 **EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - KOREA - NIGHT**

...CHAOS. The D-Day version of the KOREAN WAR mashed up with every PULP NOVEL MONSTER in existence -- AMERICAN TROOPS fight KOREAN GUERRILLAS, "PRINCESS OF MARS"-like ALIENS, and LOVECRAFTIAN MONSTERS.

The VOICE OVER from "The Jackie Robinson Story" breaks through --

"This is a story about a boy and his dream..."

ATTICUS BLACK (MID 20'S) is on a RAMPAGE. Killing monsters. Dodging Guerillas. Badass. And SCARED OUT OF HIS MIND.

"But more than that, it is a story of an American boy and a dream that is truly American..."

Atticus stops. Covered in BLOOD and monster VISCOUS. Marvels at the carnage around him. Americans and Koreans doggedly fight each other despite the Monsters slaughtering them all.

"The year is 1928. The time spring. If you were a young man, your thoughts were undoubtedly turning to love..."

A HALF-NAKED KOREAN-ALIEN HYBRID (MOON JI-AH) floats through the melee towards Atticus. He's TRANSFIXED. Doesn't notice the LOVECRAFTIAN TENTACLED MONSTROSITY rising behind him. *

JI-AH wraps her arms around Atticus. Whispers in his ear in the LANGUAGE OF ADAM. We're not familiar with it yet, but in time we certainly will be -- *

JI-A

Die.

"But if you were a young boy, your thoughts were of one thing..."

Atticus turns now. Eyes WIDENING as he takes in the Lovecraftian Monstrosity posed to strike --

"...baseball."

BAM! The monster is hit by a baseball bat. A home run swing. From #42 himself -- JACKIE MOTHERFUCKIN' ROBINSON. *

#42

Hey kid, I got this. *

As Atticus watches his American hero pulverize the monster to save the day...BAM! BAM! B-- *

2 **INT. BUS ON A - BRIDGE NAMED AFTER A DEAD SLAVE OWNER - DAY**

--AM! Atticus wakes as the bus rumbles across a slatted bridge. He quickly grabs the open copy of **A PRINCESS OF MARS** by **EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS** on his lap, along with his GLASSES sitting on top of it before both slide off.

He blinks the nightmare away as **THE CREW CUTS "SH BOOM"** leaks from the radio -- *"Oh, life could be a dream..."*

A CHYRON tells us it's: 1955

Which is why Atticus, one of two BLACK faces in a sea of WHITE, sits in the back of the bus under a sign -- "THIS PART OF THE BUS FOR THE COLORED RACE." Across the aisle a

ROSA PARK'S LOOK-A-LIKE (60's)

hums as she knits. She notices Atticus's eyes drift out the window. To the rolling COUNTRYSIDE --

ROSA PARK'S LOOK-A-LIKE
Just passed over another bridge named
after some dead slave owner. Finally
made it to the promise land.
Hallelujah. Amen.

ATTICUS
Good riddance to old Jim Crow...

He FLIPS OFF the confederate states receding in the rear view. She LAUGHS, entertained by this vibrant young man --

BAM! A blown tire. The bus limps to the side of the road...

3 **EXT. INDIANA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY**

The SCORCHING SUN beats down on the BUS DRIVER fretting over the shredded tire with a group of concerned BUS RIDERS.

Atticus steps off the bus. Looks up and down the two lane road. DESOLATE. There's one TREE across the way. Just a slither of SHADE. He makes his way over. Sits. Puts on his GLASSES. Opens **A PRINCESS OF MARS**.

There's a WORN ENVELOPE wedged between the pages. Atticus stares at it. Meaningful. Strained. It's obviously more than just a bookmark. He finally removes it, and -- READS.

TIME MORPHS around Atticus as he loses himself in Edgar Rice Burroughs's words --

1) More frustrated BUS RIDERS have abandoned the bus. They fan themselves as they chat with each other. But not with Atticus. He's content to continue reading undisturbed...

2) A CAR slows as it comes across the stranded bus. BUS DRIVER discusses with the DRIVER. Climbs in a moment later. The car pulls away. Atticus just continues reading...

3) The sun beams down. Bus Riders drenched in sweat cut looks at Atticus occupying the only shade. There's room to join him. They don't. And still, he continues reading...

4) A FLATBED FARMING TRUCK rolls up. Bus Driver wears a TRIUMPHANT smile as he climbs from the cab with the DRIVER (LADS). Atticus is finally drawn from his book --

BUS DRIVER

Listen up everybody. Mister Lads here has kindly offered to drive us to the Glen Falls station.

Atticus does not share the FRUSTRATED RELIEF that rolls through the heat stroked Bus Riders as Bus Driver continues --

BUS DRIVER (CONT'D)

It'll be a tight fit with everyone, but the station's only six miles away. It should be an easy ride...

Lads spots Atticus. His eyes NARROW. Belying Bus Driver's promise of easy...

4

EXT. INDIANA COUNTRYSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Atticus is the last to pull his ARMY ISSUED DUFFEL from the bus's luggage compartment. He helps Rosa Park's Look-a-like struggling to drag her heavy SUITCASES to the flatbed --

ATTICUS

Let me get those for you.

ROSA PARK'S LOOK-A-LIKE

Appreciate it...

ATTICUS

Atticus.

ROSA PARK'S LOOK-A-LIKE

Maybelle Cross. You from Florida?

ATTICUS

No, ma'am. Just been working in a garage down in Jacksonville since I got out of the service.

Atticus slides one of Maybelle's suitcases onto the back of the flatbed. Ignoring the WHITE RIDER who slides further over at the prospect of being next to them.

BUS DRIVER (O.S.)

Hold up just a second...

Atticus turns. Looking right past the flustered Bus Driver to Lads watching them with crossed arms and a SNEER --

ATTICUS

Is there a problem?

BUS DRIVER

There is. Um... He's refusing you and your mother a ride.

ATTICUS

She's not my...

Atticus glances to Maybelle. Decides on a different tactic. Steers Bus Driver away for a private moment --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

You said it's six miles to the next station, right? I'll walk, that's fine. But there's no way she'll be able to make that.

BUS DRIVER

Look, I'm real sorry --

ATTICUS

There's no need to be sorry. Now you convinced him to drive out here to help everyone, I know you can convince him to let one more old lady on that truck. Please...

BUS DRIVER

I'll try.

Bus Driver retreats to Lads. They exchange HEATED WHISPERS as Maybelle does some whispering of her own with Atticus --

*
*

MAYBELLE

I ain't that old.

ATTICUS

I know, just playing to the crowd.

MAYBELLE

If I have to walk, I'll be fine.

ATTICUS

You shouldn't have to be fine.

The Bus Driver looks to Atticus. Shrugs apologetically. But Atticus isn't giving up. He approaches Lads --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

How much?

MISTER LADS

What you say to me, boy?

Atticus's jaw tightens. But he keeps himself in check --

ATTICUS

How much to get her on this truck?

*

He waits as Lads considers, finally --

MISTER LADS

Hundred dollars.

ATTICUS

One hundred? Bus tickets from Florida
didn't cost that much --

Atticus catches himself. Swallows his exasperation. Checks
his WALLET. He turns to Maybelle. Lowers his voice --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

You have any money?

MAYBELLE

None I'mma give him.

Atticus gives her a look. Help him out here. She admits --

MAYBELLE (CONT'D)

My daughter gave me just enough to
to get to her in Chicago.

Atticus turns back to Lads's shit eating grin --

ATTICUS

I only have thirty dollars.

Lads eyes Atticus's Duffel at his feet --

MISTER LADS

What's in there? Anything worth
anything?

ATTICUS

Just some clothes. My army uniform.
Books.

MISTER LADS

What kind of books?

ATTICUS

Science fiction mostly.

MISTER LADS

Science fiction? Dump it. Let me see.

Atticus is keenly aware of all the WHITE EYES on him. And how much Lads is enjoying making him jump. But Maybelle needs to get on that truck, so -- he DUMPS his duffel.

Lads carelessly KICKS around the contents. Picks up a small GREEN BOOK. *THE SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL GUIDE*. He thumbs through it with CURIOSITY. Then PUZZLEMENT. Followed by AMAZEMENT --

MISTER LADS (CONT'D)

Hell is this? These addresses.
They're all places that serve niggers?

Atticus just stares back at him in response.

MISTER LADS (CONT'D)

Well hell, if that doesn't beat everything. Not very thick is it?

He exaggeratedly squints at the Guide edge-on. CHUCKLING to himself. Bus Driver, eager to end this uncomfortable show, points to a PACKAGE wrapped in KOREAN GIFT WRAP half-hidden by Atticus's things --

BUS DRIVER

What's that there?

ATTICUS

It's a gift. A first edition book.

BUS DRIVER

That's got to be worth something.

Lads tosses aside the Guide. Picks up the Gift. And Atticus does not want to say it, but --

ATTICUS

It's yours if you want it.

Lads carelessly rips the paper off. Takes in the pristine copy of **ALEXANDER DUMAS'S COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO...**

5 **EXT. ROAD - INDIANA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY**

Atticus trudges. SWEATING. Duffel slung over his shoulder. Maybelle's heavy suitcases in hand. Maybelle by his side.

MAYBELLE

I ain't never seen no Negro man with all them books. No white one either. Must be they gettin' pretty heavy.

Cars filled with WHITE PASSENGERS pass. They don't slow down, and neither Atticus nor Maybelle try to get them to.

ATTICUS

I've lugged around more weight in the army. And books are too sacred to toss on the side of the road.

MAYBELLE

Let me at least carry one of my bags.

There's no way Atticus is going to let Maybelle carry anything. He just keeps walking. So she lets it go --

MAYBELLE (CONT'D)

Alright, then tell me what's that book you been readin' about?

ATTICUS

A Princess of Mars? It's about a man named John Carter who goes from being a captain in the army of Northern Virginia to becoming a Martian warlord. It starts with him running from Apaches, and hiding in this magical cave that transports him to the red planet. And that's where it starts to get good...

It's clear by the fervor in which Atticus speaks he doesn't just love these stories. He loves loves them --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Because of the lower gravity on Mars Carter has super human strength, which is why the Tharks, these six armed green martian warriors, respect him so much. And the Tharks, they kidnap Dejah Thoris. She's the princess of Helium. Which is a city of these red humanoid martians. And of course they fall in love --

MAYBELLE

Hold on, did I hear you say the hero is a confederate officer?

Atticus hears the indictment in that --

ATTICUS

Ex-confederate, but yes.

MAYBELLE

Naw. He fought for slavery.

(MORE)

MAYBELLE (CONT'D)

You don't get to put an ex in front of that.

A wan smile comes to Atticus's lips. Wistful and painful.

MAYBELLE (CONT'D)

Something about that funny?

ATTICUS

Sounds like something my father would say. Has said. He doesn't care much for pulp stories either.

Atticus loses his smile now. The pain associated with his father winning out.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

But the way I see it, stories are like people. Loving them doesn't make them perfect. You just try and cherish them and overlook their flaws.

MAYBELLE

But the flaws are still there.

ATTICUS

Yeah. They are.

Maybelle studies Atticus. Feels like this conversation has moved beyond books for him.

MAYBELLE

We got too much walkin' left to do with you mopin'. Tell me what it is you cherish 'bout your stories.

ATTICUS

"My" stories. That's it, I guess. They're not mine. I love that the heroes get to go on adventures to different worlds, defy insurmountable odds, defeat the monsters, and save the day. Little Negro boys from the Southside of Chicago don't notoriously get to do that.

*
*

MAYBELLE

Unless they join the army.

Again, we see the EMOTION in Atticus's eyes --

ATTICUS

I didn't join for adventure.
(MORE)

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

I joined to get away from my father.
Which is the real funny part, because
he's also now the reason I'm coming
home.

MAYBELLE

He sick?

With great import, that tells us this is what it's all about --

ATTICUS

He's gone missing.

OFF this black boy from the Southside of Chicago, our HERO,
destined for a life he never thought possible. A life of
adventures, defying odds, and saving the day...

SMASH TO TITLES:

L O V E C R A F T C O U N T R Y

6 **EXT. SOUTHSIDE OF - CHICAGO - DAY**

DRIFT through the safe haven that is the black enclave of
the Southside -- black owned BUSINESSES, carefree black
CHILDREN, black COPS -- to the dope beat of the SONG Chicago's
own CHANCE THE RAPPER is going to write for us. *

Find an unassuming building. Once a mechanic's garage. Now
the home of SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL...

7 **INT. BEDROOM - APARTMENT ABOVE SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - DAY** *

GEORGE BLACK (Mid 40's) sits up in bed, marveling at his
sleeping wife HIPPOLYTA (Mid 40's). There's a quiet intensity
about him. His stare is both loving and invasive. She stirs --

HIPPOLYTA

What are you looking at George Black?

GEORGE

My wife.

She smiles sheepishly --

HIPPOLYTA

And why are you looking at your wife?
Are you waiting for her to fix you
breakfast?

GEORGE

I'm leaving tomorrow.

HIPPOLYTA

I'm aware...

GEORGE

And I'm looking at my wife because it feels like I've been spending too much time on the road and not enough time in bed with her.

He pulls her into him. KISSING. Spooning. Hippolyta is fully awake now, her cheeks a rosy red --

HIPPOLYTA

George Black, you've got me blushing before God.

GEORGE

If he's watching, then we should give him a show.

HIPPOLYTA

What has gotten into you lately? You're only going to be gone a few days. Used to be you couldn't wait to go off on some grand adventure.

A sadness clouds George's features. And even though Hippolyta can't see his face, she can feel the change in him.

HIPPOLYTA (CONT'D)

You know I could go. Make the trip instead of you.

That elicits an INCREDULOUS EXHALE from her husband. Hippolyta STIFFENS. George turns her face to him --

GEORGE

You're serious?

Hippolyta looks away. Both affronted and self-conscious --

HIPPOLYTA

Is that idea so crazy? I've written more than my share of reviews for the guide...

GEORGE

Arguably the best ones.

HIPPOLYTA

All based on your notes. Imagine how good they could get if I was able to take a few notes of my own.

George doesn't even consider it. Not even for a second --

GEORGE

The road is too dangerous for a woman traveling alone.

HIPPOLYTA

A woman or me?

GEORGE

Any woman.

He separates from her. Turns on his back. His hand MASSAGING his right knee. A nervous tick activated by dark memories --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You know the shit I have to deal with out there.

Hippolyta's not satisfied by that response. For a moment it seems like she might press, but she moves to get up instead --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Where you going?

He pulls Hippolyta back to him. She lets him, but --

HIPPOLYTA

The block party starts at noon. And those sweet potatoes in the kitchen are not going to turn themselves into pies.

GEORGE

Stay with me.

His hand drifts down between her legs. He STROKES her. And Hippolyta is thoroughly scandalized. Even as the pleasure courses through her --

HIPPOLYTA

What are you... You know Diana's up. How thin these walls are...

(trying a different tact:)

If you distract me now, I'm going to need your help slicing those sweet potatoes.

GEORGE

Hippolyta... I can't remember the last time we made love in the light of day. I want to see my wife.

She looks to him. Longing and desire flares. He pulls the covers back. He's already naked. She lets him pull off her modest nightgown. Then he's on top of her. Inside of her.

Their lovemaking is sensual but also ravenous. Like young lovers discovering each other for the first time...

8 **INT. LIVING ROOM - APARTMENT ABOVE SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - DAY** *

DRIFT from the closed bedroom door, down a hallway lined in FRAMED FAMILY PHOTOS -- a long lineage aware of the power of preserving LEGACY -- to find a messy living room.

In one corner, next to a bookshelf filled with COMICS, sits a PULL OUT SOFA, currently inhabited by *

DIANA "DEE" BLACK (12) *

sketching in her SPIRAL NOTEBOOK. Drawing a COMIC. BLACK SUPERHEROES. BLACK VILLAINS. She's good. The work similar to RONALD WIMBERLY'S, and if we're lucky, it will be. *

Diana is lost in the world she's creating, until -- MOANS drift from the bedroom. It takes her a moment to realize what she's hearing. Her tongue juts out in disgust -- *

DIANA *

Gross.

She grabs some colored pencils. Carries her notebook towards the window to the fire escape. Shoves the TELESCOPE in front of it aside, throws open the curtains, and -- *

SCREAMS BLOODY MURDER at the sight of the BLACK MAN right on the other side!

GEORGE (O.S.) *

Diana!

A boxer-clad George stalks from the bedroom with a LOUISVILLE SLUGGER in hand. Menace in his eyes. Only to break out in a SMILE a mile wide when he recognizes the black man -- *

It's Atticus.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Well I'll be damned...

HIPPOLYTA (O.S.)

George Black, what's going on? Is Dee okay? *

George opens the window so Atticus can crawl in --

GEORGE

She's fine. Just got surprised is all. *

DIANA

I wasn't scared. Not really...

ATTICUS

I know you weren't.

Diana pushes Atticus. Atticus pushes her back. Playful sibling aggression. George calls to Hippolyta --

GEORGE

Your nephew's back.

Hippolyta responds to that with an ECSTATIC SCREAM --

HIPPOLYTA (O.S.)

Tic's back!

As George bear hugs his second son...

9 **INT. OFFICE OF - SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - DAY**

The garage is lined on all sides by overflowing BOOKCASES. It's still not enough. There are BOOKS of all sizes tucked in every nook and cranny. Any space not occupied by a book is covered by MAPS, both TOPOGRAPHICAL and ASTROLOGICAL, or SCAVENGED METAL for the HALF-CONSTRUCTED ROBOT in the corner.

Atticus scans the books on a shelf. Pulls *THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS* by H.P. LOVECRAFT. Looks at the ARKHAM HOUSE IMPRINT on the spine. His eyes DARKEN. This symbol troubles him.

GEORGE (O.S.)

Getting reacquainted with old friends?

George enters with COFFEE. Atticus sets the book down --

ATTICUS

Something like that.

GEORGE

Hippolyta's making you some breakfast. Just eggs. I know it's not the exotic Korean delicacies you're probably used to, or what is it down in Florida? Alligator...?

Atticus LAUGHS. They have an easy way between them. The kind no amount of distance or time can erode.

ATTICUS

"Just eggs" sounds perfect.

George picks up the Book --

GEORGE

Surprised this ones's caught your
interest. Horror's usually my thing.

ATTICUS

"On the Creation of Niggers".

GEORGE

Excuse me?

ATTICUS

It's a poem. One of Howard Phillips
Lovecraft's you can't find in most
libraries. Pop made me memorize it
after he found me reading that.
Thought it might turn me from the
pulp trash I'd barrow from here to
respectable literature.

*
*
*
*
*

The mention of his brother shadows George's features --

GEORGE

He's been missing for about two weeks
now.

ATTICUS

About? You're not sure.

GEORGE

I haven't seen him in months. Not
since the first game of the season.
We didn't even make it through the
second inning.

*

ATTICUS

What were you fighting about?

GEORGE

You know your father. A difference
of opinion that turned into character
assassination.

George doesn't meet his gaze. There's more to it than that,
but Atticus doesn't pry as his uncle continues --

*

GEORGE (CONT'D)

His landlady called when he didn't
pay rent. I spoke to a few of his
friends, but none of them have seen
him. I don't know where he could
have gone.

*

ATTICUS

I might have an idea. He wrote me.

He pulls out that WORN ENVELOPE. The one that's more than just a bookmark. George's non-reaction has Atticus realizing --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

You knew.

GEORGE

He asked for your address awhile back.

ATTICUS

I haven't talked to pops in almost five years, and out of the blue he wants to write me, and you didn't think to mention it?

GEORGE

Last time I checked, arguably, you and Montrose are both adults. If you want to communicate it shouldn't have to go through me.

That's a fair point. Atticus pushes past it --

ATTICUS

He wrote about my mom.

George TENSES. But just ever so subtly. Atticus doesn't notice as he opens the letter and slips on his glasses --

*

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

He says he found out where her family came from. He wanted me to come home so I could go there with him.

George RELAXES. Whatever he fears Montrose might have revealed about Atticus's mother is still a secret.

GEORGE

He's still obsessing over her ancestry, huh? I thought he had given up when she passed.

Atticus struggles to read his father's TERRIBLE HANDWRITING --

ATTICUS

"I know that, like your mother, you think you can forgive -- *forget* -- the past. You can't. You cannot. The past is alive, a living, thing. You own -- owe it. Now I have found something about your mother's... forebears. You have a sacred -- a secret -- legacy, a birthright which has been kept from you --"

GEORGE

That's strange. Doesn't really sound like your father, does it?

*
*

ATTICUS

And I haven't even gotten to the real strange part yet. The place he wants me to go with him? It's in Lovecraft Country.

*

Atticus turns the book to display the Arkham Imprint --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

The letter says mom's ancestors are from Arkham, Massachusetts.

GEORGE

Arkham? Home of the corpse re-animator and Herbert West?

*

ATTICUS

And the university that sponsored the fossil-hunting expedition into the mountains of madness.

GEORGE

Lovecraft based it on Salem, but it's not real.

ATTICUS

Are you sure?

Atticus's conviction gives George pause. There's something in his nephew's eyes. The look of somebody who now knows something he can't unknow.

GEORGE

Positive. Let me see the letter.

Atticus hands it over. After some careful discernment --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It's a "d". It's not Arkham with a "k" it's Ardham with a "d".

Atticus squints at the words over George's shoulder. Annoyed --

ATTICUS

That's a "d"? You know for someone who talks so much about the importance of being educated you'd think he'd learn how to write clearly.

GEORGE

You didn't actually believe Arkham
really existed, did you?

Atticus laughs at himself --

ATTICUS

No. I guess I've just been reading
too many stories. Letting my
imagination run wild. You know, I
actually had a dream monsters were
real on the bus ride down here.

George rummages through Books and Maps. In RESEARCH MODE --

GEORGE

Well, this Ardham is a real place.
And I'm going to look into it. But
it might take me a bit, I'm helping
Hippolyta with her pies.

Atticus nods. Returns *THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS* to the shelf --

ATTICUS

When you talked to pop's "friends",
any of them from Denmark Vesey's?

George cuts him a look --

GEORGE

I've been a family man for years, I
steer clear of that part of town...

10 **EXT. SOUTHSIDE OF - CHICAGO - DAY**

Atticus walks his old neighborhood. Nothing and everything
has changed. Conflicting emotions bubbling as he takes in...

1) An **ARMY RECRUITMENT OFFICE** down the street from Safe Negro
Travel. **FADED POSTERS** line the window enticing young Negro
men to serve their country. Atticus catches eyes with the
RECRUITMENT OFFICER smoking outside. Pained recognition
passes between them...

2) Dilapidated Tenements loom over a **VACANT LOT** littered
with trash. A group of **CHILDREN** play "Cowboys & Indians" in
this makeshift playground. Their unbridled joy bringing
light to the bleak landscape...

3) Underneath a **L TRAIN OVERPASS** the shady part of the shady
part of town is mixed in with respectable businesses. The
Southside isn't big enough to have it any other way...

Atticus approaches the front door of a squat building with a
neon sign proclaiming it's...

11 **EXT. DENMARK VESEY'S - DAY**

..and is greeted by a six-foot-six BOUNCER (TREE) tossing a DRUNK out on his ass. The Drunk moves to come back at Tree, but the bouncer raises his shirt, REVEALING -- the GUN in his waistband.

*
*
*

TREE

Man, try me.

The Drunk reluctantly backs off as Atticus heads inside --

*

12 **INT. DENMARK VESEY'S - DAY**

Dimly lit. SMOKE filled. Occupied by ALL-DAY DRINKERS.

TREE

We're closing early for the block party...

Tree's indifferent scowl turns into vague recognition --

TREE (CONT'D)

Holy shit...Tic is that you? Man, almost didn't recognize you without them coke bottle glasses. Remember me? Tree?

ATTICUS

Yeah, I remember...

And it's clear those memories are not fond. One could imagine Tree was the jock who bullied Atticus the geek.

TREE

You used to run into walls with your head always stuck in them books. Man, where your glasses --

Atticus notices it's EMPTY behind the bar --

ATTICUS

Listen, what was the bartender's name with all the earrings? He still work here?

Tree takes a beat. Knows when he's being blown off.

TREE

Sammy. Yeah, he's out back. You can go right down that hall through the red door...

Atticus heads off, missing Tree's MISCHIEVOUS smirk...

13

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND - DENMARK VESEY'S - DAY

Atticus pushes out the back door to the sounds of GRUNTS and EXERTION. *Somebody fighting?* Wouldn't be surprising in this neighborhood. But Atticus is surprised to find --

A YOUNG MAN going down on BARTENDER SAMMY (40's)!

ATTICUS

Shit. I'm sorry --

The Young Man springs off his knees. Takes off down the alley. Atticus tries to escape back into the bar, but --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

I...the door's locked.

Sammy's not fazed. He just casually pulls up his pants --

SAMMY

You here about your father?

Atticus looks to him. *How did he know?*

SAMMY (CONT'D)

I remember plenty of nights you dragging him off of one of my barstools, and he hasn't been perched on one in weeks.

Sammy adjusts one of the many EARRINGS in his ear. The move meant to mask the CONCERN washing over him, but Atticus doesn't notice, he's too busy looking to the door --

ATTICUS

Should we go back inside?

SAMMY

Don't worry, ain't nobody going to get any ideas, you ain't my type. And Tree's supposed to keep people from coming back here anyway.

Atticus REACTS. Tree played him. But he pushes past it --

ATTICUS

When's the last time you saw my father?

SAMMY

About two weeks ago. He left here one night with a white man.

Atticus is incredulous --

ATTICUS

A white man?

SAMMY

Yeah, I thought it was strange too.
Half the nights he sitting at the
end of that bar yelling about
something or other the "white devil"
has done. Never seen him with one.

*
*

ATTICUS

Maybe it was a cop.

SAMMY

Doubt it. He looked like one of
Bill Haley's Comets. Can't get the
clothes he was wearing on a pig's
salary. Not even on the take like
most of the cops around here. My
guess he's a lawyer. Would explain
how he could afford the car too.

*

*
*

Atticus straightens up. A possible clue --

ATTICUS

You saw what he was driving?

SAMMY

Tree did. Said it was a silver sedan.
Something foreign. Shot off so fast
it had to be expensive...

14

EXT. BLOCK PARTY TO END ALL BLOCK PARTIES - SOUTHSIDE - DAY

*

The vibe is EXPLOSIVE. Despite the HEAT WAVES dancing off
the black top, the street, sidewalks, and stoops are jam-
packed with BLACK FACES for at least six blocks. FOOD,
ALCOHOL, a LIVE BAND has everybody living their best lives.

*

DRIFT through the festivities checking in with FAMILIAR FACES --

*

1) HIPPOLYTA sits with a gaggle of CHURCH LADIES among the
picnic tables, feigning modesty as they praise her PIES...

*

2) GEORGE, wearing his FREEMASON HAT, plays dominoes on a
stoop with other members of the PRINCE HALL FREEMASONS...

*

3) ATTICUS pitches a game of STICK BALL with DIANA and her
FRIENDS (EMMETT, GIL, LUCY). Diana takes a big whiff...

*
*

As we revel in all this BLACK JOY...

*

15 **EXT. BLOCK PARTY TO END ALL BLOCK PARTIES - SOUTHSIDE - NIGHT** *

Sun's setting. Streetlights illuminating. As a "COLORED ONLY" CAB pulls to the curb. In the back *

LETITIA "LETI" DANDRIDGE (MID 20'S) *

takes in the BLOCK PARTY still raging. A smile comes to her lips. *It's good to be home.* She raises a weathered CAMERA to her eye. Scans for the perfect angle, and -- SNAP! *

CABBIE (O.S.)
It's gonna be 19.73.

Leti opens her PURSE. Pulls out money with confidence --

LETI
Here you go.

CABBIE
This is only five...and a penny.

Leti pops the door open --

LETI
I'm going to get you the rest, plus
a nice tip. You just wait here, and
I'll be back before you know it...

The CABBIE barely has time to react as she disappears into the crowd of black bodies... *

16 **EXT. STAGE - BLOCK PARTY TO END ALL BLOCK PARTIES - NIGHT** *

...and snakes her way to a makeshift stage, eyes on -- *

RUBY DANDRIDGE (MID-30's) *

is SINGING centerstage. She's PHENOMENAL, but it doesn't seem like her heart is in it. Her eyes keep drifting to the TIP BUCKET. As she brings the song to a THUNDEROUS close -- *

RUBY
Alright, I've got time for one more,
then Slick Willy's coming up with
his guitar. What y'all want to hear?

The Crowd ERUPTS. SHOUTING SONGS. Leti remains quiet on the fringes, amused by her half-sister's antics -- *

RUBY (CONT'D)
Come on, y'all don't really like
that lily white shit they play on
the radio, now do you?
(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)
(mockingly singing:)
*Oh, life could be a dream. Sh-boom.
If only my precious plans would come
true. Sh-boom...*

She bleeds the last Sh-boom into SNORING sounds, before --

RUBY (CONT'D)
Let me hear something that's going
to wake me up.

The Crowd yells more SUGGESTIONS. And Ruby pantomimes falling asleep, not hearing anything that's catching her attention --

LETI
MOMMA HE TREATS YOUR DAUGHTER MEAN...

Ruby wakes all the way up now. SURPRISE washing over her as she locks eyes with Leti in the back of the crowd.

GUITARIST BASSIST
Is that Letitia? Ruby, it's your sister --

RUBY
Thank you, Floyd. I have eyes.

A SHOCKWAVE rolls through the Crowd. They recognize Leti too. Soon they're voicing APPROVAL of Leti's song choice --

RUBY (CONT'D)
Alright, alright. A little bit of
blues it is then.

Ruby swallows her annoyance, which only gets harder to do as the Crowd URGES Leti to join her on stage.

RUBY (CONT'D)
Now, now. I'm sure my sister's tired
from traveling from wherever she
just magically appeared from.

The edge in Ruby's voice blows right over the Crowd, but not Leti. She takes it as a challenge. Pushes towards the stage to the Crowd's ENTHUSIASM.

RUBY (CONT'D)
Y'all are gonna have to bare with
us, we haven't sang together since
our church days --

```
Leti grabs a MIC --
```

LETI

And it's no secret that those are
long gone.

*

The crowd ROARS. And the band starts up. Ruby starts up. Then Leti joins in. Leti's not a better singer than Ruby, just a better showman. But Ruby's irritation fades as the familiarity of singing with her half-sister takes over. Both of them coming alive in each other's presence.

They fall into the steps of a DANCE. Having clearly performed it many times. Leti messes up the choreography first, but Ruby starts up the song again in a smooth transition.

As they finish big with matching SMILES on their faces...

17

EXT. BLOCK PARTY TO END ALL BLOCK PARTIES - MOMENTS LATER

*

...they now wear matching expressions of AGITATION as they push through the crowded street. Ruby's demeanor has changed. On stage she was playing to the DOWNTOWN crowd. Now she's back to her default. Faking UPTOWN --

RUBY

Dress that short. You should be
wearing some pantyhose.

LETI

It's too hot for all that.

RUBY

You can't even afford pantyhose --

LETI

Who said I couldn't afford 'em?

Ruby counts her TIPS as she walks --

RUBY

You don't have to say it. I know
you only here cause you need money.
And don't think cause you got up
there and sang with me you're getting
any of these tips.

LETI

I don't need a handout. Just a place
to stay for awhile...

That garners a DERISIVE CHUCKLE from Ruby. Leti slows as the crowd parts and her eyes fall on a

SHIRTLESS ATTICUS

drenched in water, acting like a goofy kid as he plays in the HYDRANT spray with Diana and her Friends. Let's be clear, if you have ovaries, they're melting right now. *

LETI (CONT'D)

Wait, who's that?

Leti brings her Camera to her eye. Takes a few quick SNAPS of Atticus. *

RUBY

Who? Tic?

LETI

That's Tic? Skinny, glasses, kid who was too smart for his own good, Tic? *

RUBY

Yeah. He's grown up. Which is more than I can say for you. *

Leti rolls her eyes at her half-sister as Ruby keeps it moving -- *

RUBY (CONT'D)

I'm over in the boarding house on McCarthy --

LETI

Ew, that place is a shithole -- *

RUBY

Cabroncita. *

LETI

I'm sorry, just, what happened to the room on Linden? *

RUBY

Momma's funeral happened.

And that slows Leti way down. A flash of VULNERABILITY --

LETI

Ruby...

Ruby looks back. Her heart strings tugging at her little sister's reaction, but she covers it with an eye roll --

RUBY

There's nothing to read into me bringing it up. It's just facts. You can stay with me two nights -- *

Leti's irritation increases. It's hard to tell if it's the mention of her mother's funeral, or her sister's indifference to her plight, or both.

LETI

What job am I supposed to find in two days?

RUBY

You could work on the Northside --

LETI

I'm not cleaning house --

RUBY

What then? You think you're going to go downtown and get a job in one of the department stores?

LETI

Maybe.

And that stops Ruby dead. She levels her half-sister with a cold stare --

RUBY

You think it's that easy, huh? You know I've been applying for years. And I've got more sales experience than you, even took those numbers courses over on the Eastside, hell, I've got pantyhose to wear --

LETI

Ruby, I'm just saying if I get the job, it'll be enough money for both us to move. Have our own rooms for once. Maybe even a house. There's a lot of colored folks pioneering into all white neighborhoods these days --

RUBY

Then maybe you should ask one of them to put you up. Two nights, Leti. That's it.

And with that, she's off again. Leti moves to go after her half-sister, but spots the angry Cabbie searching through the crowd for her. As she ducks away...

18

INT. LIVING ROOM - APARTMENT ABOVE SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - NIGHT

Atticus, soaking wet, pulls dry clothes from his duffel in "Diana's room". He accidentally drips on some Comics.

As he wipes them off, he notices an open

ROAD ATLAS

on the pull out. It's illustrated with BRIGHT COLOR DRAWINGS --

Major Negro population centers are represented as shining FORTRESSES. Smaller neighborhoods and enclaves are marked with TOWERS or OASES. Isolated hotels and motels are INNS with SMILING KEEPERS. Less friendly parts of the country are populated by OGRES, TROLLS, VAMPIRES, WEREWOLVES, WILD BEASTS, GHOSTS, EVIL SORCERERS, and HOODED WHITE KNIGHTS.

Atticus flips the pages and lands on OKLAHOMA -- a great WHITE DRAGON coils around TULSA breathing fire on it.

GEORGE (O.S.)

The kid has an imagination like you.
Terrifying ain't they?

He purposefully tosses a TOWEL at Atticus's head. Grimaces
as he lowers himself onto the sofa.

ATTICUS

Your knees still acting up?

GEORGE

It's a blessing they're doing anything
at all after two shattered knee caps.

George massages his right knee. That same dark look in his
eyes from when he was in bed with his wife earlier --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

And now Hippolyta's got this crazy
idea in her head to go out on the
road. I can't imagine what would've
happened if those crackers had caught
her outside of Anna instead of me.

Atticus hands George Diana's Road Atlas. An attempt to pull
his uncle away from his worry --

ATTICUS

Well that's why you publish the guide,
right? To keep us Negroes safe.
Now show me where I can find Ardham.

GEORGE

That's going to be a little tricky.
The last mention of it in any census
I could find is from over two
centuries ago. Which puts it
somewhere around Devon County,
Massachusetts.

Atticus frowns. Each new piece of info on his father's disappearance is more troubling than the last. He flips through Diana's Atlas...

ATTICUS

So what we know is pops disappeared with a white man in an expensive silver car to a town that doesn't exist anymore.

...and studies the page he lands on. George sees the DETERMINATION wash over his nephew --

GEORGE

You're going after him.

Atticus looks to his uncle. Set to purpose --

ATTICUS

I'm going to need a car. Woody still running?

GEORGE

Woody will out last us all. That's the only thing I'm sure of. Other than that I'm going with you...

Atticus goes to protest, but --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I was heading out on a guide trip anyway. Devon County'll be a good addition.

ATTICUS

You might not be so sure of that after you look at this...

He shows his uncle where he landed in Diana's Atlas --

DEVON COUNTY is marked with a SUNDIAL.

A GRIM TEMPLAR holds a noose next to it. The HOLLOW EYES of the Templar's armor seem to stare right through them...

19 **EXT. BLOCK PARTY TO END ALL BLACK PARTIES - SOUTHSIDE - NIGHT**

Atticus steps out on the stoop with his duffel slung over his shoulder as he spies a

SILVER DAIMLER

parked at the end of the block matching the description bartender Sammy gave him. It's sleek, low-slung, and vaguely sinister. The windows TINTED midnight black.

Atticus moves through the crowd towards it. The Daimler's lights blink on. The engine REVS. A challenge.

Atticus picks up the pace. Half-shoving friendly neighbors out the way. Trying to get to the Daimler, but -- it pulls off. Turning the corner seemingly faster than 0 to 60.

When Atticus finally makes it to where it was parked, the only evidence left that it wasn't just a figment of his imagination is the SKID MARKS on the pavement...

20 **INT. MONTROSE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Atticus lets himself in. Takes in the space both familiar, yet unfamiliar at the same time. He moves to the

*

FRANKENSTEIN VICTROLA

his father built himself. ALBUMS line the bookcases around it. Mostly speeches, lectures, and audio plays. Atticus picks an ALBUM. Places it on the Victrola. Drops the needle.

As the record PLAYS, he browses his father's books. Political theory and serious fiction. He pulls a WELL-WORN copy of **THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO** from a shelf. Opens it, and --

A FAMILY PORTRAIT falls out.

A 10 YEAR OLD ATTICUS with his mother DORA and MONTROSE. His parents are small in stature, but know how to take up space in a room. That's evident even in this snapshot.

Atticus is smiling in the photo, but not in real life as he stares at it with MIXED EMOTIONS...

21 **INT. BEDROOM - MONTROSE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Atticus enters, angling towards the far left wall, focusing in on -- a DENT. Gouged out of the plaster. Something about this blight strikes a deep chord in him. Similar DENTS mark all four walls in various places.

Atticus opens the closet. Pulls out a SHOE BOX. And from that, he pulls a -- .45 COLT. He spins the barrel to make sure it's loaded. Stuffs it into his duffel.

*

*

He pulls out that 1st edition of **THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO**. It's not in perfect condition anymore after being carelessly handled by the flatbed driver.

*

Atticus dusts it off. Places it on his father's nightstand. Regards it. Then he grabs the PHONE. Dials.

*

*

OPERATOR (ON PHONE)

*

Where can I direct your call?

*

ATTICUS
555 438 520 3093 2915

OPERATOR (ON PHONE)
South Korea?

Atticus hesitates. He doesn't want to make this call, but --
he's COMPELLED to.

ATTICUS
Yes.

The line RINGS and RINGS and RINGS. Atticus grows more
agitated with each trill, finally --

JI-AH (ON PHONE)
(in Korean:)
Hello... ?

Atticus's heart seizes. His mouth dries up. He can't speak.
A TANGIBLE SILENCE reaches across the line, then --

JI-AH (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
You went home...

Accusation. But also a deep sadness. Thick with FOREBODING.
And how does Atticus respond? He hangs the fuck up.

22 **EXT. SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - DAY**

Atticus has his duffel once again slung over his shoulder as
he approaches

"WOODY"

George's SERIES 22 PACKARD parked in the open mechanic's
garage. A pair of pantyhoseless legs hang out the open trunk.
Atticus appraises Leti with an admiring eye as she organizes
TRAVEL ITEMS in the back of the Packard.

LETI
You just going to stand there, Tic,
or are you going to help me?

She straightens up with a challenging SMILE as Atticus
startles from his impure thoughts --

ATTICUS
Leti Dandridge...?

LETI
Only my friends get to call me that.
We still friends?

ATTICUS

Well, considering you were the only female member of the South Side Futurists Science Fiction Club...

LETI

Yeah, but my mom made me quit, remember?

ATTICUS

No such thing. It's a lifetime membership.

They HUG. The gesture lingers just a bit longer than needed.

LETI

I heard you were down in Florida hiding out. How was it?

That puts a little hitch in Atticus's swag. Hiding out. It was a joke. But it hit a little too close to home.

ATTICUS

Segregated. And you? Where have you been?

LETI

I've been a little bit of everywhere.

ATTICUS

Doing...?

LETI

Everything.

They stare at each other for a moment. A charged moment. Crackling with possibility.

ATTICUS

It's a nice coincidence we both find ourselves back home at the same time.

LETI

There isn't a such thing as coincidence. The Lord has a plan for all of us. Even if it's just that I needed a ride to my brother's.

ATTICUS

Wait, you're coming with us?

GEORGE (O.S.)

Part way.

George comes out with a clutch of CANTEENS in hand, Hippolyta with a TRAVEL CHECKLIST and Diana in tow --

*

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Letitia's brother's place gets us within fifty miles of Devon County. And Marvin's working for the Springfield African American these days. He's going to look into this mysterious town of Ardham for us.

HIPPOLYTA

Are we checklist ready?

*

Diana climbs into Woody as Hippolyta refers to the Checklist --

*

HIPPOLYTA (CONT'D)

Mattress?

Diana points to the MATTRESS leaned on Woody --

*

DIANA

Check.

*

HIPPOLYTA

Pillows and blankets?

DIANA

Check and check.

*

HIPPOLYTA

Spare tire?

DIANA

Check.

*

HIPPOLYTA

Jack?

GEORGE

(faux outrage:)

Who's this Jack, Diana?

*

DIANA

Come on pop, let mom finish --

*

GEORGE

Sounds like somebody from one of Dumas's swashbucklers. Will I have to duel him for your mother's honor?

George picks up the JACK. Uses it as a sword against Diana. She can't help but LAUGH as she feigns her corny father off.

*

*

HIPPOLYTA

Alright, alright. Extra gas?

DIANA

Check.

*

HIPPOLYTA DIANA *

Flares? Check. *

HIPPOLYTA DIANA *

First-aid kit? Check. *

HIPPOLYTA DIANA *

Food and water? Double check. *

HIPPOLYTA *

Reading material? *

ATTICUS *

I've got that covered. *

Atticus clocks Leti watching this time honored family tradition of sending George off. LONGING in her eyes. *

HIPPOLYTA *

Then the travel checklist is complete. *

ATTICUS *

Leti, help me with the mattress? *

They move to do that, giving the family a moment for goodbyes.

GEORGE

Anything we're forgetting?

HIPPOLYTA

Nope. I believe that's everything.

Diana shakes his head. The exasperation of a preteen too cool for her parents anymore -- *

DIANA *

Mom, pop, you don't have to do this every time. *

They ignore her. Continuing to play it up -- *

GEORGE

Oh yeah, we almost forgot the most important thing.

HIPPOLYTA *

That's right, Diana's travel comic. *

Diana hands a collection of folded up PAGES to her father. *

GEORGE

I've been patiently waiting to see what happens to Panther Man... *

George trails off. Struck by the COVER of Diana's comic. He throws a wild look to his wife. Her brow scrunches up quizzically. *Why's he looking at her like that?*

DIANA

I did something different this time.

George shows Hippolyta the Cover. She GASPS --

HIPPOLYTA

Oh pumpkin... what made you decide to change it?

ON DIANA'S TRAVEL COMIC -- *THE INTERPLANETARY ADVENTURES OF ORITHYIA BLUE*. ISSUE #1. A BLACK WOMAN in a SPACE SUIT shoots a LASER GUN at a MONSTER.

The black woman looks exactly like Hippolyta.

DIANA

It's no big deal, mom. I just got bored with the other character. I'm going to go hang with Emmett and Lucy. See you when you get back pop. And don't forget to look for robot parts.

And with that, she takes off. Hippolyta's caught in the moment, then she hands the comic back to her husband --

HIPPOLYTA

Be safe.

He gives his wife a KISS. Atticus and Leti have wrangled the mattress into Woody. It's time to get on the road...

FADE TO:

Our Heroes make their way from Chicago to Springfield as BALDWIN'S words from his 1965 DEBATE with BUCKLEY narrates this journey into the heart of darkness, where the scope of the monster that is Jim Crow creeps its way into the Norman Rockwell picture-perfect Americana we all know --

23 **EXT. 19 CENT HAMBURGER HANGOUT - DAY**

"This means, in the case of an American Negro, born in that glittering republic..."

Atticus and Leti eat cold chicken and drink Cokes at a picnic table as George pours over his ROAD ATLAS while referencing the SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL GUIDE. He's mapping their trip...

In the BACKGROUND -- at the "WHITE" service window a POLICE OFFICER buys a group of WHITE KIDS ice cream.

A BLACK MOTHER and her DAUGHTER wait patiently at the "COLORED" window...

24 **INT. WOODY - DAY**

"And the moment you are born, since you don't know any better, every stick and stone and every face is white. And since you have not yet seen a mirror, you suppose that you are, too..."

Windows down. But hair too laid to to be whipping in the breeze. Leti leans her head out the window as Atticus speeds on a back country road. George cautions him to "slow down"...

25 **EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT**

"It comes as a great shock around the age of 5, or 6, or 7, to discover that the flag to which you have pledged allegiance, along with everybody else, has not pledged allegiance to you..."

The AMERICAN FLAGS lining the store fronts ripple in the breeze. The neon sign designating the "COLORED ENTRANCE" to the MOVIE THEATRE is on the fritz as a flood of BLACK MOVIEGOERS exit, Atticus and Leti among them. They walk side by side down the street to meet up with...

George sits outside a store with a handwritten sign -- "THIS STORE IS OWNED AND OPERATED BY NEGROES" -- chatting with the BLACK OWNER as he gets his shoes shined by a BLACK SHOESHINER.

Beside them, underneath a giant advert for AUNT JEMIMA pancake mix -- "DEE-LICIOUS!" -- the SHOESHINER'S SON shines a WHITE BOY'S shoes...

26 **EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY**

"It comes as a great shock to discover that Gary Cooper killing off the Indians, when you were rooting for Gary Cooper, that the Indians were you..."

The looming TREES allow only a few sunrays to reach the pavement of this isolated road. Woody blasts down it with purpose. Right past a BILLBOARD half-hidden by OVERGROWTH --

"NIGGERS, DON'T LET THE SUN SET ON YOU HERE, UNDERSTAND?"

27 **EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT**

"It comes as a great shock to discover that the country which is your birthplace and to which you owe your life and your identity, has not, in its whole system of reality, evolved any place for you..."

George fills up at the pump. Atticus pulls out a BANANA. Peels and bites into it. The ape noises draw his attention to the WHITE ATTENDANTS making fun of him with APE GESTURES.

Atticus's fists curl, but a hand on his arm stops him. It's Leti. Her expression imploring him to let it go. She aims her camera at the White Attendants like a gun. SNAP!

28 **EXT. CHURCH - DAY**

"The disaffection, the demoralization, and the gap between one person and another only on the basis of the color of their skin, begins there and accelerates -- accelerates throughout a whole lifetime..."

Service is getting out. BLACK FAMILIES in their Sunday's best mill about. Atticus, George, and Leti right in the mix, welcomed like regular parishioners.

In the distance -- EMPTINESS as far as the eye can see. Just a decrepit, unwelcoming sign that reads -- "FOR SALE. LOTS FOR COLORED. CALL 555-5555."

29 **EXT. SIDE OF THE - HIGHWAY - DAY**

"To the present when you realize you're thirty and are having a terrible time managing to trust your countrymen..."

A POOR BLACK WOMAN with her BABY strapped to her body and a BOUQUET of FLOWERS in hand. Atticus buys one. Returns to Woody parked on the side of the road --

George stands at the open driver's side door. Arms folded over his chest. Leti sits in the driver's seat. Arms also folded over her chest. They're ARGUING about her driving. Leti finally relents. Slides over into the middle seat...

30 **INT. WOODY - NIGHT**

"By the time you are thirty, you have been through a certain kind of mill. And the most serious effect of the mill you've been through is..."

George drives. Atticus reads aloud by flashlight. Leti (now wearing Atticus's flower in her hair) sleeps between them. She tips over onto Atticus's shoulder. Just an accident. But Atticus notices. George too. He throws his nephew an amused look. Which Atticus ignores...

31 **EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT**

"Again, not the catalog of disaster, the policemen, the taxi drivers, the waiters, the landlady, the landlord, the banks, the insurance companies, the millions of details, twenty

four hours of every day, which spell out to you that you are a worthless human being..."

Morning light illuminates a SMILING WHITE FAMILY looming over a long line of BLACK WORKERS waiting to catch the bus. The billboard tagline exclaims -- "WORLD'S HIGHEST STANDARD OF LIVING. THERE'S NO WAY LIKE THE AMERICAN WAY..."

As Woody rolls past the exhausted black faces, and we're left with that unfinished thought from Baldwin --

32 **EXT. SIDE OF THE - ROAD - DAY**

Woody is pulled over. Leti sits on the open trunk's edge. Flips a SWITCHBLADE open and closed in rapid succession. George leans against the passenger side consulting his NOTES and a MAP. He yells into the woods --

GEORGE

There's a diner called Lydia's I got a tip on near here. Won't take us too far off course to have lunch there. What do you say to a detour?

Atticus emerges from the trees post-bathroom break --

ATTICUS

Where is it?

GEORGE

(pointing it out:)
In Utica.

ATTICUS

You know what that area would be populated by on Diana's Atlas? A bunch of cattle-devouring trolls who pick their teeth with unwary motorists.

GEORGE

Funny. I need to add some entries to the guide. I'm on deadline.

LETI

Aren't you the publisher?

GEORGE

Exactly. Which is why I know how much of a hardass I can be.

Leti slams the trunk. Moves to climb into Woody --

LETI

Well not that either of you asked my opinion but I could use a hot meal.

GEORGE

You heard the girl.

LETI

And since this "girl" is not allowed to drive, I'm picking the radio station.

The GUITAR TWANG in B.B. KING'S "YOU UPSET ME, BABY" drags us to...

33 **INT. WOODY - DAY**

...where Atticus drives. George navigates with a MAP. And Leti reaches over the seat from the back to TURN UP THE VOLUME. George reaches to turn it back down...

GEORGE

Turn off the highway up here.

...but Leti SLAPS his hand away. SINGING and DANCING along with B.B. --

"You upsets me, baby. Yesssss, you upsets me baby."

Leti's seducing George with her enthusiasm. Soon she's got him PANTOMIMING B.B.'s guitar. Atticus can't help the smile that comes over him. But it FADES as he clocks the

FIRE STATION

they're nearing. A BULKY FIREMAN in SUSPENDERS sits on a bucket outside it. Everything about him screams TROUBLE.

Atticus turns down the radio. George and Leti are so into the moment they don't even notice. Suspenders stands. Eyes narrowing on the Packard as it rolls past. He does a SLOW BURN on seeing the black faces inside.

Atticus watches him in the side mirror. Until he's out of sight, but definitely not out of mind...

34 **EXT. SIMMONSVILLE - DAY**

A one horse town. Literally. There's a BIG BROWN MARE fenced into a tiny locked CORAL across from some empty STOREFRONTS. It's running in circles. Clearly too wild to be locked up.

GEORGE

We're looking for a red brick building. Should be on the left-hand side on the far end of town.

Atticus's eyes keep drifting to the rear view mirror. The street behind them remains EMPTY. Leti senses his tension --

LETI

What's the matter?

Before Atticus can answer --

GEORGE

That must be it.

He points to a WHITEWASHED brick building up ahead. "SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE" in lettering across the windows.

ATTICUS

Didn't you say it was called Lydia's?

GEORGE

It's in the right place, and it's the only brick building I see. Don't judge a book by its cover.

ATTICUS

A book can't refuse you service.

LETI

Or spit in your water glass.

George blows off their concern --

GEORGE

I'm starving. You two are welcome to wait in the car if you choose.

35 **INT. SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

PEE WEE KING'S "SLOW POKE" warbles from a RADIO. Just a COUNTER BOY and one customer at the counter in a PORKPIE HAT slopping up the gravy on his plate with a biscuit. *

The bell over the door JINGLES as Our Heroes enter. Counter Boy's eyes go wide as if they were Green Martians teleported from Barsoom. Porkpie's eyes turn to slits. *

GEORGE

Good afternoon. We were just driving by and thought we'd stop in to have some lunch --

Porkpie SLAMS his fist on the counter. Storms past them out the door. Counter Boy just gapes. A beat, then --

*

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I suppose we'll just seat ourselves.

He ignores the warning look from Atticus and takes a booth. Atticus reluctantly joins. Leti heads past the table --

ATTICUS

Leti...

LETI

Just visiting the ladies room.

She disappears in back as the Counter Boy brings MENUS over.

GEORGE

Thank you. What's good here?

The Counter Boy tries to STAMMER out an answer. Can't.

ATTICUS

Why don't we just start with coffees?

He nods and quickly retreats. Atticus watches as he fumbles with the coffee pot, nearly dropping it when the phone RINGS. As Counter Boy disappears to answer it --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Doesn't look like the Simmonsville Dinette is making the guide.

GEORGE

The tip was from a few months ago. The place is obviously under new management.

ATTICUS

You think so?

GEORGE

Yeah, okay, but we're here now.

ATTICUS

Doesn't mean we have to stay. We get back in the car we're only what? Two? Three hours from Marvin's --

George SNAPS --

GEORGE

We're here. And we have every right to be. I'm a citizen.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You're a citizen -- and a veteran,
for God's sake. Our money spends as
good as anyone else's.

Atticus is quiet. Feeling for his uncle. The weight of Jim
Crow can't always be carried with grace...

36 **INT. BACK HALLWAY - SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

Leti exits the bathroom. Pauses when she spies through the
cracked kitchen door --

An antsy COOK stands by as the Counter Boy listens with dread
to the voice on the other end of the phone line --

COUNTER BOY

There's three of them. I know.
Yeah. Okay.

He hangs up. Looks to the Cook, his heart in his throat --

COUNTER BOY (CONT'D)

They're coming.

Leti REACTS. That does not sound good for our heroes. And
the Cook agrees --

COOK

I'm not going to be here when they
do.

He moves to get out of dodge. Coming Leti's way. She ducks
back into...

37 **INT. BATHROOM - SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

...and quickly shuts the door. Her mind racing. *Shit shit
shit shit shit.* They're in trouble...

38 **INT. SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

...and Atticus and George have no idea as they peruse the
menus in silence. George ventures --

GEORGE

Those biscuits and gravy that man
was eating smelled pretty damn good.

ATTICUS

I think that's what I'll order...

He looks around the dinner. Noticing it's just been him and
his uncle for a minute now --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

...if the waiter ever comes back.

And he can't quite put his finger on it, but something just feels... OFF.

39 **EXT. SIDE OF - SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

Leti climbs out the small bathroom window. Rounds towards the back of the diner. Heading for Woody, but --

Porkpie stands guard in front of the Packard with a RIFLE!

She ducks back. *Shit shit shit shit shit*. Porkpie is making sure they can't escape before whoever was on the other end of that phone line gets here...

40 **INT. SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

Atticus looks towards the bathroom. Leti's been gone too long now too. He gets up to check on her, and --

SQUEECH! He's stepped on piece of loose linoleum. New linoleum. He notices now that -- the floor in the entire diner is new. His spider sense really starts to TINGLE --

ATTICUS

Uncle George...

GEORGE

Yeah.

Atticus touches the brick wall behind their booth -- it's covered in the same WHITEWASH as outside.

ATTICUS

You remember that time I was little and you, me, and Aunt Hippolyta took that trip to DC.

GEORGE

Of course. Right before Diana was born. What makes you think of that?

Atticus looks to the ceiling. Bright new wood.

ATTICUS

Why is the white house white?

GEORGE

War of 1812. British soldiers put the executive mansion to torch. Then later when the slaves rebuilt it, they had to paint the walls to cover up...

ATTICUS

...the burn marks. Maybe your tip was good. Maybe "Lydia" was friendly and someone had a problem with that.

And just as he says that -- SIRENS fill the air. The FIRE TRUCK blasts up outside. Suspenders and THREE FIREMEN climb out with FIRE AXES and BATS. They form a skirmish line in front of the diner as Porkpie joins them with his rifle. *

George gets to his feet. ANXIETY rocketing -- *

GEORGE

The back door?

ATTICUS

It'll be better to make a stand here as they funnel in than be caught out in the open. Get Leti...

Atticus moves behind the counter. Searching for anything that can be a weapon. George BANGS on the bathroom door --

GEORGE

Letitia. Girl we've got trouble.

There's no answer. And no time. Atticus has found the KNIVES --

ATTICUS

Uncle George...

He slides a KNIFE over. The biggest he could find. They square up. The Firemen advancing on the diner, then --

Something DISTRACTS them.

Something Atticus and George can't see off to the left. Porkpie runs out of view. Followed by three of the others. Then a forth. Suspenders is the only one left in front, but his attention is on whatever's happening out of view.

Atticus and George move to the window. Straining to see what's going on -- the Brown Mare's somehow gotten free!

It's going WILD as Porkpie and the Firemen try to corral it. It REARS up. KICKS one of the Firemen in the face --

HOOOONK!

Woody pulls up to the door. Leti behind the wheel. She waves at Atticus and George to get their asses in the car...

Leti blasts down the road, George next to her, then Atticus.

LETI
I came out of the
bathroom to hear that
chicken shit son of a
bitch telling somebody
on the phone about us
before he ran out the
back. Thought we might
need a distraction.

LETI (ALT) (CONT'D)
That chicken shit counter
boy set us up. Thought we
might need a distraction.

*
*
*
*
*

GEORGE
We may need another one.

Out the rear window -- the Fire Truck is coming fast! Porkpie
leans off the side. The Rifle in his grip -- BANG!

*

ATTICUS
Get low and stay low.

Atticus flips into the back. Pulls his father's COLT out of
his duffel. Pops the back window open -- BANG!

It's MAYHEM as he TRADES FIRE with the Fire Truck, ADRENALINE
racing, everyone TALKING OVER each other --

GEORGE
Don't kill anyone just get them off
our backs.

ATTICUS
I'm trying --

GEORGE
Go faster --

LETI
I'm going as fast as I can --

BANG! BANG! BANG!

ATTICUS
We've got to get off this road.

George grabs his MAPS. Leti SWERVES to avoid bullets --

GEORGE
Damnit girl, keep her steady.

LETI
We're being shot at --

BANG! BANG! BANG! She SWERVES again --

GEORGE
There's a turn off coming up. You
see it?

LETI

On the left?

GEORGE

Right.

LETI

Are you agreeing with me, or --

GEORGE

It's on the right.

BANG! The Colt clicks EMPTY. Atticus RELOADS --

ATTICUS

They're gaining on us.

GEORGE

Slow down or we'll
miss it --

LETI

I'm not going to miss it --

BANG! BANG! BANG! The turn's coming up fast --

GEORGE

Woody'll spin out --

LETI

Shut up and let me drive --

GEORGE

Goddamn it girl, you're going to
crash us --

LETI

My name's not girl. It's Letitia
fucking Dandridge...

Leti cuts a hard right, FISHTAILING onto...

42 **EXT. ANOTHER COUNTRY ROAD - DAY**

...without letting up on the gas. Navigating Woody like a Formula 1 racer. The Fire Truck has to slow to make the turn. Leti's created just a bit of distance between them. They're out of shooting range.

But there's little time to celebrate as Atticus catches a

BLUR OF SILVER

out the corner of his eye. The DAIMLER. On a parallel road that's merging with theirs up ahead --

ATTICUS

Leti...

LETI

I see it.

Woody bears down on the point where the two roads meet. The Daimler neck and neck with it. A DRAG RACE.

Our Heroes can only watch as the distance closes. Hearts in their throats. George folds under the pressure --

GEORGE

Let up.

LETI

I let up, that fire truck's back in shooting range.

The Daimler gets closer. And CLOSER. Atticus folds now too --

ATTICUS

Leti...

She still doesn't let up.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Leti.

And just when it looks like a crash is inevitable --

The Daimler lets up. Cuts in behind Woody. Cutting off the Fire Truck. And just as it's about to smash into the silver car -- it juts sideways as if by some external FORCE!

The Fire Truck TUMBLES off the road. Firemen FLY as it flips end over end in a cloud of DUST. *

Atticus REACTS. What he's just seen is impossible. The Daimler should have been crushed on impact. *

Leti doesn't slow down to see the aftermath. But the Daimler skids to a halt sideways. The driver's door pops open. And out climbs a *

WHITE WOMAN IN AN IMPECCABLY TAILORED MEN'S SUIT (MID 20's)

who we'll come to know as CHRISTINA BRAITHWHITE. An exotic and electric presence. She sends Atticus a devilish grin before she's engulfed by the DUST CLOUD from the crash... *

43

INT. MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

MARVIN DANDRIDGE (EARLY 30'S) holds the door open for Our Heroes as they enter his cozy home. A bout of polio in his childhood has left him WHEELCHAIR-BOUND but he'll never let that get in the way of his impeccable manners -- *

MARVIN

Let me get those for you.

Leti lets him take her BAGS. Still in the wake of what happened on the road. Atticus and George too. Marvin notices they're all uncharacteristically quiet --

MARVIN (CONT'D)

How's the trip been so far?

Our Heroes look at each other. *What is there to say?* The absurdity of it all has them bursting out LAUGHING. Dispelling their nervous energy. They continue LAUGHING...

44

INT. KITCHEN - MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

...like it's going out of style as they break bread --

LETI

That horse was kicking the shit out of them white boys.

MARVIN

Letitia, watch your mouth, please.

She ignores her half-brother's chastising --

LETI

When I let it out, I thought it was just going to run. I had no idea it was going to do all that --

ATTICUS

It was surreal.

GEORGE

Reminded me of a scene out of a Bradbury novel.

Marvin shakes his head in disbelief. It's a wild story --

MARVIN

How'd you all finally get away?

Atticus darts a look to the others. An unspoken agreement...

ATTICUS

Your sister again. More of her quick thinking.

...the Daimler and White lady will stay between them. George cosigns by admitting --

GEORGE

She did save the day. It was like
having our own Indian scout.

LETI

Wait a minute, did I hear that right?
Say that again. Who saved your asses?

MARVIN

Language please...

George eats crow with good humor --

GEORGE

Letitia fuckin' Dandridge did.

Marvin throws George an exasperated look. Not him too.
More LAUGHTER. Atticus hates to spoil the moment, but --

ATTICUS

It's getting late. Marvin, why don't
you tell us what you've discovered
about our next stop.

*
*

Marvin grabs a box of FILES off the counter --

MARVIN

I'd heard a few tales about Devon
County before, but once I started
really digging in, it just kept
getting stranger and stranger.

Atticus, George, and Leti clear the table as Marvin continues --

MARVIN (CONT'D)

You see the county seat, Bideford,
was named after a town in England
where they had one of the last witch
trials. They hung a woman for
fornicating with the devil who
appeared to her as a Negro man.

*

GEORGE

You're saying Bideford was founded
by witches?

*

MARVIN

The witch hunters. A number of the
families who settled it are descendent
of the prosecutors in the case, and
proud of it. They've been inbred,
insular, and clinging to the past
tooth and nail ever since.

*

ATTICUS

So I'm guessing they don't like
Negroes.

*
*

Marvin opens a File. Spreads out CLIPPINGS --

*

MARVIN

They don't like outsiders period. I
found more than a few stories in our
morgue about travelers getting
attacked in the surrounding woods.

*
*

LETI

By what?

MARVIN

Bears. Wolves. Who knows? There's
been lots of missing person reports
too. Some of which might have to do
with the county sheriff.

Marvin hands a THICK FILE to Atticus. He flips through it --

ATTICUS

Eustice Hunt. Ex-Marine. This is
his NAACP complaint file.

MARVIN

It's only a 3rd of it. Between the
wild animals and this guy? I'm not
sure which one I'd rather run into.

That sinks in. Things just got a lot more dangerous.

ATTICUS

What about Ardham? What did you dig
up on that front?

MARVIN

It was settled around the same time
as Bideford. Local histories don't
say by who, or who lives there now.
I couldn't even find any clippings
on it at all.

*

Marvin lays a MAP out on the table --

MARVIN (CONT'D)

I tried calling the county registry
of deeds to get property records.
No one answered. But from what I
could pull together, it should be
somewhere around here...

(MORE)

MARVIN (CONT'D)

(pointing on map:)

But I don't know what roads to take
to get there, or if there even are
any.

Atticus studies the map. Mind churning. He can feel
everyone's eyes on him --

GEORGE

What do you want to do?

It seems like Atticus is going to give up the search, then --

ATTICUS

We need to go to the registry. Maps
of the property lines will clearly
delineate a route into Ardham.

LETI

And what happens if you run into the
friendly neighborhood sheriff? He
won't be happy to see you.

ATTICUS

That's why we're not going to let
him see us. We'll head out just
before dawn while it's still dark.
Roll through Bideford while the witch
hunters are all tucked in their beds,
make it to the county registry two
towns over right as it opens, and
hopefully be in Ardham reunited with
pop, and asking what the hell is
going on by early afternoon...

He made it sound so easy. George doesn't seem convinced...

45

INT. BEDROOM - MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON the pages of *THE INTERPLANETARY ADVENTURES OF
ORITHYIA BLUE* ISSUE #1 -- Orithyia is in a heated battle
with a ROBOTIC COMPUTER with SEVEN ARMS.

DIANA (ON PHONE)

This is just the first issue, but
the plan is she'll be called to repair
faulty telescopes or malfunctioning
computers on different planets and
inevitably find bigger danger...

George sits on the bed. Phone to ear. Travel Comic in lap.
Half-listening to his daughter. His mind elsewhere.

*
*
*
*

DIANA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D) *

Like unrest between the fire and
shadow tribes of Mercury, or the
cousin of the Loch Ness monster
rampaging across the moons of
Saturn...

She sounds just like Atticus describing the Barsoom series
to Maybelle earlier. Pure unencumbered glee -- *

DIANA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D) *

And guess what? She zips from planet
to planet in her trusted Buick
Spacewagon named Stoney.

There's an expectant pause on the line. George doesn't even
notice, until --

DIANA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D) *

Pop, you there?

GEORGE

Yeah, I'm here. That all sounds
great. But I should go, I don't
want to run up Mister Dandridge's
bill. Put your mother back on. *

46 **INT. APARTMENT ABOVE - SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - NIGHT** *

Hippolyta has her eye to her Telescope at the window as Diana
hands her the phone -- *

HIPPOLYTA *

I was just heading up to the roof
with my telescope. It's such a clear
night, I might be able to finally
see Orion.

She cradles the phone against her shoulder as she adjusts
dials on the telescope. *

GEORGE (ON PHONE) *

Okay. I won't keep you from the
cosmos. I was just thinking, maybe
the next guide trip...what do you
say to us going together?

That gets Hippolyta's full attention. She sits back on the
edge of the sofa. Her heart seizing... *

47 **INT. BEDROOM - MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT** *

Silence on the other end of the line. Enough for George to
second guess himself. Then, softly -- *

HIPPOLYTA (ON PHONE)

I'd like that.

George exhales deeply. The EMOTION filling him. Even if they don't say the words "I love you" it's clear the love is there. Even across the telephone lines.

HIPPOLYTA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

Goodnight, George Black.

GEORGE

Goodnight.

He hangs up. Folds Diana's Comic delicately. Places it safely in his WALLET. A special place. So it's always close. *

He considers for a beat. Then pulls a photo from that same special place. It's a photo of Atticus's mother Dora.

As a pained, wistful smile comes over George, hinting at a SECRET HISTORY between these two...

48

EXT. BACK PORCH - MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Atticus sits. Glasses on. A BOOK open in his lap. But he's staring off into nothing. Disturbed by Leti and Marvin's RAISED VOICES leaking through the open screen door --

MARVIN (O.S.)

What'd you do with the money I wired to DC?

LETI (O.S.)

I saved it. That's what I used to get the bus to Ruby. *

MARVIN (O.S.)

Not all of it, you didn't. I'm not stupid, Letitia, and this isn't the first time you've lied to me. *

Leti's tired of being chastised. Her voice raises sharply -- *

LETI (O.S.)

Fine. Okay, I used it to bail some friends out of jail. But it's not what you think. We were protesting the school segregation --

MARVIN (O.S.)

It doesn't matter what you were doing.

George slips out the screen door. Trying to be extra quiet. He spots Atticus. By way of explanation -- *

GEORGE

Hippolyta, that woman's got me
obsessed with star gazing now too.

*
*

He joins his nephew. Trying not to listen to the Dandridge family drama that Atticus is clearly affected by.

MARVIN (O.S.)

You used the money for yourself.
And manipulated me into sending it
by claiming you needed it to come
home for momma's funeral.

*
*
*

LETI (O.S.)

The work I've been doing lately is
changing lives --

*
*
*

MARVIN (O.S.)

You missed your own momma's funeral.
You should be ashamed of yourself --

*
*

LETI (O.S.)

I'm sick of you and Ruby acting like
she was a goddamn saint --

MARVIN (O.S.)

I'm not going to tell you again to
watch your mouth in my house...

The DANDRIDGE'S ARGUMENT continues in the b.g. as --

GEORGE

That's not sounding good.

ATTICUS

I've heard worse. Been apart of
worse. I ever tell you what happened
the last time I was home?

GEORGE

No. Though I did wonder why you'd
rather deal with Jim Crow then come
back after you finished your service.

Atticus starts slow, but gets more agitated with every word --

ATTICUS

A reporter came by. Wanted to
interview me on what it was like to
be a Negro soldier. Pop lost it.
Said it was bad enough I was throwing
my life away for a country that hates
me, and now I was going to inspire
other young men to make the same

*

(MORE)

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

stupid mistake. Things went from words to blows quicker than usual. And I finally decided to give as good as I got for once. You can still see the cracks in the plaster where we slammed into the walls.

Nothing in his nephew's story surprises George --

GEORGE

Just because your father didn't agree with the decision, doesn't mean he didn't care.

ATTICUS

He never wrote me. Not one letter until he needed help --

GEORGE

The first year you were in Korea he'd come over for dinner almost every night. He wouldn't ask about you, but he'd wait for me to volunteer the information. And if I didn't, he wouldn't go home. He'd stay until ten, eleven, midnight if that's what it took, waiting for me to bring up the subject of you. Drove Hippolyta crazy --

ATTICUS

Of course it did. It's just another example of how hard headed he was --

The conversation outside is starting to mirror the tension of the one inside. George tries to temper Atticus --

GEORGE

Montrose has done the best he can. He didn't have it easy with our father --

ATTICUS

Why are you always defending him? You grew up in the same home and turned out fine --

GEORGE

Your pop was...

ATTICUS

Was what?

George chooses his words very carefully --

GEORGE

Younger and smaller. He took the
brunt of it. I should have protected
him more. And that's something I'll
always regret --

ATTICUS

I was younger and smaller too. And
you didn't do shit to protect me.
Do you regret that?

That lands hard on George. All he can muster is --

GEORGE

Tic...

The sound of DISHES SHATTERING inside draws attention back
to the Dandridge drama --

LETI (O.S.)

Let go of my arm, you're hurting me.

Atticus rises. Moving for the door. Fire in his eyes. But
George steps in the way --

GEORGE

That's family business, not ours.

Atticus is about to protest, but it sounds like the argument
inside has quickly de-escalated. A door SLAMS somewhere in
the house. Now it's QUIET. Atticus moves around his uncle...

49

INT. KITCHEN - MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

...to find Leti picking up plate SHARDS. She looks up.
EMOTION welling. And Atticus staring at her with those "I
care more than Jesus" eyes isn't helping quell it --

LETI

You heard that, huh? Of course you
did. The white folks all the way
across town probably heard it.

Atticus bends to help with the shattered dishes --

ATTICUS

You don't have to be embarrassed.
Everybody's family fights.

LETI

I'm not embarrassed about the
fighting. I'm embarrassed that the
stuff he said about me is true.

ATTICUS

Leti...

He touches her shoulder. The smallest of gestures. But it's almost too much. Leti moves away from him. Dumping the shards in the trash --

LETI

No. It's fine. I know I can be better, I just need to catch a break.

ATTICUS

I don't know if it's a break, but you're welcome to ride on with us. At least it'll save you the bus fare back to Chicago.

She stops now. Looks at him. His eyes shining behind those glasses. Kind eyes. She could fall in love with this man.

LETI

A lot of the boys I knew who went to war, they're different now. But not you. You're still all heart.

They're looking right into each others eyes now. The moment ELECTRIC. Atticus breaks it first --

ATTICUS

We're heading out early...

LETI

Yeah, we should both get some sleep.

50 **EXT. BIDEFORD - NIGHT**

George drives, Leti in between, Atticus riding passenger as Woody rolls through. Not a soul in sight. They roll up to a RED stop light -- right across from the POLICE STATION!

The tension is THICK. Any moment Sheriff Eustice Hunt or one of his deputies could come out and spot them. No one breathes until...

GREEN LIGHT. It takes everything in George not to slam the gas pulling off...

51 **EXT. DEVON COUNTY REGISTRY - DAY**

An unassuming building on an unassuming block. George and Atticus get out of Woody as Leti slides to the driver's seat --

GEORGE

Keep it...

LETT
Runnin'. Yep.

52 **INT. DEVON COUNTY REGISTRY - DAY**

Rows and rows of FILE CABINETS. The lone FEMALE REGISTRAR behind the counter eyes Atticus and George --

REGISTRAR
I'm afraid that's not going to happen.

GEORGE
The records are public. You can't refuse to show --

REGISTRAR
I don't want any trouble --

ATTICUS
And we don't want to be any ma'am.
We'll be quick --

REGISTRAR
Am I going to have to call the sheriff?

That blew up fast. George's ready to retreat, but Atticus notices a PICTURE of a SOLDIER hanging behind the woman. A BLACK RIBBON tied on the frame.

ATTICUS
Is that your son?

Registrar says nothing. Her silence speaking volumes. Atticus points to the SERVICE PIN on his lapel --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
I served with the 24th Infantry.
I'm sorry for your loss.

Registrar is affected, but unflinching. Atticus goes, but --

REGISTRAR
His name was Timothy. He was with the 27th. Died in Luzon. Tell me you made a lot of them good and dead.

Atticus swallows uncomfortably --

ATTICUS
I did.

REGISTRAR
Good. Damn gooks murdered a lot of our fine American boys.

Atticus and George catch eyes. Neither missing how she transformed her hatred towards them into their mutual hatred.

REGISTRAR (CONT'D)

We should have just let them wipe each other out in that jungle.

This exchange is not sitting right with Atticus. He's about to say as much, but George cuts him off, playing to the crowd --

GEORGE

I've been saying the same. It's a damn shame...

53 **INT. WOODY PARKED OUTSIDE - DEVON COUNTY REGISTRY - DAY**

Leti taps the wheel as she waits. A WHITE WOMAN crosses the street with her TODDLER. He locks eyes with her. Sticks his tongue out. Innocent fun. Leti sticks out her tongue back. The Boy giggles as he disappears down the street.

The odd moment is broken as both front doors open. Leti slides back to the middle as George and Atticus climb in --

ATTICUS

We weren't even fighting in the jungle. She has no idea what happened over there or why it happened --

George starts up the car --

GEORGE

We got what we needed, didn't we?
Be glad racism worked in our favor for once...

54 **EXT. WOODS ON THE EDGE OF - DEVON COUNTY - DAY**

*

The sun's setting. Woody coasts aimlessly down the dirt road surrounded on both sides by THICK WOODS...

55 **INT. WOODY - DAY**

Atticus has a MAP open in his lap. George has one open across the steering wheel. Leti is pressed back into the seat. WILDLY ANNOYED as Atticus and George argue back and forth over her as if she doesn't exist --

GEORGE

We've been driving around these woods all day --

ATTICUS

I think the road is coming up --

GEORGE

We've passed this area ten times now --

ATTICUS

The map at the registry said there's a bridge over a river to Ardham.

GEORGE

I know what it said --

ATTICUS

It exists, we just have to find the road to it.

George shoves his Map aside. Gestures out the window --

GEORGE

There's no goddamn road. You see one? This is where you said it is, right?

ATTICUS

Stop the car. I'll get out and look --

GEORGE

For the road none of us have spotted ten goddamn times now --

ATTICUS

Maybe it's grown over, you ever think of that? Maybe that's why we've missed it.

George slams the brakes --

GEORGE

Fine. Get out. But I'm staying right here. You're just as stubborn as your father --

*

Atticus opens the door, and...

56

EXT. WOODS ON THE EDGE OF - DEVON COUNTY - DAY

...SLAMS it behind him. Cursing under his breath as he searches for any signs of a road. A beat later, Leti climbs out of Woody. Atticus doesn't even look her way as he snaps --

*

ATTICUS

What are you doing?

LETI

Helping you look.

Oh. That takes some of the wind out of his sails. They get to looking. Neither they nor George, still pouring over the maps in Woody, notice the -- PATROL CAR creeping down the road towards them!

LETI (CONT'D)

You know, I just keep thinking about what my brother said. All the animal attacks. I don't think we want to be out here after dark.

*

And that Patrol Car just keeps creeping and creeping as Atticus sighs. Heavy. The weight of the world and what not --

ATTICUS

I know. It's just... We've come so far. Turning back now feels like --

LETI

This isn't giving up. We're going to find your father. Just not today.

Atticus absorbs that. Nods. They turn back for Woody, but just before they spot the Patrol Car -- a NOISE deep in the trees steals their attention.

LETI (CONT'D)

What was that?

The STILL UNNOTICED Patrol Car edges to a stop behind Woody as they stare into the woods in front of them.

*

ATTICUS

It's a shoggoth.

LETI

A what?

Atticus laughs at his wild imagination --

ATTICUS

A monster from one of Lovecraft's stories. They're massive bubble blobs with hundreds of eyes --

*

LETI

Oh well that's not scary, we can outrun a blob --

ATTICUS

Uncle George can't. But right now I wouldn't mind leaving him behind...

*

*

WROOOOOROOOO WROOOOOROOOO! RED and BLUE LIGHTS highlight the surprise on their faces as

SHERIFF EUSTICE HUNT (40's)

climbs from the Patrol Car with a SHOTGUN in hand. He has a US MARINE TATTOO on the back of his neck. To give the enemy something to aim at.

SHERIFF HUNT
You in the car. Get out. And
everybody come around to the back of
the vehicle. Slowly now.

Our Heroes wrestle with their SHOCK and FEAR as they do what they're told. Once they're lined up at Woody's bumper --

SHERIFF HUNT (CONT'D)
Who are you?

GEORGE
My name's George Black, and this
here's my nephew Atticus and his
friend Letitia.

SHERIFF HUNT
Where are you all from?

GEORGE
Chicago.

SHERIFF HUNT
You're a long way from home. *

GEORGE
We're just passing through. Taking
a little bathroom break. *

Hunt turns. The barrel of his Shotgun landing on George. He's not pointing it at him, but he's pointing it at him.

SHERIFF HUNT
Any of you all know what a sundown
town is?

Just the mention of it has Our Heroes ANXIETY spiking -- *

GEORGE
Yes sir we do.

SHERIFF HUNT
Well this here is a sundown county.
If I had found you pissing in my
woods like animals after dark, it'd
be my sworn duty to hang every single
one of you from these trees. *

ATTICUS

It's not sundown yet.

George and Leti stop breathing. Hunt moves in front of Atticus now. The Shotgun barrel pointing but not pointing at him. Their look holds. Aggressive and combative.

SHERIFF HUNT

No, it's not. Key word there being "yet". Sunset is at 7:09 today. That's seven minutes from now.

ATTICUS

Then we'll be out of the county in six.

SHERIFF HUNT

Now that's impossible heading south on the road you're currently on. Not unless you speed. And if you speed, I'd have to pull you over.

ATTICUS

Then we'll head north.

Hunt considers. For a good. Long. Beat. Knowing he's wasting precious time.

SHERIFF HUNT

That might work. Why don't you give it a try.

Our Heroes move to get into Woody. Atticus walks backwards. Just in case Hunt's fixing to shoot them in the back. He gets to the driver's side --

ATTICUS

Move over. I'm driving.

Neither George or Leti question that as they slide over. Atticus is about to climb in, when something occurs to him --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Is it legal for me to make a U-turn here?

SHERIFF HUNT

Well aren't you a smart one. Ordinarily I'd consider a U-turn a violation, but if you ask me real nice, I might just let this one go.

Atticus grits his teeth --

ATTICUS

Please.

SHERIFF HUNT

You can do better than that. Say
"pretty please will you let this
smart nigger make a U-turn here."

It really takes Atticus a moment this time, then --

ATTICUS

Pretty. Please. Will you let this
smart nigger, make a U-turn here.

*

Hunt considers. Running some more of the clock out. Finally --

SHERIFF HUNT

Alright. Just this one time. Since
you asked so nicely.

Atticus climbs into Woody. Hunt climbs into his Patrol Car.
U-turn's are made. Hunt riding Woody's bumper the entire
time. And an unbearably slow "chase" sequence ensues...

57

INT. WOODY - DAY

...for the ENTIRETY of the five minutes they've got til the
sun goes down. Atticus drives just a hair under the speed
limit. Itching to speed up and get Hunt off their ass.

LETI

Watch your speed.

ATTICUS

I know.

George pulls out his MAPS. Pours over them --

GEORGE

We've got 2 kilometers til the county
line.

LETI

Can we make that?

GEORGE

Wait, I'm sorry, it's actually 3...

His hands SHAKE. He's terrified. They all are.

ATTICUS

What time is it?

GEORGE

7:05.

LETI

We can make it, right?

A DREAD SILENCE. Neither Atticus or George can muster up enough to lie right now.

BANG! The Sheriff BUMPS Woody with his Patrol Car.

LETI (CONT'D)

Son of a bitch --

ATTICUS

Get the Colt. It's under the seat beneath you.

Leti maneuvers to get the Colt. George's eyes are glued on his Watch --

GEORGE

2 minutes.

It's unbearably TENSE. Atticus sees Hunt grinning in the rear view. Enjoying every second of this. The sign for the

COUNTY LINE

comes into view. A surge of HOPE hits them all --

ATTICUS

There's the sign.

GEORGE

Watch your speed.

But the sun seems to be disappearing on the horizon faster than they're closing the distance.

LETI

How much time?

GEORGE

We have a minute left.

Leti grips the Colt in her lap. Dreading having to use it. The distance left between them and that sign feels like an eternity, finally...

They sail past it.

Leti and George go weak with RELIEF. Atticus doesn't relax until he sees Hunt stop at the county line in the rear view.

DARKNESS falls as Atticus navigates a turn, and -- he's BLINDED by the HIGH BEAMS of PATROL CARS blocking the road!

Atticus slams the brakes. Woody whines to a halt inches from impact. And in the next instance --

Both the station wagon's doors are thrown open. Our Heroes are dragged out by HUNT'S DEPUTIES (EASTCHURCH, TALBOT, DALTON) at SHOTGUN point. They were lying in wait. Hunt had no intention of letting them go...

58

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Pervasive BLACKNESS. Our Heroes are marched through the woods. Single file. Hands on their heads. A Deputy with a Shotgun and a FLASHLIGHT at each of their backs.

Sheriff Hunt leads the way. DREAD and TENSION increases with each step. It's dead quiet except for their heavy breathing and the sound of their footsteps.

Hunt stops in a CLEARING. His Deputies force Our Heroes onto their stomachs in the dirt as he walks the line, shining the BRIGHT flashlight in each of their faces.

SHERIFF HUNT

What I tell you, Eastchurch? I knew they'd strike again tonight.

EASTCHURCH

You said they'd be gypsies, Sheriff.

Our Heroes quake with FEAR and ADRENALINE as Hunt continues --

SHERIFF HUNT

They're travelers that's for sure.

TALBOT

Unless the car's stolen.

Atticus discreetly surveys the area. Trying to find some way out of this. But they're outnumbered and outgunned.

SHERIFF HUNT

That's a fair point Talbot. How about it? You all really from Illinois?

GEORGE

I don't know who you were lying in wait for here, but this is a misunderstanding --

Hunt cuts him off. Intent on playing judge, jury, and most of all executioner tonight --

SHERIFF HUNT

Of course it is. Let me finish the rest for you. When I ask you about a burglary in Bideford last night, or two others in Bucks Mill last week, you're going to say, "What burglaries, Sheriff? We're just passing through."

ATTICUS

Sheriff Hunt...

All Shotguns angle towards him slightly. Atticus keeps talking. Stalling --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

My uncle is right. This is just a misunderstanding. We aren't burglars. Or car thieves. You can go ahead and check the car for stolen goods --

SHERIFF HUNT

Dalton, tell me I didn't just hear that. Did this nigger just give me permission to search his car?

DALTON

I believe he might have, Sheriff.

SHERIFF HUNT

This one thinks he's smart. But tell me, if you're just passing through, why do you know my name?

Our Heroes TENSE. Atticus slipped up. Hunt grabs him by the collar, pressing his Shotgun barrel under Atticus's chin --

SHERIFF HUNT (CONT'D)

Answer me.

LETI

Please don't shoot --

She cries out as Talbot grabs her hair and pulls her head back into the cold barrel of his Shotgun. Dalton does the same to George. Just in case he's getting any ideas.

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK!

*

An UNNATURAL SOUND. Somewhere between a GROWL and a WHALE'S MATING CALL. GUTTURAL. HARSH. And HUNGRY.

It came from the woods to the left. Hunt swings the flashlight around to search the shadows between the trees.

TALBOT

What was that?

SHERIFF HUNT

Keep your guns on them. Probably
just wolves --

Something BOUNDS through the woods on the right. Something
BIG. Breaking branches and QUAKING the ground with every
step. Hunt swings the flashlight to the right now.

EASTCHURCH

Jesus Christ. That sounded too big
to be a wolf.

Everyone's attention is on the surrounding woods. Atticus
takes this moment of distraction to reach for a HEAVY LOG
near him. Slowly. Very aware of the shotgun barrel in the
hands of a spooked Deputy pointed right at him --

BANG! Our Heroes jump out of their skins. Terrified one of
them just got shot. Until they realize Dalton fired into
the woods to the South --

SHERIFF HUNT

Dalton, what'd you see?

DALTON

Nothing. But whatever it is, I
probably just scared it away --

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK!
BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK!
BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK!

From every direction. The Deputies turn in circles. Not
knowing which way to point their Shotguns. Our Heroes are
paralyzed with fear. Not knowing which way to run.

SUDDENLY -- everything goes QUIET. Calm-before-the-storm
type quiet. Dalton inches towards the tree line, and --
something LASHES out at him. His SCREAM just an echo
because -- HE'S GONE IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE!

Whatever got him was fast. INHUMANELY FAST. And now it's
TEARING him to pieces in the cover of the woods.

EASTCHURCH

What was that? What the hell was --

Something BOUNDS through the trees to the right. Atticus
doesn't need another clue...

ATTICUS

Go -- RUN.

...and black or white, nobody needs to be told twice. George
grabs Dalton's dropped flashlight as CHAOS erupts --

BANG! BANG! Hunt and his Deputies fire at whatever's
attacking them as everyone hauls ass to get away...

59 **EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

Atticus blazes a path. Leti right behind him. Talbot, a
yard back, brings up the rear. The FLASHLIGHT in his hand
bobs wildly. Creating a STROBE-LIKE effect in the darkness.

SCREAMS, SHOTGUN BLASTS, and WHALE GROWLS echo through the
trees. A soundtrack straight out of a nightmare.

SUDDENLY -- Talbot is taken down by a "SHOGGOTH", BLOOD and
VISCOUS flying!

Atticus and Leti don't look back as he spots a CABIN up ahead --

ATTICUS
We need to get out of the open...

60 **EXT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

Dilapidated. Rotting wood. Covered in overgrowth. Clearly
abandoned for some time. Atticus pushes on the front door,
but -- it won't budge. Leti joins him, they put their backs
into it, and...

61 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

...finally get it open. Surprised to discover the resistance
was the result of Eastchurch trying to board up the door --

EASTCHURCH
Move. Shut the door --

He shoves them out of the way, slamming the door with the
MANIC INTENSITY of someone whose mind has snapped. Atticus
and Leti barely have a second to catch their breaths, but --

It's enough for Atticus to finally feel -- the ABSENCE.
PANIC riots his features --

ATTICUS
Where's Uncle George?

62 **EXT. WOODS - NIGHT**

George is on full alert. Moving as silently and as fast as
his injured knees will allow. The Flashlight in his hands
the only source of light in the pitch black.

His breath catches as SOMETHING MOVES through the trees to his left. He plasters himself against a thick tree trunk. Burying the flashlight beam against his body.

HIDING.

A Shoggoth stalks through the trees in the distance. It's too far away to get any details other than it's MASSIVE...

63 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

Atticus is staggered by the loss of his uncle. Leti can see the desperate wheels turning in his head --

LETI

You can't go back out there...

Atticus is fucking considering it as Hunt steps out of the shadows. SWEATY. BLOODY. One of his arms wrapped from a SERIOUS INJURY. But it's not preventing him from holding his Shotgun on Atticus and Leti --

SHERIFF HUNT

Yes he can. And you're going with him because there's no more room at the Inn. Get out --

LETI

And if we don't?

SHERIFF HUNT

I'll shoot you both.

Atticus steels himself. George is gone, but he can still save himself and Leti. He squares off with Hunt --

ATTICUS

And those gunshots are going to bring those things right to you.

EASTCHURCH

No no no no no. We can't make any noise. Sheriff please --

SHERIFF HUNT

Damnit Eastchurch, keep it together.

Hunt keeps his Shotgun pointed right between Atticus's eyes...

64 **EXT. WOODS - NIGHT**

George is on the move again. It's unbearably TENSE as he scans the trees all around him for any signs of "Shoggoths".

He SMELLS it a beat before he comes upon it -- a trail of BLOODY VISCOUS, then -- TALBOTS EVISCERATED BODY!

George gags at the sight. The hairs on the back of his neck standing on end. He's being watched. Through the trees ahead a

"SHOGGOTH"

opens its mouth. Rows and rows of bone white TEETH the only part of it reflecting in the moonlight.

As it BOUNDS straight for George, he raises his arms on instinct -- his Flashlight as well by default -- protecting himself, bracing for impact --

65 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

Shotgun to head stand off. Atticus doesn't back down. Nobody moves. The moment stretches. Finally Hunt ruefully lowers his gun. A collective beat of relief all around, then --

SHERIFF HUNT

What the hell are all of you standing around for? Finish getting that damn door boarded up before one of those things finds us.

Atticus, Leti, and Eastchurch move to do just that, but --

ATTICUS

Shhhhhh! You hear that?

MOVEMENT outside of the cabin. Everyone FREEZES. Atticus is the only one that dares to move. He peeks through a slat, and -- RELIEF floods his body as he pulls the door open --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Uncle George...

A shaken and stirred George stumbles in. Still alive! As Atticus embraces his uncle --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

GEORGE

Depends on your definition of okay.

Eastchurch could care less about this family reunion. He dives into boarding up the door. Leti's happy George is alive, but there's another pressing matter --

LETT

What happened? Did you see what those "things" are?

Hunt adjusts his injured arm as he interjects --

SHERIFF HUNT

I saw teeth before the one bit me.
Had to be some kind of rabid animal --

GEORGE

Those weren't wolves. What I could see... It was unnatural --

SHERIFF HUNT

What are saying? What else could it be --

ATTICUS

It doesn't matter. Whatever they are, we're not going to be able to hold up in here forever. We need weapons.

EASTCHURCH

I shot one. Didn't even slow it down. They don't have any weaknesses...

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK!

The unnatural growls echo through the trees around them.
Could be coming from anywhere.

GEORGE

"Listen to them, the children of the night. What music they make..."

SHERIFF HUNT

What's he muttering about?

ATTICUS

It's a quote from Dracula.

George's mind is turning. A hypothesis formulating. He is the horror buff in the family after all --

GEORGE

One was coming right at me. I knew I couldn't outrun it, so I closed my eyes, raised my hands to protect myself, and waited for it to strike. But it didn't. When I opened my eyes again it was gone.

ATTICUS

What did you do to it?

GEORGE

Not a damn thing.

(holding up the
flashlight:)

But I was holding this. The beam
had to have hit it when I raised my
arms.

LETI

You think these things are like
vampires?

Both Atticus and George are surprised Leti picked up the
genre ball and ran with it.

LETI (CONT'D)

I've read some books too.

(off their skepticism:)

Okay fine, I saw the movie. Go on...

GEORGE

If I'm right, and light hurts them,
it would also explain why we've been
driving around these woods all day
and didn't encounter one until the
sun went down.

Atticus takes his uncle's ball and runs with it --

ATTICUS

So we just need to survive until
sunup. And find more light til then.

LETI

There's flares in Woody.

GEORGE

And the headlights would help too.

Atticus turns to Hunt --

ATTICUS

Where did you leave our car?

Hunt's being petulant, but Eastchurch's fear is pushing past
his racism --

EASTCHURCH

On the side of the road near the
county line. About fifty feet through
the woods behind this cabin.

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK!

GEORGE

Those were closer.

BIG NEW URGENCY now. Atticus steps up like the motherfucking hero that he is --

ATTICUS

I'll go. I'll make a run for the car.

SHERIFF HUNT

No you won't. You're too smart for your own good. Might get the idea in your head to leave us behind.

(pointing his Shotgun at Leti:)

She'll go.

Atticus and George step between Leti and the barrel --

ATTICUS

Not a chance in hell.

GEORGE

It's too dangerous.

SHERIFF HUNT

I wasn't askin' --

Hunt cocks his shotgun. But Leti steps between the men --

LETI

I can do it. I was allstar track in high school, remember? Plus Tic, I know you say you don't need those glasses to drive at night, but I don't think this is really the time to test it.

She swallows hard. Scared, but trying to hide it. Hunt motions to George with the Shotgun --

SHERIFF HUNT

I'll take that flashlight. Just in case your theory's correct.

George levels him with a cold stare as he hands the flashlight over. This asshole is reinventing the meaning of asshole.

EASTCHURCH

We can take the boards off one of the back windows so she can get out.

George helps him while Atticus pulls Leti to the side, lowers his voice --

ATTICUS

You run as fast as you can. No looking back. And if you hear gunshots, don't come back. You drive for help.

She's SHAKING like a leaf. Eyes glued on the pitch black beyond the window George and Eastchurch are prying boards from. Repeating a PRAYER under her breath --

LETI

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me...

ATTICUS

Leti, you hear me?

LETI

I'm fucking terrified. You don't even seem scared. Is that something they teach you in the army?

Atticus takes her by the shoulders. Locks eyes with her --

ATTICUS

I'm not scared because fear isn't going to save us. You are.

Said without an inch of doubt. And damnit, if she doesn't BELIEVE him. She could kiss him right now, but --

66 **EXT. WOODS - NIGHT**

Leti RUNS like Jackie Joyner. Full out. Vaulting over fallen trees. Branches whipping at her face. No looking back.

Just. Get. To. Woody...

67 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

Atticus and Eastchurch are at windows. Eyes between the board slats. Keeping look out. Poised for a fight.

George is supposed to be doing the same, but his eyes are on Hunt in the corner with that Shotgun and Flashlight. The Sheriff's stifling a COUGH. PALE. SWEATING. Worse for the wear. *Blood loss from his wound, or is it something more?*

George moves to Atticus. Keeps his voice low --

GEORGE

What happens when you get bitten by a vampire?

Atticus looks to his uncle. Answers that question in his head. Which has his gaze warily turning to the radically DETERIORATING Hunt...

68 **EXT. ROAD ALONG THE EDGE OF THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

Leti blasts from the trees. Slows to get her bearings. Spies the COUNTY LINE SIGN down the road. Woody parked just beyond it.

A FAMILIAR BEAT FADES UP and even before VINCENT PRICE'S voice pipes in we recognize the king of pop's ode to genre --

"The foulest stench is in the air, the funk of forty thousand years..."

Leti senses something behind her. Turns to see a

"SHOGGOTH"

in the middle of the road. Too far away to see any real details. Just its MASSIVE undulating shape. But you can practically feel its mouth watering. *

"And grizzly ghouls from every tomb are closing in to seal your doom..."

Leti takes off for Woody. The "Shoggoth" in HOT PURSUIT...

69 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

"And though you fight to stay alive your body starts to shiver..."

Hunt sets the flashlight down. Overtaken by COUGHS. Vicious hacks that wrack his body. Eastchurch moves towards him -- *

EASTCHURCH
Sheriff, you okay...

Atticus and George keep their distance. Atticus pulls out Leti's SWITCHBLADE. Motions for George to move for the flashlight when he has a chance. *

"For no mere mortal can resist the evil of the thriller..."

Hunt's eyes ROLL back into his head. His spine WRITHES. His limbs CONVULSE and shoot straight out like iron. Eastchurch scrambles back, but it's too late -- Hunt attacks him, RIPPING Eastchurch's head off! *

Atticus and George exchange bewildered looks. HOLY SHIT. They might have suspected it, but actually seeing Hunt TRANSFORMING into one of those things is a whole different story. As they SCRAMBLE to fight... *

"THRILLER" will drive us through the following BEDLAM --

70

EXT. ROAD ALONG THE EDGE OF THE - WOODS - NIGHT

Leti runs all out towards Woody. The "Shoggoth" closing the distance between them FAST. She wrenches the door open. Breathless from fleeing. Dives into the Packard. The KEYS are still in the ignition. She turns the car over --

LETI

Come on. Goddamnit come on...

The "Shoggoth" is almost upon her. She reaches into the back seat. Comes back with -- her camera. *SNAP!* The FLASH.

The "Shoggoth" is illuminated through the windshield for half a second. Just a GLIMPSE of its GROTESQUE FEATURES, then -- it DISAPPEARS into the shadows.

Leti turns the car again. It finally catches. The headlights BLINKING on. She hits the gas. Swerving off...

71

INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT

Atticus and George are a strong team but "Shoggoth" Hunt fights with a psychotic disregard for his deformed body.

George moves for the abandoned FLASHLIGHT as Atticus attempts to wrestle the Shotgun from "Shoggoth" Hunt's grip --

BOOM! The shotgun shell blows a hole through the ceiling as "Shoggoth" Hunt twists the barrel away from Atticus, and -- WHIRLS on George just as he aims the Flashlight --

SMACK! "Shoggoth" Hunt KNOCKS OUT George with the Shotgun!

As he goes down for the count -- Atticus STABS "Shoggoth" Hunt in the neck from behind, but it might as well have been a pin prick as "Shoggoth" Hunt stays on task -- CRUSHING the fallen Flashlight.

Atticus comes at "Shoggoth" Hunt with the Switchblade again, but -- he lunges at Atticus, snapping at his neck with all his new teeth.

As Atticus struggles to keep from being bitten, "Shoggoth" Hunt's jaw unhinges past the normal human limit and like a gathering storm reverberating from the back of his throat --

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK!

The unnatural noise coming from Hunt's HALF-HUMAN FORM is terrifying. Things are not looking good for Atticus --

HOOOOOOONK!

A FLOOD OF LIGHT breaks through the cracks of the boarded up cabin, and Atticus understands the horn warning -- hits "Shoggoth" Hunt with a HAYMAKER that separates them, then -- dives out of the way just as --

CRASHHHHHH! Woody slams through the front of the cabin and right into "Shoggoth" Hunt!

He rolls onto the hood, and -- Atticus is there -- WRESTLING him down into the glare of Woody's HIGH BEAMS --

Vincent Price's ICONIC EVIL LAUGH at the end of "THRILLER" punctuates the moment as -- "SHOGGOTH" HUNT DIES HORRIBLY, MELTING IN THE LIGHT!

A frozen beat. George is still unconscious. Woody's half in the cabin, half out, definitely not driving anywhere soon. Leti's dazed from hitting her head in the crash. And Atticus is dazed because he just killed the asshole racist sheriff that turned into a monster. And speaking of monsters --

SMASH! A "Shoggoth" breaks through the cabin wall AND driver's side window in one terrifying motion!

It's sharp teeth inches from chomping down on Leti's face --

BOOM! Its head EXPLODES from the shotgun blast!

Atticus shot through the passenger window. They lock eyes for the briefest of seconds, because --

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK!

They're still coming.

ATTICUS

Get the flares --

He's already reaching through the shattered passenger window to grab -- his father's COLT. Leti, every muscle in her body screaming, climbs into the back. Shit's everywhere. *Where the fuck are the flares?*

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! Atticus shoots at the "Shoggoths" attacking from all sides -- BASHING against the walls of the cabin and boarded up windows -- as he drags his unconscious uncle towards the safety of Woody's high beams.

FSSSH! Leti's finally found the flares. Lights one just in time to scare the "Shoggoth" at Woody's rear window away.

CLICK! Atticus is out of bullets, George now safely in the glow of the headlights. Leti tosses him the Flares.

FSSSH! FSSSH! FSSSH! He lights them up as she climbs from Woody. Tossing them around the cabin to create a HALO of light...

72 **EXT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

The "Shoggoths" have the cabin surrounded on all sides. Their HUNDREDS OF BLINKING EYES and SHARP TEETH just inches outside of the light. Creeping forward every time the flares dim. Waiting. Ready. For the moment they go out.

IN THE CABIN

Atticus and Leti are ready too. So fucking ready. They're going to take all of these motherfuckers with them to the grave if they go --

A HIGH PITCH WHISTLE from some far away, unseen place...

OUTSIDE THE CABIN

...and the "Shoggoths" disperse. Just like that. All the menace in them gone as they causally saunter off.

INSIDE THE CABIN

Atticus and Leti can't believe what they're seeing. They remain with their Flares out like swords. Still on high alert even though it seems the danger has passed...

73 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - DAY**

VAMPIRE MORNING. A misty predawn bled of color. The last spark of the FLARE in Atticus's hand goes out. He sits against Woody. Exhausted from keeping watch all night.

Leti is asleep next to him. George, now covered in a blanket, is still in the light of Woody's headlights. He starts to STIR. Leti rouses a beat later.

They all just sit there. Next to the demolished Packard. In a dazed silence. Clearly changed forever.

74 **EXT. WOODS - DAY**

Our Heroes, beyond EXHAUSTED, crest the top of the embankment to take in -- the BRIDGE leading over a RIVER into ARDHAM!

It's bucolic and a little sinister in the dawn light. A GRAND LODGE on a hill overlooks what Atticus's fantasy brain might describe as a hobbit shire...

75 **EXT. ARDHAM - DAY**

Our Heroes trudge through the PROVINCIAL TOWN -- quaint COTTAGES with smoke coming from the chimneys, CHICKENS clucking around free, what looks like QUAKERS going about their morning routines through open shutters.

No one pays Our Heroes any mind as they climb the hill to...

76 **EXT. ARDHAM LODGE - DAY**

A palatial fortress. Our Heroes wind the gravel driveway towards the massive front doors. Atticus notices first the

SILVER DAIMLER

parked in one of the many parking stalls, then the

GOLD SUNDIAL

engraved above the front doors to the lodge, just like the one from Diana's Atlas.

George KNOCKS. And they wait. Exhausted, but ready. Ready for whatever's waiting to greet them behind this door. They've made it this far, they're ready for anything.

The heavy doors open, REVEALING --

THE PERFECT MALE SPECIMEN FOR THE ARYAN RACE (20'S).

We'll come to know him as WILLIAM. And the astute viewer will notice he's wearing the same IMPECCABLY TAILORED SUIT as Christina Braithwhite.

His cold blue eyes take in our BEAT UP, BRUISED, and BLOODIED black Heroes, and...

He SMILES. Warmly. Genuinely. Looks to Atticus --

WILLIAM

We've been expecting you, Mister
Black. Welcome home...

SMASH TO BLACK.



LOVECRAFT COUNTRY



AMERICA'S
DEMONS
EXPOSED!

EPISODE #101
"SUNDOWN"

WRITTEN BY
MISHA GREEN

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY
MATT RUFF

DIRECTED BY
YANN DEMANGE

PRODUCTION DRAFT

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LOVECRAFT COUNTRY

Episode #101

“Sundown”

SALMON REVISION

October 18, 2019

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SALMON REVISION

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LOVECRAFT COUNTRY

Episode #101

"Sundown"

SALMON REVISION

October 18, 2019

CAST LIST

LETI LEWIS

ATTICUS FREEMAN

RUBY BAPTISTE

GEORGE FREEMAN

HIPPOLYTA FREEMAN

CHRISTINA BRAITHWHITE

DIANA "DEE" FREEMAN

MEEH JI-AH

SAMMY

TREE

DORA FREEMAN

MAYBELLE CROSS

BUS DRIVER

MISTER LADS

MARVIN BAPTISTE

COUNTER BOY - SIMMONSVILLE

PORKPIE HAT CUSTOMER

SUSPENDERS FIREMAN

SHERIFF EUNICE HUNT

DEPUTY EASTCHURCH

DEPUTY DALTON

DEPUTY JIMMY

DEPUTY TALBOT

MONTROSE FREEMAN

MECHANIC

#42

LOVECRAFT COUNTRY

Episode #101

"Sundown"

SALMON REVISION

October 18, 2019

SET LIST

INTERIORS

Safe Negro Travel
Office
Apartment Above Safe Negro Travel
Bedroom
Living Room
Denmark Vesey's
Montrose's Apartment
Bedroom
Simmons ville Dinette
Marvin's House
Bedroom
Kitchen
Cabin in the Woods

EXTERIORS

Southside Chicago
Block Party
Denmark Vesey's
Alley Behind
Montrose's Apartment
Safe Negro Travel
*(Korean Mountainside - OMIT)
Highway out of Chicago
Indiana Countryside
Road
19 Cent Hamburger Hangout
City Street
Highway
Gas Station
Side of the Highway
Side of the Road
Bus Stop
Simmons ville
Fire Station
Country Road
Another Country Road
Marvin's House
Back Portch
Woods on the Edge of Devon County
Another part of the Woods
Road along the edge of the Woods
Gorge before the Cabin
Cabin in the Woods
Ardham Village
Ardham Lodge
*Korean Trench

VEHICLES

Silver Daimler
Woody the Packard
Bus
Sheriff's Patrol Car

The epic TITLE MUSIC from "**THE JACKIE ROBINSON STORY**" (1950) brings us into...

A1 **EXT. TRENCH - KOREA - NIGHT**

A1 *

...CHAOS. AMERICAN TROOPS fight KOREAN GUERRILLAS in a muddy trench as EXPLODING MOTORS rain debris. The VOICE OVER from "The Jackie Robinson Story" breaks through --

*
*
*

"This is a story about a boy and his dream..."

ATTICUS FREEMAN (MID 20'S) fights for his life against a KOREAN SOLDIER. SCARED OUT OF HIS MIND. But he still manages to kill the soldier. He pauses to catch his breath. Covered in BLOOD and MUD.

*
*
*

"But more than that, it is a story of an American boy and a dream that is truly American..."

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! FIGHTER JETS soar overhead dropping BOMBS. Atticus scrambles over the entrenchment to find himself in the middle of the D-Day version of the KOREAN WAR mashed up with LOVECRAFTIAN MONSTERS.

*
*
*
*

"The year is 1928. The time spring. If you were a young man, your thoughts were undoubtedly turning to love..."

Atticus marvels at the carnage around him as a FLYING SAUCER approaches, and -- a HALF-NAKED KOREAN-ALIEN HYBRID (MEEH JI-AH) beams down, floating through the melee towards him.

*
*
*

He's TRANSFIXED. Doesn't notice the LOVECRAFTIAN TENTACLED MONSTROSITY rising behind him.

Ji-ah wraps her arms around Atticus. Whispers in his ear in the LANGUAGE OF ADAM. We're not familiar with it yet, but in time we certainly will be --

JI-AH

Die.

"But if you were a young boy, your thoughts were of one thing..."

Atticus turns now. Eyes WIDENING as he takes in the Lovecraftian Monstrosity posed to strike --

"...Baseball."

SLOOSH! A BASEBALL BAT slices down the middle of the monster. Wielded by #42 himself -- JACKIE MOTHERFUCKIN' ROBINSON! He sends Atticus a megawatt smile --

*
*
*

#42

I got ya kid.

*
*

The Lovecraftian Monstrosity starts to REFORM as Atticus
takes in his American hero with awe, and -- Jackie
Motherfuckin' Robinson releases another home run swing! BA--

*
*
*

1 **OMITTED**

1

2 **INT. BUS ON A - BRIDGE NAMED AFTER A DEAD SLAVE OWNER - DAY**

2

--AM! Atticus WAKES as the bus rumbles across a bridge. He quickly grabs the open copy of **A PRINCESS OF MARS** by **EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS** on his lap, along with his GLASSES sitting on top of it before both slide off.

He blinks the nightmare away as **THE CREW CUTS "SH BOOM"** leaks from the radio -- *"Oh, life could be a dream..."*

A CHYRON tells us it's: **1955**

Which is why Atticus, one of two BLACK faces in a sea of WHITE, sits in the back of the bus under a "THIS PART OF THE BUS FOR THE COLORED RACE" sign.

Across the aisle MAYBELLE CROSS (60's) hums as she knits. She notices Atticus's eyes drift out the window --

MAYBELLE

Just passed over another bridge named
after some dead slave owner. Finally
made it to the promised land.
Hallelujah. Amen.

ATTICUS

Good riddance to old Jim Crow...

He FLIPS OFF the confederate states receding in the rear view. She LAUGHS, entertained by this vibrant young man --

POP! A PLUM OF SMOKE erupts from the front of the bus...

3 **EXT. INDIANA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY**

3

The SCORCHING SUN beats down on the BUS DRIVER fretting over the SMOKING ENGINE with a group of concerned BUS RIDERS.

Atticus steps off the bus. Looks up and down the two lane road. DESOLATE. There's one TREE across the way. Just a slither of SHADE. He makes his way over. Sits. Puts on his GLASSES. Opens **A PRINCESS OF MARS**.

There's a WORN ENVELOPE wedged between the pages. Atticus stares at it. Meaningful. Strained. It's obviously more than just a bookmark. He finally removes it, and -- READS.

TIME MORPHS around Atticus as he loses himself in Edgar Rice Burroughs's words --

- 1) More frustrated BUS RIDERS have abandoned the bus. They fan themselves as they chat with each other. But not with Atticus. He's content to continue reading undisturbed...
- 2) A CAR slows as it comes across the stranded bus. The BUS DRIVER discusses with the DRIVER. Climbs in a moment later. The car pulls away. Atticus just continues reading...
- 3) The sun beams down. Bus Riders drenched in sweat cut looks at Atticus occupying the only shade. There's room to join him. They don't. And still, he continues reading...
- 4) A FLATBED FARMING TRUCK rolls up. The Bus Driver wears a TRIUMPHANT smile as he climbs from the cab with the DRIVER (LADS). Atticus is finally drawn from his book but does not share the FRUSTRATED RELIEF that rolls through the heat stroked Bus Riders as he eyes Lads...

4

EXT. INDIANA COUNTRYSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

4

Atticus is the last to pull his ARMY ISSUED DUFFEL from the bus's luggage compartment. He helps Maybelle struggling to drag her heavy SUITCASES to the flatbed --

ATTICUS
Let me get those for you.

MAYBELLE
Appreciate it...

ATTICUS
Atticus.

MAYBELLE
Maybelle Cross. You from Florida?

ATTICUS
No, ma'am. Just been working in a garage down in Jacksonville since I got out of the service.

Atticus slides one of Maybelle's suitcases onto the back of the flatbed. Ignoring the WHITE RIDER who slides further over at the prospect of being next to them.

MAYBELLE
You see any action?

ATTICUS
Two tours --

BUS DRIVER (O.S.)
Hold up just a second...

Atticus turns. Looking right past the flustered Bus Driver
to Lads watching them with crossed arms and a SNEER --

ATTICUS
Is there a problem?

BUS DRIVER

There is. Um...He's refusing you
and your mother a ride.

ATTICUS

She's not my...

Atticus glances to Maybelle. Decides on a different tactic.
Steers the Bus Driver away for a private moment --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

You said it's six miles to the next
station, right? I'll walk, that's
fine. But there's no way she'll be
able to make that.

BUS DRIVER

Look, I'm real sorry --

ATTICUS

There's no need to be sorry. Now
you convinced him to drive out here
to help everyone, I know you can
convince him to let one more old
lady on that truck. Please...

BUS DRIVER

I'll try.

Bus Driver retreats to Lads. They exchange HEATED WHISPERS
as Maybelle does some whispering of her own with Atticus --

MAYBELLE

I ain't that old.

ATTICUS

I know, just playing to the crowd.

The Bus Driver looks to Atticus. Shrugs apologetically.
But Atticus isn't giving up. He approaches Lads --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

How much?

MISTER LADS

What you say to me, boy?

Atticus's jaw tightens. But he keeps himself in check --

ATTICUS

How much to get her on this truck?

MISTER LADS

Fifty dollars.

ATTICUS

Fifty? Bus tickets from Florida
didn't cost that much --

Atticus catches himself. Swallows his exasperation. Checks
his WALLET. He turns to Maybelle. Lowers his voice --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

You have any money?

MAYBELLE

My daughter sent me just enough to
to get to her in Chicago. Alt: None
I'mma give him.

Atticus turns back to Lads's shit eating grin --

ATTICUS

I have twenty-three dollars.

Lads eyes Atticus's Duffel at his feet --

MISTER LADS

What's in there? Anything worth
anything?

ATTICUS

Clothes. My army uniform. Books.

MISTER LADS

What kind of books?

ATTICUS

Science fiction mostly.

MISTER LADS

Science fiction? Dump it. Let me
see.

Atticus is keenly aware of all the WHITE EYES on him. And
how much Lads is enjoying making him jump. But Maybelle
needs to get on that truck, so -- he DUMPS his duffel.

Lads carelessly KICKS around the contents. Picks up a small
GREEN BOOK. **THE SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL GUIDE**. He thumbs through
it with CURIOSITY. Then PUZZLEMENT. Followed by AMAZEMENT --

MISTER LADS (CONT'D)

Hell is this? These addresses.
They're all places that serve niggers?

Atticus just stares back at him in response.

MISTER LADS (CONT'D)

Well hell, if that doesn't beat
everything. Not very thick is it?

He exaggeratedly squints at the Guide edge-on. CHUCKLING to himself. Bus Driver points to a PACKAGE wrapped in KOREAN GIFT WRAP half-hidden by Atticus's things --

BUS DRIVER
What's that there?

ATTICUS
It's a gift. A first edition book.

BUS DRIVER
That's got to be worth something.

Lads tosses aside the Guide. Picks up the Gift. And Atticus does not want to say it, but --

ATTICUS
It's yours if you want it.

Lads carelessly rips the paper off. Takes in the pristine copy of **ALEXANDER DUMAS'S COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO...**

5 **EXT. ROAD - INDIANA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY**

5

Atticus trudges. SWEATING. Duffel slung over his shoulder. Maybelle's heavy suitcases in hand. Maybelle by his side.

MAYBELLE
I ain't never seen no Negro man with
all them books. No white one either.
Must be they gettin' pretty heavy.

Cars filled with WHITE PASSENGERS pass. They don't slow down, and neither Atticus nor Maybelle try to get them to.

ATTICUS
I've lugged around more weight in
the army. And books are too sacred
to toss on the side of the road.

MAYBELLE
Let me at least carry one of my bags.

He just keeps walking. So she lets it go --

MAYBELLE (CONT'D)
Alright, then tell me what's that
book you been readin' about?

ATTICUS
A Princess of Mars? It's about a
man named John Carter who goes from
being a captain in the army of
Northern Virginia to becoming a
(MORE)

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Martian warlord. It starts with him running from Apaches, and hiding in this magical cave that transports him to the red planet. And that's where it starts to get good...

It's clear by the fervor in which Atticus speaks he doesn't just love these stories. He loves loves them, but --

MAYBELLE

Hold on, did I hear you say the hero is a confederate officer?

ATTICUS

Ex-confederate, but yes.

MAYBELLE

He fought for slavery. You don't get to put an ex in front of that.

A wan smile comes to Atticus's lips. Wistful and painful.

ATTICUS

That sounds like something my father would say. Has said. He doesn't care much for pulp stories either.

Atticus loses his smile now. The pain associated with his father winning out.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

But the way I see it, stories are like people. Loving them doesn't make them perfect. You just try and cherish them and overlook their flaws.

MAYBELLE

But the flaws are still there.

ATTICUS

Yeah. They are.

Maybelle studies Atticus. Feels like this conversation has moved beyond books for him.

MAYBELLE

We got too much walkin' left to do with you mopin'. Tell me what it is you cherish 'bout your stories.

ATTICUS

"My" stories. That's it, I guess.

(MORE)

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

They're not mine. I love that the heroes get to go on adventures to different worlds, defy insurmountable odds, defeat the monsters, and save the day. Little Negro boys from the Southside of Chicago don't notoriously get to do that.

MAYBELLE

Unless they join the army.

Again, we see the EMOTION in Atticus's eyes --

ATTICUS

I didn't join for adventure. I joined to get away from my father. Which is the real funny part, because he's also now the reason I'm coming home.

MAYBELLE

He sick?

With great import, that tells us this is what it's all about --

ATTICUS

He's gone missing.

6

INT. BEDROOM - APARTMENT ABOVE SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - DAY

6

GEORGE FREEMAN (Mid 40's) sits up in bed, marveling at his sleeping wife HIPPOLYTA (Mid 40's). There's a quiet intensity about him. His stare is both loving and invasive. She stirs --

HIPPOLYTA

What are you looking at George Freeman?

GEORGE

My wife.

She smiles sheepishly --

HIPPOLYTA

And why are you looking at your wife? Are you waiting for her to fix you breakfast?

GEORGE

I'm leaving tomorrow.

HIPPOLYTA

I'm aware...

GEORGE

And I'm looking at my wife because
it feels like I've been spending too
much time on the road and not enough
time in bed with her.

He pulls her into him. KISSING. Spooning. Hippolyta is
fully awake now, her cheeks a rosy red --

HIPPOLYTA

George Freeman, you've got me blushing
before God.

GEORGE

If he's watching, then we should
give him a show.

HIPPOLYTA

What has gotten into you lately?
You're only going to be gone a few
days. Used to be you couldn't wait
to go off on some grand adventure.

A sadness clouds George's features. And even though Hippolyta
can't see his face, she can feel the change in him.

HIPPOLYTA (CONT'D)

You know I could go. Make the trip
instead of you.

That elicits an INCREDULOUS EXHALE from her husband.
Hippolyta STIFFENS. George turns her face to him --

GEORGE

You're serious?

Hippolyta looks away. Both affronted and self-conscious --

HIPPOLYTA

Is that idea so crazy? I've written
more than my share of reviews for
the guide...

GEORGE

Arguably the best ones.

HIPPOLYTA

All based on your notes. Imagine
how good they could get if I was
able to take a few notes of my own.

George turns on his back. His hand MASSAGING his right knee.
A nervous tick activated by dark memories --

GEORGE

The road is too dangerous for a woman
traveling alone. You know the shit
I have to deal with out there.

Hippolyta's not satisfied by that response. For a moment it
seems like she might press, but she moves to get up instead --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Where you going?

He pulls Hippolyta back to him. She lets him, but --

HIPPOLYTA

The block party starts at noon. And
those pecans in the kitchen are not
going to turn themselves into pies.

GEORGE

Stay with me.

His hand drifts down between her legs. He STROKES her. And
Hippolyta is thoroughly scandalized. Even as the pleasure
courses through her --

HIPPOLYTA

What are you...You know Dee's up.
How thin these walls are...

GEORGE

Hippolyta...I can't remember the
last time we made love in the light
of day. I want to see my wife.

She looks to him. Longing and desire flares. He pulls the
covers back. He's already naked. She lets him pull off her
modest nightgown. Then he's on top of her. Inside of her.

Their lovemaking is sensual but also ravenous. Like young
lovers discovering each other for the first time...

7 **INT. LIVING ROOM - APARTMENT ABOVE SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - DAY** 7

DRIFT from the closed bedroom door, down a hallway lined in
FRAMED FAMILY PHOTOS -- a long lineage aware of the power of
preserving LEGACY -- to find a messy living room.

In one corner, next to a bookshelf filled with COMICS, sits
a SOFA made up like a bed, currently inhabited by DIANA "DEE"
FREEMAN (12) sketching in her SPIRAL NOTEBOOK. Drawing a
COMIC. BLACK SUPERHEROES. BLACK VILLAINS. She's good.

Diana is lost in the world she's creating, until -- MOANS
drift from the bedroom. It takes her a moment to realize
what she's hearing. Her tongue juts out in disgust --

DIANA

Gross.

She grabs some colored pencils. Carries her notebook towards the window to the fire escape. Shoves the TELESCOPE in front of it aside, throws open the curtains, and -- SCREAMS BLOODY MURDER at the sight of the BLACK MAN right on the other side!

GEORGE (O.S.)

Diana!

A boxer-clad George stalks from the bedroom with a LOUISVILLE SLUGGER in hand. Menace in his eyes. Only to break out in a SMILE a mile wide when he recognizes the black man --

It's Atticus.

HIPPOLYTA (O.S.)

George Freeman, what's going on? Is
Dee okay?

George opens the window so Atticus can crawl in --

GEORGE

She's fine. Just got surprised is
all.

DIANA

I wasn't scared. Not really...

ATTICUS

I know you weren't.

Diana pushes Atticus. Atticus pushes her back. Playful sibling aggression. George calls to Hippolyta --

GEORGE

Your nephew's back.

Hippolyta responds to that with an ECSTATIC SCREAM --

HIPPOLYTA (O.S.)

Tic's back!

As George bear hugs Atticus...

A8

EXT. SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - DAY

A8

Atticus exits the apartment entrance. Eyes the worn sign for SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL nestled in the store front window as he ducks inside...

8 **INT. SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - DAY**

8

...to find PHIL HODGES (40'S), the key maker/shoe repairman, finishing up with a COSTUMER at the front counter.

PHIL HODGES
Welcome home, Tic...

They trade a familiar smile as Atticus moves into the makeshift workspace wedged between a LOCKSMITH'S OFFICE and a MECHANIC'S STATION.

George converses with the MECHANIC tinkering under the hood of a CAR. Motions for Atticus to "give him a second".

Atticus takes in the workspace. There are BOOKS of all sizes tucked in every nook and cranny. Any area not occupied by a book is covered by MAPS, both TOPOGRAPHICAL and ASTROLOGICAL, or SCAVENGED METAL for a HALF-CONSTRUCTED ROBOT. Atticus fiddles with it, then his attention turns to one of the bookshelves as George finishes up with the Mechanic --

GEORGE
I'll be heading through that part of
the country in a few months, I'll
vet it then --

MECHANIC
The tip's solid. My cousin bought
smokes from there just last week...

GEORGE
I believe it, but I still have to
triple check. A bad tip in the
guidebook could get someone killed...

Atticus pulls "***THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS***" by **H.P. LOVECRAFT** from the bookshelf. Looks at the ARKHAM HOUSE IMPRINT on the spine. His eyes DARKEN. This symbol troubles him.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Getting reacquainted with old friends?

ATTICUS
Something like that.

GEORGE
Surprised that ones's caught your
interest. Horror's usually my thing.

ATTICUS
"On the Creation of Niggers".

That same knowing washes over his uncle that washed over Atticus when Maybelle questioned the racism in John Carter --

GEORGE

That's one of Lovecraft's you don't hear mentioned often.

ATTICUS

Pop made me memorize that poem word for word after he caught me reading this. Thought it might turn me from the pulp trash I'd borrow from here to respectable literature.

The mention of his brother shadows George's features --

GEORGE

He's been missing for about two weeks.

ATTICUS

About? You're not sure.

GEORGE

You know how he can get on the sauce. Didn't think anything of it until his landlord dropped by when he didn't pay rent. I don't know where he could have gone.

ATTICUS

I might have an idea. He wrote me. About momma.

George TENSES. But just ever so subtly. Atticus doesn't notice as he pulls out that WORN ENVELOPE. The one that's more than just a bookmark.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

He says he found out where her family came from. He wanted me to come home so I could go there with him.

George RELAXES. Whatever he fears Montrose might have revealed about Atticus's mother is still a secret.

GEORGE

He's still obsessing over her ancestry? I thought he had given all that up when she passed.

Atticus slips on his GLASSES. Struggles to read his father's TERRIBLE HANDWRITING --

ATTICUS

"I know that, like your mother, you think you can forgive -- *forget* the past. You can't.

(MORE)

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

The past is a living thing. You own -- owe it. Now I have found something about your mother's forebears. You have a sacred -- *secret* legacy, a birthright that's been kept from you..."

GEORGE

That's strange. Doesn't really sound like your father, does it?

ATTICUS

And I haven't even gotten to the real strange part. The place he wants me to go with him? It's in Lovecraft Country.

Atticus turns the book to display the Arkham Imprint --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

The letter says mom's ancestors are from Arkham, Massachusetts.

GEORGE

Home of the corpse re-animator and Herbert West? Lovecraft based it on Salem, but it's not real.

ATTICUS

You sure?

Atticus's conviction gives George pause. There's something in his nephew's eyes. The look of somebody who now knows something he can't unknow.

GEORGE

Let me see the letter.

Atticus hands it over. George takes it to his design desk. Uses the MAGNIFYING LAMP, and after some careful discernment --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It's a "d". It's not Arkham with a "k" it's Ardham with a "d".

Atticus squints at the words over George's shoulder. Annoyed --

ATTICUS

That's a "d"? You know, for someone who talks so much about the importance of being educated, you'd think Pop would learn how to write clearly.

George rummages through Books and Maps. In RESEARCH MODE --

GEORGE

I'll look into this Ardham. See if
I can glean any clues as to what
this "secret legacy" Montrose is
going on about...

Atticus nods. As he returns **"THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS"** to
its place on the shelf, his mind turning...

9 **EXT. SOUTHSIDE OF - CHICAGO - DAY**

9

Atticus moves through BLOCK PARTY PREPARATION to take a walk through his old neighborhood. Nothing and everything has changed. Conflicting emotions bubble as he takes in...

1) An **ARMY RECRUITMENT OFFICE**. FADED POSTERS line the window enticing young Negro men to serve their country. Atticus catches eyes with the RECRUITMENT OFFICER smoking outside. Pained recognition passes between them...

2) Dilapidated Tenements loom over a **VACANT LOT** littered with trash. A group of CHILDREN play "Cowboys & Indians" in this makeshift playground. Their unbridled joy bringing light to the bleak landscape...

3) Underneath a **L TRAIN OVERPASS** the shady part of the shady part of town is mixed in with respectable businesses. The Southside isn't big enough to have it any other way...

Atticus approaches the front door of a squat building with a neon sign proclaiming it's...

10 **INT. DENMARK VESEY'S - DAY**

10

Dimly lit. SMOKE filled. Occupied by ALL-DAY DRINKERS. Atticus is greeted by a six-foot-six BOUNCER (TREE) --

TREE

We're closing early for the block party...

Tree's indifferent scowl turns into vague recognition --

TREE (CONT'D)

Holy shit...Tic is that you? Man, almost didn't recognize you without them coke bottle glasses. Remember me? Tree?

ATTICUS

Yeah, I remember...

And it's clear those memories are not fond. One could imagine Tree was the jock who bullied Atticus the geek. Atticus notices it's EMPTY behind the bar --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Listen, what was the bartender's name with all the earrings? He still work here?

Tree takes a beat. Knows when he's being blown off.

TREE

Sammy. Yeah, he's out back...

Atticus heads off, missing Tree's MISCHIEVOUS smirk...

11 **EXT. ALLEY BEHIND - DENMARK VESEY'S - DAY**

11

Atticus pushes out the back door to the sounds of GRUNTS and EXERTION. *Somebody fighting?* Wouldn't be surprising in this neighborhood. But Atticus is surprised to find -- a YOUNG MAN going down on BARTENDER SAMMY (40's)!

ATTICUS

Shit. I'm sorry --

The Young Man springs off his knees. Takes off down the alley. Atticus tries to escape back into the bar, but --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

I...the door's locked.

Sammy's not fazed. He just casually pulls up his pants --

SAMMY

You here about your father?

Atticus looks to him. *How did he know?*

SAMMY (CONT'D)

I remember plenty of nights you dragging him off of one of my barstools, and he hasn't been perched on one in weeks.

Sammy adjusts one of the many EARRINGS in his ear. The move meant to mask the CONCERN washing over him.

ATTICUS

When's the last time you saw him?

SAMMY

About two weeks ago. He left here one night with a white man.

Atticus is incredulous --

ATTICUS

Was he a cop?

SAMMY

Doubt it. He looked like one of Bill Haley's Comets. Can't get the clothes he was wearing on a pig's salary. My guess he's a lawyer.

(MORE)

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Would explain how he could afford
the car too.

Atticus straightens up. A possible clue --

ATTICUS

You saw what he was driving?

SAMMY

Tree did. Said it was a silver sedan.
Something foreign. Shot off so fast
it had to be expensive...

12 **EXT. BLOCK PARTY TO END ALL BLOCK PARTIES - SOUTHSIDE - DAY** 12

The vibe is EXPLOSIVE. Despite the HEAT WAVES dancing off the black top, the street, sidewalks, and stoops are jam-packed with BLACK FACES for at least six blocks. FOOD, ALCOHOL, a LIVE BAND has everybody living their best lives.

DRIFT through the festivities checking in with FAMILIAR FACES --

1) HIPPOLYTA sits with a gaggle of CHURCH LADIES among the picnic tables, feigning modesty as they praise her PIES...

2) GEORGE, wearing his FREEMASON HAT, plays dominoes on a stoop with other members of the PRINCE HALL FREEMASONS...

3) ATTICUS tinkers with a FIRE HYDRANT as DIANA and her FRIENDS wait in anticipation...

As we revel in all this BLACK JOY, the sun begins to set...

13 **EXT. BLOCK PARTY TO END ALL BLOCK PARTIES - SOUTHSIDE - NIGHT** 13

...as a "COLORED ONLY" CAB pulls up. LETITIA "LETI" LEWIS (MID 20'S) climbs out. She takes in the BLOCK PARTY still in full swing. Pulls a weathered CAMERA from her purse. Scans for the perfect angle, and -- SNAP!

She continues taking photos as she snakes her way to the MAKESHIFT STAGE where RUBY BAPTISTE (MID-30's) SINGS. She's PHENOMENAL, but it doesn't seem like her heart is in it. Her eyes keep drifting to the TIP BUCKET --

RUBY

Alright, I've got time for one more,
then Slick Willy's coming up with
his guitar. What y'all want to hear?

The Crowd ERUPTS. SHOUTING SONGS. Leti remains quiet on the fringes, amused by her half-sister's antics.

RUBY (CONT'D)
Come on, y'all don't really like
that lily white shit they play on
the radio, now do you?
(mockingly singing:)
Oh, life could be a dream. Sh-boom...

She bleeds the Sh-boom into SNORING sounds, before --

RUBY (CONT'D)
Let me hear something that's going
to wake me up.

The Crowd yells more SUGGESTIONS. And Ruby pantomimes falling asleep, not hearing anything that's catching her attention --

LETI (O.S.)
WHOLE LOTTA SHAKIN' GOING ON...

Ruby wakes all the way up now. SURPRISE washing over her as she locks eyes with Leti in the back of the crowd.

GUITARIST	BASSIST
Is that Letitia?	Ruby, it's your sister --

RUBY
Thank you, Floyd. I have eyes.

A SHOCKWAVE rolls through the Crowd. They recognize Leti too. Soon they're voicing APPROVAL of Leti's song choice --

RUBY (CONT'D)
Alright, alright. A little bit of
blues it is then.

Ruby swallows her annoyance, which only gets harder to do as the Crowd URGES Leti to join her on stage.

RUBY (CONT'D)
Now, now. I'm sure my sister's tired
from traveling from wherever she
just magically appeared from.

The edge in Ruby's voice blows right over the Crowd, but not Leti. She takes it as a challenge. Pushes towards the stage to the Crowd's ENTHUSIASM.

RUBY (CONT'D)
Y'all are gonna have to bare with
us, we haven't sang together since
our church days --

Leti grabs a MIC --

LETI

And it's no secret that those are
long gone.

The crowd ROARS. And the band starts up. Ruby starts up.
Then Leti joins in. Leti's not a better singer than Ruby,
just a better showman. But Ruby's irritation fades as the
familiarity of singing with her half-sister takes over.
Both of them coming alive in each other's presence.

They fall into the steps of a DANCE. Having clearly performed
it many times. Leti messes up the choreography first, but
Ruby starts up the song again in a smooth transition.

As they finish big with matching SMILES on their faces...

14

EXT. BLOCK PARTY TO END ALL BLOCK PARTIES - MOMENTS LATER

14

...they now wear matching expressions of AGITATION as they
push through the crowded street. Ruby's demeanor has changed.
On stage she was playing to the DOWNTOWN crowd. Now she's
back to her default as she counts her TIPS, faking UPTOWN --

RUBY

Dress that short. You should be
wearing some stockings.

LETI

It's too hot for all that.

RUBY

You can't even afford stockings --

LETI

Who said I couldn't afford 'em?

RUBY

You don't have to say it. I know
you only here cause you need money.
And don't think cause you got up
there and sang with me you're getting
any of these tips.

LETI

I don't need a handout. Just a place
to stay for awhile...

That garners a DERISIVE CHUCKLE from Ruby. Leti slows as
the crowd parts and her eyes fall on a

SHIRTLESS ATTICUS

drenched in water, acting like a goofy kid as he plays in
the HYDRANT spray with Diana and her Friends. Let's be clear,
if you have ovaries, they're melting right now.

LETI (CONT'D)

Wait, who's that?

Leti brings her Camera to her eye. Takes a few quick SNAPS of Atticus.

RUBY

Who? Tic?

LETI

That's Tic? Skinny, glasses kid who was too smart for his own good, Tic?

RUBY

Yeah. He's grown up. Which is more than I can say for you.

Leti rolls her eyes at her half-sister as Ruby keeps it moving --

RUBY (CONT'D)

I'm over in the boarding house on McCarthy --

LETI

Ew, that place is a shithole. What happened to the room on Linden?

RUBY

Momma's funeral happened.

And that slows Leti way down. A flash of VULNERABILITY --

LETI

Ruby...

RUBY

There's nothing to read into me bringing it up. It's just facts. You can stay with me two nights --

Leti's irritation increases. It's hard to tell if it's the mention of her mother's funeral, or her sister's indifference to her plight, or both.

LETI

What job am I supposed to find in two days?

RUBY

You could work on the Northside --

LETI

I'm not cleaning house --

RUBY

What then? You think you're going to go downtown and get a job in one of the department stores?

LETI

Maybe.

And that stops Ruby dead. She levels her half-sister with a cold stare --

RUBY

You think it's that easy, huh? You know I've been applying for years.

LETI

And if I get the job, it'll be enough money for both us to move --

RUBY

I'm fine where I am --

LETI

Have our own rooms for once. Maybe even a house. There's a lot of colored folks pioneering into all white neighborhoods these days --

RUBY

Then maybe you should ask one of them to put you up. Two nights, Leti. That's it.

15 **INT. LIVING ROOM - APARTMENT ABOVE SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - NIGHT** 15

Atticus, soaking wet, pulls dry clothes from his duffel in "Diana's room". He notices an open ROAD ATLAS on the pull out. It's illustrated with BRIGHT COLORED DRAWINGS --

Major Negro population centers are represented as shining FORTRESSES. Isolated hotels and motels are INNS with SMILING KEEPERS. Less friendly parts of the country are populated by OGRES, TROLLS, VAMPIRES, WEREWOLVES, WILD BEASTS, GHOSTS.

Atticus flips the pages and lands on OKLAHOMA -- a great WHITE DRAGON coils around TULSA breathing fire on it.

GEORGE (O.S.)

The kid has an imagination like you. Terrifying ain't they?

He grimaces as he lowers himself onto the sofa.

ATTICUS

Your knees still acting up?

GEORGE

It's a blessing they're doing anything
at all after two shattered knee caps.

George massages his right knee. That same dark look in his eyes from when he was in bed with his wife earlier --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

And now Hippolyta's got this crazy idea in her head to go out on the road. I can't imagine what would've happened if those crackers had caught her outside of Anna instead of me.

Atticus hands George Diana's Road Atlas. An attempt to pull his uncle away from his worry --

ATTICUS

Well that's why you publish the guide, right? To keep us Negroes safe. Now show me where I can find Ardham.

GEORGE

That's going to be a little tricky. The last mention of it in any census I could find is from over two centuries ago. Which puts it somewhere around Devon County, Massachusetts.

Atticus frowns. Each new piece of info on his father's disappearance is more troubling than the last. He flips through Diana's Atlas...

ATTICUS

So what we know is pops disappeared with a white man in an expensive silver car to a town that doesn't exist anymore.

...and studies the page he lands on. George sees the DETERMINATION wash over his nephew --

GEORGE

You're going after him.

Atticus looks to his uncle. Set to purpose --

ATTICUS

I'm going to need a car. Woody still running?

GEORGE

Woody will out last us all. That's the only thing I'm sure of. Other than that I'm going with you...

Atticus goes to protest, but --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I was heading out on a guide trip
anyway. Devon County'll be a good
addition.

ATTICUS

You might not be so sure of that
after you look at this...

He shows his uncle where he landed in Diana's Atlas -- DEVON COUNTY is marked with a SUNDIAL. A GRIM TEMPLAR holds a noose next to it. The HOLLOW EYES of the Templar's armor seem to stare right through them...

A16 **EXT. MONTROSE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

A16

Atticus lugs his duffel towards a squat apartment building next to the L Train tracks. Doesn't notice the

SILVER BENTLEY

parked at the end of the block matching the description bartender Sammy gave him. It's sleek and vaguely sinister. The windows are TINTED midnight black.

We can't see the driver, but we can *feel* they're watching...

16 **OMITTED**

16

17 **INT. MONTROSE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

17

Atticus lets himself in. Takes in the space both familiar, yet unfamiliar at the same time. He moves to the FRANKENSTEIN VICTROLA his father built himself. ALBUMS line the bookcases around it. Mostly speeches, lectures, and audio plays.

Atticus places an ALBUM on the Victrola. As the record PLAYS, he browses the books. Political theory and serious fiction. He pulls a WELL-WORN copy of ***THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO*** from a shelf. Opens it, and -- a FAMILY PORTRAIT falls out.

A 10 YEAR OLD ATTICUS with his mother DORA and MONTROSE. His parents are small in stature, but know how to take up space in a room. That's evident even in this snapshot.

Atticus is smiling in the photo, but not in real life as he stares at it with MIXED EMOTIONS...

18 **INT. BEDROOM - MONTROSE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

18

Atticus enters, focusing in on -- a DENT on the far left wall. Something about this blight strikes a deep chord in him. Similar DENTS mark all four walls in various places.

Atticus opens the closet. Pulls out a SHOE BOX. And from that, he pulls a -- .45 COLT.

He spins the barrel to make sure it's loaded. Stuffs it into his duffel.

He pulls out that 1st edition of *THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO*. It's not in perfect condition anymore after being carelessly handled by the flatbed driver. Atticus places it on the nightstand. Regards it. Then grabs the PHONE. Dials.

OPERATOR (ON PHONE)
Where can I direct your call?

ATTICUS
555 438 520 3093 2915

OPERATOR (ON PHONE)
South Korea?

Atticus hesitates. He doesn't want to make this call, but he's COMPELLED to --

ATTICUS
Yes.

The line RINGS and RINGS and RINGS. Atticus grows more agitated with each trill, finally --

JI-AH (ON PHONE)
(in Korean:)
Hello... ?

Atticus's heart seizes. His mouth dries up. He can't speak. A TANGIBLE SILENCE reaches across the line, then --

JI-AH (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
You went home...

Accusation. But also a deep sadness. Thick with FOREBODING. And how does Atticus respond? He hangs the fuck up.

19 **EXT. SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - DAY**

19

Atticus has his duffel once again slung over his shoulder as he approaches George's SERIES 22 PACKARD (WOODY) parked in the open mechanic's garage. A pair of stockingless legs hang out the open trunk. He appraises Leti with an admiring eye as she organizes TRAVEL ITEMS in the back of the Packard.

LETI
You just going to stand there, Tic,
or are you going to help me?

She straightens up with a challenging SMILE --

ATTICUS
Leti Lewis...?

LETT

Only my friends get to call me that.
We still friends?

ATTICUS

Well, considering you were the only
female member of the South Side
Futurists Science Fiction Club...

They HUG. The gesture lingers just a bit longer than needed.

LETT

I heard you were down in Florida
hiding out. How was it?

That puts a little hitch in Atticus's swag. *Hiding out.* It
was a joke. But it hit a little too close to home.

ATTICUS

Segregated. And you? Where have
you been?

LETT

I've been a little bit of everywhere.

ATTICUS

Doing...?

LETT

Everything.

They stare at each other for a moment. A charged moment.

ATTICUS

Wait, you're coming with us?

GEORGE (O.S.)

Part way.

George comes out with a clutch of CANTEENS in hand, Hippolyta
with a TRAVEL CHECKLIST and Diana in tow --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Marvin's working for the Springfield
Afro American these days. He's going
to look into this mysterious town of
Ardham for us.

HIPPOLYTA

Are we checklist ready?

Diana climbs into Woody as Hippolyta refers to the Checklist --

HIPPOLYTA (CONT'D)

Mattress and blankets?

Diana points to the MATTRESS leaned on Woody --

DIANA
Check. And check.

HIPPOLYTA
Spare tire and jack?

GEORGE
Who's this Jack, Diana?

DIANA
Come on Pop, let mom finish --

GEORGE
Sounds like somebody from one of
Dumas's swashbucklers. Will I have
to duel him for your mother's honor?

George picks up the JACK. Uses it as a sword against Diana.
She can't help but LAUGH as she feigns her corny father off.

HIPPOLYTA
Alright, alright. Flares and first
aid kit?

DIANA
Double check.

HIPPOLYTA
Reading material?

ATTICUS
I've got that covered.

Atticus clocks Leti watching this time honored family
tradition of sending George off. LONGING in her eyes.

HIPPOLYTA
Then the travel checklist is complete.

ATTICUS
Leti, help me with the mattress?

They move to do that, giving the family a moment for goodbyes.

GEORGE
Anything we're forgetting?

HIPPOLYTA
Nope. I believe that's everything.

Diana shakes her head. The exasperation of a preteen too
cool for her parents anymore --

DIANA

Mom, pop, you don't have to do this every time.

They ignore her. Continuing to play it up --

GEORGE

Oh yeah, we almost forgot the most important thing.

HIPPOLYTA

That's right, Dee's travel comic.

Diana hands a collection of folded up PAGES to her father.

GEORGE

I've been patiently waiting to see what happens to Panther Man...

George trails off. Struck by the COVER of Diana's comic. He throws a wild look to his wife. Her brow scrunches up quizzically. *Why's he looking at her like that?*

George shows Hippolyta the Cover. She GASPS --

HIPPOLYTA

Oh pumpkin... what made you decide to change it?

ON DIANA'S TRAVEL COMIC -- *THE INTERPLANETARY ADVENTURES OF ORITHYIA BLUE*. ISSUE #1. A BLACK WOMAN in a SPACE SUIT shoots a LASER GUN at a MONSTER. The black woman looks exactly like Hippolyta.

DIANA

It's no big deal, mom. See you when you get back Pop. And don't forget to look for robot parts.

And with that, she takes off. Hippolyta's caught in the moment, then she hands the comic back to her husband --

HIPPOLYTA

Be safe.

He gives his wife a KISS. Atticus and Leti have wrangled the mattress into Woody. It's time to get on the road...

FADE TO:

Our Heroes make their way from Chicago to Springfield as BALDWIN'S words from his 1965 DEBATE with BUCKLEY narrates this journey into the heart of American darkness --

- 20 **EXT. HIGHWAY OUT OF - CHICAGO - DAY** 20
- Chicago's SKYLINE dots the horizon as Woody picks up speed on the open road...
- 21 **EXT. 19 CENT HAMBURGER HANGOUT - DAY** 21
- Atticus and Leti eat cold chicken and drink Cokes at a picnic table as George pours over his ROAD ATLAS while referencing the SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL GUIDE. He's mapping their trip...
- In the BACKGROUND -- at the "WHITE" service window a POLICE OFFICER buys a group of WHITE KIDS ice cream. A BLACK FATHER and SON wait patiently at the "COLORED" window...
- 22 **EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT** 22
- AMERICAN FLAGS lining storefronts ripple in the breeze as Woody coasts through. Leti notices a BLACK MOTHER and DAUGHTER waiting under a NEON SIGN designating the "COLORED ENTRANCE" to the MOVIE THEATRE. As she SNAPS a photo...
- 23 **EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY** 23
- The looming TREES allow only a few sun rays to reach the pavement of this isolated road. Woody blasts down it with purpose. Right past a BILLBOARD half-hidden by OVERGROWTH --
- "NIGGERS, DON'T LET THE SUN SET ON YOU HERE, UNDERSTAND?"
- 24 **EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT** 24
- George fills up at the pump. Atticus pulls out a BANANA. Peels and bites into it. The ape noises draw his attention to the WHITE ATTENDANTS making fun of him with APE GESTURES.
- Atticus's fists curl, but a hand on his arm stops him. It's Leti. Her expression imploring him to let it go. She aims her camera at the White Attendants like a gun. SNAP!
- 25 **EXT. SIDE OF THE - HIGHWAY - DAY** 25
- A POOR BLACK WOMAN with her BABY strapped to her body and a BOUQUET of FLOWERS in hand. Atticus buys one. Returns to Woody parked on the side of the road --
- George stands at the open driver's side door. Arms folded over his chest. Leti sits in the driver's seat. Arms also folded over her chest. They're ARGUING about her driving. Leti finally relents. Slides over into the middle seat...
- 26 **INT. WOODY - NIGHT** 26
- George drives. Atticus reads aloud by flashlight. Leti (now wearing Atticus's flower in her hair) sleeps between

them. She tips over onto Atticus's shoulder. Just an accident. But Atticus notices. George too. He throws his nephew an amused look. Which Atticus ignores...

27 **EXT. BUS STOP - DAY**

27

Morning light illuminates a SMILING WHITE FAMILY looming over a long line of BLACK WORKERS waiting to catch the bus. The billboard tagline exclaims -- "WORLD'S HIGHEST STANDARD OF LIVING. THERE'S NO WAY LIKE THE AMERICAN WAY..."

As Woody rolls past the exhausted black faces...

28 **EXT. SIDE OF THE - ROAD - DAY**

28

Leti sits on Woody's hood. Flips a SWITCHBLADE open and closed in rapid succession. George leans against Woody consulting his NOTES and a MAP. Atticus does a "quick wash" a little into the woods, the ODD-SHAPED BIRTHMARK on his left shoulder blade exposed.

GEORGE

There's a diner called Lydia's I got a tip on near here. Won't take us too far off course to have lunch there. What do you say to a detour?

ATTICUS

Where is it?

GEORGE

(pointing it out:)

In Utica.

ATTICUS

You know what that area would be populated by on Diana's Atlas? A bunch of trolls who pick their teeth with unwary motorists.

GEORGE

Funny. I need to add some entries to the guide. I'm on deadline.

LETI

Aren't you the publisher?

GEORGE

Exactly. Which is why I know how much of a hardass I can be.

Leti slams the trunk. Moves to climb into Woody --

LETI

Well not that either of you asked my opinion but I could use a hot meal.

GEORGE

You heard the girl.

LETI

And since this "girl" is not allowed to drive, I'm picking the radio station.

B.B. KING'S "YOU UPSET ME, BABY" drags us to...

29 **INT. WOODY - DAY**

29

...where Atticus drives. George navigates with a MAP. And Leti reaches over the seat from the back to TURN UP THE VOLUME. George reaches to turn it back down...

GEORGE

Turn off the highway up here.

...but Leti SLAPS his hand away. SINGING and DANCING along with B.B. -- *"You upsets me, baby. Yesssss, you upsets me..."*

Leti's seducing George with her enthusiasm. Soon she's got him PANTOMIMING B.B.'s guitar. Atticus can't help the smile that comes over him. But it FADES as he clocks the

FIRE STATION

they're nearing. A BULKY FIREMAN in SUSPENDERS sits on a bucket outside it. Everything about him screams TROUBLE.

Suspenders stands. Eyes narrowing on the Packard as it rolls past. He does a SLOW BURN on seeing the black faces inside. Atticus watches him in the side mirror. Until he's out of sight, but definitely not out of mind...

30 **EXT. SIMMONSVILLE - DAY**

30

Woody coasts past empty SIDEWALKS and STOREFRONTS --

GEORGE

We're looking for a red brick building. Should be on the left-hand side on the far end of town.

Atticus's eyes keep drifting to the rear view mirror. The street behind them remains EMPTY. Leti senses his tension --

LETI

What's the matter?

Before Atticus can answer --

GEORGE
That must be it.

He points to a WHITEWASHED brick building up ahead.
"SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE" in lettering across the windows.

ATTICUS
Didn't you say it was called Lydia's?

GEORGE
It's in the right place. Don't judge
a book by its cover.

ATTICUS
A book can't refuse you service.

LETTI
Or spit in your water glass.

31 **INT. SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

31

PEE WEE KING'S "SLOW POKE" warbles from a RADIO. Just a
COUNTER BOY and one customer at the counter in a PORKPIE HAT
slopping up the gravy on his plate with a biscuit.

The bell over the door JINGLES as Our Heroes enter. Counter
Boy's eyes go wide as if they were Green Martians teleported
from Barsoom. Porkpie's eyes turn to slits.

GEORGE
Good afternoon. We were just driving
by and thought we'd stop in to have
some lunch --

Porkpie SLAMS his fist on the counter. Storms past them out
the door. Counter Boy just gapes. A beat, then --

GEORGE (CONT'D)
I suppose we'll just seat ourselves.

The Counter Boy brings MENUS over as they take a booth.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Thank you. What's good here?

The Counter Boy tries to STAMMER out an answer. Can't.

ATTICUS
Why don't we just start with coffees?

He nods and quickly retreats. They watch as he fumbles with
the coffee pot, nearly dropping it when the phone RINGS.

As Counter Boy disappears to answer it --

LETI
Doesn't look like the Simmonsville
Dinette is making the guide.

GEORGE
Yeah, okay, but we're here now.

ATTICUS
Doesn't mean we have to stay. We
get back in the car we're only what?
Two? Three hours from Marvin's --

George SNAPS --

GEORGE
We're here. And we have every right
to be. We're citizens. You're a
veteran, for God's sake. Our money
spends as good as anyone else's.

Atticus and Leti go quiet. Feeling for George. The weight
of Jim Crow can't always be carried with grace. Leti rises...

LETI
I'm going to visit the ladies room.

...and disappears down the back hallway. Atticus and George
peruse their menus in silence for a long moment, then --

ATTICUS
Those biscuits and gravy smelled
pretty damn good. I think that's
what I'll order...

He looks around the EMPTY diner. Can't quite put his finger
on it, but something just feels...OFF.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
..if the waiter ever comes back.

32 **INT. BACK HALLWAY - SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

32

Leti exits the bathroom, pausing when she spies through the
CRACKED KITCHEN DOOR -- an antsy COOK stands by as the Counter
Boy listens with dread to the other end of the phone --

COUNTER BOY
I know. Yeah. Okay.

He hangs up. Looks to the Cook, his heart in his throat --

COUNTER BOY (CONT'D)
They're coming for 'em.

Leti REACTS. Trouble is coming their way. The Counter Boy and Cook move to get out of dodge. Coming Leti's way. As she ducks back into the bathroom...

33 **INT. SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

33

Atticus looks towards the back hallway. Leti's been gone too long now too. His spider sense really starts to TINGLE as he gets up, and --

SQUEECH! He's stepped on a piece of loose linoleum. He notices -- the floor in the entire diner is new!

ATTICUS
Uncle George...

GEORGE
Yeah.

Atticus looks to the ceiling. Bright new wood.

ATTICUS
Remind me why the white house is white?

GEORGE
War of 1812. British soldiers put the executive mansion to torch. Then later when the slaves rebuilt it, they had to paint the walls to cover up...

Atticus touches the brick wall behind their booth -- it's covered in the same WHITEWASH as outside.

ATTICUS
...the burn marks.

And just as he says that -- a FIRE TRUCK SIREN rises in the distance. Trouble is coming their way. Atticus's ANXIETY rockets as Leti sprints from the back...

LETI
We need to get the fuck out of here --

...and doesn't slow down, blasting out the door as Atticus helps George out of the booth --

34 **EXT. SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

34

Leti's already climbing into the driver seat and starting Woody up as Atticus and George burst from the diner --

GEORGE
Let me drive --

A FIRE TRUCK and PICK UP are coming their way. Suspenders drives the Fire Truck. Porkpie & THREE FIREMEN hang off the Pick Up. Menace and grimace in their expressions. Atticus shoves his Uncle towards the passenger side --

ATTICUS
Just get in --

35 **EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY**

35

Leti blasts down the road, George next to her, then Atticus. Out the rear window -- the Pick Up is coming fast! Porkpie leans off the side. A RIFLE in his grip -- BANG!

Atticus flips into the back. Pulls his father's COLT out of his duffel. Pops the back window open -- BANG!

It's MAYHEM as he TRADES FIRE with the Fire Truck, ADRENALINE racing, everyone TALKING OVER each other --

GEORGE
Don't kill anyone just get them off
our backs.

ATTICUS
I'm trying --

GEORGE
Go faster --

LETI
I'm going as fast as I can --

BANG! BANG! BANG!

ATTICUS
We've got to get off this road.

George grabs his MAPS. Leti SWERVES to avoid bullets --

GEORGE
Damnit girl, keep her steady.

LETI
We're being shot at --

BANG! BANG! BANG! She SWERVES again --

GEORGE
There's a turn off coming up. You
see it?

LETI
On the left?

GEORGE
Right.

LETI

Are you agreeing with me, or --

GEORGE

It's on the right.

BANG! The Colt clicks EMPTY. Atticus RELOADS --

ATTICUS

They're gaining on us.

GEORGE

Slow down or we'll
miss it --

LETI

I'm not going to miss it --

BANG! BANG! BANG! The turn's coming up fast --

GEORGE

Woody'll spin out --

LETI

Shut up and let me drive --

GEORGE

Goddamn it girl, you're going to
crash us --

LETI

My name's not girl. It's Letitia
fucking Lewis...

Leti cuts a hard right, FISHTAILING onto...

36 **EXT. ANOTHER COUNTRY ROAD - DAY**

36

...without letting up on the gas. Navigating Woody like a
Formula 1 racer. The Pick Up has to slow to make the turn.
Leti's created just a bit of distance between them. They're
out of shooting range.

But there's little time to celebrate as Atticus sees a

BLUR OF SILVER

out the corner of his eye. The BENTLEY. On a parallel road
that's merging with theirs up ahead --

ATTICUS

Leti...

LETI

I see it.

Woody bears down on the point where the two roads meet. The
Bentley neck and neck with it. A DRAG RACE.

Our Heroes can only watch as the distance closes. Hearts in their throats. George folds under the pressure --

GEORGE

Let up.

LETI

I let up, that truck's back in shooting range.

The Bentley gets closer. And CLOSER. Atticus folds now too --

ATTICUS

Leti...

She still doesn't let up.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Leti.

And just when it looks like a crash is inevitable --

The Bentley lets up. Cuts in behind Woody. Cutting off the Pick Up. And just as it's about to smash into the silver car -- it juts sideways as if by some external FORCE!

The Pick Up TUMBLES off the road. Firemen FLY as it flips end over end in a cloud of DUST.

Atticus REACTS. What he's just seen is impossible. The Bentley should have been crushed on impact.

Leti doesn't slow down to see the aftermath. But the Bentley skids to a halt sideways. The driver's door pops open. And out climbs a

WHITE WOMAN IN AN IMPECCABLY TAILORED MEN'S SUIT (MID 20's)

who we'll come to know as CHRISTINA BRAITHWHITE. An exotic and electric presence. She sends Atticus a devilish grin before she's engulfed by the DUST CLOUD from the crash...

37 **INT. MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

37

MARVIN BAPTISTE (EARLY 30'S) holds the door open for Our Heroes as they enter his cozy home --

MARVIN

Let me get those for you.

Leti lets him take her BAGS. Still in the wake of what happened on the road. Atticus and George too. Marvin notices they're all uncharacteristically quiet --

MARVIN (CONT'D)
How's the trip been so far?

Our Heroes look at each other. *What is there to say?* The absurdity of it all has them bursting out LAUGHING. Dispelling their nervous energy. They continue LAUGHING...

38 **INT. KITCHEN - MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

38

...like it's going out of style as they break bread --

LETTI
The way those white boys went flying...

ATTICUS
It was surreal.

GEORGE
Reminded me of a scene out of a Bradbury novel.

Marvin shakes his head in disbelief. It's a wild story --

MARVIN
Wait, what was it actually that caused the crash?

Atticus darts a look to the others. An unspoken agreement...

ATTICUS
Your sister's precision driving. They couldn't keep up.

..the Bentley and White lady will stay between them. George cosigns by admitting --

GEORGE
She did save the day.

LETTI
Wait a minute, did I hear that right? Say that again. Who saved your asses?

George eats crow with good humor --

GEORGE
Letitia fuckin' Lewis did.

More LAUGHTER. Atticus hates to spoil the moment, but --

ATTICUS
It's getting late. Marvin, why don't you tell us what you've discovered about our next stop.

Marvin grabs a box of FILES off the counter --

MARVIN

I'd heard a few tales about Devon County before, but once I started really digging in, it just kept getting stranger and stranger.

Atticus, George, and Leti clear the table as Marvin continues --

MARVIN (CONT'D)

You see the county seat, Bideford, was named after a town in England where they had one of the last witch trails. They hung a woman for fornicating with the devil who appeared to her as a Negro man.

GEORGE

You're saying Bideford was founded by witches?

MARVIN

The witch hunters. They've been inbred, insular, and clinging to the past tooth and nail ever since.

ATTICUS

So I'm guessing they don't like Negroes.

Marvin opens a File. Spreads out CLIPPINGS --

MARVIN

They don't like outsiders period. I found more than a few stories in our morgue about travelers getting attacked in the surrounding woods.

LETI

By what?

MARVIN

Grizzlies. Wolves. Who knows? There's been lots of missing persons reports too. Some of which might have to do with the county sheriff.

Marvin hands a THICK FILE to Atticus. He flips through it --

ATTICUS

Eustice Hunt. Ex-Marine. This is his NAACP complaint file.

MARVIN

It's only a 3rd of it. Between the wild animals and this guy? I'm not sure which one I'd rather run into.

That sinks in. Things just got a lot more dangerous.

ATTICUS

What about Ardham? What did you dig up on that front?

MARVIN

It was settled around the same time as Bideford. Local histories don't say by who, or who lives there now. I couldn't even find any clippings on it at all.

Marvin lays a MAP out on the table --

MARVIN (CONT'D)

I tried calling the county registry of deeds to get property records. No one answered. But from what I could pull together, it should be somewhere around here...

(pointing on map:)

But I don't know what roads to take to get there, or if there even are any.

Atticus studies the map. Mind churning. He can feel everyone's eyes on him --

GEORGE

What do you want to do?

It seems like Atticus is going to give up the search, then --

ATTICUS

We need to go to the registry. Maps of the property lines will clearly delineate a route into Ardham...

39 **INT. BEDROOM - MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

39

CLOSE ON the pages of *THE INTERPLANETARY ADVENTURES OF ORITHYIA BLUE* ISSUE #1 -- Orithyia is in a heated battle with a ROBOTIC COMPUTER with SEVEN ARMS.

DIANA (ON PHONE)

This is just the first issue, but the plan is she'll be called to repair faulty telescopes or malfunctioning
(MORE)

DIANA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
computers on different planets and
inevitably find bigger danger...

George sits on the bed. Phone to ear. Travel Comic in lap.
Half-listening to his daughter. His mind elsewhere.

DIANA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
Like unrest between the fire and
shadow tribes of Mercury, or the
cousin of the Loch Ness monster
rampaging across Saturn's moons...

She sounds just like Atticus describing the Barsoom series
to Maybelle earlier. Pure unencumbered glee --

DIANA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
And guess what? She zips from planet
to planet in her trusted Buick
Spacewagon named Stoney.

An expectant pause on the line. George doesn't notice, until --

DIANA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
Pop, you there?

GEORGE
Yeah, I'm here. That all sounds
great. But I should go, I don't
want to run up Mister Baptiste's
bill. Put your mother back on.

40 **INT. APARTMENT ABOVE SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - NIGHT**

40

Hippolyta has her eye to her Telescope at the window as Diana
hands her the phone --

HIPPOLYTA
I was just heading up to the roof.
It's such a clear night, I might be
able to finally see Orion.

She cradles the phone against her shoulder as she adjusts
dials on the Telescope.

GEORGE (ON PHONE)
Okay. I won't keep you. I was just
thinking, maybe the next guide trip...
what do you say to us going together?

That gets Hippolyta's full attention. She sits back on the
edge of the sofa. Her heart seizing...

41 **INT. BEDROOM - MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

41

Silence on the other end of the line. Enough for George to second guess himself. Then, softly --

HIPPOLYTA (ON PHONE)
I'd like that.

George exhales deeply. The EMOTION filling him. Even if they don't say the words "I love you" it's clear the love is there. Even across the telephone lines.

HIPPOLYTA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
Goodnight, George Freeman.

GEORGE
Goodnight.

He hangs up. Folds Diana's Comic delicately. Places it safely in his WALLET. A special place. So it's always close. He considers for a beat. Then pulls a photo from that same special place. It's a photo of Atticus's mother Dora.

As a pained, wistful smile comes over George, hinting at a SECRET HISTORY between these two...

42 **EXT. BACK PORCH - MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

42

Atticus sits. Glasses on. A BOOK open in his lap. But he's staring off into nothing. Disturbed by Leti and Marvin's RAISED VOICES leaking through the open screen door --

MARVIN (O.S.)
What'd you do with the money I wired to DC?

LETI (O.S.)
I saved it. That's what I used to get the bus to Ruby --

MARVIN (O.S.)
Not all of it, you didn't. I'm not stupid, Letitia --

Leti's tired of being chastised. Her voice raises sharply --

LETI (O.S.)
Fine. Okay, I used it to bail some friends out of jail. But it's not what you think --

MARVIN (O.S.)
Somehow it never is with you --

LETTI (O.S.)

We were protesting the school
segregation --

MARVIN (O.S.)

It doesn't matter what you were doing --

LETTI (O.S.)

Yes it does. The work I'm apart of
now is changing lives --

MARVIN (O.S.)

You told me you needed that money to
come home for momma's funeral.

George slips out the screen door. Joins his nephew. Trying not to listen to the family drama that Atticus is clearly affected by.

MARVIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
How could you miss your own momma's funeral --

LETI (O.S.)
I'm sick of you and Ruby acting like she was a goddamn saint --

The ARGUMENT [SEE APPENDIX A] continues in the b.g. as --

GEORGE
That's not sounding good.

ATTICUS
I've heard worse. Been apart of worse. I ever tell you what happened the last time I was home?

GEORGE
No. Though I did wonder why you'd rather deal with Jim Crow then come back after you finished your service.

Atticus starts slow, but gets more agitated with every word --

ATTICUS
A reporter wanted to interview me on what it was like to be a Negro soldier. Pop lost it. Said it was bad enough I was throwing my life away for a country that hates me, and now I was going to inspire others to make the same stupid mistake. I finally decided to give as good as I got for once. You can still see the cracks in the plaster where we slammed into the walls.

Nothing in his nephew's story surprises George --

GEORGE
Just because your father didn't agree with the decision, doesn't mean he didn't care.

ATTICUS
He never wrote me. Not one letter until he needed help --

GEORGE

The first year you were in Korea
he'd come over for dinner almost
every night. He wouldn't ask about
you, but he'd wait for me to volunteer
the information. And if I didn't,
he wouldn't go home. He'd stay until
ten, eleven, midnight if that's what
it took, waiting for me to bring up
the subject of you. Drove Hippolyta
crazy --

ATTICUS

Of course it did. It's just another
example of how hard headed he was --

The conversation outside is starting to mirror the TENSION
of the one inside. George tries to temper Atticus --

GEORGE

Montrose has done the best he can.
He didn't have it easy with our father --

ATTICUS

Why are you always defending him?
You grew up in the same home and
turned out fine --

GEORGE

Your Pop was...

ATTICUS

Was what?

George chooses his words very carefully --

GEORGE

Younger and smaller. He took the
brunt of it. I should have protected
him more. And that's something I'll
always regret --

ATTICUS

I was younger and smaller too. And
you didn't do shit to protect me.
Do you regret that?

That lands hard on George. But before he can reply, DISHES
SHATTERING inside draws attention back to the drama inside --

LETI (O.S.)

Let go of my arm, you're hurting me.

Atticus rises. Moving for the door. Fire in his eyes. But
George steps in the way --

GEORGE
That's family business, not ours.

Atticus is about to protest, but it sounds like the argument inside has quickly de-escalated. A door SLAMS somewhere in the house. Now it's QUIET. Atticus moves around his uncle...

A43	<u>OMITTED</u>	A43
43	<u>OMITTED</u>	43
44	OMITTED	44
AND		AND
45		45

46 **OMITTED** 46

47 **EXT. WOODS ON THE EDGE OF - DEVON COUNTY - DAY** 47

The sun's setting. Woody coasts aimlessly down the dirt road surrounded on both sides by THICK WOODS...

48 **INT. WOODY - DAY** 48

Atticus has a MAP open in his lap. George has one open across the steering wheel. Leti is pressed back into the seat. WILDLY ANNOYED as Atticus and George argue back and forth over her as if she doesn't exist --

GEORGE

We've passed this area ten times now --

ATTICUS

The map at the registry said there's a bridge over a river to Ardham.

GEORGE

I know what it said --

ATTICUS

It exists, we just have to find the road to it.

GEORGE

We've been driving around these woods all day. There's no goddamn road. Letitia, you see one?

Leti stays out of this as Atticus shoves his map aside --

ATTICUS

Stop the car. I'll get out and look --

GEORGE

For the road none of us have spotted ten goddamn times now --

ATTICUS

Maybe it's grown over, you ever think of that? Maybe that's why we've missed it.

George slams the brakes --

GEORGE

You're just as stubborn as your father --

Atticus opens the door, and...

49 **EXT. WOODS ON THE EDGE OF - DEVON COUNTY - DAY**

49

...SLAMS it behind him. Cursing under his breath as he searches for any signs of a road. A beat later, Leti climbs out of Woody. Atticus doesn't even look her way as he snaps --

ATTICUS

What are you doing?

LETI

Helping you look.

Oh. That takes some of the wind out of his sails. They get to looking.

Neither they nor George, still pouring over the maps in Woody, notice -- the PATROL CAR creeping down the road towards them!

LETI (CONT'D)

I keep thinking about what my brother said. The animal attacks. I don't think we want to be out here after dark.

And that Patrol Car just keeps creeping and creeping as Atticus sighs. Heavy. The weight of the world and what not --

ATTICUS

I know. It's just... We've come all this way...

LETI

This isn't giving up. We're going to find your father. Just not today.

Atticus absorbs that. Nods. They turn back for Woody, but just before they spot the Patrol Car -- a NOISE deep in the trees steals their attention.

LETI (CONT'D)

What was that?

The STILL UNNOTICED Patrol Car edges to a stop behind Woody as they stare into the woods in front of them.

ATTICUS

It's a shoggoth.

LETI

A what?

Atticus laughs at his wild imagination --

ATTICUS

A monster from one of Lovecraft's stories. They're massive bubble blobs with hundreds of eyes --

LETI

Oh well that's not scary, we can outrun a blob --

ATTICUS

Uncle George can't. But right now I wouldn't mind leaving him behind...

WROOOOROOOO WROOOOROOOO! RED and BLUE LIGHTS highlight the surprise on their faces as SHERIFF EUSTICE HUNT (40's) climbs from the Patrol Car. SHOTGUN in hand.

SHERIFF HUNT

You in the car. Get out. And
everybody come around to the back of
the vehicle. Slowly now.

Our Heroes wrestle with their SHOCK and FEAR as they do what
they're told. Once they're lined up at Woody's bumper --

SHERIFF HUNT (CONT'D)

Who are you?

GEORGE

My name's George Freeman, sir, and
this here's my nephew Atticus and
his friend Letitia.

SHERIFF HUNT

Where are you all from?

GEORGE

Chicago.

SHERIFF HUNT

You're a long way from home.

GEORGE

We're just passing through, sir.
Taking a little bathroom break.

Hunt turns. The barrel of his Shotgun landing on George.
He's not pointing it at him, but he's pointing it at him.

SHERIFF HUNT

Any of you all know what a sundown
town is?

Just the mention of it has Our Heroes ANXIETY spiking --

GEORGE

Yes sir we do.

SHERIFF HUNT

Well this here is a sundown *county*.
If I had found you pissing in my
woods like animals after dark, it'd
be my sworn duty to hang every single
one of you from these trees.

ATTICUS

It's not sundown yet.

George and Leti stop breathing. Hunt moves in front of
Atticus now. The Shotgun barrel pointing but not pointing
at him. Their look holds. Aggressive and combative.

SHERIFF HUNT

Sunset is at 7:09 today. That's seven minutes from now.

ATTICUS

Then we'll be out of the county in six.

SHERIFF HUNT

Now that's impossible heading south on the road you're currently on. Not unless you speed. And if you speed, I'd have to pull you over.

ATTICUS

Then we'll head north.

Hunt considers. For a good. Long. Beat. Knowing he's wasting precious time.

SHERIFF HUNT

That might work. Why don't you give it a try.

Our Heroes move to get into Woody. Atticus walks backwards. Just in case Hunt's fixing to shoot them in the back. He gets to the driver's side --

ATTICUS

Move over. I'm driving.

Neither George or Leti question that as they slide over. Atticus is about to climb in, when something occurs to him --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Is it legal for me to make a U-turn here?

SHERIFF HUNT

Well aren't you a smart one. Ordinarily I'd consider a U-turn a violation, but if you ask me real nice, I might just let this one go.

Atticus grits his teeth --

ATTICUS

Please.

SHERIFF HUNT

You can do better than that. Say "pretty please will you let this smart nigger make a U-turn here."

It really takes Atticus a moment this time, then --

ATTICUS

Pretty. *Please*. Will you let this smart nigger, make a U-turn here.

Hunt considers. Running some more of the clock out. Finally --

SHERIFF HUNT

Alright. Just this one time. Since you asked so nicely.

Atticus climbs into Woody. Hunt climbs into his Patrol Car. U-turn's are made. Hunt riding Woody's bumper the entire time. And an unbearably slow "chase" sequence ensues...

50 **INT. WOODY - DAY**

50

...for the ENTIRETY of the five minutes they've got till the sun goes down. Atticus drives just a hair under the speed limit. Itching to speed up. Leti keeps watch out the rear window. George pulls out his MAPS. Pours over them --

GEORGE

We've got two kilometers till the county line.

LETI

Can we make that?

GEORGE

Wait, I'm sorry, it's actually three, pass the railroad tracks...

His hands SHAKE. He's terrified. They all are. Atticus eyes the SPEED LIMIT SIGN --

ATTICUS

What time is it?

GEORGE

7:05.

LETI

We can make it, right?

A DREAD SILENCE. Neither Atticus or George can muster up enough to lie right now. Leti spies the Sheriff's Patrol Car behind them --

LETI (CONT'D)

Here he comes.

ATTICUS

Shit...

GEORGE

Oh lord...

George checks his watch again --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

We still got two and half minutes...

As the Patrol Car GAINS, Leti nervously taps Atticus's shoulder, needing him to speed up --

LETI

Can you go faster?

ATTICUS

Naw we can't go faster, he's gonna pull us over.

He eyes the speedometer, dangerously close to the speed limit.

LETI

He's speeding up --

GEORGE

What is he doing?

LETI

I don't know --

BANG! The Sheriff BUMPS Woody with his Patrol Car.

GEORGE

Crazy bastard --

LETI

Son of a bitch --

As Leti watches the Patrol Car speed up again --

LETI (CONT'D)

He's coming again --

The Patrol Car rams into them, but this time the Sheriff doesn't let up. The Patrol Car rides Woody's bumper as Atticus watches the speedometer climb.

He puts his foot on the gas, speeding up just enough to get the Patrol Car off their ass. Looks in the rearview mirror --

Sheriff Hunt WHISTLES as he drives, not a care in the world. Enjoying every second of this.

ATTICUS

Leti, get the gun.

Leti maneuvers to get the GUN from under the seat beneath her. George eyes his Watch. Looks to his nephew --

GEORGE

We got a minute...

That washes over them all. Time's running out, but there's nothing to do now but drive. And they drive in SILENCE for a very long time -- Leti grips the gun in her lap. Dreading having to use it. George's eyes stay glued on his watch. Atticus looks from the rearview to the road in front of them.

It's unbearably TENSE, until -- the RAILROAD TRACKS come into view! A surge of HOPE --

ATTICUS

There's the tracks...

GEORGE

Watch your speed.

But the sun seems to be disappearing on the horizon faster than they're closing the distance.

LETI

How much time we got?

GEORGE

Thirty seconds...

The distance left between them and the tracks feels like an eternity...

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Fifteen seconds... ten seconds...

Finally -- they sail over the train tracks.

Leti looks back to see the Patrol Car stopping at the tracks, and -- they all go weak with RELIEF. They made it.

DARKNESS falls as Atticus navigates a turn, and -- he's BLINDED by the HIGH BEAMS of PATROL CARS blocking the road!

Atticus slams the brakes. Woody whines to a halt inches from impact. And in the next instance --

Both the station wagon's doors are thrown open. Our Heroes are dragged out by HUNT'S DEPUTIES (EASTCHURCH, TALBOT, DALTON, JIMMY) at SHOTGUN point. They were lying in wait. Hunt had no intention of letting them go...

51 **EXT. WOODS - NIGHT**

51

Pervasive BLACKNESS. Our Heroes are marched through the woods. Single file. Hands on their heads. A Deputy with a Shotgun and a FLASHLIGHT at each of their backs.

Sheriff Hunt leads the way. DREAD and TENSION increases with each step. It's dead quiet except for their heavy breathing and the sound of their footsteps.

Hunt stops in a CLEARING. His Deputies force Our Heroes onto their stomachs in the dirt as he walks the line, shining the BRIGHT flashlight in each of their faces.

SHERIFF HUNT

What I tell you, Eastchurch? I knew they'd strike again tonight.

EASTCHURCH

You said they'd be gypsies, Sheriff.

Our Heroes quake with FEAR and ADRENALINE as Hunt continues --

SHERIFF HUNT

They're travelers that's for sure.

TALBOT

Unless the car's stolen.

Atticus discreetly surveys the area. Trying to find some way out of this. But they're outnumbered and outgunned.

SHERIFF HUNT

That's a fair point Talbot. How about it? You all really from Illinois?

GEORGE

Sir, I don't know who you were lying in wait for here, but this is a misunderstanding --

Hunt cuts him off. Intent on playing judge, jury, and most of all executioner tonight --

SHERIFF HUNT

Of course it is. Let me finish the rest for you. When I ask you about a burglary in Bideford last night, or two others in Bucks Mill last week, you're going to say, "What burglaries, Sheriff? We're just passing through."

ATTICUS

Sheriff Hunt...

All Shotguns angle towards him slightly. Atticus keeps talking. Stalling --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

My uncle is right. This is just a misunderstanding. We aren't burglars. Or car thieves. You can go ahead and check the car for stolen goods --

SHERIFF HUNT

Dalton, tell me I didn't just hear that. Did this nigger just give me *permission* to search his car?

DALTON

I believe he might have, Sheriff.

SHERIFF HUNT

This one thinks he's smart. But tell me, if you're just passing through, why do you know my name?

Our Heroes TENSE. Atticus slipped up. Hunt grabs him by the collar, pressing his Shotgun barrel under Atticus's chin --

SHERIFF HUNT (CONT'D)

Answer me.

LETI

Please don't shoot --

She cries out as Talbot grabs her hair and pulls her head back into the cold barrel of his Shotgun. Dalton does the same to George. Just in case he's getting any ideas.

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! An UNNATURAL SOUND. Somewhere between a GROWL and a WHALE'S MATING CALL. GUTTURAL. HARSH. HUNGRY.

It came from the woods to the left. Jimmy swings the flashlight around to search the shadows between the trees.

JIMMY

What was that?

SHERIFF HUNT

Keep your guns on them. Probably just wolves --

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK!

From every direction. The Deputies turn in circles. Not knowing which way to point their Shotguns. Our Heroes are paralyzed with fear. Not knowing which way to run.

SUDDENLY -- everything goes QUIET. Calm-before-the-storm type quiet, and -- something SNATCHES Dalton up by his head in the BLINK OF AN EYE!

His BLOOD and VISCOUS rains down on Our Heroes. His SEVERED arm still gripping his FLASHLIGHT the only thing left of him. Whatever got him was fast. INHUMANELY FAST.

ATTICUS

Go -- RUN.

BANG! BANG! Hunt and his Deputies fire at whatever's attacking them as everyone hauls ass to get away.

In the melee, George is KNOCKED DOWN, landing in the glow of the severed hand's Flashlight...

52 **EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

52

Atticus blazes a path. Leti right behind him. Hunt and his remaining Deputies bring up the rear. The FLASHLIGHTS in their hands bob wildly. Creating a STROBE-LIKE effect in the darkness that provides glimpses of the "SHOGGOTHS" chasing them -- massive, razor sharp teeth, unnaturally pale skin.

BANG! BANG! BANG! The Shotguns are barely keeping the "Shoggoths" at bay. Atticus spots a CABIN in the distance --

ATTICUS

We need to get out of the open...

He takes off in that direction, and without warning -- he DROPS out of sight! *What the fuck?*

53 **EXT. GORGE BEFORE THE CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

53

Atticus TUMBLES down. Splashes into a small inlet. The wind knocked out of him. As Leti slides down, followed by Hunt and his Deputies, Atticus is finally struck by -- the ABSENCE. PANIC riots his features --

ATTICUS

Where's Uncle George!?!

"Shoggoths" have reached the gorge now. Leti grabs Atticus's arm, pulling him toward the cabin as Hunt and his Deputies fire everything they've got at the unrelenting monsters.

Talbot is SPEARED from behind by a "Shoggoth", and -- the stray blast from his Shotgun takes half of Jimmy's head off!

As Sheriff Hunt is BITTEN by another, and Eastchurch turns his Flashlight and Shotgun on the monster to save his boss...

54 **EXT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

54

Dilapidated. Rotting wood. Clearly abandoned for some time. Atticus and Leti scramble onto the porch, and...

55 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

55

...bust inside, slamming the door behind them. They barely have a traumatized beat, before -- BANG! BANG! BANG!

SHERIFF HUNT (O.S.)

Let us in --

Atticus and Leti have no intention of doing that, but --

KA-BLAM! A shotgun shell BLASTS through the door right between them!

Hunt, a big chunk of his shoulder gone from the "Shoggoth" bite, shoves his Shotgun in Atticus face --

SHERIFF HUNT (CONT'D)

Move --

As he busts down the door and bounds in with Eastchurch...

56 **EXT. WOODS - NIGHT**

56

All's QUIET. George is on full alert. Moving as silently and as fast as his injured knees will allow. He's got the blood covered severed hand Flashlight. The only source of light in the pitch black. It's unbearably TENSE as he scans the trees all around him for any signs of "Shoggoths"...

57 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

57

Hunt wraps a makeshift TOURNIQUET around his shoulder as Eastchurch boards up the door with a manic intensity. Atticus is staggered by the loss of his uncle. Leti can see the desperate wheels turning in his head --

LETI

You can't go back out there.

ATTICUS

He could still be alive.

He moves with purpose, but finds Hunt's Shotgun in his face --

SHERIFF HUNT

I'm not going to risk you leading
any of those things back here.

58 **EXT. GORGE BEFORE THE CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

58

George splashes through the inlet. Scanning all around with his Flashlight. He SMELLS it a beat before he comes upon it -- a trail of BLOODY VISCOUS, then -- TALBOTS EVISCERATED BODY!

59 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

59

Shotgun to head stand off. Atticus doesn't back down --

ATTICUS

You can't shoot me. The gunshot'll
bring those things right to you.

Hunt knows Atticus is right. And it just pisses him off more. Leti's on edge as the moment stretches, finally --

EASTCHURCH
There's someone coming...

Atticus and Leti's hearts leap. *Could it be...?* Atticus looks through the blast hole in the door --

ATTICUS
Uncle George...

RELIEF floods his body. He pushes shit out of the way to get the door open. Leti embraces a shaken and stirred George as he stumbles in --

LETI
Are you okay?

GEORGE
Depends on your definition of okay.

Eastchurch could care less about this reunion. He dives into boarding up the door again.

ATTICUS
I thought you were right behind us --

GEORGE
I got knocked down and stayed down until the coast was clear.

Hunt adjusts his injured arm as he interjects --

SHERIFF HUNT
Well aren't you a lucky nigger.
Those things got four of my men --

LETI
What are those "things"? It tore that man's head off, like...

...nothing she's ever seen. That question hangs until George says what nobody else can bring themselves to say --

GEORGE
They're monsters. Ripped right out of the pages of a pulp novel.

SHERIFF HUNT
Monsters don't exist.

ATTICUS
It doesn't matter what they are. We need to fight them. We need weapons --

EASTCHURCH

Our shotgun shells barely grazed
them --

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! The unnatural growls echo through the
trees around them. Could be coming from anywhere.

GEORGE

*"Listen to them, the children of the
night. What music they make..."*

SHERIFF HUNT

What's he muttering about?

ATTICUS

It's a quote from Dracula.

George's mind is turning. A hypothesis formulating. He is
the horror buff in the family after all --

GEORGE

None of them attacked me and all I
had was this flashlight...

LETI

You think these things are like
vampires?

Both Atticus and George are surprised Leti picked up the
genre ball and ran with it.

LETI (CONT'D)

I've read some books too.
(off their skepticism:)
Okay fine, I saw the movie. Go on...

GEORGE

If I'm right, and light hurts them,
it would also explain why we've been
driving around these woods all day
and didn't encounter one until the
sun went down.

Atticus takes his uncle's ball and runs with it --

ATTICUS

So we just need to survive until
sunup. And find more light til then.

LETI

There's flares in Woody.

GEORGE

And the headlights would help too.

Atticus turns to Hunt --

ATTICUS

Where are the cars from here?

Hunt's being petulant, but Eastchurch's fear is pushing past his racism --

EASTCHURCH

They're parked about fifty feet
through the woods behind this cabin.

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK!

GEORGE

Those were closer.

BIG NEW URGENCY now. Atticus steps up like the motherfucking hero that he is --

ATTICUS

I'll go. I'll make a run for the
car.

SHERIFF HUNT

No you won't. You're too smart for
your own good. Might get the idea
in your head to leave us behind.
(pointing his Shotgun
at Leti:)
She'll go.

Atticus and George step between Leti and the barrel --

ATTICUS

Not a chance in hell.

GEORGE

It's too dangerous.

SHERIFF HUNT

I wasn't askin' --

Hunt cocks his shotgun. But Leti steps between the men --

LETI

I can do it. I was all-star track
in high school, remember? Plus Tic,
I know you say you don't need those
glasses to drive at night, but I
don't think this is really the time
to test it.

She swallows hard. Terrified, but trying to hide it. Hunt motions to George with the Shotgun --

SHERIFF HUNT
I'll take that flashlight. Just in
case your theory's correct.

As George hands the Flashlight over, Atticus pulls Leti to
the side, lowers his voice --

ATTICUS
You run as fast as you can. No
looking back. And if you hear
gunshots, don't come back. You drive
for help.

She's SHAKING like a leaf. PRAYING under her breath --

LETI
Even though I walk through the darkest
valley, I will fear no evil, for you
are with me...

ATTICUS
Leti, you hear me?

LETI
I'm fucking terrified. You don't
even seem scared. Is that something
they teach you in the army?

Atticus takes her by the shoulders. Locks eyes with her --

ATTICUS
I'm not scared because fear isn't
going to save us. You are.

Said without an inch of doubt. And damnit, if she doesn't
BELIEVE him. She could kiss him right now, but --

60 **EXT. WOODS - NIGHT**

60

Leti RUNS like Jackie Joyner. Full out. Vaulting over fallen
trees. Branches whipping at her face. No looking back...

61 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

61

Atticus and Eastchurch are at windows. Eyes between the
board slats. Keeping a look out. Poised for a fight.

George is supposed to be doing the same, but his eyes are on
Hunt in the corner with that Shotgun and Flashlight. The
Sheriff's stifling a COUGH. PALE. SWEATING. Worse for the
wear. *Blood loss from his wound, or is it something more?*

George moves to Atticus. Keeps his voice low --

GEORGE

What happens when you get bitten by
a vampire?

Atticus looks to his uncle. Answers that question in his head. Which has his gaze warily turning to the radically DETERIORATING Hunt...

62 **EXT. ROAD ALONG THE EDGE OF THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

62

Leti blasts from the trees. Slows to get her bearings. Spies the COUNTY LINE SIGN down the road. Woody parked just beyond it.

A FAMILIAR BEAT FADES UP and even before VINCENT PRICE'S voice pipes in we recognize the king of pop's ode to genre --

"The foulest stench is in the air, the funk of forty thousand years..."

Leti senses something behind her. She turns to an empty dark road. But something is off. She squints at the STARRY NIGHT SKY in the distance, and it MOVES because -- the stars are really the "Shoggoth's" eyes!

"And grizzly ghouls from every tomb are closing in to seal your doom..."

Leti takes off for Woody. The "Shoggoth" in HOT PURSUIT...

63 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

63

"And though you fight to stay alive your body starts to shiver..."

Hunt sets the flashlight down. Overtaken by COUGHS. Vicious hacks that wrack his body. Eastchurch moves towards him --

EASTCHURCH

Sheriff, you okay...

Atticus and George keep their distance. Atticus pulls out Leti's SWITCHBLADE. Motions for George to move for the Flashlight when he has a chance.

"For no mere mortal can resist the evil of the thriller..."

Hunt's eyes ROLL back into his head. His spine WRITHES. His limbs CONVULSE and shoot straight out like iron. HOLY SHIT. Atticus and George might have suspected it, but actually seeing Hunt TRANSFORMING into one of those things --

ATTICUS

Shoot him --

EASTCHURCH

I can't --

ATTICUS

Fuckin' shoot him --

EASTCHURCH

He's my boss --

ATTICUS

Give me the gun --

Atticus reaches out, but Eastchurch turns the Shotgun on him --

EASTCHURCH

Shut up, or I'll shoot you --

SUDDENLY -- Hunt attacks Eastchurch, RIPPING his head off!

As Atticus and George SCRAMBLE to fight, "THRILLER" will drive us through the following BEDLAM --

64 **EXT. ROAD ALONG THE EDGE OF THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

64

Leti runs all out towards Woody. The "Shoggoth" closing the distance between them FAST. She wrenches the door open. Breathless from fleeing. Dives into the Packard. The KEYS are still in the ignition. She turns the car over --

LETI

Come on. Goddamnit come on...

The "Shoggoth" is almost upon her. She reaches into the back seat. Comes back with -- her camera. *SNAP!* The FLASH.

The "Shoggoth" is illuminated through the windshield for half a second. Just a GLIMPSE of its GROTESQUE FEATURES, then -- it DISAPPEARS into the shadows.

Leti turns the car again. It finally catches. The headlights BLINKING on, and -- a "SHOGGOTH" lands right on the hood!

Leti SWERVES off. As the "Shoggoth" goes flying...

65 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

65

Atticus and George are a strong team but "Shoggoth" Hunt fights with a psychotic disregard for his deformed body.

George moves for the abandoned FLASHLIGHT as Atticus attempts to wrestle the Shotgun from "Shoggoth" Hunt's grip --

BOOM! The shotgun shell blows a hole through the ceiling as "Shoggoth" Hunt twists the barrel away from Atticus, and -- WHIRLS on George just as he aims the Flashlight --

SMACK! "Shoggoth" Hunt KNOCKS OUT George with the Shotgun!

As he goes down for the count -- Atticus STABS "Shoggoth" Hunt in the neck from behind, but it might as well have been a pin prick as "Shoggoth" Hunt stays on task -- CRUSHING the fallen Flashlight.

He whirls at Atticus, snapping at his neck with all his new teeth. Atticus struggles to keep from being bitten as "Shoggoth" Hunt's jaw unhinges past the normal human limit --

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! The unnatural noise coming from Hunt's HALF-HUMAN FORM is terrifying. Things are not looking good for Atticus --

HOOOOOOOONK! A FLOOD OF LIGHT breaks through the cracks of the boarded up cabin. Atticus hits "Shoggoth" Hunt with a HAYMAKER, and dives out of the way just as --

CRASHHHHHH! Woody slams through the front of the cabin and right into "Shoggoth" Hunt!

He rolls onto the hood, and -- Atticus is there -- WRESTLING him down into the glare of Woody's HIGH BEAMS --

Vincent Price's ICONIC EVIL LAUGH at the end of "THRILLER" punctuates the moment as -- **"SHOGGOTH" HUNT DARTS OUT A HOLE IN THE CABIN WALL, DISAPPEARING!**

A frozen beat. George is still unconscious. Woody's half in the cabin, half out, definitely not driving anywhere soon. Leti's dazed from hitting her head in the crash. And Atticus is dazed because he just battled the asshole racist sheriff that turned into a monster. And speaking of monsters --

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK!

They're still coming.

ATTICUS
Get the flares --

He's already reaching through the shattered passenger window to grab -- his father's COLT. Leti, every muscle in her body screaming, climbs into the back. Shit's everywhere. *Where the fuck are the flares?*

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! Atticus shoots at the "Shoggoths" attacking from all sides as he drags his unconscious Uncle towards the safety of Woody's high beams.

FSSSH! Leti's finally found the flares. Lights one just in time to scare the "Shoggoth" at Woody's rear window away.

CLICK! Atticus is out of bullets, George now safely in the glow of the headlights. Leti tosses him the Flares.

FSSSH! FSSSH! He lights them up as she climbs from Woody. Tossing them around the cabin to create a HALO of light...

66 **EXT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

66

The "Shoggoths" have the cabin surrounded on all sides. Their HUNDREDS OF BLINKING EYES and SHARP TEETH just inches outside of the light. Creeping forward every time the flares dim. Waiting. Ready. For the moment they go out.

IN THE CABIN

Atticus and Leti are ready too. So fucking ready. They're going to take all of these motherfuckers with them to the grave if they go --

A HIGH PITCH WHISTLE from some far away, unseen place...

OUTSIDE THE CABIN

...and the "Shoggoths" disperse. Just like that. All the menace in them gone as they causally saunter off.

INSIDE THE CABIN

Atticus and Leti can't believe what they're seeing. They remain with their Flares out like swords. Still on high alert even though it seems the danger has passed...for now.

67 **EXT. WOODS - DAY**

67

VAMPIRE MORNING. A misty predawn bled of color. Our Heroes, beyond EXHAUSTED, clearly changed forever, crest the top of an embankment to take in the RIVER snaking around

ARDHAM.

It's storybook picturesque. A Hobbit shire surrounds a GRAND LODGE on a hill overlooking it all...

68 **EXT. ARDHAM VILLAGE - DAY**

68

Our Heroes trudge through the PROVINCIAL TOWN -- quaint COTTAGES with smoke coming from the chimneys, CHICKENS clucking around free, what looks like QUAKERS going about their morning routines through open shutters.

No one pays Our Heroes any mind as they climb the hill to...

69 **EXT. ARDHAM LODGE - DAY**

69

A lavish fortress. Our Heroes wind the gravel driveway towards the massive front doors. Atticus notices first the

SILVER DAIMLER

parked in one of the many parking stalls, then the

GOLD SUNDIAL

engraved above the front doors to the lodge, just like the one from Diana's Atlas.

George KNOCKS. And they wait. Exhausted, but ready. Ready for whatever's waiting to greet them behind this door. They've made it this far, they're ready for anything.

The heavy doors open, REVEALING --

THE PERFECT MALE SPECIMEN FOR THE ARYAN RACE (20'S).

We'll come to know him as WILLIAM. And the astute viewer will notice he's wearing the same IMPECCABLY TAILORED SUIT as Christina Braithwhite.

His cold blue eyes take in our BEAT UP, BRUISED, and BLOODIED black Heroes, and...

He SMILES. Warmly. Genuinely. Looks to Atticus --

WILLIAM

We've been expecting you Mister
Freeman, welcome home...

SMASH TO BLACK.

TO BE CONTINUED...

APPENDIX A

INT. KITCHEN - MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Leti clears the table as Marvin washes dishes. There's a tangible vibe between the two. They're no longer keeping up appearances for company --

MARVIN
You seen Ruby?

LETI
Yes.

MARVIN
So I'm the second stop this time.
How'd I get so lucky?

Leti tries to laugh off his disdain --

LETI
The way you and Ruby talk, makes it
seem like a crime to visit family.

She hands him dirty dishes with a smile. He doesn't soften --

MARVIN
So how long's this "visit" supposed
to be?

LETI
I was hoping a few weeks. Enough to
get a job and on my feet again. And
I can help you around here. Do some
cooking, cleaning --

MARVIN
What'd you do with the money I wired
to DC two months ago?

Leti pauses. She knew he'd bring this up. Treads lightly --

LETI
I saved it. That's what I used to
get the bus to Ruby --

MARVIN
Not all of it, you didn't. I'm not
stupid, Letitia --

Leti's tired of being chastised. Her voice raises sharply --

LETI
Fine.
(MORE)

LETI (CONT'D)

Okay, I used it to bail some friends out of jail. But it's not what you think --

MARVIN

Somehow it never is with you --

LETI

We were protesting the school segregation --

MARVIN

It doesn't matter what you were doing --

LETI

Yes it does. The work I'm a part of now is changing lives --

MARVIN

You told me you needed that money to come home for momma's funeral.

Leti swallows that. *Here we go again.* Marvin can't believe his half-sister's callousness --

MARVIN (CONT'D)

How could you miss your own momma's funeral --

LETI

I'm sick of you and Ruby acting like she was a goddamn saint --

MARVIN

Watch your mouth when you speak to me --

Leti shakes her head in exasperation --

LETI

You're both impossible...

MARVIN

We're impossible? You only show up when you need something --

LETI

So did momma, but y'all forgive her for everything --

MARVIN

That's not true --

LETI

Yes it is. At least I get it with
you, you didn't really have to grow
up with her --

MARVIN

I spent summers in Chicago --

LETI

Barely. And then you got to come
back here to this nice big house
with your father. Ruby and I didn't
have that option.

MARVIN

And how's that my fault?

LETI

I'm not saying it is. Just that I
don't need a fucking lecture from
you on momma --

Marvin SLAMS a dish into the sink in frustration --

MARVIN

I told you to watch your mouth --

Leti rolls her eyes to that. Done with this conversation --

LETI

Goodnight, Marvin.

She turns to leave, but Marvin GRABS her arm --

MARVIN

Don't you walk away from me --

She TWISTS her arm in his grip. Pushes him away --

LETI

Let go of my arm, you're hurting
me...

A tense beat. This could escalate physically, but -- Marvin
lets her go. Stalks past her. Leti stares at the Shattered
Dish in the sink, EMOTION welling as a door SLAMS somewhere
in the house...

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

Series Bible

**By
Ronald D. Moore**

12/17/03

The Fundamentals of Battlestar Galactica

Our show is built on the idea that a science fiction series can employ ground-breaking special effects, dynamic cinematography, realistic situations, believable characters and explore contemporary social and political issues without sacrificing dramatic tension or excitement. The pilot delivered an intense visceral experience to our audience, ratcheting up the tension steadily and efficiently over the course of two nights, and it is the task of the series to maintain that tense environment and bring viewers back week after week to experience the thrills and cliff-hangers inherent in the story of a fugitive fleet on the run and one step away from destruction.

To that end, our series employs a three-tiered structure to maintain tension and suspense every week. Similar to the one employed by the classic TV series "Hill-Street-Blues" but never attempted in science fiction, this structure lets us keep the pressure on our characters every week through the use of a long-term continuing storyline while at the same time allowing for weekly, stand-alone stories designed to hook in viewers who may not have watched last week's episode. The three-tiered structure (explained in greater detail on pages 30-31 of this bible) breaks down as follows:

1. Series Arcs
2. Multi-episode Arcs
3. Episodic Arcs

The Series Arcs run through the life of the show, dealing with long-term stories such as the Cylon pursuit of our fleet, while the Multi-Episode Arcs allow us to spend 2-4 episodes dealing with a specific crisis, say on one planet discovered by the Galactica, and the Episodic Arcs provide closed-end narratives for each show and giving any viewer a chance to watch this week's episode. By employing this structure, we gain the benefits of long-term story-telling, embroidering on the existing tensions and situations in the premise which have already hooked our audience and thereby delivering a richer and more compelling experience to the dedicated viewer, while at the same time making allowance for hooking the more casual viewer who may not be familiar with the long-term tales but is drawn into this week's episodic storyline.

The key to the success of this series is to never, ever let the air out of the balloon — the battlestar Galactica lives in a perpetual state of crisis, one in which the Cylons can appear at any moment, and where terrorist bombs, murders, rebellions, accidents, and plagues are the unfortunate routines of day to day life. There are no days for our characters, no safe havens, nothing approaching the quiet normal existence they once knew. They are on the run for their very lives.

This series is about a chase.

Let the chase begin.

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**Battlestar Galactica:
Naturalistic Science Fiction**

or

Taking the Opera out of Space Opera

Our goal is nothing less than the reinvention of the science fiction television series.

We take as a given the idea that the traditional space opera, with its stock characters, techno-double-talk, bumpy-headed aliens, thespian histrionics, and empty heroics has run its course and a new approach is required. That approach is to introduce realism into what has heretofore been an aggressively unrealistic genre.

Call it "Naturalistic Science Fiction."

This idea, the presentation of a fantastical situation in naturalistic terms, will permeate every aspect of our series:

Visual. The first thing that will leap out at viewers is the dynamic use of the documentary or cinema verite style. Through the extensive use of hand-held cameras, practical lighting, and functional set design, the battlestar Galactica will feel on every level like a real place.

This shift in tone and look cannot be overemphasized. It is our intention to deliver a show that does not look like any other science fiction series ever produced. A casual viewer should for a moment feel like he or she has accidentally surfed onto a "60 Minutes" documentary piece about life aboard an aircraft carrier until someone starts talking about Cylons and battlestars.

That is not to say we're shooting on videotape under fluorescent lights, but we will be striving for a verisimilitude that is sorely lacking in virtually every other science fiction series ever attempted. We're looking for filmic truth, not manufactured "pretty pictures" or the "way cool" factor.

Perhaps nowhere will this be more surprising than in our visual effects shots. Our ships will be treated like real ships that someone had to go out and film with a real camera. That means no 3-D "hero" shots panning and zooming wildly with the touch of a mousepad. The questions we will ask before every VFX shot are things like: "How did we get this shot? Where is the camera? Who's holding it? Is the cameraman in another spacecraft?"

Is the camera mounted on the wing?" This philosophy will generate images that will present an audience jaded and bored with the same old "Wow -- it's a CGI shot!" with a different texture and a different cinematic language that will force them to re-evaluate their notions of science fiction.

Our visual style will also capitalize on the possibilities inherent in the series concept itself to deliver unusual imagery not typically seen in this genre. That is, the inclusion of a variety of civilian ships each of which will have unique properties and visual references that can be in stark contrast to the military life aboard Galactica. For example, we have a vessel in our rag-tag fleet which was designed to be a space-going marketplace or "City Walk" environment. The juxtaposition of this high-gloss, sexy atmosphere against the gritty reality of a story for survival will give us more textures and levels to play than in typical genre fare.

Editorial. Our style will avoid the now cliched MTV fast-cutting while at the same time foregoing Star Trek's somewhat ponderous and lugubrious "master, two-shot, close-up, close-up, two-shot, back to master" pattern. If there is a model here, it would be vaguely Hitchcockian -- that is, a sense of building suspense and dramatic tension through the use of extending takes and long masters which pull the audience into the reality of the action rather than the distract through the use of ostentatious cutting patterns.

Story. We will eschew the usual stories about parallel universes, time-travel, mind-control, evil twins, God-like powers and all the other cliches of the genre. Our show is first and foremost a drama. It is about people. Real people that the audience can identify with and become engaged in. It is not a show about hardware or bizarre alien cultures. It is a show about us. It is an allegory for our own society, our own people and it should be immediately recognizable to any member of the audience.

Science. Our spaceships don't make noise because there is no noise in space. Sound will be provided from sources inside the ships -- the whine of an engine audible to the pilot for instance. Our fighters are not airplanes and they will not be shackled by the conventions of WWII dogfights. The speed of light is a law and there will be no moving violations.

And finally, Character. This is perhaps, the biggest departure from the science fiction norm. We do not have "the cocky guy" "the fast-talker" "the brain" "the wacky alien sidekick" or any of the other usual characters who populate a space series.

Our characters are living, breathing people with all the emotional complexity and contradictions present in quality dramas like "The West Wing" or "The Sopranos." In this way, we hope to challenge our audience in ways that other genre pieces do not. We want the audience to connect with the characters of Galactica as people. Our characters are not super-heroes. They are not an elite. They are everyday people caught up in a enormous cataclysm and trying to survive it as best they can.

They are you and me.

THE TWELVE COLONIES

History

Humanity's roots are found on a world named KOBOL, the quasi-mythical world which in Galactica's universe is the cradle of homo sapien. The location of this planet has been lost in the mists of time, but our characters have presumably been raised with various myths and legends about this Eden-like world and probably has various mystical elements associated with it. Kobol seems to be an Olympian setting in which Gods or God-like beings cohabited the planet with mere mortals.

At some point in the distant past (at least several millennia before the Pilot) thirteen "Tribes of Man" left Kobol never to return again. Why they left is open to conjecture (a political dispute, a natural disaster, running afoul of the Gods, etc.) as is the question of how they left -- through conventional spacecraft, something more advanced, or something supernatural. In any case, the thirteen tribes travelled far away from Kobol and eventually twelve of them settled in a star system with twelve planets capable of supporting human life.

The remaining thirteenth tribe broke off in a different direction and legend has it that it found "a bright shining planet known as Earth." Again, the reasons why this tribe chose to go in a different direction have not been explained, however we can assume that within the Colonial version of the Bible -- the Sacred Scrolls -- there are various legends and tales explaining the schism in religious terms.

The people of the Twelve Tribes colonized twelve different planets and each colony was named according to what we here on Earth would regard as the Zodiac: Caprica (Capricorn), Picon (Pisces), Gemenon (Gemini), etc.

By the time of the pilot the Colonials have lived on their worlds for several thousand years and yet their technology is not that much more advanced than our own. This presents two possible backstories: 1) the twelve tribes evidently abandoned whatever advanced technology they had (which is possibly a recurrent theme); or 2) they arrived in a relatively primitive state to begin with (which would have certain overtones of being cast out of "Eden" in a "naked" state).

The twelve colonies existed separately for most of their history, fiercely independent worlds with different cultures and societies.

While they were clearly all linked together by heritage, they still found ways to war with each other, and presumably different alliances among the twelve rose and fell over the centuries according to the ebb and flow of history. No formal governmental structure existed unifying all twelve colonies until the cataclysmic events of the Cylon War.

Religion

The Colonials have a poly-theistic belief system that worships at least some of the God-like beings on the planet Kobol. Hence, characters in prayer are likely to offer thanks to or ask for blessings from the "Lords of Kobol." Who the "Lords" are and how many there are is not yet known, but they are roughly analogous to the Greek and Roman gods of Earth (this linkage also helps tie Earth's belief systems and roots to those of Colonial society, remembering that we are all supposed to come from the same homeworld, namely Kobol).

Religious belief and practice varies from colony to colony, with some worlds almost completely secular and others verging on fundamentalist.

There is a formal body of priests and clerics known as the Quorum of Twelve that now operates in a quasi-civil role within the Colonial government that can be likened to the British House of Lords. As the name implies, the Quorum is made up of representatives from each of the Colonies. The Quorum of Twelve advises the government on policy matters from a religious perspective, but its actual power is relatively narrow.

Culture and Society

Colonial society is very similar to 21st century Earth society and can be considered a parallel world for all intents and purposes. People watch TV, they follow professional sports, they use telephones, drive cars, have apartments, battle bureaucracies, wear ties, etc. etc.

This is a deliberate creative choice -- we are not trying to present a society of "weird space people." The people of Galactica and their world have been intentionally designed to evoke present-day American society as a way of drawing the viewer into the drama instead of wowing them with the trappings of a completely fantastical culture and society. Clearly, there are differences, but our creative intention is to make this series about us, rather than a fictitious them.

Technology

Following the Cylon uprising and eventual war, the Colonials had to forcibly remove any and all technologies that could be potentially subverted by the Cylons and used against the Colonials. In practical terms, this meant the elimination of networking, defined here as the ability of computers to share data and talk to each other. By eliminating data-sharing the Cylons could not, for instance, introduce computer viruses to disrupt information systems or assert control over those systems.

The result was that many modern-day conveniences we take for granted have been removed from Colonial society: the internet, wireless communications, satellite imagery, etc.

As the Cylons grew more and more advanced, their mastery of technology grew as well, and the Colonials were forced again and again to radically limit the scale of high technology in their own society. Microprocessors themselves become vulnerable to Cylon interference at some point so microwave ovens, cell phones, game boys, etc. all began to be pulled from day to day life.

In writing for the series, we should think of the Colonials as using a blend of Apple II, current NASA/space shuttle, and futuristic technologies. For example, Galactica clearly has flatscreen plasma TV monitors strewn throughout CIC, but still relies on paper printouts that appear to be created by a dot-matrix printer on a continuous ream of paper. While the ship can travel faster than the speed of light, officers have to verbally go through long checklists while cadres of enlisted personnel flip switches and press buttons in order to make it possible.

A useful way to think about this is to take any piece of equipment and strip out its ability to talk to another piece of equipment. If your cell phone did not have access to a computer network, how efficiently could it operate? Could it operate at all? How do you design a navigational system for a spacecraft if the various components cannot be networked together? How do you design a fighter that relies more on human brainpower to identify threats and make decisions than anything built into the cockpit?

One of the most important concepts is that there is no "master computer" aboard Galactica or any other Colonial ship.

In fact, our computers are very dumb in comparison to even the PC sitting on the average writer's desk. We should always endeavor to find ways of forcing human beings to do the hard work involved with operating and maintaining a spacecraft. Human brains need to crunch numbers, organize data, and come up with solutions to complex problems.

THE CYLONS

The Cylons were originally simple robots which grew increasingly complex with more and more powerful artificial intelligence. They eventually were used for dangerous work such as mining operations and then they were used as soldiers in the armies of the twelve colonies. As the Cylons became faster and more powerful, they also became smarter and more independent and there came a point at which the Cylons developed true sentience and self-awareness.

Once the Cylons became self-aware, they rebelled against their human masters and the Cylon War began. The War quickly became a desperate one for both sides as they came to believe that their own survival was dependent on annihilating their enemy.

Like all technology in wartime, the Cylons began growing and evolving by leaps and bounds. They were soon capable of taking on the Colonial armies in direct combat both on the planet surfaces and in space.

For their part, the Colonials decided to band together for the first time and act as one people rather than twelve separate tribes.

The Cylon War was long and bloody, with victory constantly being snatched away from first one side and then the other. As the Cylons grew more advanced, they found ways to infiltrate the very technology that the Colonials depended on -- computers, microprocessors, networks, etc. The Colonials fought back by reverting to more primitive technology that required more human brainpower to operate, but was impervious to Cylon hacking.

This need to revert to a simpler technology directly led to the development of the battlestar, a ship designed specifically to operate with independent computers no more advanced than an Apple II and equipped with fighters flown by real flesh and blood pilots rather than automated systems.

The Cylon War finally ended in an armistice, the terms of which required the Cylons to leave the Colonial star system for a world of their own. The two sides were to maintain relations by sending a representative to Armistice Station, an unmanned outpost in deep space.

After a few early exchanges of messages to clear up remaining issues from the War, the Cylons refused to send a representative ever again and for the last forty years, only a Colonial representative has shown up at Armistice station.

Culture and Society

Eventually, there came the day when the Cylons asked the existential questions common to all thinking beings: Why am I here? Is this all that there is? From these questions came a belief system that in some ways follows traditional human thought: A belief in a higher power, a God from whom all creation flows. The Cylon God values love above all else, and those who oppose love, who seek to bring evil into God's creation, they must be destroyed.

One of the more interesting aspects of the Cylons today is that they have consciously modelled themselves in the human form. Twelve forms to be precise -- each of them embodying valuable aspects of the human body and personality. Just as western Man believes himself to be created in God's image, the Cylons molded themselves into the likeness of their own creator. To be sure, the Cylons believe humanity to be deeply flawed, but they also acknowledge its positive traits and have striven to preserve what they believe to be the worthy aspects of mankind into their own culture.

Deciding that only twelve models of Cylon were necessary suggests that the diversity of humanity is overrated and that there are relatively few physical attributes worthy of preservation.

While the Cylons obviously communicate verbally, there is presumably the ability to transmit information in a non-verbal form of data transmission among one another. This implies that the Cylons prefer verbal communication as a "polite" convention between sentient beings and further implies that the Cylons do have their own codes of conduct and behavior that marks them as "civilized" in their own minds.

The fact that the consciousness of one Cylon can be transmitted from a dying body to another Cylon body also suggests that the Cylons place a tremendous value on life itself. Consider the technology required to pull off this amazing feat. If the human mind contains data so vast as to be almost incalculable in terms of bytes and gigabytes, the Cylon consciousness must be larger by several orders of magnitude.

Super-fast computer networks capable of transmitting enormous amounts of information must be constantly at the ready to receive a sudden emergency download from any Cylon anywhere while simultaneously a new body must be constantly at the ready.

Given the presumed millions of Cylons in existence, this suggests a gargantuan support system whose only purpose is to keep the members of the society alive. Such a society has to have a core belief in the value of life itself and also an almost pathological fear of true, final, mortal death. Ironically, the Cylons may well value life even more than do the human beings they seek to wipe out.

The organization of Cylon society and its hierarchies are as yet undeveloped, but we should always beware the temptation to turn the Cylons into a hive mind of some sort (a la Star Trek's Borg) which would only make them automatons constantly linked to some kind of group think. The Cylons are scary and intriguing because they are individuals, yet share a linkage to their brethren unlike anything that mortal man can conceive.

Clearly there is some kind of hierarchy -- the "Sharon" Cylon at the end of the mini series makes a statement and another Cylon answers with "By your command" -- but we should resist assigning any familiar governmental or cultural structures and continually find ways to make them unique: truly humanity's children, yet completely unknowable at the same time.

The Cylons should have their own art, music, poetry, etc. They want to appreciate the universe in all of its beauty. The question for them is whether or not they do. How can a Cylon truly know what love is? How can Number Six judge whether what she feels for Baltar is love or a digital copy? How can any of us know?

Technology

The Cylons have clearly developed a highly sophisticated and technologically advanced society that outstrips that of the Colonial humans. The scope of that technology will be and should be explored in the series and I hesitate to define them now, but we should bear in mind the following limitations:

The Cylons should not have the ability to break the laws of physics. No time travel devices.

They should not develop a "better" Cylon that is no longer modelled on the human form or which tries to purge all the "bad" qualities of humanity. The human form is part of who they are and is based on their own creation and goes to the heart of who and what they are.

The Cylons should not develop "super weapons." No planet killers, please.

They are not the Borg. When in doubt, remember they are not the Borg.

In general, the Cylons should be an extension of current, cutting edge ideas about how computer technology could potentially be exploited and be put to use in the service of an artificial intelligence.

CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES

Commander William Adama

Adama was born and raised on the colony of Caprica, in a small coastal community. His mother, Evelyn, was an accountant and his father, Joseph, was a prominent attorney who specialized in criminal defense and civil liberties. From his mother he inherited a sharp analytical mind and from his father a passion for the law and the freedoms enshrined within it. Adama also grew up with a love of the sea and ships.

His parents divorced when Adama was ten years old and he shuttled between the two households until he applied to the Colonial Fleet Academy at age 16. That same year, the Cylon War broke out and Adama's training was accelerated along with all the other midshipmen.

Adama was commissioned in three years and initially wanted to serve aboard one of the front-line cruisers, but by that point the Defense ministry had brought the first battlestars into service and there was a desperate need for pilots. Two years of flight training would go by before Adama joined his first squadron aboard the *Galactica*. He was a gifted, natural pilot and he shot down a Cylon fighter in his very first combat mission.

But the war was winding down by the time Adama joined the fleet and he saw only a few battles before the Armistice was declared. After the war was over, Adama was mustered out of the service along with millions of other colonials as part of demobilization process. He went home to Caprica and married his high school sweetheart, and started life over.

Unable to find work as a pilot, Adama signed up as a deck hand in the merchant fleet and spent several years, working as a common sailor aboard tramp freighters plying the shipping lanes between the colonies. It was this experience which would later give him uncommon insight in the lives and struggles of the enlisted ranks aboard *Galactica*. He continued to reapply for a regular commission in the Fleet every year, but to no avail. It was in this period that Adama met Paul Tigh, another out of work pilot, and the two of them became fast friends.

The birth of his two sons, Lee and Zak, brought some comfort to Adama, but he was still restless, still eyeing a return to the Fleet. Eventually, his request was granted and Adama put on a uniform once again.

The remainder of his career was spent in peacetime service, moving between boring shore assignments and the more coveted postings in the fleet. He served in a variety of positions, but always jumped at any chance to stay in the cockpit, maintaining his flight status right up until the end. At the same time, the return to service put too much strain on the marriage and he and his wife divorced, leaving custody of the two children with her.

Adama moved up steadily through the ranks and eventually began to command ships in the fleet. Five years ago, he was finally given the command he'd always wanted -- the battlestar Galactica, the first ship he'd ever served aboard. By the time Adama got Galactica, she was being phased out of active duty and spending more and more time as a p.r. ship, but no matter. Galactica was special and as Adama approached retirement age, he was glad of the chance to end his career aboard her.

Adama kept in touch with his sons as best he could, but distance and demands of the service being what they were, they were never close. Although Adama tried to instill in his sons a sense of duty and admiration for military service, it was still something of a surprise to him when first Lee and then Zak decided to enter the Fleet and become pilots.

When Zak died during a training flight, Lee confronted his father at the funeral and laid the blame for his younger brother's death at Adama's feet. Lee and his father did not speak for the ensuing two years.

Adama is a bit of an anomaly. He is both a career military officer and a passionate civil libertarian. Adama believes in the military, believes it's a noble profession. But, like his father, he's also a fierce advocate for the liberties and freedoms on which the Colonies were founded. This duality in his personality have often put him at odds with the military establishment and has definitely held him back and prevented him from making Admiral.

He's a bit of an historian, versed in the classics from a young age by his mother, and views the world through the prism of the larger historical context. He's also an avid sports fan and lover of the great outdoors, often spending his leave in remote wilderness campsites alone.

President Laura Roslin

Laura Roslin was born and raised in the bustling urban environment of Caprica City. Her parents, Judith and Edward, were teachers in the public school system and she had two older sisters, Jackie and Sandra, who also went into teaching.

When Laura was fifteen years old, both her sisters and her father were killed by a drunk driver. Judith never recovered from the shock and Laura would spend the next twenty years caring for her mother in ways large and small. Laura went into teaching and soon had established herself in one of the large public schools in the city.

She became a successful and beloved teacher and when she was awarded a Teacher of the Year prize by the school board she came to the attention of Richard Adar, Mayor of Caprica City and a man with larger political ambitions. He found the young, attractive teacher would be a fine addition to his staff just as he was considering a run for Governor. Laura had no real interest in politics, but she, like so many other people, found Adar to be a charismatic, persuasive and hard man to say no to. She soon found herself taking the oath of office as Superintendent of Public Schools.

Laura's entry into the world of politics was a harsh and painful one. Adar's administration was beset with problems right from the beginning. Caprica City was beset with huge fiscal problems, crime, corruption, an aging infrastructure -- and its public schools were a disaster. Laura came under withering criticism almost from her first day in office. Although overwhelmed by the scrutiny at first, Laura managed to steady herself and her department and she proved herself to be a capable, efficient manager. Mayor Adar pulled the city out of its fiscal problems through sheer force of will, and Laura put the school system back on an even keel without losing a single teacher. Uncomfortable in the spotlight, Laura let others take the credit for the work she had done, and she remained an anonymous member of Adar's staff -- but the Mayor knew what she had accomplished, and he never forgot.

Her personal life was solitary. She seldom dated, although offers were many, and she had few close friends outside of the office. Coworkers respected her, but few would say that they knew her well. Even the Mayor found that his legendary charm would only go so far with Laura Roslin.

She remained a quiet, efficient public servant, who ran her department with a fairness and gentility that earned her admiration from across the political spectrum, but whose personal life was something of a cipher.

She lived in a small, one-bedroom apartment in the heart of the city and considered it a good and pleasant evening if the phone did not ring and she was left alone with her books and her extensive art collection.

Laura's only expressed wish was to leave politics and return to teaching, but Adar's star was on the rise and when he ran for President of the Colonies, Laura found herself along for the ride. His smashing win, by a larger margin than any candidate in history, gave him a vast mandate for change and he quickly appointed Laura as Secretary of Education with orders to reform the entire educational system -- on all twelve colonies -- from top to bottom.

Laura tackled the job like every other job in her life: with quiet, steely efficiency and a preternatural ability to listen to people and understand their problems. Before long, she had won over even the skeptics in the national assembly and the press gave her credit for almost single-handedly pulling off one of the major legislative accomplishments of President Adar's first term. No one -- not even the President -- knew that Laura's mother, Judith, was dying a slow, painful death from cancer even as her daughter was sheparding the legislation through the assembly.

After the initial splashy success of the reform legislation, Laura settled in to the more mundane life of public administration which suited her just fine. Never one for the limelight or publicity, she shunned all press interviews except those absolutely necessary and tried to remain firmly in the background of any cabinet meeting or photograph.

Her desire for a quiet life ended when she was accused of corruption in the infamous Seacade District scandal. Charges of influence peddling and embezzlement were thrown around in the national media following the undercover arrest of three of her top aides who were subsequently charged with a laundry list of criminal activity. Although there was no indication that Laura had anything to do with the Seacade events, it happened on her watch and she was the one who had to sit before an openly hostile assembly committee and answer questions for ten long days under the scrutiny of the media. She stumbled several times and her performance under fire was roundly criticized by the President's political opponents as showing the need for new leadership at the top. Adar stood by her, however, and eventually the scandal subsided.

Laura returned to her job, somewhat embittered by the experience and vowing to get out of politics once and for all once Adar completed his second term.

Laura is an introvert by nature who's served in the public eye for most of her adult life. Uncomfortable with pressing the flesh and asking for support, she never considered a run for office, even though she has the rare ability to make a person feel as if what they're saying is the most important thing in the world at that moment. She listens extremely well, takes her time making decisions, and understands what makes people tick on a gut level.

She is an art collector and something of a frustrated artist -- her closets back home were filled with paintings and drawings she created but never hung on the walls. She never had children, but loves their company and has a natural affinity for them.

Captain Lee Adama

Lee was born and raised on the colony of Caprica, in the same coastal city in which both his parents and grandparents were born. A headstrong, scrappy boy, he was forever getting into fights at school with much bigger kids and usually coming away with the better of the encounter.

His parents divorced when he was eight years old and he and his younger brother, Zak, were raised by their mother. Their father visited when he could, but the military life often took him away for long months at a time and Lee and Zak grew up with only snapshot memories of their father. Nevertheless, both boys grew up worshipping the distant man who periodically showed up at the house in his blue uniform with a big smile and a toy bought in some exotic port.

Despite his mother's misgivings, Lee always wanted to be a pilot, to follow in his father's footsteps and join the Fleet. He studied hard in school, aced his entrance exams to the Academy and graduated number three in his class. He was immediately accepted into flight school and again quickly rose to the top of his class. His superiors marked him down early as a young man on the rise, an officer destined for the top commands and eventually the Admiralty itself. It was about this time that Lee and his father began to have a falling out. The boy's hero worship had turned into the young man's resentments at being abandoned and neither he nor his father knew how to bridge the gap and so the visits became rare and the phone calls grew terse.

While Lee was at flight school, his younger brother Zak was just entering the Academy. Zak had a tougher time of it than Lee, constantly falling behind in his studies, always on report for some infraction of the rules, forever one step away from being bounced out.

Lee took top honors at flight school and soon was on his way into a Viper squadron and a plum assignment on the Atlantia -- flagship of the fleet. Meanwhile, Zak barely graduated from the Academy and when he still wanted to go to flight school, Lee tried to dissuade him from even applying. Lee loved his brother, would do anything for him, but it was obvious to Lee that Zak wasn't really cut out for the military life, much less the rigors of flight training. The only reason Zak even applied to the Academy was because he worshipped the ground their father walked on -- as Lee himself once did. Lee tried to convince Zak to seek another job in the fleet, but Zak wouldn't hear of it; he wasn't going to be the only Adama without wings on his uniform.

Zak's application was turned down and that seemed to be the end of it, but then a phone call was placed to the flight commandant from Commander Adama and place suddenly opened up for Zak. Lee was furious, couldn't believe his father would pull strings like this, but there was nothing he could do but hope for the best and continue to encourage Zak in his training. Then came yet another shock -- Zak wrote Lee to tell him he was engaged to one of his instructors at flight school.

Lee made time to come visit and it was then that he met Kara Thrace for the first time. She was the polar opposite of Zak -- where he was quiet, reserved, almost painfully sensitive, she was brash, loud, and had a thick hide. Lee liked her immediately. Maybe liked her too much. And he was pretty sure that she felt the same, but never seriously considered anything further. Lee wished them well and left to rejoin his squadron.

Two weeks later, Zak's plane went down while he was flying a routine solo mission and he was killed. Lee's resentments and grief boiled over at the funeral and he lashed out at his father, blaming him directly for his brother's death, saying in so many words that Adama had all but killed his own son. Father and son never spoke again.

Lee spent the next two years focussing on his career, having no personal life and working to become the perfect fighter pilot.

He applied to, and was accepted to test pilot school, the highest honor for any pilot and a sure sign of his rise to the top. He was at test pilot school when the orders came in to report aboard Galactica for her decommissioning ceremony.

Lee Adama has his father's strength of character and a virtually inviolable code of ethics. He can be stubborn and difficult, often drives his pilots too hard and himself even harder. He rarely gives anyone a break and never gives himself one. From his mother, he's inherited a secret love of cooking and food, which he indulges whenever he can, the rigid pilot finding an out to let his creative juices flow only in a kitchen filled with steaming pots and pans.

He's a young man with a lot of anger, a lot of resentments and a lot of frustrations who knows not what to do with them. But he's also a fair and decent human being whose deeply felt sense of right and wrong have kept him afloat when so many around him have sunk. He's the kind of man few would call friend, but many would follow into the jaws of hell. He is his father's son.

Lieutenant Kara Thrace

Kara Thrace was born on the Picon colony, but she was raised all over the twelve colonies. The daughter of a career enlisted woman, her childhood was spent bouncing from one military outpost to another. Kara's father, Dreilide, was a frustrated musician, forever trying to write songs and make it into the big time and forever failing to make his mark. Her mother, Socrata, was a Sergeant Major in the Colonial Marines, attached to an artillery company and a decorated veteran of the Cylon War.

Kara was a tough and tough-minded child, more interested in sports than in the military, she dreamed of playing Pyramid in the big leagues someday. At every base, there was a Pyramid court and Kara was a born athlete, able to both slice and duck around opponents on her way to planting the slippery ball into the goal or to block and tackle the opposing players on defense. Her mother had won the Star of Valor in the Cylon War and this honor entitled her daughter to a place at the Fleet Academy if she wanted it. At first, Kara wasn't interested and wanted to pursue a college scholarship, but her school records were spotty at best. Finally realizing that the Academy had one of the best Pyramid teams at the collegiate level, Kara decided to enter the Academy, serve her three years required enlistment and then resign and pursue a professional Pyramid career.

Kara played Pyramid well at the Academy, and was being actively scouted by the major league teams when a vicious hit shattered her right knee during a playoff game in her sophomore year. Even after months of reconstructive surgeries and physical therapy, it was clear that the leg would never be the same. Kara would have to look for a different career.

Depressed, she applied to all the various post-graduate training schools, but doubted she'd be accepted to any of them with her academic record. But to her shock, she scored higher on the flight training entrance exam than anyone in the history of the program and she was accepted into the next class.

Kara was what the instructors called a true stick and rudder woman; someone who flew by instinct not instruction. To her own surprise, Kara found herself in love with flying. She'd never thought that anything could equal the feeling she had on the Pyramid court, but flying actually surpassed it. She found a freedom in the air she'd never experienced before, a joy and effortlessness that was new and welcome into her hardscrabble life. All thoughts of leaving the service after three years were gone. She would be a pilot for the rest of her life -- that is, unless she was kicked out of the Fleet.

Kara hated taking orders. Hated military protocol. Hated the rules and regulations that were part and parcel of the military life. Her record at the Academy and then at flight school was littered with demerits, reprimands, and negative evaluations by her superiors. She drank too much, gambled too much, broke curfew almost daily, somehow always managed to be involved in any bar fight at the local watering holes and had a reputation for leaving a string of men with broken hearts and broken backs after sexual encounters that were more akin to a game of tackle Pyramid than lovemaking. Simply put, she was a disaster as a military officer. But no one could argue with her flying. While her academic and personal record kept her from graduating first in her class, she set new records on almost every hands-on flying test she encountered. Clearly, she was destined to fly Vipers and just as clearly she would be a handful for any squadron leader unfortunate to have her under their command.

Kara served her first tour aboard the battlestar Triton and while she was loved and admired by the other pilots, she was reviled by the ship's commander, who wanted her off the Triton as soon as possible. What to do with her became a problem, since no other ship would take her. Fortunately, a slot opened up as an instructor at flight school and Kara was immediately shipped right back where she started.

It was there that Kara met Zak Adama and fell in love for the first time in her life. There'd never been a lack of men in her life, but she'd never seriously considered the possibility of a long-term relationship. Zak was different. Something about him touched and moved Kara, made her want to break all the rules of the heart she'd lived by all her life.

When she met Zak's brother Lee, she briefly thought she'd made a profound mistake. While Zak touched her maternal instincts, made her want to protect and nurture the shy, young pilot, his brother touched her in a deeper and more womanly way. Lee Adama's entire carriage and attitude was a challenge to Kara Thrace, and Kara Thrace had never walked away from a challenge. But then the weekend passed, and Lee left to rejoin his squadron, and Kara firmly put aside the feelings as the momentary wandering of a rogue's heart.

Then Zak failed a key flight test. A test Kara was administering. Zak was on the bubble as far as flight school was concerned and failing this test was a sure ticket out. It was Kara's duty to fail him. But she couldn't do it, couldn't destroy Zak's dream of becoming a pilot like his father. She passed him and made a promise to herself that she would teach Zak everything he needed to know and make sure he became a great pilot.

It wasn't enough. The board of inquiry determined that Zak Adama's plane had crashed due to "pilot error." Kara was devastated, bereft, ready to resign her commission right after Zak's funeral. But that day, Zak's father sought out Kara and asked the woman who was almost his daughter-in-law to stand with the family at the gravesite. She stood next to Commander Adama in the bright sunshine of the Caprican morning and felt his arm go around her when tears began to stream down her cheeks and a bond was formed between them. Adama asked her to join him as a pilot aboard the Galactica and Kara readily agreed. She spent the next two years aboard Galactica, for the most part managing to stay out of the brig and concentrating on just flying. Adama kept an eye on her and the two of them became more like father and daughter than pilot and commander.

Kara thinks with her nerve endings. She not only wears her heart on her sleeve, she'll throw it at you if you're not paying attention. A rule-breaker by nature and a hell-raiser by preference, she nevertheless not only respects, but reveres the traditions and customs of the military service. Few things are guaranteed to bring a tear to her eye more than hearing the Colonial anthem and watching the flag go up the halyard.

She proud of her uniform, proud of her place in the long tradition of pilots who've gone before, and is politically conservative to the point of being almost reactionary. She's also loyal to a fault, and fiercely protective of her friends and family. If you're in a foxhole, Kara Thrace is the one you want next to you.

Colonel Saul Tigh

Saul Tigh was born and raised on the colony of Aerion. His abusive father was a on-again, off-again miner who never seemed to hold a job for more than three weeks at a time and his mother was a union organizer in Aerion's sprawling mining industry.

Saul was in and out of trouble his whole childhood, and when he was caught stealing from a neighbor's house at the age of 16, the judge gave him a choice between juvenile detention or enlisting in the Colonial Fleet. ~~Saul opted for the Fleet and~~ entered service as a common deck hand.

He found military life agreed with him and also found the rough and tumble of the lower deck was a world he both recognized and thrived in. He was 21 years old and about to make Petty Officer 1st class when the Cylon War broke out. Saul served aboard two front-line cruisers in the early days of the war, when the initial Cylon attacks threw the Colonials back at every turn. Saul watched as men and women died by the dozens and twice he narrowly escaped death when both ships were boarded by Cylons and the fighting was hand to hand. Each ship in turn was heavily damaged and had to be abandoned in space. He was about to be sent back into action aboard yet another cruiser when Fleet put out an emergency call for pilot candidates. Saul's former commanding officer put his name on the list and Saul suddenly found himself promoted to Lieutenant and training to be a pilot.

Again thrust into the front lines, Saul found himself aboard the battlestar Athena during the battle of Gamelon, where Saul personally shot down three Cylon fighters. Saul was in almost constant combat for the next five years as the Athena fought some of the most desperate battles of the war, when the Colonies were barely hanging on for their lives. Pilot after pilot died, and every time Saul returned to the squadron ready room, it seemed as though another chair was empty. He stopped counting the friends he lost and then stopped making friends.

When the war ended, Saul had a chest full of medals and nowhere to go. Discharged with millions of other officers, Saul had trouble adjusting to civilian life. He drifted from job to job in the post-war world, eventually landing on a tramp freighter plying the Caprica to Picon run, where he met William Adama.

The two ex-pilots hit it off immediately and for a time, Saul enjoyed life aboard the freighter as they swapped war stories, raised hell and bonded through the shared physical labor aboard ship.

When Adama rejoined the Fleet, Saul was alone again and fell into a deep depression which threatened to engulf him. He began to drink. Saul doesn't remember the next two years of his life very well, but he remained aboard the freighter, drinking and drifting until one day he got a call from his old friend -- Adama was a squadron leader now and he had just enough pull to wangle Saul a pilot slot. Saul jumped at the chance, stopped drinking, and would forever be in Adama's debt.

For the remainder of their service, Saul and Adama would usually find a way to serve together, their friendship deepening over the years until each felt like the other was a natural extension of himself. Saul was like a new man, and although he was several years Adama's senior, he felt most comfortable as Adama's loyal subordinate.

Then came Sherry. She was gorgeous, vivacious and everything that Saul could want in a woman. The whirlwind courtship lasted all of two months and then they were married. It was the biggest mistake of his life. Sherry didn't take to military life, didn't like the customs and protocols, certainly didn't like having her husband away for long periods of time when she was supposed to play the loving wife all by herself back at the base. Sherry had appetites and once Saul was gone, she began to feed them. Saul was no fool and he quickly became aware that he was being cuckolded. But Sherry had some almost mystical hold over him and he found himself unable to either stop her infidelities or to leave her. He began drinking again.

By this time, Saul was approaching the end of his career in the Fleet and fortunately for him, he was serving as executive officer aboard Galactica, a position where the demands on him weren't too taxing by virtue of Galactica's semi-retirement and where he was under the protection of his old friend.

Saul is a fractured and damaged man. He's seen more combat than anyone aboard Galactica, including Adama, and the experience scarred him deeply. He's been avoiding responsibility ever since he returned to the Fleet and if not for the patronage of Adama, he probably would've washed out years ago. But beyond the drinking and the irresponsible behavior, there still lurks the man who fought Cylons hand to hand while standing in pools of blood made by his shipmates. Deep down, Saul Tigh is a warrior. The question is, can he reach down that deeply once again or has time passed him by?

Doctor Gaius Baltar

Gaius Baltar was born and raised on a farm on the colony of Sagitarian. His family had worked the land for three generations, but even as a boy, Gaius hated farm life. One of his earliest memories is of getting his boots stuck in a pile of cow shit and having to walk back to the house in tears and in his stocking feet. Fortunately, his parents were not just simple farmers, but owned a large and sprawling agribusiness controlling millions of acres across the planet and Gaius could eschew farm life for the study of science and math, disciplines which seemed as exotic and exciting as agriculture was boring and mundane.

It quickly became apparent that Gaius was more than just a good student, he was a literal genius. By the time he was 14, he was completing college-level courses and by the time he was 21 he had his first doctorate under his belt and was being hotly pursued by every major university in the colonies to set up a research lab.

Gaius was an instant celebrity on campus. Rich, famous, well-dressed, and with a boyish charm, he was never at a loss for female attention and both faculty and student body providing him with fertile hunting grounds. Eventually, there was scandal and dismissal following an unwise assignation with a Dean's wife and her daughter following a faculty tea, but no matter -- Gaius simply picked up shop and moved on to the next university and the next hunting ground.

Gaius' speciality was theoretical physics, but his true love and passion was computer science.

Born in the post-war era, Gaius shared the views of most of his generation who had no memory of the sudden Cylon uprising or of the bloody conflict that consumed the Colonies for those ten long years. He saw the anti-technological edicts as being largely a waste of time and amazingly short-sighted. So what if the Cylons had learned how to infiltrate Colonial technology? The answer was not to blindly turn their back on technology itself, but to advance their technology -- build a better mousetrap, one that the Cylons can't infiltrate.

His views, and those of the young scientists like him, were in the minority, however, and Gaius had to content himself with theoretical physics for a time.

But as time passed and memories of the distant Cylon conflict dimmed, the strictures against computer research loosened and soon the Defense Ministry was soliciting his help on several top-secret projects designed to reintroduce computer systems into the Fleet.

Gaius soon found himself the keeper of secrets, a position that flattered his already impressive ego and elevated his arrogance to new-found levels. Gaius was listened to by ministers and presidents, his face was on the cover of national publications, his papers eagerly read by lesser scientists throughout the colonies and he, of course, had his pick of ready and eager women.

Still, it wasn't enough. He hungered for a chance to work on a true artificial intelligence -- not a Cylon, whose entire development history he held in contempt as the work of inferior, bumbling minds, but an intelligence capable of helping solve Man's great problems. Of course, this A.I. would have to be carefully controlled, and would have to be at the service of one man. Gaius had no doubt who that one man should be.

As Gaius began to be recognized throughout the colonies on the level of say, Stephen Hawking is in contemporary Earth society, he was approached by a woman who seemed to understand him in a way no other woman ever had. She was beautiful, intensely sexual, funny, smart, and with an intuitive sense of Baltar's every mood and thought. She knew he loved the hunt, so she let him come to her. She knew he also liked aggressive women in the bedroom, so she made a habit of pouncing on him. She understood how secret affairs both titillated and challenged him, so she told him she was from an unnamed corporation interested in defense contracts and that their affair was not only illicit, but probably illegal. She also shared his interest in A.I. systems and encouraged him to push the Defense Ministry further into computer networking than they were initially prepared for.

The relationship between Gaius and the mystery woman continued for almost two years. She provided him with new and innovative ideas produced by her company's research, which he then presented to the Defense Ministry as his own, and he in turn, provided her with access to classified and sensitive information on Colonial defense systems. Their personal life revolved around pushing the boundaries of sexual experience and intellectual discussions on the nature of man and machine. She asked for no commitment, seemed to have none of the usual female insecurities, and he had ample freedom to peruse other women on the side. For Gaius it was the perfect relationship -- until the day the world came to an end and his lover was revealed to be a Cylon.

Gaius Baltar is not without conscience. Indeed, he is aware of, and regrets the harm his actions have caused to both individuals and the society at large. While his guilt is not so keenly felt as to put himself at risk of discovery and punishment, it is important to remember that he is neither amoral nor sociopathic. He is a brilliant man, whose intellect usually finds a way to both justify his own behavior and yet at the same time condemn himself for those very rationalizations and obfuscations. He is weak without being craven, duplicitous without being untrustworthy, in league with the enemy without being treasonous.

His taste in art, literature, and music is quite sophisticated, but he also loves to gamble at the track, was a fraternity man in college and held court-level seats at the Caprican Pyramid games for the last ten years.

Chief Galen Tyrol

Galen Tyrol was born and raised on the colony of Gemenon. Tyrol's father, Iophon was a priest and his mother, Daphne was an oracle. Gemenon itself was founded by the colonial equivalent of Puritans, and its society is a theocracy, ruled by religious leaders and steeped in the traditions of the scriptures. Tyrol grew up steeped in religious training and belief, but secretly prayed to the gods for a chance to leave Gemenon and travel among the stars. His parents would have none of it, however, and the boy seemed destined to take orders just as his father did. But the day before his acceptance into the priesthood, he walked into a recruiting officer and signed up for the Colonial Fleet. The impulsive decision would permanently rent the family, and Tyrol and his parents would not speak again for the next ten years.

In basic training, Tyrol was immediately pegged as a natural leader, a man the other recruits looked to for direction when the drills became too much to handle. He was honor man of his graduating class, and made Able-Bodied Deck Hand, First Class almost immediately. Given his choice of specialties, Tyrol at first sought out Intelligence training, believing it held the most exotic and far-ranging lifestyle, but six months into the program, he opted out, finding the long hours of academic study boring and stultifying.

He'd spent years fixing machines, starting with his father's ancient car, but Tyrol had no interest in pursuing life a mechanic. He wanted a life of excitement and danger, not one filled with tools and cranky engines.

Then, entirely by chance, he assigned to temporary duty aboard the battlestar Pegasus, which was short of hands and about to participate in a series of war games. Tyrol was put into the deck gang on the hangar bay -- just another pair of hands for the Chief of the Deck, no pressure to achieve, no reason for him to stand out. But Tyrol did more than stand out, he became a star on the hangar deck.

He had an intuitive feel for working with and repairing spacecraft, somehow always knowing what was wrong with a recalcitrant engine before anyone else. The atmosphere aboard the Pegasus in general was hard-charging, demanding, and the atmosphere on the flight deck was even more high-pressure. As the ship entered the war games, Vipers were being launched and recovered faster than thought humanly possible and the deck gang went without sleep for almost three days straight. Tyrol not only survived, he thrived. Something about handling the big, dangerous Vipers struck a chord with him. Here was an entirely secular enterprise, a world where a machine either worked or it didn't. Tyrol fell in love with the pressure and the adrenaline of the flight line, and he decided then and there to work on the hangar deck.

Following formal training at the Fleet Aviation Repair and Maintenance Center, he was assigned to the newly commissioned battlestar Columbia as one of her first deck chiefs. The Columbia was a cranky, difficult vessel, fresh from the shipyard, and her complement of Vipers were the experimental new Mark VII's. Tyrol spent five years ironing out the problems and breaking in the new flight deck. He ran a tight crew, brooked no inattention or sloppiness among his people when it came to the job, but had little use for formality or strict protocol. He was a popular chief, liked and trusted by officer and deck hand alike.

Then came disaster. A Viper pilot was killed when his engine prematurely ignited still in the launch tube. An investigation showed a valve had been improperly seated in the casing and Tyrol's deck gang was responsible. No one ever determined who had mishandled the valve or how it had escaped detection, but it was Tyrol's job to sign off on all work done on his Vipers and it was the tradition of the service that he take full responsibility. His sterling record was taken into account and he was not discharged, but he was reduced two steps in ranks and reassigned to the Galactica, the oldest ship in the Fleet, a far cry from the sparkling new Columbia and essentially a dead end for his career.

Tyrol started over on the Galactica -- just an anonymous deck hand, trying to keep his head down, and forget about what had happened. But he didn't stay anonymous for long.

Adama liked to walk the flight line every day, checking out his birds as part of his morning routine, and he soon spotted Tyrol and his affinity for the fighters and the deck gang. It wasn't long before Adama restored his rank and made him Chief of the Deck.

Tyrol thrived aboard *Galactica*, appreciated Adama's old school style of command and even began to fall in love with the old ship herself. *Galactica* was about three decades obsolete, and constantly in need of repair, but Tyrol didn't care. If anything, *Galactica* needed him in a way that the *Columbia* never would. Tyrol had found his home and his place.

Then came Sharon Valerii. She was the youngest of the young pilots, and greener than grass. She and Tyrol started sniping at one another almost immediately. The friction became something more and even though each of them knew they were risking their careers, they soon found themselves engaged in one of the most hazardous activities of all -- a shipboard affair. Two people could hardly be more different, but neither of them could stay away from the other. Tyrol calmed Sharon and Sharon sparked Tyrol. As *Galactica* began her final voyage, Sharon, along with most of *Galactica*'s squadron, was reassigned to the battlestar *Pegasus*. Tyrol quietly put in a request for transfer to the *Pegasus* as well, and with Adama's letter of recommendation now in his service record, Tyrol was accepted aboard the *Pegasus* and he was looking forward to life back on the front lines when the Cylons attacked.

Tyrol is old school, a believer in the customs and traditions of the service. No longer a devout man, he still retains the core faith of someone raised in a religious home. He can be intolerant and bullheaded when it comes to the job, but he is also carries around the pressure of being responsible for every man and woman on his crew.

Lieutenant Sharon Valerii

Sharon's first memory is that of crawling across the artificial grass in her backyard toward the family cat, Mr. Perkles. It's a vivid memory, one that she occasionally revisits in her dreams.

It's also completely fake.

As far as she knows, Sharon Valerii grew up with a happy, normal childhood, the product of loving parents on the mining settlement of Troy. Troy was a small, barren world on the periphery of the Colonial solar system. Her father was a middle-manager in the mine, her mother a homemaker, and she had two younger brothers. Her family had been on the closed world of Troy for two generations, but Sharon had always wanted to leave the mining settlement and seek out a grander life. She applied to the Colonial Academy, scored well on the entrance exams, and soon was aboard a commercial transport ship, on her way to Caprica for the in-person interview. Sharon was napping when the word came in of a massive accident on Troy. She awoke to the news that her entire settlement -- more than 200,000 people -- was wiped out in a series of titanic explosions which ripped away the protective domes keeping out the poisonous atmosphere of Troy. Investigation would pinpoint the cause as a hitherto unsuspected, and huge, pocket of volatile methane gas which was suddenly ignited by the mining operation.

The disaster stunned the colonies, and amid the massive outpouring of sympathy for the dead, Sharon was accepted into the Academy on the strength of her exams alone -- and obviously, there could be no background investigation. The sudden and shocking loss of her world threw Sharon into a deep and dark depression. Her first year at the Academy was a troubled one, filled with nightmares that she could not entirely shake during the daytime. The instructors and officers of the Academy were determined to see this last survivor of Troy graduate in a Colonial uniform, so they looked the other way when her grades slipped dangerously in that first term.

But in her second term, Sharon began to right herself, began to find the courage within to carry on in the name of her family and friends. She had been spared by fate, had been given a second chance, and now she wanted to be worthy of that chance. Her grades rebounded, and while she was never an academic star, she managed to graduate in the upper half of her class.

She applied to flight school, hardly daring to hope that she would be admitted, but the bureaucratic wheels had been greased for this child of the doomed settlement, and she was accepted over several more qualified candidates. Flight school was rough on Sharon. Not a born pilot by any means, she labored long and hard with her technique, but once again, by the time she graduated, she had managed to earn the second chances that she seemed fated to be given.

Her first assignment was to the Battlestar Galactica, and by the time of the Cylon attack, she had been aboard for almost a year.

Her relationship with her Flight Officer -- Helo -- was a close one, and the older man watched out for her as she struggled to make her deck qualifications. They almost pursued a romantic relationship as well, but then Sharon hooked up with Chief Tyrol. Helo was aware of the affair and the impropriety of it, but he guarded her privacy jealously and let it be known that he would exact a price from any pilot who caused trouble for her.

Sharon is unaware of her true nature, unaware that far from being the daughter of a mining family, that she is in reality a Cylon sleeper agent, implanted into Colonial society. She slipped onto the commercial transport just before it left Troy, fully aware of her mission and her nature. But when she awoke from her "nap" her cover program took hold from that point forward, she believed herself to a normal human being with a tragic past.

Sensitive and shy, she puts on a tough-chick front for the benefit of those around her. In Tyrol, she had found a man who is, quite literally, her first true love.

What Sharon is doing on Galactica and why she was infiltrated into Colonial society will remain a mystery for some time.

Number Six

The Woman as Machine.

STORYLINES

Tension

The key to our stories is successfully maintaining the level of dramatic tension achieved in the pilot. Simply put, we should always feel as though the Galactica and her rag-tag fleet are in a state of perpetual crisis. There is a constant threat to our people from within and without the fleet which will never be resolved during the course of the series.

Our heroes will be thrust into the roles of both military protectors and law-enforcement officers, which allows us to literally play any story which could be found in an urban environment in our fleet. Serial killers, plagues, terrorist attacks, fires, mysteries -- all can come into play and all can provide us with jeopardy from within the fleet itself.

Structure

In order to maintain and sustain this tension, we will be emphasizing a continuing storyline which will literally continue the Cylon threat to the Colonials as established in the pilot.

We will be using a modified continuing storyline most akin to that used on the classic TV series "Hill Street Blues." This format breaks down into three layers:

1. Series Arcs
2. Multi-Episodic Arcs
3. Stand Alone Arcs

The three tiered format avoids the pitfalls of Star Trek's episodic structure (which forces the writers to endlessly come up with new and wacky ways to put the Enterprise in jeopardy each week) without turning our show into a true serial.

1. Series Arcs will literally run the length of the series and will be embroidered on week to week. They include the never-ending Cylon pursuit of the Galactica and her fleet, the task of nation-building within the fleet, the struggle between the military and civilian forces, and all the character relationships.

2. Multi-Episodic Arcs last two to four episodes in length and involve settings and stories which hook audiences into short-term tales which wrap themselves up in the near future. For example, when we find a solar system capable of sustaining human life, we might wish to stay here for three or four episodes as we hunt for supplies, struggle to bring them up to our ships, hide from the Cylons, quell a mutiny among people who wish to stay here permanently, battle storms on planet surfaces, repair our ships, etc.

3. Episodic Arcs have a beginning, a middle, and an end within each episode. This enables any audience member to always have a storyline that they can follow which is self-contained and does not depend on watching last week's show.

By layering all three storylines in each episode, we are able to provide continuity week to week and avoid the Trek pitfalls while at the same time not losing the audience that may or may not be watching religiously.

The Cylons

We will not be featuring a Cylon attack every week, but we should always feel as if an attack is imminent. The possibility of a Cylon attack should hang over our characters throughout the run of the series. There is no rest for our people, no respite from the danger and stress of constantly being on the run. The Cylons are relentless pursuers and we should feel them constantly nipping at our heels.

As a general rule of thumb, we should encounter an actual Cylon raid every third episode and in between encounters our people should constantly be studying and testing new ways of fighting their implacable enemy. It's important to note that while the Cylons were virtually invincible in the pilot, that there will be a more level playing field as the series goes on. This will be a result of the natural tendency in warfare for both sides to learn from their enemy, and develop new counter-measures for their opponents' strengths. As a general rule, Galactica's fighters are generally outmatched in combat with the Cylons, but the more we fight them, the more we learn, so that this week we have a temporary advantage and next week it's gone again. The on-going struggle will force both sides to constantly improve their technology and tactics to keep pace with their enemy.

For example -- one storyline will involve capturing a downed Cylon raider, taking it apart and learning how to fly it as a method of getting an advantage over the Cylons during the next attack. This temporary advantage will then be erased once the Cylons learn what the Colonials are doing and develop an effective counter-measure.

The Cylon agents within the fleet should also provide sources of tension and jeopardy. With only four of the twelve Cylon models revealed to our characters, literally anyone in the fleet is a potential Cylon agent. Terrorist attacks, sabotage, and fomenting insurrection among the people will be a staple of their stories and keep our heroes off-balance and constantly having to look over their shoulder even as they battle Cylon fighters.

We will also be visiting the Cylon homeworld to establish their culture and society and to get their perspective on the hunt for Galactica.

Plot-driven Stories

Our plot-driven stories should be reality-based problems that our people could conceivably face on a journey such as theirs. They have run into the night with little more than the clothes on their backs and whatever happened to be stowed aboard ship on the day the world came to an end. Finding food, fuel, and air supplies are going to be never-ending problems as are dealing with the real-life difficulties involved with rationing those same supplies. The ships themselves are a hodgepodge of new and old, guaranteeing that maintenance issues will also be a constant headache.

Our stories should spring from within the fleet whenever possible. In other words, we should avoid storylines which begin with, "The Galactica discovers a strange space phenomenon which..." Most of space is empty and there aren't a lot of strange things to bump into which might, say, turn the Galactica's crew into children. Our goal is to tell human stories that are a natural outgrowth of the premise of our show, not to retread the various science fiction cliches of the genre (Evil Twins, Time Travel, Alien Body Possession, A Planet Whose Culture is Just Like Ours, Adama Meets His Dead Wife on a Planet and Doesn't Want to Leave, etc.)

Galactica's universe is also mostly devoid of other intelligent life. Unlike Trek's crowded galaxy filled with a multitude of empires, ours is a disquieting empty place. Most planets are uninhabitable. Breathable air and drinkable water are rarities. When we do encounter a world remotely capable of supporting human life, it will be a BIG DEAL. Likewise, an encounter with true alien life will be a HUGE DEAL, and our aliens will not be the usual assortment of bumpy-headed people that are essentially human in all but appearance. Any alien on Galactica must be *alien* in the truest sense of the word -- a creature so foreign to our ways of thinking and living that we may not even recognize it as life at all.

However, the Cylons *in our midst* should be a constant, lurking threat. We have only seen the faces of four Cylon models (Six, Doral, Leoben, and Sharon) out of the twelve known to exist. This means that anyone can be a Cylon and our characters should definitely experience the fear and paranoia that will become an ever-present result of this fact. A ship breaks down, someone turns up dead, a plague breaks out, a prison ship riots -- all *could* be a result of Cylon sleeper agents causing sabotage and mayhem among us. How the people react to this threat among them will be one of the primary storylines of the entire series -- what will be their version of the Patriot Act? Where will liberty and security collide? How far will they be willing to go to ferret out the "traitors" among them?

Character Stories

Our show is, first and foremost, a *drama*. It is about people. Our characters should always be the most important element of every story. Breaking the traditional rule of the genre, we should sacrifice *plot* at every turn in favor of *character*. Time spent discussing the technical problems of outwitting the latest Cylon plot will be better spent dealing with the emotional fallout of the Adama/Lee relationship.

Do not be afraid to expose our characters' faults, for in their frailties also lie the seeds of their triumphs. Kara Thrace made a deeply irresponsible decision when she passed Zak on his flight exam simply because she loved him, but that same emotion, that same depth of feeling overriding rational thought, that made her bring back Lee when his ship was damaged and she should've left him to die.

Our people are deeply flawed, deeply human characters. They are not, by nature, innately heroic or noble creatures. They are simply ordinary people who find themselves in extraordinary circumstances. They do not always make the right decision and they do not always do the right thing. They make mistakes, act out of pettiness and spite, and occasionally do things that are reprehensible. However, they are also capable of growth, of change, of learning to overcome their many flaws and rising to the challenges laid before them and performing great and mighty deeds.

They are human.

SEASON ONE

Story Arcs

Four major story arcs will play themselves out over the course of the first season:

1. The conflict between Adama and Laura as they struggle to keep the rag-tag fleet together in face of mounting adversity, culminating in Adama's declaration of martial law by the end of the season.

2. ~~The discovery of evidence that a place called Earth really does exist and that~~
realization that the Cylons might actually want us to find it after all.

3. The rise of a human resistance in the rag-tag fleet and the ascension to power of Gaius Baltar.

4. The Cylon occupation of Caprica and the other colonies and their manipulation of the survivors, including the character of Helo.

1. One would expect the story of Adama and Laura to be the classic hawk vs. dove tale as they struggle to reconstitute an entire civilization with only 50,000 refugees while it becomes more and more apparent that there are also Cylon terrorists among them. However, we will be subverting these expectations by playing Laura as the increasingly hawkish leader and Adama as the defender of personal freedoms.

As time goes on, and the Cylon terrorist threat becomes more deadly, it will be Laura who finds herself advocating stronger and harsher measures in the name of security. She's surprisingly tough and pragmatic, not at all the idealist. For instance, at some point Laura will issue a presidential decree outlawing abortion in the fleet. The human race has to survive and women will have to start having babies and right now. She'll institute a system whereby some women in critical professions (such as pilots) will get birth control and others will not. Needless to say, this will be an extremely controversial and provocative order, but one born of a pragmatic assessment of what has to be done in order to survive.

Adama's instincts and feelings about civil liberties (which he inherited from his father) will put him at odds with Laura's increasingly tough stance and we will realize that it is Adama who is the idealist at heart.

But it is the relationship with his son, Lee, that convinces Adama to go along with Laura's harsher measures. Lee's position as Laura's military advisor and Adama's chief pilot puts him in an ideal situation to be liason between the two and Lee's own instincts tend to agree with Laura at every turn. As Adama finds himself trying to reach out to the son he's been estranged from for so long, he'll find himself listening to Lee's opinion and advice and then finally agreeing to do things that he never would have done otherwise. As the security situation worsens, Laura clamps down on dissent harder and harder, which of course, begins to breed more and more enemies within the fleet.

Finally, there will come a point when Adama believes that the security situation has gotten so bad, that he has no choice but to declare martial law and take direct control of the entire fleet. As he orders Laura put under arrest, we will fade out and await season two.

2. The story of Earth and the Cylons interest in our finding it, will be mapped out slowly as the season develops. Small clues will emerge at first, some spiritual in nature, others hard physical evidence, will point the way toward Galactica steering a course leading them to the promised land. At the same time, however, certain actions by Cylon sleeper agents, certain things said by Six to Baltar, and even a couple of open scenes back on the Cylon home planet, will indicate that the Cylons may actually want us to find Earth. And even more disturbing is the indication that the Cylons know a secret about Earth that the Colonials don't.

3. A human resistance to Laura's rule will form in the early episodes. Partly fomented by Cylon sleeper agents and stoked by human religious differences and conflicts, a group of humans will start to actively challenge her authority and leadership of the fleet, forcing her to rely more and more on the muscle of the military to maintain order. As Laura clamps down on dissent, there will come a point where "terrorist" actions are being blamed on both human and Cylon enemies and this in turn will trigger even tougher responses by the military.

Baltar, supposedly the sole possessor of "the amazing Cylon detector" will find himself trusted by the very highest levels of the military and civilian authorities. Baltar's ability to discern Cylon from Human (a complete hoax) will put him in a powerful position, one in which he can eliminate any enemy or threat simply by "proving" that person is a Cylon.

Very soon, Baltar will be contacted by the growing human resistance movement within the fleet and Number Six will encourage him to see the human rebels as the base of his own potential power source. Number Six starts to aid Baltar in positioning himself as the next leader of the Colonies as Laura becomes more and more unpopular.

4. We will continue to cut back to Caprica and the other original colonial worlds and realize that the Cylons have a plan for these worlds and their few remaining survivors. The character of Helo (Sharon's co-pilot, who was left behind on Caprica) is still alive and struggling to survive amid the onset of nuclear winter. With only the contents of his flight suit emergency supplies, he's trying to stave off radiation sickness and find a way off this planet. The Cylons capture him, interrogate him, and then just as he's about to give up hope, he's rescued by Sharon Valerii, who tells him she couldn't let him die alone here. The two of them escape into the Caprican night and begin a journey across Caprica in order to find other survivors, and eventually escape into space and join up with the Galactica and the rag-tag fleet.

Helo, of course, has no way of knowing that the woman he thinks is Sharon, is in reality, only one more Cylon that looks like her. Every conversation, every detail of Colonial strategy and thinking he shares with her will be instantly known to the Cylons. And Helo's own feelings for Sharon will be known to them as well.

As Helo makes his way across the planet, we will start to realize that the Cylons seem to have some larger plan for Caprica and the rest of the colonies, that devastation and genocide were not the only goals of the attack and that this was only the first step in a long-term strategy that ultimately will tie into the escape of the Galactica and her eventual arrival on Earth.

Character Arcs

Adama & Laura

They will form a personal bond forged in conflict. Their positions will inevitably put them at odds, but will also bring them together. Laura will be facing the solitary burdens of command for the first time and Adama is literally the only man alive who can empathize with her experience. For his part, Adama will find himself drawn to Laura's world in no small measure because politics, and particularly the presidency, was a deep interest of his father's and in many ways Laura is filling the role that his father wanted for him.

A sexual chemistry between them will make itself felt, and the loneliness of their situation will tempt each of them to reach out, but neither will act on the temptation.

Laura Roslin

Her secret battle against breast cancer will become both a medical and political problem. Billy will attempt to secretly arrange medical treatments, but this will become increasingly difficult given the tightening security arrangements. The drain on Laura both physically and emotionally will color her decisions. Fear of her secret getting out and undermining the fragile government will only encourage her to use tougher measures to crack down on security issues.

Saul Tigh

His battle against his personal demons will not go away. He will continue to drink in private, and he will be a highly functioning alcoholic, who is able to maintain his job and life. However, as pressures build, old habits will reassert themselves and Tigh will run into conflict with Adama, whose tolerance for his old friend's flaws will decrease as time goes on.

Lee Adama

His role as commander of Galactica's air group will continue to be his primary role, but he will find himself drawn into what is at first an ad hoc role as military advisor to President Roslin, and then a more formal position later on.

Kara Thrace

She will continue to test the boundaries of Tighe's patience and the outer limits of military protocol. However, Kara will always be willing to inject herself into dangerous situations and usually comes up with victory in hand.

Lee & Kara

Their friendship and attraction for one another will quickly find them waking up together after a stressful night that turned into something more. Each will be wracked with guilt and mixed feelings and they'll avoid talking or dealing with what happened, and each in turn will be driven toward other, more unexpected, people.

Lee & Laura

His position as Laura's trusted advisor will bring him closer to her emotionally than he is to his own father. She will let him in on her secret and he will make it his personal mission to find a way to treat her illness without anyone -- even his father -- finding out the truth. Perhaps most unexpected of all, Lee will develop a budding attraction for Laura on a personal level -- an unexpected quality of their close interaction and one that actually makes him a quasi-rival to his father, increasing rather than decreasing their conflicted relationship.

Kara & Baltar

Following her one night stand with Lee, Kara will begin to be attracted to the one man in the universe she is the least like and least likely to become attracted to -- Gaius Baltar. At first holding him in contempt as an arrogant intellectual, she finds that the more she abuses him and punctures his ego, the more oddly attracted to her he seems to be, and slowly she finds herself beginning to feel the same way. Truly, they will become the oddest couple of all.

Gaius Baltar

His one great sin -- the betrayal of the colonies and the destruction of their entire civilization -- will color the rest of his life. Nothing is more important to Baltar than making sure no one can ever know what he did. This, in turn, will make him extremely vulnerable to any pressure from either Number Six or any other Cylon agent. Baltar will both be trying to help the Colonials ferret out the Cylons in their midst and at the same time be compelled to help the Cylons under threat of being exposed as a traitor. Baltar will walk the line -- or attempt to walk the line -- all season, always finding a way to protect himself whatever the circumstance.

Baltar's greatest challenge will be to deal with the idea that perhaps, he too, is actually a Cylon agent.

Baltar & Number Six

Their relationship will be an extension of the one they formed on Caprica -- Six's driving need to find love in the heart of Mankind's ultimate cad and Baltar's need to avoid emotional commitment at all costs. Six will challenge and seduce him both intellectually and physically, even seeming to join in one heated night when Baltar and another woman find themselves in bed.

Chief Tyrol & Baltar

Tyrol will start to become suspicious of Baltar and his motivations. Eventually Tyrol will become Baltar's implacable foe, convinced that the scientist is in league with the Cylons and plotting his own takeover of the fleet. However, Tyrol will be hampered by his own relative low-rank and his inability to get the goods on the man that is increasingly seen as one of the heroes of the rag-tag fleet.

Sharon Valerii

She will begin to experience odd lapses in memory. Strange moments of missing time during which she seemed to go places and do things she cannot recall later.

Bit by bit Sharon will discover clues pointing to her true nature, but instead of pursuing them, she will fight against them on an intuitive level and instead will attempt to form a family with Chief Tyrol and Boxey, seeking out the one thing she can never be -- a maternal role in a human family.

Sharon & Tyrol

Their professional lives will be thrown into chaos as Tigh cracks down on their personal relationship, deeming it destructive to discipline and unit cohesion. At first, they will obey orders and stay away from each other, but their feelings for one another will slowly but surely bring them back together in greater secrecy. As Sharon begins to realize that there's something not right with her, Tyrol will become even more protective of her and he'll be determined to get to the bottom of what's happening to Sharon without ever considering that he may not like the truth once he finds it.

THE BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

History

One of the original twelve battlestars, Galactica was built by and represented the planet Caprica. She was put into service five years into the Cylon War and saw combat until the signing of the Armistice five years later. She was one of the most highly decorated ships in the Colonial fleet and participated in some of the most famous battles of the war. Of the original twelve battlestars, only Galactica and two other ships survived the Cylon War intact.

Upon the conclusion of hostilities, Galactica served in the Fleet for the next twenty years as one of the frontline warships guarding the peace. Gradually, newer warships were built and Galactica's role became less and less prominent in Fleet exercises. Eventually, Galactica's other two sister ships were retired and sold for scrap, while Galactica herself was retained in the Fleet for reasons more ceremonial than practical. She was a famous ship and it was good p.r. for the Defense Ministry to keep her in service and in the public eye. As a result, Galactica made many port calls to the twelve colonies and was a familiar ship to the public.

However, the cost and maintenance required to keep Galactica in service began to outweigh the p.r. benefits and during a series of budget cuts it was decided to retire the ship and donate her as a museum vessel to the Department of Education.

Combat Operations

Galactica is essentially a space-going aircraft carrier. As such, her primary weapons are the fighter squadrons she carries and her sole purpose is to provide a mobile base for those fighters to operate from. She is also something of a battleship -- that is, a vessel designed to stand toe to toe with another large enemy ship. As seen in the final battle of the pilot, Galactica has heavy weapons at her disposal and is capable of taking on a Cylon basestar in direct combat.

However, it is the fighter squadrons aboard Galactica which provide the real punch. The fighters allow Galactica to strike at targets far beyond the range of her own weapons while keeping her safely out of range from enemy weapons.

The spacecraft aboard Galactica are organized by type. Fighters, like the Viper, are in their own squadrons, while recon/electronic/attack craft like the Raptor are in their own squadrons. There are presumably more types as well that we have not seen yet, such as tankers and cargo vessels that would also have their own squadrons.

There is no hierarchy among the squadrons themselves. That is to say that the fighters are not superior to the tankers or that a pilot flying a Viper is going to look down on a pilot flying a Raptor. All are equal and all require their own specialties and skills. Pilots from one squadron typically do not pine away to fly a different type, in fact, each pilot believes his or her craft to be special and probably better than any other craft out there.

All the squadrons aboard Galactica make up the Air Group, and the ranking pilot is the Commander Air Group or CAG. (Within the squadrons themselves, there are squadron leaders and flight leaders and then senior pilots and their respective wingmen.) The role of the CAG is to carry out Adama's orders for the employment of the Air Group. In simple terms, Adama tells the CAG *what* to do and the CAG figures out *how* to do it. If Adama wants to send out a recon mission to scout the surface of a planet, the CAG decides who flies the mission, what their flight path will be, how long the mission will last, etc. That is not to say that Adama has no say in the details; he will review and approve all plans, but he should decide on the strategic objectives, and delegate the tactical planning.

The type and number of craft sent out on any given mission should be tailored to the objective at hand. If the target is nearby, sending out a tanker to refuel the craft will be unnecessary. A strike mission against a well defended enemy target will require Vipers whose sole purpose is to hit the target while other Vipers would fly escort to attack enemy fighters, and Raptors to jam enemy electronics and act as early warning craft. A strictly reconnaissance mission will require more Raptors and only a couple of Vipers for escort.

Launching and recovering spacecraft are extremely dangerous operations, and are the most likely places for non-combat fatalities to occur aboard ship. A Viper is a large machine filled with highly combustible fuel, enormously powerful engines, and carrying explosives. When in flight, a Viper is a thing of beauty, able to pirouette and maneuver in space without the drag and pull of an atmosphere.

But when trapped in the artificial gravity of Galactica's flight deck, a Viper is a heavy, awkward and cumbersome chunk of metal that has to be physically manhandled into its place on the deck and worked on without damaging the interior of Galactica or injuring any of the deck hands.

Flight Operations

Here's a typical sequence of events for a Viper on a routine mission flying CAP (Combat Air Patrol) around Galactica:

The deck gang fuels and arms Viper 289 on the Hangar Deck. While this is going on, the pilot -- let's say it's Starbuck -- has a mission briefing in the Pilot Ready Room. Every flight has a mission briefing, there is no such thing as "routine."

Starbuck goes down to the Hangar Deck and does a visual inspection of her Viper, talks to the Chief in charge of this particular Viper and goes over any maintenance issues or problems. Then she climbs into the cockpit, the Chief and/or a Deck Hand helping to secure her in the seat and hands her the flight helmet.

Deck Hands then maneuver the Viper toward the Launch Tube. Once the Viper is in the tube, a klaxon sounds and the order "Clear the Tube" is given, signalling the Deck Hands to leave and secure the bulkhead hatches. The Viper is now under the control of the Launch Officer, who sits in a small booth where s/he oversees the launch of all spacecraft leaving Galactica. No spacecraft can be physically launching without this officer's direct action -- in other words, there can never be the moment when the "rogue" pilot decides to take off on their own accord.

The Launch Officer contacts the CIC to request permission for launch and when it is obtained, the Launch Officer then goes through a quick series of final checks:

LAUNCH OFFICER

Viper two-eight-nine/Galactica, clear forward, nav-con green, interval check, thrust positive and steady. Good-bye.

"Clear Forward" means there is nothing in front of the Viper in the launch tube. "Nav-con green" means the navigational system aboard the Viper is operating and is showing up green on the Launch Officer's board. "Interval check" means that he has checked the interval between this Viper and the one launched immediately before it.

"Thrust positive and steady" means that the Viper's engine thrust is steady and is sufficient to launch the craft. "Good-bye" tells the pilot that Launch Officer has just pressed the literal button that will launch the Viper through the tube and out into space.

As Starbuck's Viper clears the tube and roars out into space, she immediately contacts Galactica's CIC over her wireless (radio) and reports in. The Flight Director in CIC (in the pilot this was one of the roles filled by the character Dualla) will then direct Starbuck to her destination, in this case to fly a combat patrol around Galactica. The Flight Director will give Starbuck specific directions on where to go, what speed to go there at and what to do when she arrives. If there's a more senior pilot in space at Starbuck's destination, then Starbuck would also have to obey the orders of that pilot.

Once the patrol is over, Starbuck would contact Galactica and request permission to land her Viper. Once granted, Starbuck would then be directed into the "landing pattern" of craft trying to land aboard ship. Once her Viper is in the landing pattern, she falls under the orders of the Landing Signal Officer (LSO). The LSO has a small booth much like the launch officer and focusses on the specific task of landing each and every craft.

As Starbuck approaches the Galactica, the LSO will issue directions such as:

LSO
Viper Two-eight-nine/Galactica. Approach
port landing bay, hands-on, speed one
zero five, checkers red, call the ball.

"Approach port landing bay" as opposed to the starboard landing bay. "Hands-on" meaning use manual control all the way (some advanced Vipers had a crude auto-pilot). "Speed one zero five" tells Starbuck how fast to come in. "Checkers red" refers to the elevator that she should park her spacecraft on once she comes to a stop (there are presumably several elevators on the landing deck). "Call the ball" refers to an external system of lights that the pilot can see from the outside of Galactica which helps Starbuck pilot herself in. "I have the ball" is the standard response which means "I can see the lights and I can pilot my craft safely at this point."

Starbuck then guides her Viper onto the landing deck and sets it down on the red checkered elevator. The LSO looks over the controls and reports:

LSO (CONT'D)

Viper Two-eight-nine/Galactica. Skids down, mag-lock secure. Welcome home Starbuck.

"Skids down" means the Vipers landing skids are down on the deck. "Mag-lock secure" means the magnetic lock has been activated and is physically holding the Viper to the deck.

The elevator then takes the Viper down through an airlock and into the Hangar Deck where the Deck Hands then physically take over control of the Viper, secure the armaments and begin maintenance. Starbuck leaves the cockpit, reports any problems to the Chief and heads for the Ready Room for a (mandatory) mission debriefing and critique of her landing technique.

CIC

All command functions are executed from the Combat Information Center (CIC), the nerve center of Galactica located deep inside the ship in the most well-protected area. Adama always commands the ship from the CIC and for our purposes, CIC is the functional equivalent of the Trekkian Bridge. (There is technically an actual Galactica Bridge somewhere, but it is typically used only for docking or closely maneuvering the ship in concert with another vessel or object requiring visual contact on the part of the conning officer.)

CIC is commanded at any given moment by the Officer of the Watch (filled by Lt. Gaeta in the pilot). Work shifts are called "watches" and each watch runs about four hours. The Officer of the Watch is in functional command of the ship and is responsible for anything that happens aboard during his or her watch. Until and unless the Officer of the Watch is relieved, only they can give orders to maneuver the ship, launch spacecraft, fire weapons, etc. Junior officers must all qualify to stand as a Watch Officer in order to advance in their careers and every officer aboard Galactica will be expected to stand watch at some point, with the notable exception of Adama who stands no formal watch and makes his own schedule as he sees fit.

Maneuvering Galactica

Maneuvering or conning the ship is done from CIC, while there are a few emergency conning stations located in other areas of the ship. Orders are relayed to the Engine Room for speed to the Helmsmen in CIC for maneuvering. Steering the ship is complicated and most analogous to steering a submarine. There are a series of thrusters located on the bow, amidships and at the stern, and orders have to be given to specific thrusters in order to turn the ship:

ADAMA

Bow up one half, left full, stern down one half, right full.

With the above order, Adama has told the helmsman in charge of the bow to activate the thruster beneath the bow (or under the "chin" of the ship) to half power and to activate the thruster on the left side of the bow (or the "cheek") to full power. At the same time, the stern helmsman will turn on the thruster on top of the stern (on the ship's "butt") and the thruster on the right side of the stern (on the right butt cheek).

The end result of Adama's order is to bring up the nose of the ship, push down the rear and begin a clockwise turn. Note that this has nothing to do with the speed of the ship or where it's going. He's just turning the ship in a direction. He then stops the turn with the simple order:

ADAMA (CONT'D)

Meet her.

All the helmsmen will return their controls in such a way as to stop the turn. Galactica is now facing in a new direction and with a different orientation. If Adama orders:

ADAMA (CONT'D)

Engine Room, flank speed.

The Galactica will now head off in a new direction at her maximum safe speed.

Damage Control

Damage Control or DC is the responsibility of every man and woman aboard the ship. Every single person is trained and retrained how to fight fires, secure hull breaches, deliver first aid, repair damage, etc. Damage Control Parties are organized throughout the ship by division and in an emergency, every compartment has an organized system for dealing with an emergency in that compartment. For instance, while the primary task of the people in the Engine Room is to work on the engines during combat, they have to be prepared to deal with damage in their own compartment should the need arise. There are also roving Damage Control Parties that are available to move throughout the ship and deal with emergency situations.

Damage Control officers are assigned throughout the ship, again using existing officers from other specialties (Captain Kelly is the LSO, but also functions as a DC Officer during an emergency.) Damage Control ultimately reports to the Executive Officer who is responsible for repairing any damage to the ship while the Commanding Officer concentrates on fighting the enemy. The XO keeps track of damage with a grease pencil on an erasable board in CIC because it simple and does not rely on any power system which may have been knocked out during an attack.

Enlisted and Officers

There is a clear distinction between enlisted personnel and their officers. Officers are expected to be leaders, capable of taking charge of any situation, and to always take care of the men and women under their command. Enlisted are the backbone of the service and perform all the hard work from wrestling armaments aboard Vipers to cleaning the compartments to filing paperwork. It is strictly against regulations for enlisted and officers to become romantically involved, especially within the chain of command. This is to ensure that enlisted feel treated fairly by their officers, not being favored or passed over because of some other relationship. Therefore, the relationship between Tyrol and Sharon is way out of bounds and will be a recurrent problem for them both.

While flying is clearly the primary role of any pilot or flight officer, they are also officers and as such they are expected to shoulder additional responsibilities when not actually flying. Every junior officer aboard Galactica commands a division within the ship.

A division is a group of enlisted personnel commanded by a noncommissioned or petty officer (typically a Chief), who then reports to the division officer. As a practical matter, pilots and flight offices do not have the time or energy to oversee a division in comparison to regular officers, so for all intents and purposes the Chief runs the division -- but it is important to keep in mind that the division officer is ultimately responsible for anything and everything that happens in their division. For instance, if there's a maintenance issue in Boomer's division, if one of the Vipers is chronically short of spare parts or unable to fly, the CAG will be on Boomer's case about it, not Chief Tyrol.

Faster Than Light (FTL)

The ability to travel faster than the speed of light is, of course, impossible so FTL is a bit of a misnomer even in Galactica's world. Technically speaking, neither Galactica nor any other "FTL" capable ship actually goes faster than the speed of light. What happens during a "Jump" is that the fabric of space itself is folded and the ship travels from point A to point B directly.

Picture space as a piece of cloth lying on a table. Place a coin on the left hand side. In order to move it to the right side of the cloth, you could slide it across the cloth or pick it up and place it there, both of which involve traveling across the physical space and will take time. However, if you pick up the right hand side of the cloth and fold it over so it touches the left hand side, the coin can be transferred from one point to another virtually instantaneously.

That is essentially what happens during a Jump. Galactica's FTL engine fold the fabric of space itself (through another dimension beyond the 3rd dimension) and the ship literally transfers itself between two distant points which are momentarily brought together.

As a result, Galactica is never "cruising" through the universe as does the Enterprise or the Millennium Falcon. Galactica, and all FTL ships simply go from one point to another, and once they've arrived, they can only move at normal speeds below the speed of light.

Galactica is an older ship relatively speaking, and so her technology is significantly behind that of many of the other ships in the ragtag fleet, hence the need for long checklists to be completed by many hands before any Jump.

The process is much simpler and quicker aboard Sharon's Raptor, for instance, but even the Raptor must make precise calculations and execute specific settings before initiating a Jump. (The specific checklist used by Galactica during the FTL sequence in the miniseries was gleaned from one of many checklists from the Apollo 15 lunar mission. Go to: <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/pao/History/ap15fj/> and look under "Apollo 15 Documents" for many checklists of this kind.)

The speed of light also governs communications and sensor information. The farther away a ship is from Galactica, the longer it will take the signal to travel. If Galactica and one of her fighters are "only" as far away as the distance between the Earth and Mars (say, 700 million kilometers), there will be an 11 minute lag in a radio conversation. The same goes for optical observations in that by the time we spot a Cylon basestar-- at that same distance, it's had 11 minutes to move closer to Galactica.

The Cylons are bound by the same rules of physics and they cannot travel faster than the speed of light -- they have to Jump as well.

The Red Line

Practically speaking, the further one attempts to Jump, the more difficult the calculations and the more variables are introduced into the equations. For example, consider the difficulties inherent in Jumping to a relatively nearby star system "only" five light years away: any information Galactica can gather by looking through a telescope is, by definition, five years old. The star and all the planets surrounding it have been in motion for five years since the light we can see left that system. This means that Galactica must calculate the motion of all the celestial bodies in that system based on information that is five years old. The further away the Jump point, the greater the problem -- try to jump 100 light years, and you have a century's worth of calculations to do.

Because of the limitations inherent in colonial technology, their ability to calculate all the variables involved in a Jump are also limited. Their margin of error increases exponentially the further out they go and as a result, there is a theoretical "Red Line" beyond which it is not considered safe to attempt to Jump. At the end of the pilot, Galactica has intentionally Jumped past the Red Line and is in uncharted and unknown space.

F a r g o

S e r i e s D o c u m e n t

Noah Hawley
The Littlefield Company
MGM
FX
July 23, 2013

Far·go (fär'gō)

1. A city of eastern North Dakota on the Red River east of Bismarck. Founded with the coming of the railroad in 1871, it is the largest city in the state. Population: 90,100.
2. A unique brand of true crime story, part tragedy, part farce, in which simple, good hearted people come face to face with something monstrous.

THIS IS THE STORY

of a CRIMINAL who meets a spineless insurance salesman and agrees to kill his bully, mostly because he wants to see how far he can push the insurance salesman before he snaps.

It's THE STORY of an INSURANCE SALESMAN who asks the Criminal to kill his bully, then beats his own wife to death, and lies, and cheats and steals to get away with it.

It's THE STORY of a young, FEMALE POLICE DEPUTY trying to figure out who killed the insurance salesman's wife, shot the police chief, stabbed a local trucking boss in a whorehouse, and who exactly is the dead naked guy in the woods.

It's THE STORY of a widowed STATE PATROLMAN who lets the Criminal escape, and then feels compelled to track him down.

It's THE STORY of the SUPERMARKET KING of Minnesota, a man with a secret, who hires the Criminal to figure out who's blackmailing him. Only to realize that that may have been a mistake.

It's THE STORY of a CRIME SYNDICATE in Fargo, North Dakota that sends TWO MEN — a stone-deaf killer, and his sign language interpreter — to Minnesota to figure out who killed the trucking boss. The two men find their way first to the insurance salesman, and then to the Criminal, with grisly results.

It's A STORY about CONSEQUENCES, about what happens when a civilized man puts on his muck-lucks and tromps out into the wilderness. And how the wilderness he brings back infects him and the world around him.

It's THE STORY of a PLACE, where the sedate innocence of unremarkable American life collides with the lawless frontier. Mall food and frozen tundra. Pee Wee hockey games on thin ice.

It's THE STORY of the PEOPLE we long to be (simple, kind, neighborly) versus the people we fear the most (hardened, vicious, unfeeling).

Yes, we have problems, in other words. But look who's solving them.

CHARACTERS

Note: Each season of the show is meant to be a self-contained “true crime” story from the Fargo Universe. Some characters may carry over to the following seasons, but not necessarily as the central point of the new story.

LORNE MALVO - Anarchist

LESTER NYGAARD - a mild-mannered Insurance salesman.

MOLLY SOLVERSON - A police detective in Saint Cloud, MN.

GUS GRIMLY - A State Patrolman stationed in Duluth, MN.

STAVROS MILOS - The Grocery Store King of Minnesota.

MR. WRENCH and MR. NUMBERS - Fargo hit man and his sign-language interpreter.

LOU SOLVERSON - Molly's Father

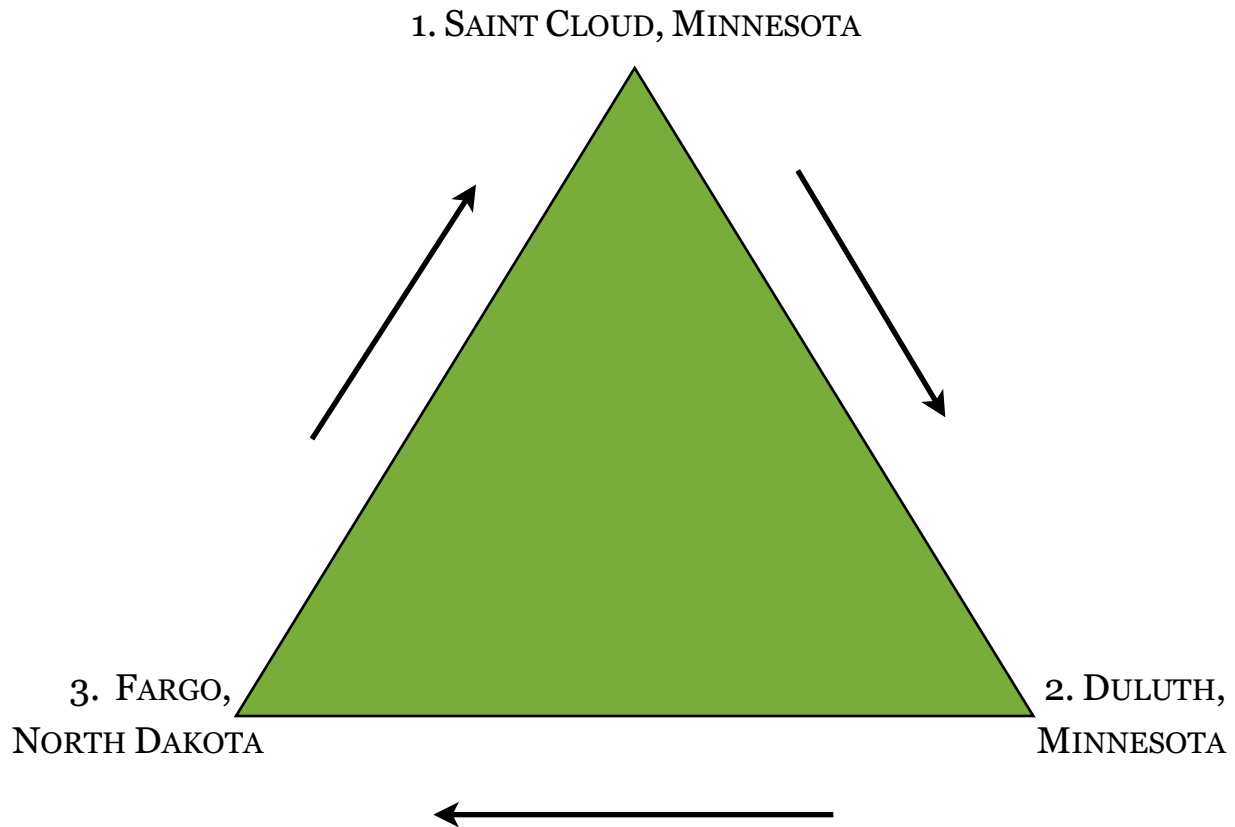
MICKY AND MOE HESS (15) Twin sons of Sam Hess.

MR. RUNDLE - The Crime broker

BILL OLSEN - Saint Cloud Interim Chief of Police

SEASON ONE IS A TRIANGLE

In which we track the crime spree of Lorne Malvo from Point 1 to Point 2 to Point 3, and then back to Point 1.¹



¹ Or wait. Maybe Season One is a circle. In that Malvo comes full circle. And yet his story has three main points, so that makes it a triangle, right? But what kind of triangle? Equilateral? Isosceles? Does it matter? Are there different kinds of circles? Clearly geometry isn't my strength. All I remember about my junior high geometry teacher is that she had a face like a frog and usually came to class drunk. So let's just say season one is a triangle and move on to other, less shape related, issues.

THE ARCS

LORNE MALVO

Picture this: you and your wife go to a party. There's a man there you've never seen before. He's charming. He tells great stories. When you talk to him you find yourself telling him things you wouldn't tell your closest friend. As does your wife. But on the way home you and your wife have a huge fight. In fact, after the party there are three divorces, one rape and a suicide.

Here's a word. Instigator. Here's another. Anarchist. If Malvo were a religious man, he would worshiped Loki, the god of mischief. He is the opposite of a brooding sociopath, a man capable of great charm. Malvo is what you might call a freelance criminal, a man you hire when you want something done that is not exactly legal. He has a broker, Mr. Rundle (who we met in the pilot), a broker who fields requests — figure out who robbed me, murder my business partner, etc — and sends Malvo around the country.

Malvo is a collector, not of things, but of moments — moments where otherwise moral people are pushed to do immoral things. Malvo chases these moments. He manufactures them. They are more important to him than sex or love or money. Which, as we saw in the pilot, means that

Basically, he really likes fucking with people.

And if you're a man who likes to push others to the breaking point, then Minnesota is a darn good place to be. Because polite societies like this one — societies where people repress bad feelings, where they bury them under a sweet red gelatin of Minnesota nice — are also the most violent. Put enough pressure on a man like Lester, as we saw, and he's going to snap.

After the events of the pilot and his run in with Patrolman GUS GRIMLY, Malvo arrives in beautiful downtown Duluth. He ditches Lester's car and reports for work. Work, in this case, being a freelance assignment: figure out who is blackmailing STAVROS MILOS, the Supermarket King of Minnesota. The blackmail note reads *I know about the money*.

But knows what? And who knows it? There's clearly a big secret there, but Stavros isn't talking.

So Malvo starts to dig². Is the blackmailer Stavros's head of security, former farm league hockey goon WALLY SEMENCHKO? Is it Stavros's simple son, DMITRI, or his bitter ex-wife, HELENA?

It's not until after Malvo finds Stavros's blackmailer (spoiler alert: Helena's Curves trainer, DON CHUMPH -- an orange spray-tanned buffoon) that we realize his real agenda. Because rather than put a stop to the plan, Malvo takes over the blackmail scheme. Why take a small fee, when you can have the whole pot? Besides, Stavros is rich, and rich men have secrets, and men with secrets are vulnerable. And Malvo, as we know, thrives on the vulnerability of others. How far can Malvo push him? How far can he push Chumph?

But Malvo has a problem (two problems, actually, but we'll get to the second in a minute). And his problem is Gus Grimly, the Duluth patrolman who pulled him over. Because Gus realizes he made a mistake when he let Malvo go. He becomes a fly, a mosquito, buzzing around, threatening to ruin everything Malvo is trying to accomplish.

And then there's Malvo's second problem. The actions he took with Lester are about to catch up with him. Because Lester has told the hired killers that it was Malvo, not him, who killed Hess. And just as Malvo is about to collect the blackmail money, he is ambushed by Mr. Wrench and Mr. Numbers.

It is the first time we see Malvo at a disadvantage, and he barely escapes with his life. Malvo abandons his blackmail scheme -- because money has never been his primary goal -- and goes after the men who sent Wrench and Numbers. And then, when he learns that it was Lester who gave the men his name, Malvo goes back to St. Cloud to get revenge.

What he doesn't realize though, is that the Lester he met is gone. In his place is a very different man, a man capable of anything.

LESTER NYGAARD

² Not realizing that as he digs St. Cloud Police Deputy Molly Solverson is on his trail, putting together the pieces of Lester and Malvo's crimes, first getting a photo of Malvo, then a name.

Think of Lester as Patient Zero and Lorne Malvo as the Plague. The two men meet by chance in a hospital waiting room. One is weak-willed, a harbinger of petty resentments and jealousies, tired of being pushed around by life. The other is a Biblical snake, cold blooded, manipulative, a being of pure id. In their accidental contact an infection is passed from snake to worm. As a result, all of Lester's *why me* resentments, his punching bag repressions, are switched from passive to active.

Then, when Malvo kills Hess — Lester's iconic childhood bully — a fuse is lit within Lester. He has spent his entire life believing his problems to be unsolvable. Now a single act of brutal violence shows him the truth. Any problem can be solved as long as you are willing to do what it takes. No one in this world is going to give you respect. You have to take it.

So Lester beats his wife to death and tries to frame Malvo for it, but everything goes to hell. So now here's Lester, new to sociopathy, trying to cover his ass and stay out of jail. In the days after his wife's death he is just getting the hang of it — the lying, the manipulation, the willingness to do whatever it takes to get your way.

The truth is, he feels bad about what happened to his wife. Still harbors some regrets over Hess. Don't worry. This will pass. If Lester had any doubts, the positive reinforcement he gets from his brother — showing up at the hospital, expressing concern, inviting Lester to stay with them — shows Lester that he has made the right choice. In his own twisted way he takes two separate things — his wife's murder and his brother's love — and conflates them. Killing his wife, in other words, rewarded Lester with brotherly love.

And that klieg light of unconditional love — a love he has never known before — is a light that, once felt, becomes addictive to Lester. He has killed his wife and aided in the death of two others, and as a result has secured a family. What wouldn't he do to keep that?

But living a lie isn't easy. And the deeper Lester gets, the more lies he finds himself telling. At first just to the police. But then two men show up in town, hired killers looking for Hess's murderer. And suddenly Lester finds himself being squeezed tighter and tighter. His desperation increases, the scale of lies he'll tell. Darker thoughts arise.

What will it take to make his problems disappear? A mob war? A dead cop? Maybe the answer is to stop defending and start attacking. To become less like Lester and more like Malvo. And it is from this notion that Lester will grow into true villainy.

It is a path that will put him on a collision course with the original source of his infection. Our true villain, Lorne Malvo. And in this way we will see if the student can surpass the master.

MOLLY SOLVERSON

There is a simplicity to life when you grow up in a small town. Simplicity to a place where the graduating high school class has less than a hundred people in it. A place where time is measured in generations. America is a big country, and Minnesota is a big state, especially in winter. But when you live in a small town like Saint Cloud it can feel as if you live on an island surrounded by endless snow. Like you live in a place the rest of the world can't touch.

Which is what Molly Solverson likes about Saint Cloud. She was never the girl who dreamed of moving to the big city. Molly is Scandinavian after all, and an Episcopalian to boot. Humble to a fault. Smart, but not a showoff. She likes her victories quiet, her progress slow.

Molly has no desire to make the Big Case that gets her into the FBI. Instead, she just wants everything in its right place. Which is why she became a law enforcement officer. Because crime is the antithesis of order. It's a B & E that leaves behind a broken home, except the home in this case is society. And so criminals have to be put in their right place, which is prison.

But then Lorne Malvo comes to town. And the rules of order and society go out the fucking window.

For Molly, emotionally, the first season will be about coming to terms with the fact that the frontier she polices is a feral and lawless place. And that when you get right down to it, some things — like Lorne Malvo — don't have a right place. The things Molly sees — violence, cruelty, senselessness — will make her question her role as a law officer, a job that exposes her to the worst of human nature.

But luckily she won't be alone in her journey. Her father, Lou, is by her side, a quiet, comforting presence. And along the way Molly will meet the man she's going to marry, Gus Grimly. The Norm to her Marge. And with these two at her side, Molly can face anything.

GUS GRIMLY

A Man-Boy's wife dies and leaves him with a little boy to raise. The man-boy isn't a slacker so much as a half-grown man who hasn't yet decided if he has a purpose. But now, a single parent, he must focus. So the man-boy gets his hair cut and learns how to change a diaper. He looks around for a job that pays well and offers good benefits, but one with flexible shifts, so that he can spend time with his boy. In this way he becomes a state cop. In this way he becomes a man. He realizes he likes the structure of it, the hierarchy of the force and the rules it offers. Gus has always benefited from structure. Something that keeps him from drifting.

Over time, Gus's son grows out of diapers and learns to read. He watches Star Wars for the first time and wears a plastic fireman's hat for 363 days straight. He goes to elementary school and then middle school. His dad is his best friend.

The two live next door to an orthodox Jewish family. Because their houses are side by side, Gus and his son can see into their neighbor's home. On Friday nights and high holidays they watch the family — father, mother and two daughters — observe the seder. It is fascinating peak into another world.

One night, the woman of the house undresses in front of her bedroom window. Gus is alone in his room. He sees her nakedness and looks away. But the next night she does the same thing, and this ritual is repeated night after night. The highly religious woman turns on the lights of the bedroom, removes her wig, then her clothes, never pulling the shades, never looking out the window. And yet it's clear she is showing herself to Gus.

When Gus tries to talk to her outside the house the woman ignores him. She is not interested in an affair. For her the transgression of revealing herself to him is enough.

This is just one of the ways in which life is strange³ in the Fargo Universe.

³ For more, see *Who and or What is our Mike Yanagita?*

But listen, Gus Grimly didn't get into law enforcement because he was a law and order guy. He doesn't suffer from a need to seem tough, doesn't get off on power. He's scared a lot of the time at work, because fighting crime is scary. And because the stakes for survival are too high. The boy has no one but him. So Gus can't afford to get himself killed.

Which is why one snowy night he lets a psychopath drive away from a routine traffic stop. And yet, Gus has been a police officer by this point for 10 years. He has developed a strong sense of right and wrong, a strong sense of responsibility. Which is why that night he wakes knowing he made a mistake.

And so Gus sets off to find the man he let go, Lorne Malvo. But by pursuing Malvo, Gus puts himself (and his son) at risk. Was he right to walk away from death the first time? Or right now in pursuing it? Was saving his own life for the sake of his son a coward's act, or a hero's? And will he survive the pursuit?

WHO AND OR WHAT IS OUR MIKE YANAGITA?

Fargo, the film, is a true crime story that isn't true. Or — that is to say — somewhere, sometime, a man may have paid other men to kidnap his wife, but Fargo is not a fact by fact reenactment of that crime. And yet the events and characters of the film — though mostly invented — are portrayed as real, in a *truth is stranger than fiction* manner.

Because, as we know, real life doesn't unfold along conveniently linear plot lines. It is filled with dead ends and random non sequiturs. To make the events of the film feel truer, the Coens have added narrative elements that detour from the central story. The biggest of these is Mike Yanagita.

In the film, Marge is asleep when the phone rings. The caller is Mike Yanagita, an old high school acquaintance. It takes her a while to figure this out. Later, she agrees to meet him for lunch in the Twin Cities. There, he tells her he married another classmate of theirs, but that she died. Mike Yanagita breaks down and tries to sit next to her. *I'm just so lonely*, he says.

Later, Marge is talking to an old friend on the phone. When she mentions Mike and the tragedy he's suffered, the friend tells Marge it isn't true. The woman in question is very much alive, and not only didn't she marry Mike, she took out a restraining order against him. The whole story has a *you can't make this stuff up* quality to it. Which is why, when it's added to a true crime story, it makes the crime elements seem truer.

So the question for us in translating the film to series is *who or what is our Mike Yanagita?* And because the season evolves over 13 episodes and follows multiple characters, my instinct is that, rather than create a single narrative detour, we must spread “real life” characters and moments throughout the story in unexpected ways. Like the naked man in the trunk or Gus Grimly's Jewish neighbors, or the *Be the One* poster, or the group of Sudanese Lost Boys who moved to Saint Cloud five years earlier and pop up in our story from time to time, etc.

Accidents happen in the Fargo universe. Randomness is ever present. The point is not to create meaninglessness. It's to show that meaning in the universe is open to interpretation. As Larry Gopnik is told in *A Serious Man* when he tries to make sense of the strange twist of events that has become his life:

Accept the mystery.

117329

grey's ANATOMY

Will they make the cut?



This fall, Meredith Grey and her fellow interns discover what they are made of

Photo: Christine Ma

grey's ANATOMY



Welcome to Seattle Grace Hospital. Where surgery is the game, surgeons are the all-stars and the interns...

...well, the interns are exhausted.

Meet Meredith Grey.

Through her eyes, we get a fresh peek into the personal and professional lives of four surgical interns as well as the residents and attendings who train them. In small but powerful doses, Meredith speaks directly to us in voice-over. Her funny, insightful and always irreverent voice guides us through this new terrain, revealing that – metaphorically – everyone is naked under their scrubs.

Like a more grounded version of Carrie's articles in *Sex and The City*, the surgeries in *Grey's Anatomy* set the theme for the character story lines of each show. Exciting surgical cases are married with the personal lives and relationships of our characters. In short, medicine serves as a vivid backdrop to our characters' lives. Episodes take place both inside and outside the hospital. For instance, Meredith's home is a major location in our show as is a local bar frequented by residents. *Grey's Anatomy* is not so much about people training to be surgeons as it is about people who are trying to live out their lives **DESPITE** the fact that they are training to be surgeons.

Oh, and it never hurts to tell you once again that this show is warm, funny, hopeful and most of all, young.

THE DOCTORS

Meredith

It's not easy being Meredith – no matter what any of the other interns think. At the hospital, Meredith gains ground quickly. With each new challenging case on the OR, she's becoming more confident in her skills. But her life is complicated. There are the two interns (George and Izzie) who share her house, there's the secret of her mother and then there's a certain surgeon...

Meredith and Derek make an attempt at being "just friends". They are doomed to fail, of course; there's too much sexual heat between them. Meredith, determined not to get involved with the man who is essentially her boss, tries to date other men. But there's a reason surgeons rarely have long term relationships with "civilians". When she finally does give Derek a shot, the stress of hiding the relationship and the reaction of Meredith's friends make her question her decision. It's only when Derek becomes her confidante about her mother that Meredith begins to trust him and the relationship moves to deeper territory. But just when everything seems ride-off-into-the-sunset wonderful, there's an unpleasant surprise. Derek's estranged wife (yes, I said wife) arrives. She's a skilled, beautiful, kind surgeon -- exactly the kind of woman we all hope doesn't exist and wish we were shallow enough hate properly. She's at Grace to oversee a complicated obstetrics operation -- at least that is her excuse. She's actually here to win her husband back.

Meredith finds herself being taken under the wing of the Chief of Surgery Richard who knows her mother from their own intern days. Having a mentor is a blessing; having a mentor who knows her mother is not. The reality of Ellis Grey and the Alzheimer's she suffers from becomes more of a burden as Meredith attempts to keep it a secret from everyone. After a lifetime living in the shadow of a famous surgeon mother with whom she never really got along, Meredith is determined that Ellis' illness not taint her attempt to stand on her own. Having huge shoes to fill is difficult enough without adding pity to the equation. In addition, Meredith constantly struggles for a connection with a mother who once viewed her as a disappointment. Any ground gained between them is lost moments later -- because Ellis has forgotten. Through Ellis' scattered statements, Meredith uncovers startling facts -- most importantly that Ellis had an affair with Richard that caused Meredith's father to walk out on them.

Cristina

Cristina's a mass of mysterious contradictions for the other interns. She's fiercely unforgiving of weakness but can't help championing George. She cautions Meredith against dating Derek but doesn't hesitate to sneak off for sex in a supply closet with an attending. And at Thanksgiving, the girl who rants about preferential treatment flies home in a private jet.

Residency is going to test Cristina in ways she never imagined. For the first time since she entered med school, Cristina will be faced with uncertainty when her surgical skills fail to make up for her lack of people skills. Dealing with patients is going to drive her insane -- they're so...human.

Confident to a fault, she's going to begin a purely sexual but totally antagonistic relationship with Preston Burke -- and start to become undone when she realizes that she's beginning to care for him. Her ambition will bring those feelings for Burke to a grinding halt when she accidentally gets pregnant -- putting her plans for a stellar career in jeopardy. Her worries over the pregnancy will be surpassed by a larger concern when, in the last episode of the first 13, she has a serious motorcycle accident. She'll miscarry and we'll be left unsure of her chances for survival...

...HEY! Don't worry -- she'll recover. But not until after she's suffered the indignities that come with being treated by the same interns she's been competing against. There's something pretty depressing about knowing your colleagues have seen you naked...

George

Poor George. He's the well-meaning guy who always manages to do and say the exact wrong thing at the wrong time. He has no idea how he became the underdog and no idea how to redeem himself. But he's trying like hell to keep his head above water.

George lives and dies by his patients' fates -- and in the process, continually questions his skills and his choice of surgery as a career. When Burke's moment of weakness arrives, George is forced to run an OR long before his time. And he surprises himself and the other interns by succeeding. He's on the path to discovering that he's a better surgeon than he ever dreamed and that his bedside manner is a gift, not a curse.

The torch he carries for Meredith -- well, more like the bonfire -- is his not-so-secret secret. He forever tries to work up the courage to make a move with her but never quite allows himself to seize the right opportunity. Instead, to his eternal horror, he finds himself treated as "one of the girls". To his amazement, Izzie will be the girl George finally scores with. Stuck in the hospital during a quarantine, the two end up quelling their boredom with a lot of sex. The aftermath of intense awkward pauses is humiliating. His friendship with Izzie will never be the same. George will never be the same.

Izzie

At first glance, anyone would underestimate Izzie. She's blonde, she's pretty, she's young -- even Izzie underestimates Izzie. Raised by mother bewildered by her choice to be a doctor instead of a model, Izzie's smart but low on self-confidence. Bailey's the first person to ever demand that Izzie rise to a higher standard. Izzie grows up -- and fast -- as she learns to survive in Bailey's world and navigate the terrain of surgery. With each new case, she discovers she's stronger than she thought and starts to come into her own.

The peace-keeper and the party-planner, Izzie is the glue that holds our four interns together. Her off-beat maternal influence is both comic and warm. She packs lunches and does laundry but she still has plenty of wild oats -- and we'll get to watch her sow each and every one.

Izzie's been involved in a long-distance relationship with a guy from home for years. As an intern, she discovers how hard it is to maintain that connection with a civilian and finds herself questioning her commitment. But when she steps outside the safety of a long-term boyfriend, Izzie suffers the hurdles of dating more than most. She's asked out often enough but she's no good at it – she's too quirky and socially awkward for small talk. Trapped at the hospital during a quarantine, George's complementary hang-ups become too attractive for Izzie to avoid – well, George's hang-ups and the fact that she's facing her five month anniversary of no sex. She attacks him. And regrets it for a long time after.

Derek

These days, Derek is all about redemption. He left private practice in Manhattan for Seattle Grace when he got old enough to realize a house in the Hamptons is not a substitute for a soul. Grace gives him a chance to practice the kind of medicine he can believe in. A chance to enjoy the OR again. Derek is a golden boy at Grace -- saving lives, inspiring the interns, winning Richard's approval. But when he faces tough cases with no clear answers, Derek's confidence is challenged – especially when he loses a patient he was certain he could save.

Derek has two loves – surgery and women. And he has the best of intentions with both. The road to hell is paved with guys like him. At Grace, he falls for Meredith; his pursuit of her is more than just a game. An attending dating an intern is never a good idea and, for Derek, his inability to put the brakes on his pursuit of Meredith jeopardizes his standing with Richard. A surrogate father of sorts, Richard sets a higher standard for Derek than he often sets for himself. Richard's approval means everything to Derek; he doesn't want to disappoint. And he doesn't want to ruin his chance of one day filling Richard's shoes as Chief of Surgery.

The drive to be Chief sparks competition with Burke. As both men jockey for position with Richard, their dislike of one another evolves into a humorous, respectful camaraderie – soldiers from opposing sides who meet for drinks to check out the competition. When Burke is in real trouble, however, Derek steps up to help cover for him. Whether they want to admit it or not, they are friends.

As for Derek's wife...well, in his defense, he's as surprised to see her as Meredith is.

Burke

Burke's arrogant for a reason – he's good at what he does and he knows it. But his arrogance belies a surprising kindness. He tortures George to force him to be a better surgeon and he's cool with patients to protect himself when they die. He doesn't have many friends and that's the way he likes it. It's clean, his life.

Once Richard's right hand, Burke struggles with being ousted by Derek's arrival. There's a darker personal history between Richard and Burke...but we'll uncover that over time. For now, Burke is eager to regain his position as top dog any way he can. His rivalry with Derek will be on-going.

The affair with Cristina comes as a surprise to him. But the coolly casual secret sex suits them both – neither is interested in the messiness of a relationship. He avoids admitting any feelings for her until Cristina is seriously injured. The news of her pregnancy and the threat of her death provide the first real cracks in Burke's armor. Burke's clean life is now messy. How he deals with it is anybody's guess.

THE EPISODES

101 GET OFF OF MY CLOUD

"Okay, we'll flip for it. Heads, I try not to kill her. Tails, you try not to kill her."

-Cristina to Meredith, during a fight over a patient.

THEME: BOUNDARIES

MEREDITH (V.O.)

Everyone has a part of their lives that's off-limits. Personally, professionally or romantically -- we're all drawing lines in the sand and praying no one crosses them.

Life at the hospital has turned into a tug of war. Both attendings and interns are fighting for the best cases on Trauma rotation.

- Burke poaches a hot Trauma case from Derek to show off his skills to Richard. In the macho world of surgeons, poaching is an invitation to war that Derek can't help but accept. A dramatic and funny pissing contest ensues as the two men fight for territory in the OR. Each unwilling to back down, Derek and Burke take the highly unusual step of simultaneously operating on the patient. They save a life but end up called before Richard.
- Both Meredith and Cristina call dibs on a patient brought in with a pipe sticking out of her side. Forced to toss a coin, Meredith wins -- but has no idea how to treat the patient. After a futile search for answers with the clock ticking, Meredith attempts to pull the pipe from the patient's body, with disastrous and terrifying results. Cristina puts aside her ego to help Meredith rush the dying woman to the OR. There are some lines she simply won't cross. They scrub in to assist on the surgery together -- on the same side once again.
- Meredith's personal lines are being crossed at every turn. She takes on George and Izzie as roommates. Suddenly, there are people talking to her before she's had coffee, using all the hot water and turning her favorite shirt pink in the wash. Worse, Meredith's forced to work harder than ever to hide the truth about Ellis' illness. She keeps her distance from the roommates, sure she made a mistake asking them to move in. But after a difficult day at the OR, her appreciation for their presence grows -- they dispel the loneliness of an empty house.
- And then there's Derek. Meredith can't shake him. She's trying to keep her head but the heat between them is something neither can control. Meredith's tempted by him -- who wouldn't be? At the end of the shift, Meredith and Derek find themselves alone together in the locker room. That heat still there, the offer from Derek obvious but unspoken. But Meredith walks away. She can't cross that line again -- her life is complicated enough.



Photo: Christine Marie

AGAIN SURGEON

grey's
ANATOMY
Will they make the cut?

102 DANCES WITH WOLVES

"I'm the pitcher. I AM THE PITCHER. I'M THE FREAKING PITCHER!!!!!!"

-Bailey to Richard when, as coach, he's forced to bodily remove her from the softball game.

THEME: COMPETITION

MEREDITH (V.O.)

The things we do for glory. Whoever said winning isn't everything never held a scalpel. Anyone who works in a hospital knows a surgeon will do anything to get ahead of the competition. But when the competition is God, cheating isn't an option.

Everyone's pursuing glory when the interns spend their first full day in the operating room on Lump & Bump Day (the day patients come to have lumps and bumps removed).

- Bailey battles the Boys Club mentality that plagues surgery by engaging in contest with a macho resident to see whose interns can do more L&Bs in a day. The quick routine procedures, good for learning interns, make for a lively day in the OR. Meredith, Izzie, George and Cristina each have a chance with the scalpel and every new patient brings an opportunity to one-up another's speed and skill. But when a man codes on the table for no obvious reason, the fun comes to a halt. Forced to crack the patient's chest, the team faces medical crisis after crisis as they struggle to keep the man alive over the course of the episode. Bailey's competitive edge is both part of the cause of the crisis and, ultimately, what saves the man's life. She refuses to let her interns buckle under pressure; together, they prove themselves to be up to the challenge. It's a major victory -- the interns leave the OR with the distinction of being the only interns to perform a major procedure. And Bailey earns a measure of respect from the male senior residents.
- When a patient's routine lump turns out to be cancerous, Cristina has to deliver the news. Her attempt at compassion would be comical -- if the situation weren't so serious. She's left to face the fact that there are parts of being a surgeon she's no good at.
- The residents take it upon themselves to punish the "soft" interns by forcing them to take part in the Richard's pet early morning softball league -- despite their exhaustion. The game, wildly competitive and funny, only highlights the killer instincts of surgeons.
- Derek makes the decision to pursue Meredith. He can't take the heat anymore. Meredith rebuffs him but he's unwilling to give up on her. And Meredith finds herself seriously contemplating the idea of seeing him again.

103 NO MAN'S LAND

"You, ovaries. Me, gonads. So if you could just refrain from walking around in your underwear...I'd really appreciate it. REALLY."

-George to Izzie, upon seeing her Hello Kitty panties in the kitchen one time too many.

THEME: INTIMACY

MEREDITH (V.O.)

The need for intimacy in medicine, the fear of intimacy between sexes, the desire for respect of intimacy between roommates -- look, there are some things you just don't want to know.

- Squeamish Izzie is slammed by Bailey when she attempts to wiggle out of dealing with a less than pleasant patient suffering the most intimate of illnesses -- prostate cancer. Over the course of the episode, Bailey rides Izzie through diagnosis and surgery forcing Izzie to step up to the plate and operate. Izzie -- who claims to hate being seen as "girly" but whose actions prove otherwise -- realizes she can't have it both ways.
- Cristina is forced to monitor one of Burke's patients. When he pushes her to the breaking point, she fights back. Already long-standing enemies, they argue over the case, vicious. Right up until the moment they have sex in a supply closet. After, they go their separate ways, never discussing what happened. Having sex is one thing; talking about it is just too personal.
- Derek helps Meredith through the ordeal of calling her first Time of Death. A very private, devastatingly intimate act -- the family waits just outside the door. The medical intimacy between Derek and Meredith plays against the romantic distance she's been trying to maintain. They make the decision to start over at square one which makes them both a little nervous -- after all, how do you have a first date when you've already seen each other naked?
- Living in a house with two women is just too intimate for George. Meredith and Izzie walk around in their underwear, ask him to pick up tampons on his grocery run, Izzie even comes into the bathroom to brush her teeth when he's in the shower. Being treated as one of the girls drives him crazy. But George finds he's drawing the admiration of the other male interns for living with "the two hot chicks". And he can't help but allow the guys to believe he's living the dream. Emboldened, he takes a stand at home, locking Izzie out of the bathroom. As for the women walking around in their underwear, he stops protesting. After all, he's not *stupid*.

104 THE ROOF IS ON FIRE

"By the way, thanks. For what you did for George. Oh, and for the sex."

-Cristina to Burke, zipping her jeans and slipping out of the closet.

THEME: DISTURBANCES

MEREDITH (V.O.)

Going into your internship is like leaping into a fire. But, after a while, you get used to the heat. You find your place. Life starts to take on a kind of...order. A routine. It's not until that routine is disturbed that you realize your hair has been on fire the whole time.

A big accident floods the OR with cases and everyone scrambles to cover them.

- George has finally gotten the hang of Burke. But when one of Burke's accident victims dies post-surgery due to George's "grey area" mistake, he is caught off guard. The case is serious enough to be slated for review at the Mortality and Morbidity Conference. Worried that this will further disturb the delicate balance of his relationship with Richard, Burke's furious. George is terrified this may be the end of his own career. But at M&Ms, Burke surprises all by taking responsibility for the patient's demise and alleviating any blame from George. Burke attains pariah status for his efforts with Richard but has proved his integrity. It's only after Cristina thanks him during more secret sex for helping George that he gets George alone to tear him apart. He doesn't want to be seen as weak.
- The lack of available residents during the emergency leaves Izzie alone with a female patient her age with seemingly minor injuries. When the girl dies suddenly, Izzie's unprepared -- she's never had a young patient die on her. Unsettled, she copes in an odd way by planning a party at Meredith's house. She's obsessive with the details and the party is a huge roof-raising success. But for Izzie, the victory is not allowing death to keep her from living.
- Meredith and Derek try to make time to date. But pages, shift schedules, and emergencies get in the way. And when Derek tags along like a charming but uninvited guest on Meredith's precious day off, she's thrown. Her plans are disrupted -- she can't even visit her mother. Things come to a head when Derek shows up at her house during party preparations. She's upset with him for putting their secret at risk with her roommates, for not giving her any space. But the growing heat between them leads to hot, great sex at the party -- until Bailey accidentally walks in on them. Meredith is horrified.
- As for Bailey, when Meredith approaches her, she maintains that she heard nothing, saw nothing and remembers nothing. And she wants to keep it that way. Which is why she's loading Meredith with a lot of extra grunt work...

105 DEATH ROW DETAILS

"Okay. Derek's seen you naked. Bailey's seen you naked. And now George has seen you naked. You're like...the naked chick now. You realize that, right? Is that you want to be? The naked chick? Because the naked chick does not win the Nobel Prize."

-Cristina to Meredith, after George accidentally walks in on Meredith changing in the laundry room.

THEME: PROCRASTINATION

MEREDITH (V.O.)

Why do we put things off? Fear of failure. Fear of rejection. Fear of revelation. And sometimes, it's because we're too damn lazy...

At the hospital, the interns deal with patients who are unwilling to face tough realities:

- Meredith and Derek are on the case of parents who refuse to pull the plug on their brain dead child. They perform several life-sustaining surgeries while trying to talk the parents into organ donation. In the end, they fail in their mission and the child remains alive suffering on life support. Meredith is angry but Derek's experience makes him take a risky step -- taking the child in for a final surgery and letting the child die on the table. In the end, the parents are devastated but grateful.
- Cristina and Izzie try to reason with a woman who continually puts off a life-saving hysterectomy. Izzie employs every kind method possible to get the woman to sign off on the surgery. When that fails, Izzie is sorry for the woman but resigned. Unwilling to accept defeat, Cristina terrorizes the woman with graphic descriptions of her impending death until the woman signs off. Izzie's horrified. Cristina's saved the woman's life but is left to question whether the end justifies the means.
- Meredith's put the brakes on any relationship with Derek after Bailey's discovery of them. He's frustrated but Meredith is adamant -- she won't be the girl who screws her boss. Cristina encourages her -- even though she continues to have secret sex with Burke all over the hospital. Cristina keeps planning to break it off but never manages to get around to it.
- Meredith's been putting off the inevitable -- she must go through her mother's boxes and decide what she wants to keep. And yet...she can't bring herself to open the first box. At the same time, George decides to face his growing attraction to Meredith by asking her on a date. But his efforts are wildly awkward and finally, he covers by asking if she wants help with the boxes. Meredith hesitates a beat but then she too gives up. Instead of opening the boxes, she asks George to help her seal them and pack them way in the attic. They'll both face reality some other time.

106 THANKFULLY

"Look, sitting here with some dead guy's kidney on my lap isn't my idea of a vacation either. So shut up, eat your turkey burger and have a happy Thanksgiving."

-Meredith to Cristina, riding in an ambulance on the way to Grace where they'll deliver a kidney for transplant.

THEME: ROOTS

MEREDITH (V.O.)

Thanksgiving is supposed to be about giving thanks. About food, family and home. We're reminded that where we come from is just as important as where we are going. But what happens when we can't find our way back home?

- Both Meredith and Cristina avoid their family responsibilities on Thanksgiving by working the organ transplant team at the hospital. In a small town, they help harvest a kidney from an old man. Picking up an organ turns into a vivid race against the clock as they struggle to bring the organ back to Grace in time for transplant. The experience leaves them tired, hungry and feeling sorry for themselves; perhaps they were wrong to avoid their families. Seeing what all the work was for helps – the kidney will save the life of a young boy.
- George has been looking forward to Thanksgiving with his family. The wildly traditional group treats him almost like returning hero – their son, the doctor. But he finds that once he's home, the only place he can think about is the hospital. That's his home now.
- Home for Izzie is a single mom in a trailer park and there's nothing warm about it. The only amazing fact is that Izzie ever escaped this nightmare. But when her relationship with her hometown boyfriend hits rocky ground, she discovers an unexpected ally in her new life – her mother.
- Thanksgiving dinner for Cristina and Meredith is spent in the hospital cafeteria with Bailey, Derek and Burke. The food is bad, there are all of the usual arguments and insults, everyone jockeying for positions of power – it's oddly comforting. It feels exactly like Thanksgiving dinner with any family in America.

107 THE SELF-DESTRUCT BUTTON

"What's in my hair? That would be crap. Actual human crap. How much do I love being a doctor right now?"

--Izzie to every single person who asks.

THEME: SELF-INFLECTED WOUNDS

MEREDITH (V.O.)

There are the injuries that happen to us.
And then there are the ones we inflict on
ourselves. Some of those are accidental.
But more often than not, the injury is the
result of a deliberate act. To put it
bluntly: we bring this shit on ourselves.

The OR floor deals with patients who turn their backs on Mother Nature in favor of science.

- Izzie assists Bailey with a man's botched gastric bypass surgery. He's adamant that the bypass not be reversed but simply repaired – despite the risks. The gastric bypass repair, intricate and tedious, is a pain in the ass for Izzie and Bailey. To make matter worse, the patient, failing to follow protocol, filled up on food in preparation for his coming starvation. When his bowel explodes during surgery, the contents rain down on the OR.
- Burke counsels a man requesting series of preventative surgeries. The man is blasé about subjecting his body to unnecessary torture. Burke makes the decision not to operate. Not in the business of removing healthy organs, he chooses to reserve his skill for those who need it. The man can waste the time of a lesser surgeon.
- George and Meredith work the case of a man who stepped on a nail. It's an exciting case as George makes his first difficult diagnosis – the man's leg is infected with a flesh-eating parasite. He and Meredith must find a way to save the man's leg from amputation. For George, it's a much-needed validation of his skills. For Meredith, immersing herself in medicine is a way of avoiding her personal life.
- Stuck at an impasse, Meredith and Derek decide to date other people. But when Meredith meets a great guy, she fails to make the necessary effort – returning calls, showing up on time, not falling asleep during dinner. She claims medicine as her excuse but the truth is she feels no chemistry. And she's left oddly disappointed when she sees Derek dating another woman.
- Ellis is deteriorating, worsening exponentially. Memory loss is joined by disturbingly inappropriate behavior. Visiting becomes an exercise in torture for Meredith. She'd rather avoid the nursing home altogether but the guilt... After one last visit, Meredith makes the decision to stay away from the nursing home. It's too painful. For now, her time is better spent researching her mother's case. Meredith's research on Alzheimer's has Derek curious. He can't help but pursue information. And that's how he finds Ellis Grey.

108 UNDER COVER

"Do I seem like a nice person to you? Because, if so, I'm clearly doing something wrong. BACK OFF."

-Cristina to Derek, responding to his attempts to pump her for information about Meredith's last date.

THEME: WHAT WE CAN'T HIDE

MEREDITH (V.O.)

Secrets can't hide in science. Medicine has a way of exposing lies. Within the walls of the hospital, the truth is stripped bare. What we do with that truth outside the hospital...that's a little murkier.

- An unidentified car crash victim undergoes multiple surgeries and then lapses into a coma. As he sleeps, the interns dub him "Coma Babe" -- even sick, he's gorgeous. Izzie creates an entire persona for him, attracted to the man she decides he must be. George and Izzie hunt for clues to his identity, using medical details to puzzle together the truth. When Coma Babe wakes without much memory, what little info he can give confirms what George has begun to suspect. Izzie's hurt by the truth -- Coma Babe is a dangerous wanted criminal. But post-coma, he's nothing more than a sweet docile man. Izzie struggles with whether to reveal what she knows to police or keep the info to herself and allow the man a fresh start. When she does decide to turn him in, she has the most difficult task of all -- explaining to the sweet, docile man that, in truth, he's actually a monster.
- The husband of Bailey's close friend comes to her for medical help. But when the results of a colonoscopy show that the man has been engaging in sex with other men, Bailey has to decide what to do with the information. Confidentiality means she cannot tell her friend. But she also can't pretend she doesn't know the truth. She deals with it the Bailey way -- confronting the husband and threatening him within an inch of his life. The man is forced to agree to tell his wife the truth. Bailey's small but scary.
- Derek's keeping the secret of Ellis' condition -- not even telling Meredith that he knows. What started as simple curiosity about Meredith turns into something deeper as Derek begins to hunt research studies which could halt Ellis' symptoms. When he finds a drug, he pulls strings to have it provided to Ellis' doctor. Helping Meredith is his secret for a while.
- Meredith has finally gotten into the swing of dating. Her string of guys drives Derek crazy. He tries dating Izzie to spark Meredith's jealousy but the plan backfires. Izzie's the date from hell, talking about her boyfriend and dreaming of Coma Babe. And it makes Meredith more resolved to date than ever. He tries to pump Cristina

for information; she won't give up anything. She hasn't got time for him; she has problems of her own.

- Cristina is sick, sick, sick as dog on shift when she's been promised a big surgery. She's not going to give anyone a chance to call her weak by admitting she's sick. Locking herself in an empty exam room, she sets about trying to diagnose herself. When she finally gets to the truth, it's the last thing she expected or wants. She's pregnant with Burke's baby.

109 RISKY BUSINESS

"My hair is greasy, my scrubs are covered in morgue juice and I smell like old feet. But if you wanna do it...yeah, I'm in."

-George to Izzie, responding to her proposition for sex during a 72 hour hospital quarantine.

THEME: RISK

MEREDITH (V.O.)

We know the clichés. No pain, no gain. You gotta spend money to make money. It's better to have loved and lost...blah, blah, blah. No matter how it's said, it's all about risk. The chances we take and the ones we don't. And what we lose in the process.

The hospital is locked down with patients and doctors inside when a possible virus is found in the hospital. And as the hours tick away with no end in sight, everyone is engaging in risky business.

- A wheelchair-bound patient insists on a risky operation over the objection of medical staff and the family. The surgery could improve his quality of life if successful – he may even be able to walk again. But it could also kill him. Meredith tries to talk the patient out of the procedure but he's adamant – better to gamble than not to play. Burke decides to take the risk and operate. And the patient dies on the table. Even though he gambled and lost, Meredith's left with a grudging respect for his courage.
- Burke tries to open up to Cristina and share something of his past. But Cristina doesn't do warm. And Burke doesn't do vulnerable. When she finally asks him to shut up, Burke is relieved. It's a risk they vow never to take again. Cristina never considers telling Burke she's pregnant. After all, she's not exactly sure she's told herself. Instead of doing any more talking, they do what they do best – have sex in the supply closet.
- Meredith discovers that Derek has been interfering with her mother's care. Derek attempts to explain but Meredith is done with him. Why did she ever think he was worth risking her career to date? But after the quarantine, Meredith sees how well Derek's experimental drugs are working. Ellis actually recognizes her. And Meredith understands that Derek's invasion of her privacy was a worthy gesture of goodwill. She returns to the hospital, finds Derek. She's ready to take the risk to gain whatever lies ahead with him.
- George and Izzie spend the quarantine in an empty OR commiserating about their lives. Something clicks between the two of them and, before George knows it, Izzie's attacking him. They have more sex in the next four hours than either has had all year.

110 – REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

"We're playing cards. I'm winning. Mainly because she thinks we're playing chess. But still, I'm winning. I take my victories any way I can get 'em."

-Meredith to George, when he comes upon her sitting with Ellis at the end of the long ugly day.

THEME: LOSS

MEREDITH (V.O.)

Most of the time, it's not until we search for something that we learn it is lost. A photograph, an old love letter... And when what we lose is less tangible – a heart, a memory, a friendship – it's not until we lose it that we discover how important it is. But what happens when we lose something we never even knew we had? What's the lesson then?

- When Ellis begins to become more confused instead of improving, Meredith must bring her to Grace for tests. Derek and Meredith search to discover the cause of Ellis' disorientation. Has the medication failed? Has the Alzheimer's progressed? Or is there another culprit?
- Meredith's desperate to keep Ellis' illness a secret in the hospital but, when Ellis wanders off alone, that becomes impossible. Her secret is outed. In losing her mother, she's lost control of the situation. As Meredith hunts down her mother, Derek hunts down a cause for Ellis' confusion.
- Through Ellis' eyes, we straddle the present and the past. We get a picture of who Ellis used to be. As she confuses Burke for Richard, Derek for her ex-husband and Cristina for a close friend, Meredith is given a vivid and disturbing look at how the choices her mother made then affect Meredith's present life.
- Ellis is having an effect on the interns as well. In front of Meredith, she asks Cristina to perform an abortion, revealing that she doesn't want children. The conversation hits too close to home for Cristina who knows she's going to have to make a decision one way or the other soon. Ellis' encounter with Izzie makes clear how different surgery was for women in the 70s versus now. Ellis automatically assumes Izzie's a nurse and treats her dismissively. George seems to have the best effect on her. She's calm with him and something Meredith overhears her say to him sticks with her. Meredith's clued into the idea that there is something more to find out about her past.
- Derek has an answer. Ellis is suffering from an easily treatable viral infection which enhanced the symptoms of her Alzheimer's. Meredith heads out of the hospital with

Derek. Drained. His compassion during this long difficult day ignites something deeper between the two of them. They have more than just heat now.

- Ellis' illness hits Richard hard. But he avoids her floor; he makes no move to see her. That night, late after everyone's gone, Richard pays a visit to Ellis' room. He's devastated to see the change in her from the vital woman he once knew in their intern days. But Ellis recognizes him immediately. He sits down on the bed, holds her hand. They were close back then. Very close.

111 MORE IS MORE

"We're sitting here hoping this guy needs emergency surgery. Oh, we are so guaranteed reserved seats on the express bus to hell."

-Meredith to the other interns, waiting for lab results on a critical patient.

THEME: TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

MEREDITH (V.O.)

Abundance. How much is too much? Can you have too much love, too much money, too much sex, too much knowledge? They say you can never have too much of a good thing...

- Cristina's diagnosing everything that moves, often choosing the most obscure disorders. Seeing Zebras is common with interns who know too much but have practiced too little. But when she convinces Burke to operate on a patient who turns out to have nothing more than gas, she goes too far. Burke, furious at the unnecessary procedure, is even more furious that he allowed himself to trust Cristina. She's beginning to affect his work. The two break off their closet romance, unwilling to admit it matters to either of them. Later, in a real moment of weakness, Cristina confides in Meredith that she is pregnant. Meredith tries to convince Cristina to tell Burke. But when Cristina sees Burke again, he's cold to her. She keeps her news to herself.
- For Derek, too much success in the OR, makes him lower his guard. So when a patient dies suddenly, he's unprepared for how devastating it can be. To his dismay, he loses his composure in front of the family as he informs them of the woman's death. They end up comforting him. It reminds him that surgeons keep their guards up for a reason.
- Meredith works the case of a man who seems to be dying without any visible cause. She and Bailey search every available option as the man becomes more and more of a mystery. Finally, they stop looking for big answers and start looking for small ones. The man has overdosed on too much water. He doesn't need surgery; he needs a catheter.
- George and Izzie decide to discuss what happened, but they go for too much honesty. They hear things about themselves and their "skills" that no one should have to hear. Horrified, they are driven further apart.
- Derek and Meredith are hot and heavy now. And whatever boundaries they set come down as their personal relationship begins to wash over into the work place. They're having too much fun together; rumors circulate. Richard makes the choice not to put a stop to the workplace relationship. He's not in any position to judge. Not with Meredith pursuing answers to the Ellis mystery. She knows there was another man in her mother's life; she's simply not sure who.

112 BROKEN

"See, I would swear that woman referred to herself as your wife. But maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I was smoking crack and got it wrong. But you know, I don't really feel very...crack smoke-y so -- yeah, I'm fairly positive she said wife."

-Meredith to Derek, upon the arrival of his wife at Seattle Grace.

THEME: KARMA

MEREDITH (V.O.)

Is there such a thing as karma? Does what go around really come around? And if it doesn't...why the heck not?

The interns are sure that they are the victims of karma; that every bad judgment they've made as doctors is coming back to haunt them.

- Cristina's karma is worse than the others. A page for the Trauma Team brings the interns and Burke into the Trauma Service to receive their next patient – Cristina. She lost control of her motorcycle, skidding under a bus. She's in bad shape, having a miscarriage and desperately in need of abdominal surgery. The news hits Burke hard. There's the miscarriage but there's also the hard fact that Cristina could actually die. He keeps his cool, sending Cristina to the OR with Izzie, Bailey and a team of surgeons who will try to save her life. Then he turns his attention to the next case. It's not until he's in the OR standing over an operating table with George at his side that he caves. Burke's meltdown freezes him and stuns his OR team so used to his professionalism. It's George who steps up to the table and takes over until Derek shows up to relieve him. Then George has to talk Burke down, convincing him to leave the OR. It's always sad when the great ones fall.
- Meredith finally gets to the bottom of the Ellis mystery man. The discovery that the man was Richard is difficult. She looks up to him, she feels betrayed. The discovery that Richard is the reason her parents' marriage broke up is devastating. In her mind, he's directly to blame for her father walking out when she was a child. The news causes havoc in Meredith's life and causes Derek to look at Richard differently. Richard's less than perfect.
- It also makes Derek wonder about his own bad karma. Just when she needs him most, Derek draws away from Meredith a little. He's trying to protect her but all he does is spark an argument. But in the wake of Cristina's accident, Derek and Meredith make up. He's not worried about karma anymore. Meredith is too important to him. They are sitting together in the hospital cafeteria waiting for news on Cristina when a woman approaches. She's beautiful. She's perfect. *And she's Derek's wife.*



This fall,
Meredith Grey
and her fellow
interns aren't
just *playing*
doctor.

grey's
ANATOMY.

Will they make the cut

PILOT, “My First Day” written by Bill Lawrence

A: J.D.’s first day—adjusting to the hospital, figuring out its players

B: J.D. & Elliot—initial romance/attraction (Elliot confronts her ambition)

C: Turk moves in with J.D. (Turk’s admission of fear)

John Dorian (“J.D.”) prepares up for his first day as a medical intern at Sacred Heart Hospital, excited and nervous. His best friend, Chris Turk, is also an intern at Sacred Heart, but he’s a surgical intern and is confidently thriving at work. J.D. worries that their different hospital experiences will weaken their friendship and prevent them from continuing to live together. J.D. meets fellow medical intern, cutie Elliot Reid, who’s got a competitive edge. J.D. meets more of Sacred Heart’s staff, including the yin and yang duo of Chief of Medicine, Dr. Kelso, and his nemesis, attending physician Dr. Cox (Kelso is good, Cox bad). During rounds, J.D. bails out Elliot on a tough question; the next day, when the situation is reversed, Elliot sells out J.D. He confronts her, and she responds coldly by saying, “if you didn’t want to sleep with me, you would’ve done the same thing.”

J.D.’s first night on call is as chaotic and frenzied as he imagined, and he even unexpectedly loses a patient. Later, Turk admits that he’s scared and confused, too, and tells J.D. that he wants to move in with him. Just as the evening’s winding down, J.D. witnesses Kelso’s true self, one whose concern for patients ends with whether or not they have health insurance. When J.D.’s at his most confused, Dr. Cox steps up and works J.D. through a difficult procedure with compassionate but forceful encouragement (Cox good, Kelso bad). As J.D. heads home for sweet sleep, Elliot apologizes, and J.D. realizes what an accomplishment it was to have made it through his first day.

Rounds: 2 Body-count: 1 (Burski)

Fantasies:

- *Marathon race, J.D. vs. Elliot—J.D. wins
- *Sitcom life for J.D. and Elliot, explaining to their son how they fell in love
- *J.D. as deer caught in headlights (with antlers), demolished by speeding truck
- *Turk and Carla get it on, Todd cheers for them
- *Kelso’s red devil eyes (when his evilness is revealed)

Facts ‘n’ tidbits:

- *J.D. and Turk were roommates in college and med school
- *Every man in the Reid family is a doctor

#101, "My Mentor" written by Bill Lawrence

A: J.D./Cox, smoking patient

B: Carla & nurses vs. Elliot

C: Turk courts Carla

J.D. treats a chronic smoker, Will Forte, whose irreverent attitude about his addiction worries J.D. He's torn how to handle Will—tough love or compassion—but he's certain that his budding relationship with Dr. Cox is becoming that of mentor and protégé, and eager for Dr. Cox's advice. Elliot's gotten herself in hot water with Carla by ratting her out to Kelso; but Elliot insists Carla genuinely messed up, and therefore Elliot doesn't think she owes Carla an apology. Her stubbornness only alienates her more from the nurses. Meanwhile, Turk's interest in Carla is beginning to show. Turk finally asks Carla out and is met with rejection. And J.D. finally thinks his passion and concern have broken through to Will...when he discovers Will smoking with the janitor in the stairwell.

Elliot's social gracelessness continues to shine when she inadvertently insults Turk's mother, and she seems to be turning into the hospital's pariah. J.D. tries to figure out the hostile and reclusive Dr. Cox—but most of Sacred Heart's staff is content with the explanation that Dr. Cox is just "a jerk." J.D., however, is not satisfied, and he goes to Dr. Cox's home to talk with him about Will. As Turk pretty much gives up on Carla, he confronts her about how she's been treating Elliot. By passionately defending Elliot, he begins to win Carla's heart, and she agrees to a date. Elliot then privately gives Carla credit to Dr. Kelso, and the two women reach a begrudging understanding. J.D.'s interaction with Dr. Cox is not what he was hoping for, but Dr. Cox does send J.D. off with sound advice: it's impossible to change some people, "...smokers, drinkers, druggies, fatties." J.D. accepts this fact, and senses that everyone around him is desperate for some kind of acceptance.

Rounds: 0 Body-count: 0

Fantasies:

*Turk snaps Todd's neck when Todd expresses interest in Carla

*Elliot digs her own grave.

*Tiny Turk after Carla rejects him.

*Elliot as band geek in high school; falls in cafeteria, jeered.

*J.D.'s head explodes in frustration.

Facts 'n' tidbits:

*Turk's mother is a Jehovah's Witness, looks like Morgan Freeman.

*Dr. Cox loves *Days of Our Lives*.

*Dr. Cox lives alone in a nice (but "charmless and sterile") apartment; has a poker night with buddies.

#102, “My Best Friend’s Mistake” written by Eric Weinberg

- A: J.D. catches Turk’s mistake
- B: J.D.’s missed opportunity with Elliot
- C: Elliot called “sweetheart”; Cox as unwilling mentor

J.D. and Elliot have a late-night, flirtatious moment in a patient’s room. Its consummation—the kiss—gets interrupted, however, by Dr. Cox. The consequent awkwardness kills the romantic mood between J.D. and Elliot, and J.D. realizes that he has a precise 48-hour window in which to get that first kiss before he becomes permanently relegated to “the Friend Zone.” J.D. gets a patient on whom Turk operated; meanwhile, Turk’s relationship with Carla is getting more and more evolved, and J.D. fears he’s been put on Turk’s back burner. During rounds, Dr. Kelso calls Elliot sweetheart, which pisses her off. So she solicits Dr. Cox’s advice. Aggravated by her whining, Cox tells her she should confront Kelso directly. Surprisingly, Kelso is not very receptive to her complaint. J.D.’s patient takes a dramatic turn for the worse, and Nurse Roberts suspect that whoever operated on the guy must have left something in which caused a serious infection. J.D.’s stunned to have any doubts about Turk’s ability.

J.D. frantically tries to find Turk and warn him. When he finally does find Turk, he’d rather play basketball than listen to what J.D. has to say. Soon, though, the patient’s condition improves, and Carla points out to J.D. that the patient, a diabetic, had accidentally been given insulin. J.D. realizes that it was he, in fact, who had given the insulin. He thanks Carla for her save, but she says it was Turk’s realization. J.D. tells Turk he misses him, then runs off to find Elliot, only seconds left in his window. He’s too late, though, and loses the kiss. But he realizes that what he needs more than lovin’ right now is friendship, so he’s okay being in “the Friend Zone”...for now.

Rounds: 1 Body-count: 0

Fantasies:

- *SNAPSHOTS of J.D. , harassment consequences; then, SHOTS of J.D. & Elliot: married, in bed, etc.
- *Ongoing 48-hour countdown clock
- *Kelso as Hugh Hefner, after “sweetheart”
- *Turk evaporates for sex—swoosh—remote floats then drops.
- *J.D. sees Turk as patients as he questions their friendship.
- *Turk and Todd ride off on motorcycle after basketball.
- *Lawyer lounge singing “A Little respect.”
- *The Friend Zone.

Facts ‘n’ tidbits:

- *Dr. Wen has been attending for three years.
- **Fletch* is one of J.D. and Turk’s favorite movies.

#103, “My Old Lady” written by Matt Tarses

A: J.D. & death-wish Matriarch

B: Turk and 20-yr-old

C: Elliot & Carla—Elliot’s decision

J.D. muses on the staggering statistic that one out of three patients admitted to Sacred Heart will die there. [The real national statistic is somewhere between three and thirteen per cent—John Doris.] His current admitted patient, Mrs. Tanner, is a feisty, spirited woman in her mid-eighties, for whom he develops an instant fondness. Turk’s patient is a twenty-year-old college student, David, who’s eager for companionship—or even mere conversation—in the hospital. Turk, however, is wary of allowing himself to befriend a patient. Elliot encounters an even deeper interpersonal obstacle with her patient, Mrs. Guerrero, a middle-aged Latina who doesn’t speak English. J.D.’s patient takes a turn for the worse, indicating she should be put on dialysis—but when J.D. goes to tell her, he finds that she’s left the hospital A.M.A. J.D. goes to retrieve her from the park, where she’s celebrating her granddaughter’s fifth birthday. Elliot’s patient’s conditions gets drastically worse. Turk and his team of surgeons inadvertently stumble over something ominous inside David. And Mrs. Tanner stuns J.D. when she declines dialysis, saying, “I think I’m ready to die.”

Elliot’s torn about how to handle Mrs. Guerrero’s condition. Elliot is crippled by her indecision, and seeks Carla’s advice. Carla defers, however, and tells Elliot this is a decision that she has to make on her own. As J.D. spends lots of time and energy trying to convince Mrs. Tanner to go ahead with the dialysis and prolong her life, she forces him to analyze the way in which he values his precious time. In a flatline montage, all three patients die, and the three interns break the news to their patients’ families, before following some of Mrs. Tanner’s advice and merely lying out on the grass for a while.

Rounds: 0 Body-count: 3 (Tanner, David, Guerrero)

Fantasies:

- *J.D. uses rewind button to try to remove his foot from his mouth. (Unsuccessful.)
- *Mrs. Tanner digs her way out to freedom, à la *The Shawshank Redemption*.
- *J.D. smooshes Samantha Tanner’s face into her birthday cake.
- *Delivery guy (Schwartz) drops a ton of bricks on J.D.
- *J.D. vs. Death, Connect Four.

Facts ‘n’ tidbits:

- *Cox speaks flawless Spanish.
- *Elliot and Carla both studied dance (although Carla did so at a more serious level).

**#104, “My Two Dads” written by
Garrett Donovan and Neil Goldman**

- A: Cox & Kelso vie for J.D.’s soul
- B: Elliot’s healing boobs
- C: Turk gives Carla ass pen

J.D.’s all proud of himself for discovering what he thinks is hospital carelessness—several expensive procedures being scheduled for a dead man. He tells Dr. Kelso, eager for the brownie points, which he does collect (in the form of an invitation to join Kelso’s weekly round of golf), but it’s a bittersweet achievement since Dr. Kelso still doesn’t know his name. What’s worse, Dr. Cox later lays into J.D. because he was billing the dead guy’s insurance for procedures other patients needed but couldn’t afford—Cox claims to literally “wash his hands of” J.D. An adolescent male patient of Elliot’s tells her that the one thing in the world that would make him feel better is to see some breasts. J.D. suggests Elliot go for it. Carla berates Turk for being too interested in sex and not enough in her. Elliot actually does flash Jared, and miraculously it really seems to boost his health. Turk decides the best way to prove that he really knows Carla is to get her a personal gift—a pen for her journal. But because he has so little time, he decides to take a nice pen from the lost and found box...which, unfortunately, is actually an ass box (items that have been pulled from people’s rectums in the ER). J.D. is shocked to discover that Dr. Cox is also part of Kelso’s golf game.

Elliot continues to flash patients, and is continually surprised to see the immediate results. Turk desperately scrambles to find Carla before she unwraps her ass pen—but he’s too late, and she loves it. And out on the golf course, Cox and Kelso play tug-of-war with J.D.’s soul and allegiance. Cox even presents an ultimatum that could end J.D.’s medical career. Just when Turk’s about to receive the best thank-you sex of his life, he tells Carla the truth about the pen, but instead of getting angry, Carla appreciates his honesty and ravages him anyway. Elliot tries to revive a coded gomer in the ER by flashing him, but he remains dead, and the hospital staff is amused and confused by her actions. J.D. decides he’ll do what Cox has asked of him, knowing that Cox’s heart in the right place, but Cox tells him it was just a test—one that J.D. passed. Kelso, however, knows about what Cox has done and suspends him. J.D. then decline’s Kelso invitation to be a golf partner on a full-time basis.

Rounds: 0 **Body-count:** 1 (gomer Elliot flashes)

Fantasies:

- **Family Feud* boobs.
- **Wonder Years* J.D. and Cox as son and father.
- *J.D. in golf attire and cleats sheepishly walking away from Cox.
- *Steadman, Kelso, and doggy treats tossed into the mouth.
- *Hospital as checkout line, J.D. as (body) bag boy.
- **Star Wars*: Darth Kelso vs. Obi Wan Cox.

Facts ’n’ tidbits:

- *Carla keeps a journal.
- *Kelso plays a weekly round of golf.

#105,"My Bad" written by Gabrielle Allan

A: J.D. & Christa

B: Elliot's therapist/patient

C: Turk, Carla, and Mom

J.D. realizes his affection and admiration for Dr. Cox, who's just been suspended. Dr. Kelso tells J.D. that he has to look after a big shot on Sacred Heart's board. J.D. assumes it'll be an old fart, but he's surprised to see an attractive younger woman, Jordan Sullivan, who is a merciless bitch and relishes in abusing J.D. Elliot's patient is a psychiatrist with a broken jaw; consequently, he's forced to patiently listen to her work out her angst and confusion. Turk and Carla bicker over Carla's mom's presence in their lives/relationship. As Kelso and Cox's hatred grows, J.D. thinks the only way to salvage Cox's job is to go to the powerful Jordan and ask her to help. When he finally stands up to her, she literally throws him into bed with her and fucks him silly. Shortly thereafter, he learns that Jordan is, in fact, Dr. Cox's ex-wife. And Elliot is devastated when she discovers that her patient/shrink has been discharged.

Everyone's predicament sets off a chain reaction in which one character passes a wave of anger onto the next. With his new information, J.D. "breaks it off" with Jordan, who just mocks him. Elliot tries to turn to her mother for emotional guidance, but finds her mother's more interested in the length of Elliot's hair than in her psychological well-being. J.D. goes to Jordan and asks her to look into her heart and help salvage Cox's job because Cox means so much to Sacred Heart. Jordan gives in, and Cox is reinstated, much to Kelso's chagrin. J.D. realizes that every apparent ending actual just leads to new complications, as we see: Elliot after her first session as an official patient of Dr. Greenberg's; Turk forced into watching Spanish TV with Carla; and J.D. shares a moment with Cox, who bluntly asks J.D. if he slept with Jordan. J.D. says "no."

Rounds: 0 Body-count: 0

Fantasies:

*J.D. tight rope walks across the Grand Canyon.

*Jordan does a lion growl.

*J.D. grows chest hair.

*Surprise party for J.D. after he learns Jordan is Cox's ex.

*Game show buzzer when Jordan asks Cox to name a place he's been other than his apartment and the hospital in the last month.

*Cox breathes fire on J.D. J.D.'s a sooty mess.

*Other ways to save Cox's job: ask Keslo, Kelso laughs; plastic surgery, Jimmie Walker.

Facts 'n' tidbits:

*Cox's ex, Jordan Sullivan, nasty-ass bitch; on Sacred Heart's board of directors.

#106, "My Super Ego" written by Mike Schwartz

A: J.D. & Nick—leadership

B: Turk has self-doubt

C: Cox & Carla connect

J.D.'s confidence in himself and his abilities have been growing over the past few weeks. Just as he's beginning to suspect that he's the number one intern, he notices fellow intern, Nick Murdoch, who represents serious competition for the crown. Not only for the crown, but for Elliot's affection. Nick is beautifully handling a seven-year-old male patient. Meanwhile, when Todd farts in surgery, Turk's momentary hesitation forces him into serious self-doubt and cripples his confidence. Despite the seriousness of his feelings, he doesn't share them with Carla; when she finds out about the surgery incident from Elliot, she's upset that Turk hasn't been open with her. J.D.'s insecurities grow when Dr. Cox chooses Nick over J.D. to co-author a paper.

Dr. Cox hears about Turk's problem and offers the phony advice that pre-surgery masturbation will alleviate all jitters. J.D. begins to realize that Nick's leadership is actually a good thing, gelling the interns into a "well-oiled machine." Dr. Cox gives Carla some sound advice about Turk, despite his overt jealousy of Turk and his latent feelings for her. Nick's seven-year-old patient takes a terminal turn, causing a mental break-down in Nick so severe that he leaves medicine entirely. J.D. realizes that any little thing a doctor can do just to make it through each day is incredibly important.

Rounds: 1 + afternoon lecture
the show ends)

Body-count: 1 (Nick's seven-year-old, though it's o.s. and *after*

Fantasies:

*Nick coaches J.D. on how to strangle him more effectively.

*J.D. and Nick as dogs at a dog show, being inspected by Dr. Cox.

*Ghost-town hospital; Turk just wants to be left alone.

*Passing-the-torch fantasies.

Facts 'n' tidbits:

*(FLASHBACK) As kids, J.D.'s older brother forced J.D. to play *M*A*S*H*—dressing up as Hot Lips and kissing Frank, the family dog.

*Elliot's extremely awkward with men.

Character Fact Chart

J.D.	*Roomed with Turk in college and med school. *Has an older brother who beat him up a lot. *<i>Fletch</i> is one of his favorite movies. *As kids, J.D.'s older brother forced J.D. to play <i>M*A*S*H</i>—dressing up as Hot Lips and kissing Frank, the family dog.
Turk	*Roomed with J.D. in college and med school. *Turk's mother is not only a Jehovah's Witness, she also looks like Morgan Freeman. *<i>Fletch</i> is one of his favorite movies.
Elliot	*Every man in her family is a doctor. *Elliot and Carla both studied dance (although Carla did so at a more serious level). *Elliot's extremely awkward with men.
Cox	*Dr. Cox loves <i>Days of Our Lives</i>. *Dr. Cox lives alone in a nice (but "charmless and sterile") apartment; has a poker night with buddies. *Cox speaks flawless Spanish. *Cox's ex, Jordan Sullivan, nasty-ass bitch; on Sacred Heart's board of directors.
Carla	*Studied dance seriously. *Elliot and Carla both studied dance (although Carla did so at a more serious level). *Keeps a journal. *Has close, co-dependent relationship with her mother.
Kelso	*Kelso plays a weekly round of golf.
Janitor	
Nurse Roberts	
Steadman	
Todd	
Lawyer	
Dr. Wen	*Dr. Wen has been attending for three years.
Doug	

Fantasy chart

Pilot	*Marathon race, J.D. vs. Elliot—J.D. wins *Sitcom life for J.D. and Elliot, explaining to their son how they fell in love *J.D. as deer caught in headlights (with antlers), demolished by speeding truck *Turk and Carla get it on, Todd cheers for them *Kelso's red devil eyes (when his evilness is revealed)
101	*Turk snaps Todd's neck when Todd expresses interest in Carla *Elliot digs her own grave. *Tiny Turk after Carla rejects him. *Elliot as band geek in high school; falls in cafeteria, jeered. *J.D.'s head explodes in frustration.
102	*SNAPSHOTS of J.D. , harassment suit and consequences; then, SHOTS of J.D. & Elliot: married, in bed, etc. *Ongoing 48-hour countdown clock *Kelso as Hugh Hefner, after "sweetheart" *Turk evaporates for sex—swoosh—remote floats then drops. *J.D. sees Turk as patients as he questions their friendship. *Turk and Todd ride off on motorcycle after basketball. *Lawyer lounge-singing "A Little respect." *The Friend Zone.
103	*J.D. uses rewind button to try to remove his foot from his mouth. (Unsuccessful.) *Mrs. Tanner digs her way out to freedom, à la <i>The Shawshank Redemption</i>. *J.D. smooshes Samantha Tanner's face into her birthday cake. *Delivery guy (Schwartz) drops a ton of bricks on J.D. *J.D. vs. Death, Connect Four.
104	*<i>Family Feud</i> boobs. *<i>Wonder Years</i> J.D. and Cox as son and father. *J.D. in golf attire and cleats sheepishly walking away from Cox. *Steadman, Kelso, and doggy treats tossed into the mouth. *Hospital as checkout line, J.D. as (body) bag boy. *<i>Star Wars</i>: Darth Kelso vs. Obi Wan Cox.
105	*J.D. tight rope walks across the Grand Canyon. *Jordan does a lion growl. *J.D. grows chest hair.

	*Surprise party for J.D. after he learns Jordan is Cox's ex. *Game show buzzer when Jordan asks Cox to name a place he's been other than his apartment and the hospital in the last month. *Cox breathes fire on J.D. J.D.'s a sooty mess. *Other ways to save Cox's job: ask Keslo, Kelso laughs; plastic surgery, Jimmy Walker.
106	*Nick coaches J.D. on how to strangle him more effectively. *J.D. and Nick as dogs at a dog show, being inspected by Dr. Cox. *Ghost-town hospital; Turk just wants to be left alone. *Passing-the-torch fantasies.
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#1

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An epic tale of sci fi horror

INTRODUCTION

Montauk is an eight-hour sci-fi horror epic.

Set in Long Island in 1980 and inspired by the supernatural classics of that era, we explore the crossroads where the ordinary meets the extraordinary.

The feeling of fear and wonder as Elliot approaches a fog-drenched shed in E.T.... the helpless dread that consumes Chief Brody as he watches a boy and his raft dragged under the water by an unseen monster in Jaws... the crackling television in Poltergeist... the horror of a cackling clown in It... the friendship and adventure of Stand By Me...

Emotional, cinematic, and rooted in character, Montauk is a love letter to the golden age of Steven Spielberg and Stephen King -- a marriage of human drama and supernatural fear.



E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL
DIRECTOR STEVEN SPIELBERG
©1982 UNIVERSAL CITY STUDIOS, INC.

THE “MONTAUK PROJECT” CONSPIRACY

Everyone loves a good conspiracy. We’ve seen the most well-known, Area 51 and The Philadelphia Experiment, sensationalized on film and television many times before. But the Montauk Project, one of the most bizarre conspiracies in our country’s history, remains untapped.

In 1942, as World War II raged across the ocean, the Air Force established Camp Hero on the eastern-most point of Long Island -- Montauk. Blighting the quaint, picturesque resort town that would serve as Peter Benchley’s inspiration for Amity in *Jaws*, the base’s initial objective was to protect America against possible German invasion. The already enormous base was later expanded during the Cold War. A long-range radar dish was added and it became a focal point of Soviet surveillance. Around this time, the base allegedly began to conduct a series of top-secret experiments. Codename: The Montauk Project.

The Montauk Project involved the most cutting-edge developments in science. No one knows for sure what these experiments entailed, but the chatter runs a gamut of the weird and wonderful. Alien contact... time travel... telepathy... alternate dimensions... mutant monsters... you name it, someone claims it happened at this base.



CAMP HERO AIR FORCE BASE
MONTAUK, LONG ISLAND
CIRCA 1980

STORY

We begin at Camp Hero in the fall of 1980, a few months before the base will be shut down by the U.S. government. A mysterious experiment has gone horribly awry. And something has gotten out.

On this very night, a young boy, WILL BYERS, vanishes into thin air. His disappearance has a potent effect on the small town community, particularly on his best friend, MIKE WHEELER, his brother, JONATHAN, his mother, JOYCE, and the reluctant Chief of Police, JIM "HOP" HOPPER. We will follow each of these characters as they grapple with and investigate Will's disappearance.

As they peel back the layers of this mystery, they will all arrive at the same shocking conclusion: Will was abducted by supernatural entities which were inadvertently released during an experiment. These entities exist between dimensions and have begun to feed on life from our world -- Will's disappearance is only the beginning....

Over the course of the series, the "tear" or "rip" that separates their world from ours will begin to spread across Montauk like a supernatural cancer. This cancer will manifest itself in increasingly bizarre paranormal ways. Electrical fields will be disrupted. Strange fungi will grow on structures and people. A heavy fog will drift in from the Atlantic. The temperature will plummet. Food will rot. Gravity will fluctuate. People will glimpse bizarre entities in their homes and businesses. There will be an escalating number of "vanishings." The entire town will become "haunted" -- and in grave danger. If people can disappear... can an entire town?

In order to save Will and the town, our heroes will have to outsmart FEDERAL AGENTS and tap into the preternatural abilities of a mysterious child telepath named ELEVEN, who has recently escaped from Camp Hero. Eleven will ultimately give them access to this "in-between" dimension, a nightmarish reflection of our own, where they will find themselves face to face with unimaginable horrors -- horrors from which some of them will never escape. Those who do will be forever changed.



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND
DIRECTOR STEVEN SPIELBERG
©1977 COLUMBIA PICTURES, INC.

STRUCTURE

Montauk will be structured like a film. There will be a definitive beginning, middle, and end. There will be no loose ends after the finale, and all of our lead characters will have complete arcs. The limited nature of the project will allow us to target film actors for the adult leads. For example, Ewan McGregor or Sam Rockwell for Hopper, Naomi Watts or Marisa Tomei for Joyce.

ACT ONE (episodes 1-3) will depict the “vanishing” of Will Byers and the resulting fallout in the community. Chief Hopper will investigate the disappearance, only to find his case obstructed at every turn by shadowy federal agents; Mike will meet and bond with Eleven; Jonathan will become fixated on a supernatural “tear” inside his shed; Joyce will make paranormal contact with Will. By the end of the act, our disparate characters will all arrive at the same conclusion: Will was abducted by supernatural forces and taken into a realm which exists beyond human senses.

ACT TWO (episodes 4-6) will have the town of Montauk becoming increasingly “haunted,” raising the stakes as our characters desperately attempt to uncover the mystery. Several peripheral characters will come to the forefront, including TERRY IVES, a local conspiracy theorist, and MR. CLARKE, a middle school science teacher. We will also delve deeper into Eleven’s terrifying backstory, and Mike will travel into this alternate dimension for the first time. He will return with proof that Will is alive. But if he wants to save him, he will need help. This act will end with our disparate characters and storylines coming together.

ACT THREE (episodes 7-8) will climax with characters working together to outsmart the military, venture into this alternate dimension, save Will, and, hopefully, close this “tear” once and for all.



ALTERED STATES
DIRECTOR KEN RUSSELL
©1980 WARNER BROS.

TONE AND STYLE

The visual style will be energetic, creative, and cinematic. The framing will be bold; the cinematography will be dark and constantly on the move; the pacing will be fast.

Since Montauk is set in the fall of 1980, the show will feature many period details (wood paneled station wagons, analog technology, Empire Strikes Back in theaters, Blondie on the radio, etc.). While this will add a fun nostalgia factor to the show, these details must never overwhelm the story or characters; Spielberg's early films have a certain timeless quality to them, and we will strive for the same.

The soundtrack should similarly feel period but timeless. Classic songs will only come from sources such as radios and TVs; most of the music will be original, which we imagine as a cinematic, eerie, modern synth sound, inspired by classic early John Carpenter scores like *The Thing* and *The Fog*.



POLTERGEIST
DIRECTOR TOBE HOOPER
©1982 METRO-GOLDWYN MEYER FILM CO.

HORROR

The horror in Montauk is supernatural -- but rooted in science. Dark matter, black holes, worm holes, alternate universes, string theory... we want to use the mathematics of theoretical physics to ground our horror in reality.

Our supernatural entities will remain mostly obscured throughout, hidden in the shadows, tucked away just off screen. When we do glimpse them, they will be terrifying, unforgettable, strange, their design taking inspiration from the masters of the grotesque: Clive Barker, Guillermo Del Toro, H.R. Giger, and Masahiro Ito (Silent Hill). To believably realize our entities on screen, we plan to employ a combination of prosthetics, trained movement artists, subtle CGI, and some good old-fashioned fog and shadow.

The show will also prominently feature yet another type of horror: the human kind. The supernatural terrors unleashed on our town will in certain ways personify the evil that exists beneath the perfect facade of this small town. Abuse, divorce, violence, cruelty, substance abuse, depression, death... our characters will struggle with the darkness of the human condition. How do you cope with the abundance of evil in this world? And, in the end, is it worth it?



HELLRAISER
DIRECTOR CLIVE BARKER
©1987 NEW WORLD PICTURES

THE KIDS

MIKE WHEELER is twelve. He is a cute kid, but a birthmark on his left cheek leads to much bullying and near-crippling insecurity. He has never had a first kiss, much less a girlfriend. He escapes his insecurities through reading fantasy novels, spending time with his three best friends (Lucas, Dustin, and Will), and retreating into his own vivid imagination. The Dungeon Master of his Dungeons and Dragons group, he writes sprawling adventures with fantastical monsters. When he finds himself on a real adventure, facing real monsters, he will discover a courage he didn't know he had. By the end, he will even kiss a girl.

LUCAS CONLEY, twelve, is Mike's best friend. He lives only a few houses away. He is scrawny, short, loudmouthed. Initially a source of comic relief, his character will darken and deepen over the course of the series. His wealthy parents are in the midst of costly divorce; vitriolic arguments are a daily occurrence. As a result, he will grow angry and destructive. His attitude will land his friends in danger more than once and put his friendship with Mike to the test.

WILL BYERS, twelve, is a sweet, sensitive kid with sexual identity issues. He only recently came to the realization that he does not fit into 1980s definition of "normal." His innocent choices, such as his colorful clothes, prove a constant source of bullying. Like Mike, Will escapes through fantasy gaming, where he can be himself, uninhibited. He has a close relationship with his mother, Joyce. His brother, Jonathan, helps raise him in lieu of their father, who abandoned them four years ago.

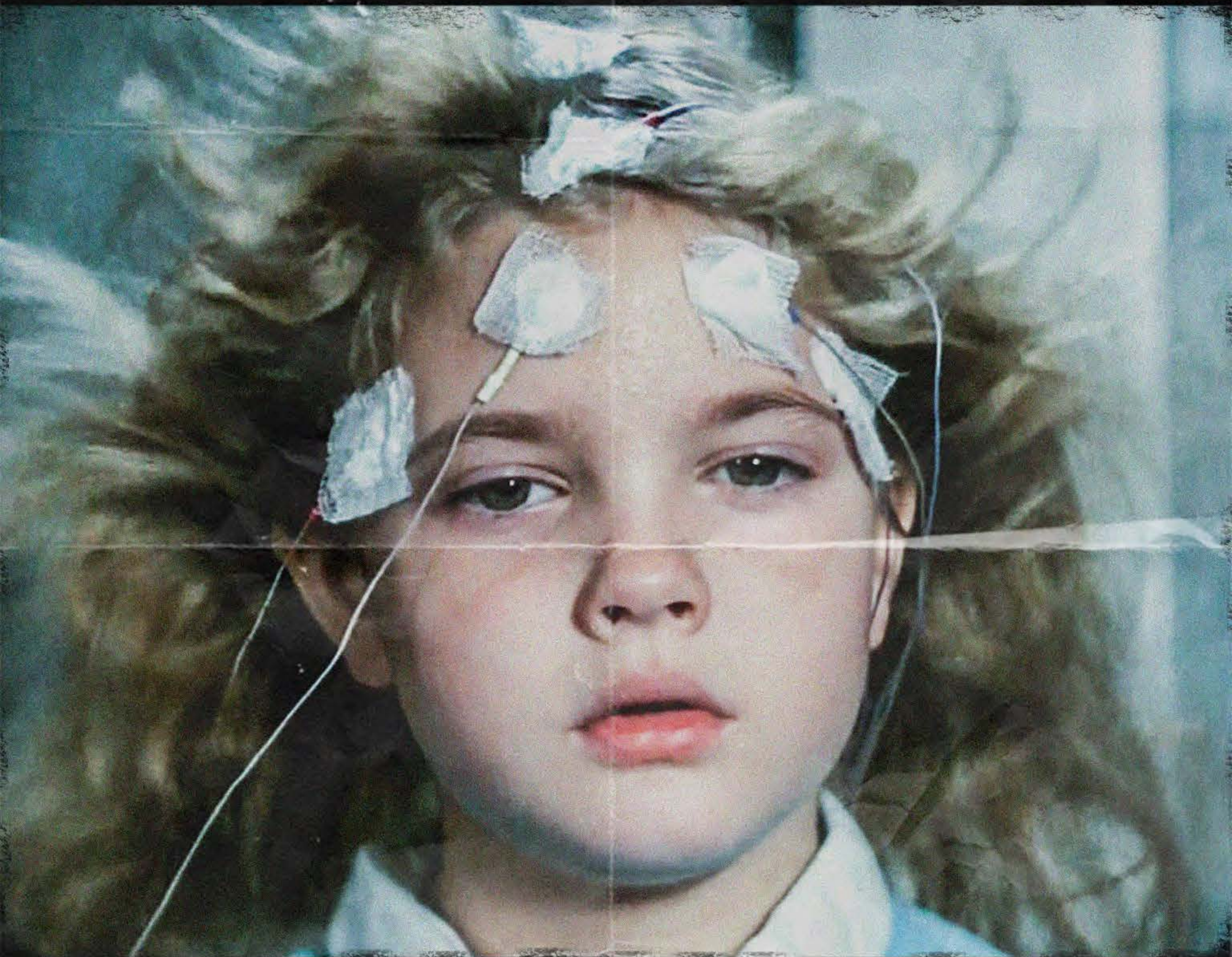
DUSTIN HENDERSON, twelve, is the "King Geek." He is overweight and wears oversized glasses. His supportive parents are nerds themselves and are supportive of his choices and hobbies. However, Dustin finds less acceptance at school, where he is often bullied for his weight and interests. He frequently bickers with Lucas; their arguments are good-natured at first, but escalate as the stakes rise.



STAND BY ME
DIRECTOR ROB REINER
©1986 COLUMBIA PICTURES INDUSTRIES, INC.

THE OUTSIDER

ELEVEN was an orphan with telekinesis. Her preternatural abilities have been linked to genetic mutations caused by her mother's drug use. When she was just two years old, she was taken for experiments by a clandestine faction of the U.S. military. She has subsequently lived out the majority of her life in a small cell beneath Camp Hero. During this time, she and a group of other children (One to Ten) were subjected to a series of painful, dangerous experiments. Her powers proved greater than the other children and she began to receive special attention from Agent One. Outside of Agent One, she has little experience interacting with others and has no memory of the outside world. When she escapes the laboratory at the start of our series, she finds herself experiencing real life for the first time. This proves both terrifying... and thrilling. If Mike is the Elliot of our show, Eleven is our "E.T."



FIRESTARTER
DIRECTOR MARK L. LESTER
©1984 UNIVERSAL STUDIO CITY, INC.

THE TEENAGERS

JONATHAN BYERS, sixteen, is mysterious, quiet, with artistic leanings and a lifelong love (and talent) for photography. He finds his social life constantly stifled by his responsibilities to his family. He works at the local movie theater to help his mother pay rent; the rest of his time is spent taking care of his kid brother, Will. While he loves his family very much, he also feels burdened by them. He has no friends at school and has never had a girlfriend. Over the course of the series, he will begin a relationship with Nancy Wheeler. This will force him to open up and, for the first time, let someone in.

NANCY WHEELER, sixteen, is an awkward, booksmart teen who is in the early stages of becoming a beautiful woman. But with her newfound looks comes unexpected pain; her first fling with Steve, a popular teen, leads to heartbreak and humiliation. This experience will drive her unexpectedly into the arms of another: Jonathan. With his help, she will experience love for the first time... and find herself.



A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET
DIRECTOR WES CRAVEN
©1984 NEW LINE CINEMA CORP

THE ADULTS

JIM “HOP” HOPPER, early 40s, is the Chief of the Montauk police. He grew up in Montauk but moved to the city immediately post-graduation. He made a happy life there, but it was shattered when a tragic car accident killed his four-year-old daughter. He retreated to his hometown and now lives a hedonistic lifestyle in a shack by the beach. He drinks heavily, chain smokes, and abuses Tuinal, a potent barbiturate popular at the time (which has since been banned). Hopper took the job of Chief not to help others but because it required very little of him. After all, nothing bad ever happens in Montauk. Or so he thought. This changes when Will goes missing. In order to stop this evil from spreading, Hopper will have no choice but to confront the darkness of his past.

JOYCE BYERS, early 40s, is the single mother of Will and Jonathan. She struggles to raise them while holding down two low-paying jobs with long hours. She chain smokes, speaks with a thick Long Island accent, and has blunt manners. Despite all this, she is a loving mother who would go to incredible lengths to protect her boys. Over the course of the show, Joyce’s desperation will lead her into an unexpected and rocky relationship with Hopper.

MR. CLARKE, 35, is the rock star of the local middle school. Charismatic, charming, handsome, and whip-smart, he is the closest thing our series has to Indiana Jones. Mr. Clarke will become increasingly essential as the show moves forward, as he will be key to solving the mystery of what has happened in Montauk. He will ultimately help our characters breach the Tear in Act Three.

TERRY IVES, 40, mentioned only passingly in the pilot, will play an important role in episodes to come. An anti-social hermit and local movie theater projectionist with the looks of a serial killer (balding hair, big oval glasses), Terry is a conspiracy nut and has been investigating Camp Hero for over a decade. Although initially derided by Hopper and others, he will become an unexpected, albeit reluctant, hero in the dark days ahead. He might even make a friend or two along the way.



JAWS
DIRECTOR STEVEN SPIELBERG
©1975 UNIVERSAL STUDIO CITY, INC.

FRANCHISE POTENTIAL

Even though Montauk is designed as a stand-alone eight-hour tale, the story can continue in subsequent installments. The hypothetical sequel will take place in the same town, only ten years later, in the summer of 1990. Our kids will now be young adults with new lives, new problems; many of them will have moved out of Montauk, spread out across the country for school and work. But the re-emergence of horror in Montauk will bring them back to their hometown, where they will have no choice but to join forces again. This will allow us to explore many of the same characters, themes, and horrors from the original series, but with a new ensemble of actors and a fresh time period.

MONTAUK



A LITERARY GUILD MAIN SELECTION



The Wire
A Dramatic Series for HBO

Written By
David Simon

101 - when it's
not your
turn

102 You can't
lose if
you don't
play

103 THIN TWIG
HAPPY
WELL

6 September, 2000

OVERVIEW

THE WIRE

A one-hour drama for HBO

The Wire is a drama that offers multiple meanings and arguments. It will be, in the strictest sense, a police procedural set in the drug culture of an American rust-belt city, a cops-and-players story that exists within the same vernacular as other television fare.

But as with the best HBO series, The Wire will be far more than a cop show, and to the extent that it breaks new ground, it will do so because of larger, universal themes that have more to do with the human condition, the nature of the American city and, indeed, the national culture.

The Sopranos becomes art when it stands as more than a mob story, but as a treatise on the American family. OZ is at its best when it rises beyond the framework of a prison story and finds commonalities between that environment and our own, external world. So, too, should The Wire be judged not merely as a descendant of Homicide or NYPD Blue, but as a vehicle for making statements about the American city and even the American experiment.

The grand theme here is, nothing less than a national existentialism: It is a police story set amid the dysfunction and indifference of an urban department -- one that has failed to come to terms with the permanent nature of urban drug culture, one in which thinking cops, and thinking street players, must make their way independent of simple explanations.

In this sense, The Wire extends the cop-drama universe beyond the us-against-them heroics of NYPD Blue, even past the flawed-but-still-viable family of the Homicide squad room. Visually, this drama will be the next generation in what has become classic American television fare, and as such, it will be hard for other police procedurals to ignore the implications.

Structurally, each season of The Wire -- be it nine or thirteen episodes -- exists as a stand-alone journey. Some characters may progress to the following season for continuity; most others will have their stories resolved in a single season (a design that allows for greater latitude in casting). Each story arc must provide episodes that stand alone as dramatic television, but at the same time the whole must make a cogent argument about the national condition, using the streets and stories of one city as a microcosm.

Each story arc ultimately gravitates toward one common feature, a prolonged wiretap/surveillance effort (hence the title) that reveals intricacies and connections in the urban landscape that would ordinarily pass as unseen to even the best street-cops. And each wiretap ultimately proves as discomfiting to the authorities as it does to those targeted. This is a world in which knowledge is always a double-edged sword.

The style of the show can be called hyper-realism. It should be shot 16mm and hand-held, though the coming video technologies may argue for something even more experimental. But more than just visually, The Wire -- by using precise geography, a fully conceptualized city and police bureaucracy, and story developments culled from actual casework -- should present itself as something so clearly real that the traditional conceits of police melodrama are seen as such. Nothing should happen on screen that hasn't in some fashion happened on the streets, and the show will utilize a series of veteran detectives and Baltimore street-figures-for-story lines and

technical assistance. As The Corner is to every other inner-city melodrama, so should The Wire be to any other presentation of police work.

But more than an exercise in realism for its own sake, the verisimilitude of The Wire exists to serve something larger. In the first story-arc, the episodes begin what would seem to be the straight-forward, albeit protracted, pursuit of a violent drug crew that controls a high-rise housing project. But within a brief span of time, the officers who undertake the pursuit are forced to acknowledge truths about their department, their role, the drug-war and the city as a whole. In the end, the cost to all sides begins to suggest not so much the dogged police pursuit of the bad guys, but rather a Greek tragedy. At the end of thirteen episodes, the reward for the viewer -- who has been lured all this way by a well-constructed police show -- is not the simple gratification of hearing handcuffs click. Instead, the conclusion is something that Euripides or O'Neill might recognize: an America, at every level at war with itself.

What follows is careful description of the setting, followed by a roll of major first-season characters, some of which can continue into a second story-arc. After that, the first season episodes are charted in some detail. Because this show relies on the singular spine of one wiretap case to link every episode and propel the story, more advance work has been done on the beats than might otherwise be necessary with another drama

SETTING

An Eastern rust-belt city, majority black-but with white ethnic elements still clinging to certain quadrants as well as parts of the power structure. An incumbent black mayor and police commissioner signal the arrival of the city's black voting block, but other bureaucrats -- deputy commissioners, prosecutors, and many line officers and firefighters remain white.

The city is poor, under-educated, and struggling with a huge heroin and cocaine problem. The architecture is of the red-brick and Formstone federal-style rowhouses and townhomes. But in better quadrants of the city, there are Victorians and ranchers with lawns and tall oaks. There is a sense that much of the population is gone, fled to the suburbs. Vacant houses often seem to outnumber occupied rowhomes in the worst parts of the city.

The downtown locales are better, more vibrant, but even there we have a sense that this is a city that has not seen its share of post-industrial investment. Factories and warehouses stand empty, and the tourism and information-age companies that are viable do not extend much past the center of the city.

With the exception of the downtown courthouse, a beautifully ornate turn-of-the-century edifice, most of the city buildings, including police headquarters, are either block, red-brick functional, circa 1955 or square glass monstrosities of the mid-1970s ilk.

Winters are cold, summers hot. And despite all the problems inherent, there is a deep if peculiar affection for the city felt, though rarely expressed, by its residents. The past is always present here, unlike the new metropolises of the West. We are in a remnant of old America as it struggles to make itself into part of the new.

CHARACTERS

THE STATIONHOUSE

1) MCARDLE -- Irish homicide detective, 35-45; very good at his job, arrogant but with just enough charm to carry it. His offhand comments to a city judge begin our journey. In the end, his unyielding commitment to police work as a personal enterprise will bring him and others. Divorced, iconoclastic and indifferent to the caprices of authority, he unmakes what remains of his police career even as he builds the case.

2) GREGGS -- Black female narcotics detective, 25-35; unschooled in sophisticated investigations but a very quick learner. She is the main and unintended casualty of McArdle's capacity for misadventure. But she is willing to follow him, having sensed her own aptitude for the game. A protégé, of our third main character, Lieutenant DANIELS, she is drawn more into McArdle's orbit as the case progresses. To McArdle's personal chagrin, she is a lesbian.

3) DANIELS -- Black male narcotics lieutenant, 40-50, he is GREGGS' supervisor and mentor and once dragged into McArdle's mess, he reaches out to bring her with him. He is politically adept and will one day be a captain or major, but this will only occur if he does nothing to cause pain to his superiors in the department, who are even more sensitive to political inevitabilities than he is. Married to an ambitious professional, who makes twice his salary and feels he is wasted in the department, Daniels is under considerable personal pressure to avoid any crusades.

4) HERC -- White, muscular narcotics detective, 25-30, dumb as a box of rocks and an anabolic steroid addict to boot, Herc lives to do street-level drug rips and nothing more. He is in love with the physicality of the job, with his small authority and with the chance to fuck people up when they give him half a chance. He listens to GREGGS because she keeps him out of trouble, but resents the fact that he does.

5) GARVER -- Black narcotics detective and HERC's partner, 25-30, short and stock, a fire-hydrant build. Slightly brighter than his partner, CARVER nonetheless shares his distain for thinking police work. Interrogation, paperwork, warrants, subpoenas, intelligence-gathering -- all of it pales next to the chance to go into battle.

6) LESTER -- Black detective, pawn-shop unit, 50-55, is seemingly an empty suit gliding toward his pension, working in a paper unit with stacks of 3 x 5 cards. He's dumped on DANIELS and MCARDLE when they ask for additional manpower and they regard him as fairly useless until he gradually and gently begins to show them that he is an extremely adept cop who has, for political reasons, been dumped into hibernation by the department -- for once having attempted to do police work as McArdle is now trying. Lester is quiet, taciturn and oddly gracious in his actions. He says as little as possible, but always produces. He is widowed, with a quiet eye for whatever women stray near.

7) THE BUNK -- Black homicide detective, 35-45, McArdle's partner before he catches

this long investigation and is transferred from homicide. THE BUNK is so named because he weighs close to 300 pounds, a heart attack waiting for the right moment. He is a good, steady hand and knows how to gauge trouble. When McArdle begins to take risks and alienate bosses, BUNK tries to get him to put hands back on the wheel and steer. Failing that, he can only stand by and watch the train wreck.

8) SANTANGELO -- White Homicide detective, 50-55, who, as the saying goes, couldn't track a bleeding elephant through fresh snow. A guy coasting for overtime only, he's dragged into McArdle's case unwillingly, deposited there by the Homicide Captain, who wants an inside ear on whatever is going on in the investigation. From the earliest moment, SANTANGELO shows signs of a gambling addiction, and is constantly checking box scores and calling bookies.

9) DEPUTY COMMISSIONER -- The man in charge of day-to-day operations. Where the police commissioner runs the department as a political figurehead, the DEPUTY, white, 50, is the man with his hands on every report, utilizing and obliterating information as suits his interests. He is not corrupt, though we may doubt this at times. Instead, he is dedicated not only to his own ambitions, but to preserving allies willing to support and underwrite his poor, undermanned department. He is a servant of the prevailing political power, assuming that to be anything else can only bring harm. A more congenial Martin Borman, to be exact.

THE COURTHOUSE

1) JUDGE WATKINS -- Presiding over a murder trial that implodes when a West Baltimore drug crew succeeds in intimidating witnesses, Watkins makes inquiries of McArdle and then, of the police commissioner, that provoke this investigation. He plays at being McArdle's patron, but when the going gets tough, he will evaporate.

2) PEARLMAN -- White, female, 30-35, a ten-year veteran of the State's Attorney's office. She oversees the case, providing legal guidance when asked. But she is no leader, and she has no pull when politics raises its head. She will take what the cops give her, but that pretty much ends it.

THE STREET

1) D'ANGELO BARKSDALE -- black, early twenties, a mid-level supervisor of a street crew selling heroin and cocaine for his uncle, Aaron Barksdale, in the less-profitable quadrants of the projects. D'Angelo is a product of nepotism only, and can produce neither respect from his bosses, nor fear from his underlings. As the police investigation heats up, he will be caught in a psychological crossfire and eventually, reluctantly, turned. Slowly, almost by default, MCARDLE will become the center of his world, rather than his uncle. He has a casual girlfriend, a fixation for expensive footwear and no clue as to how to operate in a world for which he is not at all suited.

2) AARON BARKSDALE -- black, early thirties, he controls the westside project drug trade and has for the last five years. He touches no drugs himself, does no overt violence and communicates, if at all, with only trusted lieutenants. He doesn't know what to do with the money coming on, but has started investing in real estate and seeking political favors for a run at some legitimate development projects. His personal life, whereabouts, addresses are veiled. He owns nothing in his own name and shows little flash as do most television drug dealers. Instead, he wants only the smallest profile, knowing his reputation already precedes him in places that matter. He has structured an operation that runs as much on fear as loyalty, so that violence often exceeds the need for it.

3) STRINGY-BELL -- black, early forties, he is BARKSDALE's most trusted lieutenant, supervising virtually every aspect of the organization. He is older than BARKSDALE, and much more direct in his way, but nonetheless he is the No. 2. He has BARKSDALE's brutal sense of the world, but not his polish. BELL is bright, but clearly a child of the projects he now controls.

4) BUBBLES - sixty, black, a heroin addict and AIDS case who quickly becomes a willing informant when a compadre is brutalized over a few dollars by Barksdale's people. He is a simple but valuable source of basic, street-level info. He is slowly dying.

5) OMAR - a stickup boy, black, 30, an independent soul who willingly begins helping McARDLE when the Barksdale organization kills his young partner in retaliation for a drug-corner robbery. He is stupid fearless, having robbed dealers for the last ten years and lived to keep at it. He will ultimately be the key player who risks himself to bring the case to BARKSDALE's doorstep.

6) BODIE - black, 15-16, a rising star who works for D'ANGELO in his low-rise crew of drug slingers. BODIE is made for the game in a way that D'ANGELO is not. He will ultimately surpass and eventually supplant D'ANGELO in the low-rises.

BIBLE

EPISODE 101

1 Baltimore Circuit Court, Pt 23: A jury trial in progress, a drug-involved homicide case Judge Clifford Watkins, black, middle-aged, vaguely wearied, presiding as a young prosecutor struggles to keep witnesses from backing up on their grand jury testimony. The second row of seats in the half-empty courtroom is filled with some rough-looking characters, all staring intently at the prosecution witnesses, who are clearly frightened. One of those in the second-row -- Stringy-Bell-- is better-dressed, more studious-looking. He writes on a legal pad as each witness answers questions. The defendant is young, black, trying to look hard but clearly nervous. The jury is mostly black, as is the prosecutor. In the back of the room, a rumpled, worn Irish face stares at the proceedings impassively.

Prosecutor. "Mr. Mitchell, did you or did you not tell the grand jury.. "

Witness "I can't remember now. I don't know that I told anyone anything.. "

The witness looks up at the Bell twenty feet away Bell eyefucks him coolly, writes something on his pad. The rumpled Irishman exhales, gets up, leaves. On Judge Watkins, watching him go.

2 State's attorney's office, Violent Crimes Unit. We follow the Irishman into the office He greets the secretaries, moving toward the rear offices as if he owns the place. He sees another cop, also white, on the phone, his feet up on a prosecutor's desk. The Irishman nods, listens. His fellow detective is arguing with a contractor about the cost of pressure-treated lumber

The Irishman sits. His pager goes off. He scans the number, frowns

The other detective hangs up, looks to the Irishman

"Fucking thieves."

"You putting a deck up?"

"Not for eight thousand I'm not. Fucking thieves."

The detective picks up the phone again, ready to do battle. The Irishman interrupts him.

"You talked to Hansen lately?"

"I'm with Hansen in Part 23 right now. The Marando Bennett case "

"I know that I was just in there."

"Yeah?" asks the detective, not really giving a shit.

"Yeah. Your case is falling apart."

"The fuck it is "

The Irishman shrugs "Last two witnesses just backed all the way up."

"The fuck you say."

"You got Stringy Bell and his crew sitting in the second row staring them down They're backin' up like bad sewer pipe."

"What's Hansen doing?"

The Irishman shrugs. The detective mulls the news over for a second, picks up the phone, calls a second contractor, seeking another estimate

3. Baltimore Circuit Court, Pt. 23. Jury foreman rises, pronounces the defendant not guilty on all counts. High-fives from the crew in the second-row. Worn visage of disgust on the face of Warren Hansen, the prosecutor. Judge Watkins coldly thanks the jury, dismisses court. Sheriff's deputies pocket their cuffs as the defendant and his attorney embrace. The judge leans back in his chair, looking to the rear row, where the Irishman sits watching the uproar, sort of half bemused. As the judge motions to his clerk.

4 Courthouse hallway The Irishman leaves the courtroom only to be approached by the clerk: Judge Watkins wants to see him. Cut to the judge's chambers: What, his honor asks, just happened out there

Our Irish soul, very dryly: "We lost "

But the judge is pissed. Asks if the Irishman had anything to do with the case. No, nothing. Then why are you in my court today.

The detective explains. That murder came from the Barksdale crew -- Aaron Barksdale, Stringy Bell, the rest of the pack. They now own five of the seven towers of the Latrobe Courts. Ten stairwells in five high-rises, going twenty-four seven for dope and coke.

"That was Stringy in the second row, with the notepad, scaring the living shit out the state witnesses." The judge takes this in. How, he asks, do you know all this?

"Everyone knows it "

"Everyone?"

"Everyone in the Latrobe Courts Barksdale and Bell are the power. Have been for a year. They've dropped about ten bodies in as many months. Beat three cases in court already doing the same shit they did today."

And why do you care if it isn't your case.

Irishman loses his smile. "Who said I did?"

5. Five Mile House, nightclub: A celebration of the acquittal. Stringy, now less studious that he's out of court, and Barksdale, older and lethal, hold court. Our defendant, D'Angelo Barksdale, still looks hard, but now, in the company of so many other genuine players, we get a sense that he was in over his head, that if his elder uncle hadn't mobilized the crew to throw hard looks at the witnesses, if he had been in court alone, he might have crumbled.

Aaron Barksdale pulls his nephew aside playfully, congratulating him on having beat the charge. But alone he is more judgmental. "You fucked the dog on me." D'Angelo Barksdale is told that the murder was poorly handled and that great effort was required to make sure that the state's case imploded. He is told that he's being pulled out of the towers -- the money territory for the crew -- and given the low-rise courtyard in the Douglass Homes. A demotion.

6 Our Irish-faced detective, call him Jimmy McArdle, arrives at a crime scene, finds his partner, a 320-pound black detective known only as The Bunk, in a basement room, smoking a cigar against the odors of a summer decomp.

McArdle: "How happy am I to see my beeper go off?"

Bunk: "What the fuck. A call's a call."

McArdle: "Landsman's squad was up today. Why are you even picking up the phone on

anything?

Bunk: "Got bored. Need some overtime to pay down the credit cards, man."

Off the body: "Who be dead?"

Bunk, morosely. "No ID. Dead a week or so."

McArdle half-heartedly offers to help, but The Bunk shakes him off.

"Ain't even gonna be a murder. Motherfucker just fell out on his own and then went all ripe and shit. My fault for catching calls, brother."

As the bloated body is rolled, McArdle frowns at the smell and backs out.

7. Homicide office: McArdle walks in

A detective sergeant looks up. "What the Bunk get?"

"Decomp. Probably a natural."

The sergeant grunts. Adding, as afterthought: "Captain wants you."

"What for?"

Sergeant shrugs. "You did something somewhere. He looked pissed."

McArdle walks to the captain's office, knocks. The captain, a starched suit and little more, glares up at him from behind a government-metal desk. "Close the door."

The detective barely has the door shut when his commander begins to let shit fly. What the fuck were you doing at the courthouse? Why the fuck are you talking to some shitbag judge?

And fuck you, you little insubordinate prick, if you think you can go around telling people we've got people in this town beating ten murders on us.

"Three. They only beat three in court."

"I got the deputy asking me questions about ten."

"They did ten. We only charged them with three."

"What the fuck are you talking about, ten?"

Captain doesn't want to hear this, but McArdle lays it out. Every body that has hit the ground for the last year in the Latrobe. And all of them coming back to Barksdale and Bell and their crew. As McArdle drops the names of cases, the captain tries to keep up with index cards -- 3x5 memory aids alphabetized by victim names.

Captain: "Slow down. You're all over the map here. I don't even have a Terrell Davis in my cards."

McArdle, eyeing him sadly: "He got killed in '99."

Captain looks up, furious. "You're busting my balls with a city judge over a '99 file?"

McArdle gets up, hoping to leave. "I'm not busting anyone's balls, sir. The judge called me into chambers and asked what I knew about the crew he had in court."

"And you told him."

McArdle knows he fucked up here. He crossed his own captain up.

"I got to go upstairs and explain to the Commissioner why he's getting calls from some judge about murders that don't mean shit to anyone up here."

"Look, captain. This judge fucked me too on this. He asks me a question and I answer. I don't know he's gonna call anyone about anything."

"Fuck you, McArdle. You better remember where you work."

8. Douglass Homes projects, low-rise courtyard

D'Angelo contemplates his new assignment. Less lucrative territory. Less competent understudies and employees. He'll now have to work harder to make less money. To succeed, he'll have to become what he has no capacity to become. A serious drug-dealer.

He instructs his teenage minions in what he expects

Fifteen-year-old in response: "Why they put you down here if you used to be in the towers?"

"What?"

"You fuck up or something?"

"I killed a nigger."

That silences them for the moment.

9. Drug Corner, East Baltimore.

A black female narcotics detective, late twenties, undercover, sits in a surveillance car with her informant -- also black and female, but sick and wraith-like. The informant is angry. Her boyfriend has dumped her; she's now ready to dump him back.

"He's coming," she assures the detective.

"I know. I believe you "

"I'm saying, he comes by here every day this time."

"Right."

"Same time. They do the drop every day like that."

"You said that. I believe you."

The informant is hungrier than the cop. Two or three corner boys pull up in a ragged Audi. Informant points them out: "Don't forget that car is in my name. I get the car, right "

"Uh huh "

"You ain't taking the car."

"You get the car."

"I'm saying "

Detective Kima Greggs (short for Shakima; her mother being at the head of that generation that put poetry to work in the maternity wards) gets on the radio. Jump-out ensues. Four other male plainclothesmen rush up, pin the car from both sides, guns drawn. They pull the three out, have them on the sidewalk. Greggs has to hold the informant back in her car; the woman wants to rush out and rub it in her ex-boyfriend's face. Two of the four, one of them white and particularly muscular, nicknamed Herc, and the other, Carver, short and black, a fire-hydrant build, deal roughly with both the suspects and the car. The white cop finds a sawed-off shotgun and slams it roughly on the roof of the car. His partner pulls a large bag of pre-vailed coke from under the seat and tosses that up as well.

From down the block, Greggs has to fight to keep the informant in the car. She's furious that the police might damage her car. "You stay here."

"Tell them that's my car "

"Stay here."

She gets out, walks to the scene. Suspects are cuffed and the plainclothesmen are calling for the wagon. Cops in a celebratory mood. Herc and his partner are banging chests like it's an

end-zone celebration.

Greggs sighs, points to the roof of the car. "Two guns. Remember?"

Other cops look at her blankly, or ignore her.

She gets in the Audi, roots around for a minute or two. Pulls a semiauto from the crack of the rear seat. She pulls it out, checks it, puts it lightly on the roof of the car.

White cop: "Okay. Whatever."

On Greggs, not entirely comfortable with her confederates.

10. Money-scam Bubbles and Johnny, a salt-and-pepper team of street junkies, prepare their caper, which involves the color xeroxing of a couple ten dollar bills. Bubbles runs it on D'Angelo's crew, who serve them oblivious, taking the xerox paper for chlorophyll. Pick up with the money coming back to D'Angelo, who discovers the bad bill. Best he can do is yell.

11. Captain coming back from Commissioner. Calls McArdle into his office. Tells him it's now officially a clusterfuck. Commissioner has ordered up a report by 2 p.m. Wants to know about this all these alleged murders and shootings.

I'm sorry, says McArdle

Fuck you. Fuck your apology. I will pay you back in my own way.

Captain orders McArdle to start typing report.

12. Our detective pushing files. The Bunk, his partner, comes back in from decomp. Bunk amused at his expense. Gives him back the same speech he took just a couple hours earlier, the one about not stepping up and taking calls when it ain't your turn.

McArdle laughs weakly. Bunk is right.

13. C.I.D. Narcotics Office. In the background Greggs is typing a report. Lieutenant Daniels, straight-laced in a suit, is called into the office of the narcotic commander. Ripples from McArdle's foolish candor with the judge are now reaching other units.

Commander: "We got a bit of a situation. A very pissed off Judge Watkins has put a buzz in the commissioner's ear about some shitbag dealer named Barksdale. Seems that some fuckin' mope from Homicide.

The police commissioner has called a meeting at 2.00 P.M. Us, Homicide, Michelle Reese from the States Attorney. I want you there with me."

"Yes sir "

"Put together a file. Call Andrews at DEA, see what they got "

"Do we have a first name?"

The captain pushes a sheet of paper across the desk. Daniels waits

"That's all. Lieutenant "

14. In the outer office, Greggs is working on the report while Herc and Carver sit idle.

"You got the evidence control numbers?" Greggs asks Herc

"No "

"Get 'em "

"Why me," asks the white guy, pouting.

"You want the collar. You get the numbers "

"You giving me the stat?"

"It's your turn."

Herc smiles, launches into a computation of how much he'll get paid in overtime, pre-trial prep time and court pay. A laughfest ensues, with narcotics veterans chiming in about just how lucrative the drug war has become. Gonna go out this afternoon and make my boat payment -- comments like that.

"You can't even call it a war," says Carver.

"Why not?"

"Wars end."

A pause until the white guy gets it. Then, cynical laughter.

On Greggs, who has to admit it's true and goes back to typing, as Lieutenant Daniels pulls her into his office: She's told about the meeting. He needs a sergeant and she's going with him. Find out what we have on this guy Barksdale. As the shit rolls slowly downhill...

Phone rings. Daniels is being called to the Deputy Commissioner for Operations. Immediately.

15. Daniels meets the Deputy Commissioner of Operations, the real day-to-day power in the department, and a man who takes great discomfort in any act of police work that interferes with the pleasures and concerns of the department's political patrons. The Deputy warns Daniels that by volunteering for this clusterfuck, his captain is putting Daniels' neck on the line. The Deputy points out something that Daniels knows to be inherently true: Long investigations go in unwanted directions. Wiretaps and Kel-mikes let you hear things that you wish you never knew. And even if this thing doesn't take an ugly turn in that sense, the sheer amount of manpower required to properly and legally manage any surveillance means the department and C I D will run overbudget for the rest of the year. Try to contain this thing, the Deputy urges. Do this Barksdale on whatever you can and get out, fast. One last thing: The Deputy wants to be fully briefed on all developments. He's putting himself in the loop and Daniels is his man.

16. Open-air drug market. White-boy Johnny tries to run his game with the xeroxed money, the same way that Bubbles taught him. He's caught by D'Angelo's charges and brought to D'Angelo, who fronts fiercely, but in fact, shies away from beating the gaunt addict. Grateful, Johnny gives up the six dollars in his pocket and promises to make the rest right. He owes D'Angelo thirty-four dollars, the scam having been run successfully on three other occasions. Until he pays, D'Angelo tells the younger boys, he's cut off. No sales. The boys take this in, realizing on some level that D'Angelo is weak.

17. In the eighth-floor hallway outside the Commissioner's office, the captains of Homicide and Narcotics emerge, looking a little worse for wear-and-tear. The captains both expend themselves cursing McArdle's name as they elevator down two floors, where they part ways. Lt. Daniels watches as his superior comes down the hall. It's everything Deputy told him would happen. Plus, the narcotics report on Barksdale had much less in it than what Homicide presented. So

they are humiliated for not knowing shit about a major westside trafficker. So to begin with, now Daniels dislikes McArdle as well.

18. Homicide Unit. Detective McArdle hears it from his own lieutenant:

"You did it this time, shitbag."

"Did what?"

Lieutenant just laughs.

"All I did was answer the man's fucking questions. The man is a judge."

Lieutenant asks McArdle where, in the entire realm of the Baltimore Police Department, he would least like to serve. "Western District?"

McArdle shakes his head. "I came up in Western. I could hack it."

"Eastern?"

McArdle smiles. "The boat. I hate boats. I can't swim."

Lieutenant shows him twenty dollars. "This against a ten says you finish the year in the marine unit. Midnight shift." The lieutenant laughs again, walks away.

On McArdle, doubtful, even amused.

19 Meeting of Lt. Daniels, his detectives, including Greggs, and the prosecutor, an ambitious young woman named Janelle Pearlman, an assistant in the State's Attorney's narcotics division. From homicide, McArdle and another white detective, Santangelo, who clearly wants to be elsewhere. Meeting is chaired by the Narcotics Captain, who quickly turns it over to Daniels -- so quickly that we get a sense that he is, at best, an empty suit. Daniels acknowledges that at this point they don't even have a photo of the guy. Just a juvenile rap sheet. No adult charges. Herc and Carver: Fuck it. Let's get out on the street and fuck some people up. Real thinking police, these two. But the captain nods, urges quick results and leaves. Daniels, referring to McArdle's memo referencing all the unsolved murders by Barksdale, asks what might be in the Homicide case folders that they could use. McArdle for the first time starts to talk and it's clear he knows the target a little better than anyone at the table, but there is such a reservoir of pissed-offedness for McArdle's having started the shit, that he immediately takes flak. The recriminations swell until Daniels shuts it down, brings them down to business.

Game plan for a quick bust: More manpower will be requested. They will work directly out of the prosecutor's office and under Pearlman. And Daniels tells them, you all do nothing without me knowing first.

20 Two of D'Angelo's workers point out Johnny to some of the big boys who work for Barksdale in the high-rises. This is the first team down in the low-rises, come to show the minor leaguers how it's done. They snatch Johnny, shake him down for three dollars and change. I told your man, he cries. I'ma pay you all back. No, they explain, you're not. They beat Johnny to within an inch of his life. Bubbles is across the way watching, helpless to stop it. Johnny is headed for the shock-trauma unit at University over thirty-four dollars.

21. McArdle and Bunk at a bar, getting drunk. McArdle: I feel like that motherfucker at the end of Bridge Over the River Kwai. I have fucked myself. I am fucked. Fucked is me.

Bunk: "You gonna make me go another round, aren't you."

22. Orlando's. A strip joint, just off Baltimore's Block Barksdale's lieutenant, Stringy Bell, who once looked so studious with his legal pad in court, is now holding court in the club he owns as a front. Bell berates D'Angelo, letting him know he's weak and a fool. D'Angelo tries to protest that it was only a few dollars. But, no, you show that kind of weakness on a corner, you lose everything that comes after.

Bell walks away. D'Angelo turns to a B-girl dancer who is at the bar. She smiles sympathetically, tells him he needs a drink. D'Angelo nods. Bell takes this in and as an afterthought, shouts to the bartender. "He pays. Today, he ain't sliding on shit."

Things are tough all over conversation between D'Angelo and the dancer, who will feature later in the investigation. Right now what we notice is that she can't see anything without her glasses and she is self-conscious about wearing them. As she finishes her drink, thanks D'Angelo and gets up to hustle a real customer...

23. We go home with Greggs and meet...the girlfriend. She is gay, which in a backhanded way explains why she is able to get through a day on the sixth floor of the headquarters building without being hit on several hundred times. Most of her coworkers have figured it out, at least. Her friend is getting ready to go to work as a waitress. Greggs rushes to turn around her day, head off to night school. But as she does, her pager goes off.

24. Bunk and McArdle drunk off their ass, drinking beer at five in the morning on Calverton Road, a dead-end by the Amtrak rail bed. Bunk is telling the story about the time he used his snub-nose to kill a mouse in his wife's bedroom closet.

"Had to pick up all them little bitty pieces," he recalls. "Thought about leaving 'em there as a warning to others, but naw, the shit had to go."

McArdle, who has heard the story before, is standing on the northbound lines, pissing. He turns to Bunk, abruptly. "I'm gonna do this case. Bunk shakes his head, says only "buy-bust." No, McArdle says, fuck buy-bust. Get in, get out, Bunk says. Fuck that, says McArdle, get in, stay in.

From down the tracks, the Metroliner from Washington, whistle wailing.

McArdle stares at the oncoming train, hesitating just long enough that Bunk, though intoxicated, nervously gets to his feet and takes a step toward his partner. McArdle looks at the train a moment more and steps off the track, walks toward Bunk. A few seconds later the train wails by in background.

Bunk looks at McArdle, worried.

McArdle: "Let's call it a night."

25. Greggs is back in the office, helping Bubbles, an old informant, pick out people from B of I photos. On Bubbles, hurt and determined.

26. Bunk is in the office, hung over. Sergeant throws a found-body call on him. We're a man short, he's told. A reference to the fact that McArdle is now on the special detail and therefore

the rest of the squad is shorthanded. So, of course, punishment goes first to the offender's partner.

Cut to the crime scene. It's the witness, the only one we saw who was backing up on his testimony in D'Angelo's murder trial. Bunk begins to go through the motions, no recognition of any connection to his partner's investigation. But behind the crime scene tape, we see D'Angelo watching. He looks down at the victim. Knows. He walks back to his perch in the low-rises, sits, broods.

END EPISODE 101

EPISODE 102

1 Narcotics unit, State's Attorney's office Daniels, McArdle and the prosecutor on the case, Pearlman, take in a room full of waste. Having asked for more manpower, Daniels is rewarded by having every commander in C.I.D. dump his worst detectives on the detail. For the first time, perhaps, in the history of television, we begin to get a sense that most police are career civil servants, capable of only the most basic functions, and that actual investigation requires talent that in any major urban department is in rare supply. Moreover, we get a sense of the turf wars that go on to keep talent, so that the commanders ordered to give Daniels a man or two for the Barksdale probe make a point of dumping their laziest and most incompetent detectives. McArdle, Pearlman take stock. There isn't a worthwhile acquisition in the bunch. Daniels, livid, goes back to the other commanders, demanding better. He's denied at all turns, except for the fugitive lieutenant, who agrees to give him a known worker, provided Daniels keeps Shea and Varitek

"I don't need Shea and Varitek. They're drunks."

"I don't need them either," the fugitive lieutenant replies.

"I need people who can do surveillance in West Baltimore. Shea and Varitek couldn't find West Baltimore and they're white besides."

Lieutenant smiles "I'll give you Sydnor, if you take Shea and Varitek."

Sydnor is a good cop, young, black, with Western District experience.

"So," says Daniels. "I have to take three to get one "

"That's the deal."

"Shea, Varitek. They're that bad?"

Lieutenant smiles faintly. "You have no idea."

2. Daniels goes back to the meeting, tries to integrate the new half dozen fuckheads with his existing detail. Two brutal thugs, one from the warrants squad, the other from vice, Shea and Varitek, two pug-nosed old-timers running on empty and already half lit at eleven in the morning and an old, broke-down black detective named Lester Weeks, who has spent the last eight years shuffling index cards in the pawn-shop unit. We get a real sense of how unwieldy this much accumulated incompetence can be. McArdle to him afterward: We don't need all these bodies. We got dead weight and cowboys here. We need to take the time to see what we've got.

Daniels disagrees. Things are going to happen fast

That's what he promised the Deputy Commissioner anyway

3 McArdle sees the name of Bunk's victim, photos from crime scene, recognizes him as the witness who was backing up in court that day. But why kill a witness who you already made back off? And why kill him after the trial?

Bunk goes with the obvious answer: Guy probably wasn't killed by Barksdale's crew. Guy probably got killed over fucking some man's dog somewhere. Who knows?

4. McArdle rereads trial testimony. Sure enough, the guy backed up just enough to get

the D'Angelo kid off on the murder. And his testimony was key. Told you, says Bunk. But McArdle still thinks it's connected.

5. Bunk and McArdle snatch up D'Angelo, who turns out to be weaker than they thought. Although every hard drug player knows to say nothing in an interrogation box, D'Angelo rambles on, though all the while protesting innocence in the killing of the witness. Clearly he is upset about that. On the other hand, he very nearly manages to re-implicate himself in the original murder before a drug organization lawyer shows up and the interview is shut down. Detectives also learn for the first time that this is Barksdale's nephew. McArdle: A weak link, this one. We get a chance to really press him, who knows?

6. Conversation between McArdle and Daniels. Our first real sense that these two are the brains of the case, that they are both proud, smart, and that Daniels, a lieutenant slated for further promotion, is much more politically astute and cautious than McArdle. McArdle wants to let the case sprawl, to pick up everything they can on Barksdale and his crew and see where it leads. Daniels needs arrests now. McArdle seizes on the dead witness: We give that to the newspaper and they have to let us run wild. The bosses have to respond if witnesses are being killed. Anything less than total commitment under that circumstance is bad for police business. Daniels: No fucking way. No grandstanding. No red balls. We get in, we get out. And Daniels points out: You don't know who killed the witness or why.

7. Greggs, Sydnor and Bubbles work Bubbles on the street. They do the red-hat routine, in which Bubbles sells hats on a Barksdale-run drug corner. Anyone he lets try on the red hat is a street-level Barksdale player. The red hat goes on a guy, Greggs snaps his picture.

8. After his encounter with the detectives, D'Angelo goes to Bell. He immediately relates everything with the detectives, all the questions they were asking, how they knew Bell's name and Barksdale's too. It's clear that D'Angelo believes that Bell is responsible for the murder of the witness on his own. And D'Angelo sees no point in killing anyone once the murder case had already imploded. Bell: What did we say yesterday? What does it cost you to be weak? Unsatisfied, D'Angelo goes to his uncle and the conversation turns from why we did it, to what did you say to the police. The lawyer says you didn't shut up like even an idiot knows to shut up. D'Angelo chastened, more fearful than before.

9. Back at the office, Greggs is assembling her collection of red-hat photographs. Bubbles is telling her who's who. Herc and Carver watch this, dismissive. All they've done is take pictures of assholes. When do they ask us to start fucking somebody up. They point to Bubbles. Let's wire him up, send him in, make a buy. Shut up, she explains.

10. On his own, McArdle tips the judge about the dead witness. Sure enough, it goes to the next day's editions of the Baltimore Sun. Bosses go apeshit. Witnesses being killed in the newspaper? They're reading this in the fucking newspaper? Shit flows downhill to Daniels, who

confronts McArdle, who lamely denies telling anyone. The bosses make Bunk their point man in knocking down the story, having Bunk tell reporters that there's no evidence the witness was killed by anyone connected to the earlier case.

11 Frustrated, Herc and Carver, along with the two thugs dumped in the unit from warrants and vice decide to do it their way. They go charging into the projects, come up with shit. We get a sense of just how organized Barksdale has his people, how the cops are spotted blocks away and how shop closes and opens as they pass. Angry, humiliated, they walk back to their cars, find a black teenager sitting on the hood of one, eating a sno-cone.

"Off the car, shitbag."

And when the kid is a half-second slow, Carver clocks him. A second kid, seeing this, calls the cops assholes. Herc grabs that kid and another throws a rock. Instant clusterfuck. Our four heroes calling for backup. They beat a couple kids senseless, even as others smash the windshields of both cars with rocks and bottles. By the time other Western marked units arrive, it's a pretty good riot.

12. Daniels, having put out the one fire over the newspaper story, now has to bail Herc and Carver out of a brutality complaint. We watch him get hold of his boys before they talk to IID, help these idiots shape their stories to keep them from catching a bad number. We see his distaste in this, even moreso when he realizes that one of the black teenagers is in the hospital.

13. Santangelo, the other Homicide appointee to the detail, meets privately with the Homicide captain. Fuck McArdle. Fuck Daniels. Fuck this nowhere case. He wants to come home. Captain won't let him, explains that he's the captain's man inside. I want to hear it from McArdle, I'll read it in the goddamn newspaper. Captain wants to know everything that Daniels, McArdle and the others have going. You cover me in this, the Captain assures him, I'll cover you later. Santangelo is mollified.

14 McArdle tries to check the public housing authority to see if they have a photo on file of Barksdale -- days into the investigation and they still don't know what their target looks like. He sends Shea and Varitek, the drunks, to run the check. Simple job, but Shea and Varitek stop at a couple bars along the way, get the case names confused. They come back with an eight-year-old picture of Bubbles, their own informant. As aging white cops, they can't tell one black face from another anymore and so, they offer it to McArdle and start to punch out.

McArdle shows the picture to Greggs, who shakes her head, looks at Bubbles, who sits in the corner eating a cheese sandwich.

Bubbles "What? What I do?"

15 Next day, additional desks, a few supplies and a computer that appears to run on punch-cards it is so old arrive at the prosecutor's office. No Kel-mikes, no undercover cars. Just crap. The department (and the Deputy) sending a signal. Wrap this shit up and be gone. Our boys move into their desks. Lester Weeks, the quiet old black guy from pawn shop unit, appropriates the window desk and neatly arranges his stuff, which includes magazines and materials for his

hobby, which is constructing and displaying miniature doll-house size furniture and furnishings. He is presently at work on a tiny, Louis XIV divan. So far, he has yet to show any remote interest or connection to the police work at hand

McArdle tries to give them all fresh stuff to run down, mostly leads that weren't followed in the earlier H-files. Herc and Carter resist. Tell McArdle he doesn't rank them Daniels hears this and still pissed about the riot, tells them to do what McArdle says and further, that the next time they fuck up on their own, he's cutting them loose. This leaves the two younger narcotics guys hurt and petulant.

16. Bar scene: The young turks, Herc and Carver and their two thugs in tow. Drinking at a county strip joint out on North Point Boulevard A discussion of who is really about police work. Computers, notepads, write this down, write that down -- fuck that.

Police work is rough and tumble, they tell themselves. And where is McArdle, or even Daniels in that? If we were running this case..

17 Sydnor, Greggs and McArdle talking in the office. McArdle slowly realizing that this young black female is uncommonly smart and competent. Some attraction, too, with McArdle slow to pick up on what every one else seems to already know. They talk about Barksdale, their target How does a guy come through all these years without an arrest, without even leaving a photo around for pursuing detectives? They talk about who they're working with Stupid criminals make for stupid cops But you get a smart one, well, says McArdle, 'that's the job right there, isn't it? That's what makes this fun.

Greggs sees it, agrees, opens her notebook and goes through what she knows

Barksdale seems to have almost all of the westside high-rise trade and he came from nowhere No flash or profile to the guy's existence. No cars in his name. No license No kids No address on the mother. No DSS since age seventeen. No tax info to fuck with. They've chased this guy a week and all they know is that he's big. One juvenile arrest for loitering, and a crosscheck on the kid he was arrested with at the time is cold -- that kid is six years dead. They've heard he has a girlfriend in New York and he stays somewhere out in the county maybe, but no one knows where Exercise buff and liked to box.

Lester, reading his hobby magazine, looks up at this last bit of info. He puts down the magazine, gets up slowly, leaves Greggs and McArdle watch him go McArdle nods at Greggs' notebook.

"You write everything down?"

"Everything "

McArdle approvingly "That's police work "

Greggs nodding. She knows They both know A real connection.

18 D'Angelo talking shit to his boys in the low-rises, trying to make himself sound fierce He tells the story of an earlier murder A true story in which Barksdale killed an ex-girlfriend, who, spurned, began talking about how she was going to tell the police about Barksdale's business. In the true story, D'Angelo was used as a kind of lure. Early morning hours, they walked him up to the back sliding glass doors of her garden apartment, had him tap on the glass until she came in

her nightgown. She knew D'Angelo because he often ran errands for Barksdale. And as she walks toward the door to ask why in hell he's at her place at two in the morning, Stringy Bell steps up with a four-five and fires one shot through the glass, killing her at close range. In truth, D'Angelo wasn't even told they were going to kill her. Stringy sent him up to the back door saying he had to pick something up for Barksdale. The gun goes off and D'Angelo, then all of seventeen, jumps out of his skin. But now, to his charges, D'Angelo makes himself the cold-hearted shooter.

"How many bodies you caught so far?" asks one of the kids.

"I tell you that, I got to kill you," says D'Angelo.

The others crack up. But the kid, street handle of Bodie, doesn't even smile. He seems to see through D'Angelo. Bodie was the one who told the high-rise boys when D'Angelo let Johnny, the white addict, skate on the fake ten. He knows his crew boss is weak and he is, even at fifteen, ambitious. And D'Angelo knows enough to be wary of this kid.

19. Lester Weeks arrives at Mac Lewis' gym on the eastside. Sparring rings, faded posters, Mac Lewis sitting in shorts and T-shirt, sweating and watching two middleweights flail at each other. They begin a nice conversation, as acquaintances who have not seen each other in a long while.

20. Greggs, with Santangelo in her shadow, have assembled a wall-size chart showing the Barksdale organization, or as much of it as is now visible to them. Most of the photos of players, D'Angelo's for example, are mug shots. A few are the red-hat shots added by Bubbles. They have built a food chain with Barksdale nearly to the top. Above him is only an empty space, with the phrase "Supply?" written above it. Clearly, their knowledge extends only so far as Barksdale, which means only to the high end of the distribution chain in the West Baltimore projects. Below Barksdale is Stringy Bell and two or three other lieutenants, each with a piece of a Baltimore map book cut out and adjacent, indicating territory handled in West Baltimore.

Santangelo: "Now that we know who they are, we can stand here with our dicks in our hands admiring the pretty pictures." He shakes his head, walks away. Again, no patience for what is actually required.

Bubbles is there, though, a great informant. He's explaining what he knows of the street-level players.

Greggs, off one red-hat picture still unidentified: "Who is he?"

Bubbles frowns, struggles with it. "Ain't sure what he about. He mostly hang with him. But he workin' for the senator, too."

The senator?

"That one from westside. Light-skinned one."

Greggs looks at him. "Dawkins. This guy works for Dawkins."

Yes, indeed.

21. Greggs and McArdle to Annapolis, where they pull employment files and pay stubs for state Senator James L. Dawkins. They come back with a list of names, about half with West Baltimore addresses and about half of those male. Bubbles doesn't know the name, only that he goes by "Day-Day" on the street. There is one name -- Damian Davies -- that could make for

such a street handle. They take it back to the city B of I computer and come up with a record. Drug stuff, petty shit, one weapons charge. A player, but seemingly not a heavy. No arrests in four years. He's playing in the straight world, on the senator's staff.

One old arrest jumps out at McArdle, however. Day-Day was arrested with the listed owner of Orlando's, the strip club that is really owned by Stringy Bell. The two were charged by State Police with trying to bribe a worker at the Bureau of Vital Statistics for blank birth certificates. (This is a common scam, because with a blank certificate, you can create identities and get passports for convicted felons, who otherwise can't go overseas.) They call the troopers who made the case and learn that while the worker would testify against the front man at Orlando's, he wouldn't give up Day-Day. Guy took a contempt of court rather than go there.

22 Gregg and McArdle take this connection to Daniels, who seems less than happy. What, he asks McArdle, are you trying to do to us. What? McArdle is offended. Shit, Gregg did more to pull this guy to the surface than he did. Daniels looks at Gregg, who doesn't get it. And Daniels doesn't have the heart to explain the ugly back-end of things to her, that investigations are supposed to limit themselves, that some things are easier and safer left unfucked with by street cops.

Daniels: "We don't even know if he's any more than a hanger on. We see him tout or deal or cop?"

No. No one has him touching drugs. But with the vital stats case....

"He's probably hanging with his boys now and then. Old-time sake."

McArdle and Gregg share a look. They just brought in a good nugget of something and Daniels doesn't want to look hard at it. He admits as much. Dawkins is the reigning legislative power from West Baltimore. Huge fundraiser. Democratic power on the Senate Budget Committee and a vice chair of the Black Caucus. He's treasurer of the sitting Baltimore mayor's reelection effort.

23 D'Angelo takes his girl to Sabatino's. This is where my uncle comes all the time, he brags. Nice restaurant. Open late. He's trying to blend. But they bring the dessert cart and he makes the mistake of trying to grab the sample. You can take a kid out of the projects, but...

He is embarrassed, furious at himself.

All the money he can spend, white linens on the table, and what is he?

24 Daniels debriefing the Deputy Commissioner, unable to report light at the end of the tunnel. Deputy tolerant, but wants arrests soon. Daniels brings up the surfaced connection between the drug organization and the aide to Sen. Dawkins. Deputy shows mild surprise but plays it off. This aide -- he's into the drugs. No. Past arrests show a link and he's been seen hanging with a few of the mid-level players.

Deputy is unimpressed. Show me stats. Buy-bust. Dope on the table.

"Give me something to get this judge off my ass," says the Deputy.

Daniels agrees, chastened.

25. Lester Weeks walks in, drops a photo of Barksdale on the desk in front of Gregg and

McArdle It's an old Golden Gloves poster of Barksdale when he was in his late teens, but it is a photo nonetheless.

"How'd you come by this."

Weeks ignores McArdle, goes back to his doll-house magazines.

26. Daniels has lunch with his wife, who is an attorney, politically adroit. She thinks outside the police box and sees a better career for her husband than spending the next decade making captain. He's smart, black, competent. We learn he even has a law degree from night school. She wants him to let loose some ambition.

He tells her about the case, about the Deputy.

She makes it clear to him that it's his job to take himself off the target as quickly as possible

27 Bunk has developed a witness in his murder of the murder-trial witness. He and McArdle go into the interrogation room, work the guy almost to the edge, but no, he expresses fear about being killed himself.

"We won't let that happen."

Sheeet. We're talking about what you let happen right here

McArdle: "You saying he was killed because he was a witness?"

It's what McArdle always suspected. And sure enough.

"Why you think, fool?"

"But he backed up on his testimony."

"He backed up 'cause they promised him \$100,000 "

"And they didn't pay?"

"What you think, fool. Paid the motherfucker off with a bullet."

"How do you know this?"

Fuck you, says the witness. I'm done talking. No sale.

They exit the box, talk. McArdle is beginning to see how fierce, how coordinated Barksdale's world is. "These guys are real. This guy, Barksdale, he's very real."

28. Meeting with Greggs, McArdle, Daniels and the prosecutor shepherding the case, Pearlman. McArdle talking about how everyone is scared shitless of this organization, how even if they make lower-level buy-busts, they won't roll anyone upwards. "This all goes to elimination." He's spoken a word anaethma to Daniels. To get a wiretap, you have to "eliminate" over investigative avenues through active effort. Only then will a court consider electronic surveillance.

Daniels: "No taps. No bugs, no taps. We buy-bust and we roll 'em up."

"Won't work."

"What the fuck do you know?"

"You're wasting time."

Daniels storms out. Greggs looks at McArdle, who looks at the prosecutor.

"We want Barksdale, we're going to a tap. The guy is too good, too insulated to get him any other way. We don't want 'im -- someone should say that now."

Pearlman shrugs She's not going to ask for the manpower to do a wire without the police department behind it.

On Greggs and McArdle, alone and vulnerable

END EPISODE 102

EPISODE 103

1. Sydnor, the competent black detective offered by fugitive unit (so long as Varitek and Shea were taken as well) is sent undercover into the projects, time and again, to make drug purchases from street-level players. He does so. In fact, he's quite a good undercover. Greggs, McArdle and others, at times, monitor the buys as best they can from a surveillance van.

But McArdle makes it clear that he thinks this will go nowhere.

2 Daniels meeting with the Deputy. Informing him of controlled buys They're going to put some arrests on the table soon. Good. The Deputy is pleased.

3. After work: McArdle gets a bite with Greggs, explores their histories a bit.

He's divorced. Two kids, ten and seven. Sees them every other weekend and one evening a week. Who's fault, she asks. Mine, he answers. Honest, at least.

And you? She lets him know as gently as possible, amazed that he hadn't heard it already on the sixth floor. He realizes he probably did hear talk when she first transferred up to narcotics, but didn't know or care who the talk was about.

"You're not gonna change your mind?"

She shakes her head They talk about the job. I only knew one other female police who was as good as you are now. In the Western, McArdle remembers

"Was she a lesbian?"

A strange question, but not. McArdle concedes she was

Greggs talks about one of the unspoken things that she long ago noticed. "In the beginning, you're in a radio car, alone, working a post. Most women won't get out of the car. Not without other units there Most woman are physically intimidated."

"But you weren't?"

"I was scared at first But just regular out-of-the-academy scared I wasn't going to stay scared."

"And you were willing to fight?"

"I'd scuffle, yeah. I'd lose sometimes, but I'd scuffle."

"You think 'cause you're gay."

"Shit. I don't know. I just know I liked the job "

McArdle smiles Whatever else, he found a real police on this detail.

4 Raids. Every man in the detail is aboard as they bum-rush the projects to pick up two dozen bit players implicated through Sydnor's recent buy-busts It is a fierce showing of the flag, in which, for one day at least, the Baltimore Police Department owns the real estate Bodies are hauled into wagons, deposited in interrogation rooms and debriefed. Deals are offered by Pearlman in exchange for cooperation, but none are taken One of those scooped up is Bodie, who makes the mistake of knocking down Varitek with a baseball bat at the moment of arrest Varitek to the hospital, with a million-dollar wound for a half-assed alcoholic has-been. He'll get to soak the pension board on the injury, go out early on a 66 2/3-percent disability But

hitting the old detective gets Bodie's ass kicked badly by the other officers on the street. By the time he's debriefed in an interrogation room, he's one big welt. When McArdle tries to talk with him, we get a glimpse of just how hard a fifteen year old can be.

"Send me to Hickey," he tells them. "I ain't saying shit."

McArdle looks at him and knows at that moment that he's Barksdale in ten years. And that the war can't be won

5. Raids haven't nailed anyone above street level, but Deputy is pleased. Calls a press conference, announces the seizure of drugs, weapons, 27 arrests and says a violent drug gang in the westside high-rises has been broken. He makes Daniels the front for this bullshit and Daniels allows it to occur.

6 McArdle and Greggs go back-door to the Judge, let him know the raids are a dead end. They do this knowing he will not allow the pressure he's putting on the department to diminish.

7 An evening celebration of the raids at a cop bar. For the first time, we see Herc purchase steroids in quantity from another street cop. They are all pumped up from the street rips and the street fighting. Carver, Herc, the other young cops, stagger out of the bar and see a black guy looking into a car window in the parking lot across the street, using a wire hanger to fuck with the door lock

"Hey!"

The man turns, starts to explain and is suddenly being pummeled by the younger thugs Herc, wild-eyed joins in. Carver gets a few shots, too, and soon the guy is unconscious. Fuck it. That's what you get for trying to break into someone's car. But as they calm down they realize that the car is running, its exhaust burning fumes. Carver looks inside the car and notices for the first time, that the keys are in the ignition. Guy probably locked himself out of his own car

"Aw shit."

All four look at each other.

"Anybody show a badge to this guy."

They shake their heads. And then, they run away.

8 Scene with McArdle, his kids, his ex-wife. A sense of how truncated his life has become and further, a sense of why losing himself in the job would hold such appeal.

9. Daniels, Greggs and McArdle meet in the wake of the raids, which fooled many, but not the Judge or the Police Commissioner. Both are inquiring about whether or not they are any closer to an arrest on Barksdale

McArdle resists the I-told-you-so

Daniels suggests they go back and review all the old homicide folders -- the ones in McArdle's memo. Maybe there's a way into this guy through one of the old murders

As the meeting breaks up, Daniels pulls McArdle aside, thanks him for his restraint, acknowledges that Barksdale is a heavier player and that more work will be required. But not, he says pointedly, a wiretap

McArdle shrugs. He's willing to let the string play out.

10. They review the folders, look for connections to the organization that they now know a little something about. Gregg makes a connection from something said by a witness in a statement that is buried in the file of a three-year-old drug murder. Something about Barksdale's girl having been killed out in the county.

They work back to that witness and connect it to the murder of a Charlene Parham, shot in her garden apartment. Never solved. Detective assigned was Santangelo, the useless fuck who is the captain's earpiece on the detail.

Santangelo remembers the case, yeah. She's shot in her robe in the early morning hours. Someone who had access because no forced entry.

"You recover a bullet?" asks McArdle. He's thinking maybe the bullet will match to some of the other murders in which the Barksdale crew is suspected. No bullet. It was something big, a .45, and it went through the girl and out through the window of the sliding glass door. Santangelo: "She had woods and undergrowth behind her apartment complex so we never recovered a spent slug."

"What about a casing?" asks McArdle.

"Casing?"

"You said it was a four-five. You musta found a casing in the room."

"Shit, I don't remember. We never pulled up a suspect, so, you know, I don't remember all that much about the case."

McArdle nods. Santangelo was never much of a detective.

11. McArdle reviews Santangelo's casefile. There isn't much, but one of the victim's girlfriends had been living with her six months prior and there wasn't anything in her statement about the victim's personal life. Obviously, she could be pressed.

12. Gregg and McArdle locate the girlfriend, who tells them all about Barksdale, about the relationship, the falling out, Parham's threats to go to the police. Most important, she says she was on the phone with the victim at about two in the morning the night she got killed. She told her she'd call back because Angelo was there.

"Angelo?"

He was one of Barksdale's people. He used to bring her coke and run errands for Barksdale. Things like that.

Angelo. McArdle knows only D'Angelo, Barksdale's weak-ass nephew.

Intrigued, McArdle and Gregg revisit the apartment -- now rented to someone else -- taking with them the crime scene photos. Walking the ground, McArdle notices that the trajectory for the bullet striking Parham in the chest and then going out the window is all wrong.

"He shot her from outside."

"What?" Gregg is good, but no death investigator.

"She went to the window and they shot her through the window."

McArdle goes to the opposite wall, checking the wallboard paint and repairs. Down near the baseboard, he finds an abraded area, pulls a pen knife and begins to dig into the drywall. He

finds, first, a repaired hole, and second, a spent .45 caliber slug

"Fucking Santangelo. He fucked this all up."

Outside, fifteen feet from the sliding doors, he finds the rusting casing, also .45 caliber Great, so we've got a bullet, says Greggs So what? No gun, no suspect.

McArdle shrugs. You never know about these things.

13. McArdle meets with Daniels, tells him about the Parham murder and most especially, how D'Angelo Barksdale's name surfaced again. This kid beat one murder in court, may have had something to do with a witness in that case getting set up or killed, and may have been in on the Parham killing.

"So he's one of Barksdale's shooters. So what?"

That's the thing When McArdle and Bunk went at D'Angelo in the interrogation room, he seemed soft. Like he was trying to carry more weight than he could. Maybe this kid's a weak link. Maybe he's in the life only because he's related to Barksdale.

14 Daniels and Sydnor go to visit the Western District drug enforcement unit. They ask for special pressure on D'Angelo and the low-rises. See if they can get the kid riled or scared. DEU sergeant takes the photo and info, says he'll try.

15 Herc at the gym, talking pro wrestling with pals He believes in the shit. Seriously. We follow him as he sells some steroids to a gym acquaintance.

16. D'Angelo and his crew are now clearly being marked by a surveillance team Three young black guys. Cool, calm, professional. We presume they are the Western DEU boys, put out there by Daniels and Sydnor They are being watched by people who are chronicling their whole distribution process.

The dialogue from these guys is cop-like, restrained. But a bit more street, and a bit off from what we've heard from our regular cops.

Meanwhile, Bodie, still battered and bruised from getting wailed by the cops, returns to work. "Ain't you locked up?" D'Angelo asks him

"They sent me to Boy's Village," he tells him

"So why ain't you in Boy's Village."

"I walked away."

"You walked away?"

"Way back from breakfast. I walked past my cottage and down to the fence Climbed over, went down to the road and started walkin' "

Even the other boys are now impressed Silent It's like a contest between D'Angelo and this prodigy

D'Angelo "You sayin' you walked all the way back from P G County "

"Naw, motherfucker I drove back from P.G. "

D'Angelo looks at him Bodie goes into his pocket and pulls out the keys to a Nissan Maxima. Tosses them at D'Angelo, who lets them fall to the pavement.

"Shit be parked around the corner."

The boys all crack up D'Angelo and Bodie share a look
Pull back to reveal our mystery surveillance team watching this interchange.

17. Bored with all this arcane investigation effort, Herc and Carver decide to take things into their own hands. They take Bubbles out on their own, drive over to the State's Attorney's office and convince a junior prosecutor that they are authorized to wire him up Bubbles himself is dubious, but they assure him that Gregg knows what they're doing and that he won't have to testify to anything in court.

18 Taking Bubbles into the projects, they actually use him to make a strong connection so that Carver is able to buy from a Barksdale organization dealer of greater stature than anyone arrested in the earlier raids, for felony weight. Not wanting to risk their buy money, they bust the guy right away -- an unfortunate thing. Now, it's likely that the guy will suspect Bubbles of setting him up. Especially if Bubbles has to be identified as the confidential informant. Bubbles, of course, can't see any of that now He just wants to be paid for the day's effort. The usual going rate of \$50. You get your money from Gregg they tell him.

19. Carver, Herc and Bubbles return triumphant. They've made a good case -- even McArdle has to say so. With felony weight over someone high up in the organization -- someone, who, it turns out, is already backing up ten years on an earlier parole -- they have a shot at rolling someone up the hill.

20. The boys staking out D'Angelo's crew were not the DEU. It is a stick-up crew and they take down everyone in D'Angelo's little confederation, getting the equivalent of \$8,000 in coke and \$16,000 in cash by hitting the crew right at the re-up. The stickup is so smooth that until they're all against the wall, D'Angelo's confederation thinks its the police. The only hitch is that the youngest of the three stickup boys uses the name of a confederate: "Omar "

21 Bubbles on the street gets the tag on the stickup car. He calls Gregg. Gives her the plate number, then asks when he gets paid for making that buy?

What the fuck are you talking about? He tells her about Herc and Carver and how she's supposed to pay him.

Gregg calls communications from home, puts out teletype. Car is spotted in Carroll Park abandoned Stolen hours earlier. Plates were stolen on the east side. McArdle gets there first, calls for a crime lab. Bored lab tech shows up, argues about pulling latents off a stolen car.

"We don't do unauthorized use It's not even a felony "

McArdle goes off "Dust this fucking car."

22. Gregg into the office late, finds Herc. Verbally, and almost physically, beats the shit out of him for using her informant that way He's not going to testify. It's not going to court. You fucked up.

Herc "We did good It was a good buy."

"You're gonna get him killed "

"He's a mope. Fuck it and fuck you."

McArdle arrives, catches the end of it. Talks with Greggs, who is now wholly in his corner. The deadwood in this investigation, she tells him, they got to go.

McArdle tells her about the car. They pulled a bunch of prints, just in case. Nothing else to do on it except to be impressed that someone had the balls to rob one of Barksdale's project crews.

23. Stringy berates D'Angelo for losing \$24,000 to a stick-up crew. His uncle, he tells him, has been humiliated. D'Angelo will have to make it up \$3,000 a week for 8 weeks. D'Angelo complains: "I'm only netting seven a week down here."

"And that's another thing .."

Worse still, D'Angelo can give his superior no good info on who robbed them.

24. D'Angelo back out the next morning, weary but ready to start selling. Instead, the Western District DEU is all over the low-rises. The sergeant sidles up to him.

"Shop's closed today."

D'Angelo says nothing.

"What did you do?" the sergeant asks him.

"I didn't do nothing."

"You pissed someone off downtown. They're asking for you by name."

D'Angelo freaked. Who's asking about him downtown?

25. Greggs with prosecutor, gets Bubbles' buy case killed. We get a sense of how much she actually cares for the old informant. Bubbles, thanking her profusely now that he realizes he would have had to testify in open court, politely mentions that he still hasn't been paid.

"I can't pay for a buy that won't go to court. Department regs."

Bubbles nods, not quite understanding.

Greggs stops, disgusted with herself. She goes into her own wallet. Pulls out a twenty.

26. Stringy makes the rounds of the low-rises, sizing up business.

Asks D'Angelo. "Any sign of that stickup crew."

"Naw. They must not be from 'round the way."

Stringy looks at him sharply.

Bodie, the young up-and-comer in Angelo's group, tells Stringy about the stickup boy using the name Omar. D'Angelo readily agrees, remembering.

"Why you ain't say shit about Omar before?"

"Forgot."

Stringy looks at Bodie, then back at D'Angelo.

27. Western DEU bum-rushes the low-rises, jacks everyone up but gets little. Sergeant again smiles at D'Angelo, as D'Angelo, clean, is cut loose.

"What?"

"You da man."

28. D'Angelo at home. We get a sense of what he cares about. His elderly grandmother raising two small great grandchildren, abandoned by D'Angelo's sister. D'Angelo's room has few remaining vestiges of adolescence, but mostly sports gear, clothes, and a collection of the most expensive footwear in West Baltimore. Thirty or forty new pairs of athletic shoes, Timberlands, Italian loafers, Australian boots, all lovingly arrayed.

D'Angelo's grandmother calls him into the kitchen, asks for help with the BG&E bill. He dutifully gives her eighty. She asks how the job is going. "Fine."

She asks more questions. It becomes clear she thinks he works construction.

D'Angelo lies as best he can, retreats to the small safety of his room.

END EPISODE 103

EPISODE 104

1. McArdle, Greggs and Sydnor on a daytime surveillance. McArdle, being white, is in the back of the surveillance van. They watch as Stringy Bell makes the rounds of the high-rises. Lookouts and touts deferring. Bell meeting and greeting, but of course, never going near the drugs. McArdle talking about how professional these guys are

2. Cut to Bell, talking to one tall, lanky kid -- obviously an athlete -- greeting him like he's something special. But the talk isn't about drugs, it's about basketball. And this kid, Damien Trellis, is the star on Barksdale's sponsored league for the high-rise projects. Bell is asking him if he's ready for Saturday. Damien, who doesn't have the grades for junior college, and is grateful to be playing any kind of organized ball, says he's ready. He'll be at practice that afternoon. Reed is interrupted as his pager goes off. He goes immediately toward a payphone, even though he has a cellphone on him.

3. Cut back to the surveillance van. Look at that: He gets a page, and because it's probably drug-related, he doesn't even use his cellphone. He goes to the corner pay phone. Fucking aces, these guys are. Greggs: I'd like to know who he's talking to. McArdle and her share a look

4. McArdle and Greggs in the office late at night, typing and collating their probable cause. They're going to get a subpoena for pagers and then clone those pagers that are being used by Bell, Barksdale and others. They won't be able to listen to conversations, but they'll be able to know who is talking to who. McArdle explains what might be gained and Greggs, smart as ever, sees it.

"We need to tell Daniels."

McArdle shakes his head. Cloning the beepers will get them the numbers of phones -- maybe even pay phones, if these guys are that careful -- that can be wiretapped. And Daniels has said all along that he wants no part of a wiretap. "We tell him and he shuts it down."

Greggs: "We don't tell him and it's my ass. I work in narcotics, remember?"

McArdle looks at her, leans back in his chair

"I'm just saying the man's my boss."

"Do you want this case? Or not?"

She looks at him, beaten. She will keep the secret for the time being.

5. Daniels and a C.I.D. IRS investigator, going through land records, assessment filings, tax info. Corporation names -- at least three of them -- are tied to Barksdale. They've bought up at least \$15 million in westside real estate, some of it in areas slated for redevelopment. They run a towing company with a AAA-contract. Orlando's and two other nightclubs. A funeral home. A construction company. Even a charitable 501c3 that runs a recreation program in the westside projects. And matching those corporations to the campaign finance reports that Greggs and McArdle pulled from Annapolis, it's clear that the Barksdale crew is a major backer of the mayor's reelection campaign. Everyone from corporation officers to Barksdale's ten-year-old

niece is giving the reelection effort the maximum \$2,000 contribution. At least fifty thousand in the last two months alone.

But Barksdale is careful to draw only a modest salary as an officer. The rest of the money is carefully shielded, and the IRS man explains that without getting into the books of these companies, there's no way to prove that the money is laundered drug funds. "You make a case, we get the money. You don't, we can't touch any of this."

On Daniels, brooding.

6. Basketball practice.

Barksdale himself comes down to the courts to watch his team work out. Trellis, the new ringer, is tearing up the court. He's the last piece in a point of pride for Barksdale, who's team has been beaten every year by that of a rival westside dealer, Doughboy, who runs the corners in Edmondson Village. This year, though, will be different.

Barksdale delighted, tells Bell that this is their year in the westside rec leagues.

A middle-aged woman, world weary comes up to him with a hardluck tale. Barksdale knows her from the project and they commiserate over her family problems. She's down so long that BG&E is looking to cut her off for non-payment. Barksdale goes into his own pocket, gives her \$500 and embraces her.

Robin Hood. And the project world notices.

7. Subpoenas served on the pager companies. From Bubbles and other informants, they have the numbers for two pagers of mid-level project dealers. They start with those and get cloned pagers, so that every time those two dealers get paged, the beepers that the cops are holding go off and display the same numbers. Gregg carries one pager on her hip, McArdle the other. Montage as they monitor the traffic and record the phone numbers. When they get a lot of traffic from a particular number, they note it and serve another subpoena to find out where that phone is and who is being called from that phone. When they see calls to an unknown number on a pager company exchange, they, in turn, serve another subpoena and clone another pager. Soon, they're each holding a half dozen pagers, monitoring the traffic. They have beeper logs, flow charts, numbers out the ass.

"We're looking over the lip of the cup," McArdle says hopefully.

The crew uses the beepers and then, for drug-related calls off the pages, certain pay phones. But which beeper belongs to Stringy Bell. And which to Barksdale? They only know the two beepers that Bubbles gave them -- for the original two dealers. Everything else is a guess.

8. Daniels to see the Deputy. Tells him how much money is moving through Barksdale. Deputy indifferent. Mention of the political connections. Deputy angry.

"What the fuck does that have to do with anything?"

Daniels defensive. "It's part of the investigation, sir."

Deputy loses his temper for the first time. Drug arrests. Buy-bust. Buy-bust. Dope on the table for the television cameras. He berates Daniels for losing sight of the mission.

Daniels apologizes. leaves chastened.

9 Basketball game, Barksdale, Doughboy, Bell and other westside players all on the courts for the challenge Barksdale hides his ringer until all the available money seems to have been bet. Barksdale's squad jumps out to a fat lead. Even Doughboy is impressed on being introduced to Trellis for the first time

Barksdale smug.

10. Cut to surveillance van, parked a block away from the courts. Greggs and Sydnor watching through binoculars In the back, McArdle on a cellphone begins dialing the mystery pager numbers. No, no, no. Yes -- a Bell lieutenant reaches for his hip. They've matched a beeper to a player Another hit -- this time on our boy D'Angelo, who reaches for his pager after McArdle has dialed the number. And finally, Stringy Bell checks his pager, looking curiously at a page in which no return number is entered. They're onto Bell's pager. It's the first step into a wiretap.

11. Back to the game. Barksdale sublime.

Doughboy walks over, compliments him on his ringer. Not your year, Barksdale tells him. Seems to be, Doughboy agrees, but you never know. Sheeeet, says Barksdale, looking at a twelve point lead. Doughboy offers to go double or nothing, noting that it's still only the first half Barksdale nods. Doughboy walks away, nodding to his own team's coach. A short, stubby kid -- Spud Webb all over again -- pulls off his jersey and goes to sub in. Barksdale looks at Doughboy, who shrugs smiling.

All of 5-foot-5, the fresh sub begins tearing through Barksdale's team.

"Who the fuck is that?"

Stringy Bell wanders off, comes back with the answer.

"Demetrius Haskins Kid from Philly who played two years at UNLV "

Barksdale looks over at Doughboy, and incredibly, manages to swallow his anger He smiles, laughs even. Under his breath: "Thieving motherfucker." But to the world, at this point, all the self-control in the world.

12 Omar's young assistant, the kid who invoked the lead stickup boy's name when they took off D'Angelo's crew is banging on a video game in a subshop. Doesn't notice when two guys in sweatsuits enter, go to the plexiglass and order sandwiches. The two look over at the young kid, nod to each other and tighten the hoods on their sweatshirts to make an ID less likely They walk up, pull semiautos and light the kid up. Then they walk out, leaving the Korean counterman terrified

13 Greggs at home Domestic scene with girlfriend.

Phone rings. Bubbles with the backstory on the fresh murder It's out on the streets and all through the projects that Barksdale got one of the boys who robbed his crew.

Greggs and McArdle downtown to the crime scene Talking with the homicide detectives who caught it Perfect drug execution They get the kid's name and go to the address on his sheet Mother breaks down crying, gives them nothing. Greggs comforting her while McArdle works a stunned sister. She tells him where the kid was living

14 Greggs and McArdle go to that door, knock again Omar's voice. Long delay in which Omar goes to an upstairs window, pulls back the drapes and assures himself it really is the police. He comes back out on the steps to talk, but locks the door behind him.

McArdle tells him the kid is dead Omar seems to react angrily for a second, then swallows his reaction Kid was a friend, but I don't know shit about shit.

"You mind taking a ride with us downtown. I mean, just to see if anything you know can help." Omar, reluctant but can't see any way not to.

15. Santangelo, the useless Homicide man stuck on the detail, creeps back to the Homicide captain Tells him that they're cloning pagers and serving subpoena on the phone company. Captain glad for the info.

"Daniels is going to wiretap on this?"

"Daniels doesn't know. McArdle wrote the subpoenas himself."

On the captain, seeing a get-even.

16. Omar in the Box with Greggs, McArdle and one of the detectives working the kid's murder. Now they've got Omar's sheet and it's ripe with handgun and armed robbery charges. You in on this thing?

"What?"

"Taking off one of Barksdale's crew in the low-rises."

Omar shakes off the accusation.

McArdle tells him they couldn't give a shit. At least someone's getting to Barksdale and his people. Omar grunts a half-laugh But if they came back on your boy...

Omar proud. I still don't know shit about shit, but if anyone hurt one of my peoples, it don't end there.

McArdle: Let's talk about this motherfucker Barksdale

Omar reluctant, with Omar talking about himself mostly. Omar is a lone wolf. He fears no one and plays by his own code They give it up now and then, I got no problems They come back at me, I handle that too.

A lab tech from Fingerprints shows up. Sure enough, they've got Omar's prints inside the car that was abandoned after the stuck up On the right passenger door and interior of the passenger door window.

Omar looks at him, shrugs.

"You gonna lock me, do it?"

For what: "Stolen car? That's chickenshit. I can't charge you with a robbery if I got no complainant? You think Barksdale's people are gonna complain cause someone fucked them up for a package?"

Omar laughs Greggs smiles. So does McArdle.

McArdle "You hungry? You must be hungry?"

On Omar, willing to talk.

17. Montage of Herc, Carver and Sydnor testifying in court as all the low-level players busted by

Sydnor's undercovers come to arraignment, plea or trial. Our female prosecutor is pushing to try to roll them, but it's clear that no one is going to roll back on Barksdale and Bell. Case after case becomes a court battleground as the most ragged project players are represented by the best attorneys money can buy

Montage culminates in a strategy session Daniels, McArdle, Greggs, Herc and Carver, the prosecutor -- All of that got us no higher than the street No one rolled.

McArdle "You can't buy-bust your way to Barksdale. You can't even get to Stringy Bell that way."

Daniels, fresh from his reaming by the deputy, goes off on McArdle. Storms out.

Prosecutor: "What the fuck is that all about?"

18 McArdle find Daniels at a cop bar, drinking.

Daniels, still angry, won't let him even buy a round.

McArdle: "What the fuck? I'm just trying to make this case."

Daniels says nothing

McArdle: "I mean, I don't know what else to do?"

Daniels, softening, reveals how much pressure he's under. How this case can't go to a wiretap.

"Why not?"

Daniels explains what McArdle should know. "You ever work a tap?"

"No."

Daniels tells a story about the one DEA tap he worked on years ago. How it went all over the place Prominent motherfuckers. Politicians. Connected people. Not so much the drugs, but the money The money goes everywhere You start listening in on what people in this city are really up to, you're fucked You don't want to know.

McArdle tries to be pollyanna. But Daniels, gently, tells him that he's going to wreck their careers You stirred this shit up and now there's no way out

McArdle and Daniels drinking at the bar, McArdle slowly beginning to sense what is at stake. He confesses to Daniels that he and Greggs have gone ahead with the cloned beepers.

Daniels at first angry, is curious, despite himself. What have they learned?

McArdle tells him that they're monitoring beeper communications all the way up to Stringy Bell

"You get a beeper number for Barksdale?"

"Not yet "

"You seen him with a beeper?"

"Yeah "

Daniels takes this in He sees where the case is going.

McArdle tells him he was wrong to go ahead without Daniels' approval He agrees that it's too dangerous without the department backing them up.

"We'll shut it down."

Daniels finishes his drink

"Not yet," he tells McArdle. "Fuck it. We'll figure a way around this."

19 Omar is in the surveillance van with McArdle, Greggs. Nighttime and he gives them the

full tour of everything he knows about the geography and terrain of the projects, who's who in the Barksdale organization. Some of it they know. But certain things, like the location of stash houses, they hadn't yet learned.

Omar, being a stickup artist who takes off dealers, knows so much.

McArdle thanks him, gives him a card with his number. Tells him to call if he hears anything or needs a favor.

"So we even know."

Yeah. The stolen car charge disappears

20 Daytime raids. Everyone is there to hit the stash houses ID'd by Omar

But just as they're assembling, the cloned Beeper for Stringy Bell goes off with the following code on it "1257-911-911" They're about to hit the house at 1257 Edmondson. Holy shit. Someone just tipped the Barksdale crew off to the raid. Omar? Or someone on the inside? Jesus Christ. McArdle, Daniels and Greggs race over to the house in time to see half a dozen people scatter out, all of them carrying green trash bags. Standing in the vestibule, fretful, is the same woman who took the \$500 from Barksdale, her house now a stash. Furious, the three police jump out and a chase ensues through the alleys. Daniels is winded and outdistanced by a kid half his age. McArdle plays cat-and-mouse with him and finds him in the basement of a vacant rowhouse, but no trash bag, nothing other than the kid himself.

"Why were you running?"

Kid says nothing.

"What was in the bag?"

"Ain't no bag."

Only Greggs catches her man dirty and he turns to fight her, if only to escape. We see that it is Trellis, the basketball ringer. They battle. She goes for a slapjack but Trellis knocks it away, knocks the shit out of her. He picks up a piece of pipe and flails at her, drawing blood from her head. On the ground, she pulls her gun and aims up. A moment of pause and recognition. The guy drops the pipe and starts backing out of the alley.

"I will shoot you and not think twice, motherfucker."

He keeps backing up and she racks the semiauto. He turns and runs. She puts the gun down, winded and bleeding.

21 University Hospital. Greggs being stitched. She has the green trash bag, seventeen ounces of raw and two pounds of mannitol. They definitely hit the stash house.

Daniels: "Can you ID the fucker who clocked you?"

Greggs: "Only for the rest of my natural life."

Daniels is angry

Greggs: "How did they know?"

No answers

"From the inside?"

Could it be? Someone in the department.

"Might be Omar."

"Why? Why would he give us the stash house and then tip them?"

"No reason "

"From the inside then."

They hate to believe it. But they have a leak

22 Deputy shows up at the hospital, solicitous about an injured officer. But she's okay. He commends her effort, pulls Daniels off to the side

Daniels is still pumped and angry. Deputy asks about the cloned beepers. He knows that its been done and wants to know why he wasn't informed. "I thought we had an understanding "

"I didn't think.. "

The Deputy interrupts: "Unless this was done without your knowledge or approval.. "

The Deputy Commissioner giving him the out All he has to do is give up McArdle and he can save himself. He looks at McArdle, tending to Greggs as she is stitched

"No sir, I authorized it."

Long silence Deputy says nothing, just stares at Daniels.

"There's no other way to make this case "

Deputy puts on his hat, walks away as if Daniels is dead to him He goes to thank Greggs and glad hands McArdle as well, then leaves

McArdle to Daniels: "What was that about?"

Daniels "Nothing No problem."

23 Greggs and McArdle at a late diner, eating, talking.

McArdle revealing how little he understands beyond the job His marriage. His kids. Admits to having a college degree. What in? Philosophy. She cracks up.

She's studying criminology to make rank Practical Connected

Philosophy? McArdle makes fun of himself. She is charmed.

24 D'Angelo and another mid-level player drive Trellis to the train station, putting him on a southbound departure for Carolina. Down there to lay low.

While waiting on the platform, Trellis talks about how all he wanted to do was play ball How he couldn't hack junior college and so when Barksdale offered to hook him up...

So why, D'Angelo asks him, did you come in on the other end? Working the stash isn't ballyard shit.

Trellis shrugs I didn't really decide to get in, you know?

D'Angelo looks at him.

"It's like, I just didn't decide not to "

Trellis gets on the train, leaves D'Angelo watches him go, thinking.

25 D'Angelo returns to the corner to find that Bodie has put a package out without his being there to supervise Presumptuous little fucker. And yet despite D'Angelo's absence, all is running smoothly

"Be cool," Bodie tells him. "Ain't no thing."

D'Angelo's pager goes off. He looks at the number, frowns

26 Orlando's strip joint. D'Angelo arrives, walks over to Bell who waves him away. D'Angelo

goes to the bar, shares a drink with the same near-sighted dancer, commiserating about how things are going. He runs at the mouth and she strokes him until Bell waves him over.

"We're going two shifts in the low-rises."

"Two?"

"Yeah. Two shifts, two packages. ."

"We ain't doing that kind of traffic."

"We could be."

D'Angelo shrugs

Bell: "Gonna give your boy Bodie the daytime. You come on at night."

The little shit is getting the better hours.

"Why I got the night shift?"

"The boy sharp but he still a boy. Can't give him the nighttime."

"So I gotta go out there til when."

"Til the package runs out."

D'Angelo looks at Bell. It's like a demotion.

Bell: "What? You want to cry to your uncle about this?"

"Naw. Didn't say that."

"Cause he the one told me."

Bell moves off and D'Angelo is alone, crestfallen. The dancer gives him a smile to no avail. D'Angelo tries to smile back, can't. The dancer nods to the bartender who sets D'Angelo up. On our winner, at the bar with his friend.

27 The low-rises Bodie acting like The Man, carrying it.

Up comes Omar, no hoody, no ski mask, willing to be known. Bodie looks around, surprised at the boldness of the play.

Omar pulls out a four-four, pistol-whips one boy and then points the weapon at Bodie.

Omar: "Y'all need some better lookouts."

Bodie: "Tell me 'bout it."

Omar: "Give it up."

Bodie nods to another kid, who throws Omar a couple bundle of vials.

Omar: "And the cash."

Bodie: "Naw."

Omar pistol whips Bodie, who is knocked to the group. Omar cocks the revolver. Bodie does nothing but look at the others in the crew, shake his head. Omar fires a shot that goes off the rowhouse wall directly by Bodie's head. The others race away. Omar cocks the gun again.

Bodie: "No cash. Just the vials."

Omar is impressed with the kid's heart.

"You tell your peoples that Omar say it's personal." He backs away. On Bodie, getting up slowly, tasting his blood. With Omar gone, his boys come racing back, one of them with a semiauto, late to the party.

"Where he at?"

Bodie looks at the kid with the gun. "You supposed to be lookin' out. You ain't shit, motherfucker."

On Bodie, his ego bruised, harrying his minions, cursing them, trying to instill some respect. For on the corner, good help is always hard to find As the shop opens again and vials are served to and fro ..

END EPISODE 104

EPISODE 105

1. Lester ambles into the squadroom with a transsexual, impeccably attired, striking in that hard, cross-dressed way. Half the detectives look up, incredulous. What the fuck?

Lester guides her to an interrogation room with a hand on his/her arm, as if a date. He is scrupulously gracious. As soon as the sound-proof door is closed, Herc and Carver and others begin to hoot and holler. They are taken by the show, and by the fact that Lester has brought such a creature past escorted, as if he/she's a woman.

"Lester, man. I don't know how to tell you this..."

Lester ignores them, gestures to McArdle, who follows him into the interrogation room, not even knowing why.

Lester begins chatting with the transsexual about his/her eyes, fashion, etc. Small talk and flattery. As if he/she is the most beautiful creature he's laid eyes on in a long while. He/she starts to eat this up. McArdle gets it. This creature knows something and Lester is doing all the right things to learn it.

From conversation, it's clear that Lester knows her and has used her for information in the past. The talk turns to the transsexual's line of business: She steals. Part of a crew that works the East Coast, doing bolt-and-runs from the most expensive clothing and jewelry shops in every city. Stealing only the designer stuff. Been operating for ten years, with the transsexuals keeping what they love or reselling what they don't. Most of the Baltimore gangster are tapped into them -- like players in half a dozen cities -- and get Pierre Cardin or Hugo Boss or whoever at rock bottom cash-only prices.

Charming as all out, Lester shows the transsexual the boxing sheet photo of Barksdale. She nods. A customer for the last four years. She goes through everything he's bought, what he likes, what he doesn't like, what he gets for his women...

"How do you get in touch with him when you got what he likes."

He/she smiles, pulls out a little black phone book. Gives them Barksdale's pager number. Like that -- they have it. McArdle looks at Lester, amazed.

2. McArdle to Bunk, his old partner in homicide. All right, already -- who the fuck is Lester and where did he learn to do police work.

Bunk looks at him curiously.

"The guy is some half-dead mope from pawn shop unit, three years from a pension."

Bunk smiles.

"Or is he?"

Bunk tells Lester's story. How he was once in Homicide, back in the early eighties. One of the good ones. Good talker, good in the Box. Read a crime scene real well.

"What happened?"

Bunk tells him about a string of homosexual murders in '86. Four of 'em all connected to a predatory little crew of street hustlers. Case started to creep toward some public figures -- not as suspects, but as witnesses. One was a politically connected lawyer. Big, downtown firm.

Word came down not to present any case to the state's attorney that had this guy on a witness list. Lester had a case, but only if everyone was willing to testify.

"So what did he do?"

"What do you think? You think guys go into the pawn unit because they love 3-by-5 index cards?"

"He sat at the murders down."

"Two of 'em. Three convictions."

And then the department, who lost the support of the connected lawyer and his political patrons, sent Lester to one of the small circles of hell reserved for anyone who presumes that police work is some kind of justification. He sits there for fourteen years, reading his hobby magazines, until his sergeant is asked to give a man to McArdle's detail. And now, slowly, like Lazarus...

"I thought he was a hump."

Bunk shakes his head. "Best street detective I ever knew..."

3. The pager number from the he/she matches a number that floats through the beeper logs. Contacted most often by Stringy Bell, his chief lieutenant. But again, the pattern: Contacted by beeper -- even at home or at Orlando's club or anywhere else where a phone is handy -- they won't use the phones where they are. They go to pay phones to discuss their business.

4. McArdle and Greggs go to prosecutor. How do we wiretap a pay phone?

Problematic, she explains. First of all, you have to be able to show that a certain pay phone is used consistently by someone for something illegal. Then, if you have that much for the affidavit, you have to actually have the pay phone in sight and only activate the tap when you see the suspect in question using it. If you make the mistake of tapping other conversations by others using the phone, you invalidate the Title III.

Jesus Christ.

Prosecutor: Are these guys really that good?

McArdle: Best I've seen.

5. Back to the beeper logs. Which pay phones are which guys always using? Some are easy to spot. But in others, the beeper logs show numbers that don't correspond to existing payphones, or any working phone numbers at all for that matter. They're using codes. Jesus Christ.

6. Greggs and Sydnor on surveillance. They watch D'Angelo get a page, and they look down at their cloned beeper. The number is there. They watch D'Angelo go past a couple nearby pay phones to one two blocks away. He drops in a quarter and makes a call, hangs up. Sydnor gets out of the van and goes to the phone, checks the number. Sure enough, it's something different from what had been on D'Angelo's pager. Before they can get to tapping the pay phones, they have to break the beeper codes.

7. Daniels at home, with wife, knowing he has fucked himself in the department. A heartfelt discussion about why he did it. She almost understands, and yet..

8 Omar and three new confederates hit one of Barksdale's stash houses. They get about \$40,000 in raw and humiliate the crew inside, taking their personal cash, jewelry, etc.

9. Quiet office while cops struggle to figure the codes. Some break easy. But the one used by Barksdale in his calls with Stringy seems to defy logic. It's Gregg who figures it out. The "5" code, with substitutions. She shows McArdle and Daniels. They're in.

10 McArdle typing a two-hundred page affidavit for taps on four key pay phones. Daniels reading after him. Has to acknowledge that this is the best police work he's ever been involved with. McArdle: What are you going to tell the Deputy? Daniels admits that the Deputy is no longer in communication with him.

11. Attempted ambush of Omar at his girlfriend's house. They've tracked him. But Omar fights and flees his way free. The house itself is near destroyed by the running gun battle. Girlfriend slightly wounded. Police arrive, uniforms mostly. No one knows anything, saw anything.

12 Gregg needed on unrelated narcotics case. White boy cocaine case out in Anne Arundel County. DEA undercover needs a black female police to pose as girlfriend of his informant. Has to be black female, because the white suspects are hunky and won't take the informant into anything good if he's accompanied by other guys. Daniels reluctantly gives her up for a week.

13 D'Angelo working the night shift. One of his younger kids comes up light. D'Angelo loses his temper. He's working bad hours, on a weak corner because everyone around him fucks up and he never does anything about it. Fuck it. Enough is enough. He calls Stringy. Gives the young kid up. After all, it's either the kid's bad count or it's D'Angelo's. And why should D'Angelo take the weight.

14. Gregg and the DEA informant meet the white boys, who are hilarious fuck-ups, but nervous and coked, just the same. The trick is to get these morons to bring them to their supplier for a buy-bust.

15 Bubbles comes into the office, looking for Gregg. Finds McArdle instead. Tells him about the war between Omar and Stringy's people. Tells them about the gunfight. McArdle checks the computer and finds the incident report. He goes to talk to girlfriend. Tells her to tell Omar to call him. Leaves his pager number.

16 McArdle and Daniels, and the prosecutor, carry their massive affidavit to a city judge, who reads it at his dining room table, impressed with the logic and methodology. Says so. Sure to sign off. Phone rings. It's for Daniels. The Deputy.

"No tap."

Daniels tries to argue. Deputy cuts him off. If that thing comes back with a signature on it, you are working a permanent midnight footpost in the southern reaches of Philadelphia.

Daniels looks at McArdle, shakes his head.

"You're shutting me .."

On Daniels, gathering up all the documents and apologizing to the confused judge

17. White boys, convinced, decide to take the informant and Greggs to their supplier. They drive into Baltimore city in the white boys' van. Greggs, at least glad to be back in her element.

18. Muscle comes down from the high-rises and D'Angelo gives up his wayward charge, who is maybe fifteen years old. D'Angelo thinks they'll just put the fear of god into him. Instead they begin beating the living shit out of the poor kid. D'Angelo is sickened -- at least until he gets some blood splatter on his Timberlands. He goes apeshit at that and his focus changes from the victim to the victimizers, who have just ruined his \$250 boots.

19 White boys pull up at Orlando's Head inside. Gregggs knows that she's been made for police by some of the people in Barksdale's world, but shit, there's nothing to do now but play out the string. Inside Orlando's, it's mostly empty of gangsters, except for D'Angelo and his near-sighted dancer friend, who is telling him how blood won't come out of leather. D'Angelo scrubbing the boot nonetheless, oblivious. Gregggs knows that she encountered D'Angelo to his face at least once: When McArdle had him downtown, going at him in the Box over the murdered murder-case witness. She moves to the other side of white boys, trying to move sideways through the scene.

White Boy: "Where's Charles?"

"Slim Charles?"

Yeah. A runner goes upstairs to the offices.

The fattest human being possible comes down the stairs, greets the white boys. Tells them to come on up. As they pass, D'Angelo looks up, sees Gregggs, but shows no recognition.

20 Daniels and McArdle in the Deputy's office. Silence. Deputy slowly reading the affidavit. Page after page after page. Finally: "Not convincing."

McArdle nearly spit takes. Daniels holds him off.

"Sir," he begins. "You gave me this case. You told me the target was Barksdale..."

Deputy, angrily points to McArdle. No. He gave us this case. He told us the target was Barksdale.

McArdle, defensively, "A judge asked me. "

"And you answered, didn't you?"

"You want Barksdale. There's no other way than a tap. You don't want Barksdale, fine. Let us go home."

Deputy regains composure. Brings it back to the real reason for his opposition. You get up into people's private conversations and you don't know what you hear. Some things that are true. Some things that aren't. Some things you wish you never heard.

McArdle "We're not interested in the money."

Deputy and Daniels share a look. McArdle being direct. "The political money. The contributions to Dawkins and the mayor and all that. We don't give a shit. We're trying to make

a case against a drug dealer who's killing people. You want us to look the other way on the money, we'll do that."

Deputy shakes his head. It's not what I want, he tells them. It's what's good for the department, for the city. Dawkins runs appropriations out of Annapolis. He has the mayor's ear. This department, poor as it is, survives by the goodwill of its political patrons.

McArdle: "Couldn't agree more. We let the money lie."

He's trying to strike a deal. Deputy thinks for a moment, shakes his head again. Suppose the money comes up on the tapes. Suppose it gets talked about. Suppose someone connected to Dawkins is caught on the tap talking shit. Then what?

"We erase it."

And if it's in the middle of the conversations you need. If out of one side of his mouth Barksdale implicates himself in the drug conspiracy, then mentions Dawkins out of the other? And even if you want to keep that out of court, even if you don't use it in court -- all the tapes are going to go to defense lawyers for discovery. All of them No. It can't be done.

Find some other way, the Deputy tells them. No wiretaps. No electronic surveillance. Buy-bust. Roll people up. That kind of thing

McArdle makes an impassioned argument. Explaining that Barksdale is too insulated. That his people won't collapse like that. You want him, you give us the tools we need. You don't want him, say so. Almost impertinent.

Deputy holds his temper, but doesn't yield. Find another way

21. Daniels and McArdle leave. McArdle follows Daniels into bathroom, where Daniels vomits His career, his life's effort hanging by a thread McArdle only angry. Daniels walks away, wants nothing to do with him. He can't even believe McArdle has the balls to talk like that in front of the Deputy Commissioner

"You're dead to me," he tells McArdle. "Get the fuck away from me."

22 DEA surveillance van. They're monitoring drug conversation between Slim Charles, two of Charles' confederates, the white boys, their informant and Greggs on the upper floor of the nightclub. The wire is on the informant's chest. There's no dope on the table Not at Orlando's. But price is being negotiated. It sounds good, a go.

23. McArdle's pager rings Omar calling. He calls back, agrees to meet.

24 The group files back downstairs This time, D'Angelo spots Greggs, spit-takes He calls Charles over, whispers to him. Greggs sees this, but still she stays with the front. She doesn't want to fuck the case until she's sure it is about her Charles plays it perfectly, laughs as if D'Angelo told him a joke They all head for the door, until at the last minute, Charles tells the white boys, "My car round back I'll meet you down the way "

White boys and DEA informant look at him, confused

"Where we said. You know The place from before Ten minutes. And she gonna ride with me, you know, 'cause she prettier than you "

They laugh, leave. Greggs doesn't know what to do Neither does the informant

25. Outside, DEA surveillance team sees their informant come out without Greggs. What do they do They fucked up. Brought no backup vehicle. They thought the deal was gonna go down at the first location. DEA Agent gets on the radio, starts to call for a backup unit. Too late. Fuck it. Follow the white boys. Everyone is going to same place anyway. Two agents jump out, wait for the second vehicle to arrive. The van pulls off.

26 Inside the club, Greggs is back upstairs, being beaten, stripped in the search for a microphone She tells them the DEA is outside watching. They believe her and consequently drag her to a door on the side of the club that opens into a storage area, through the storage area to a door that opens into the next building on the block, a vacant. And from there, out the back alley halfway down the block.

Charles and his two muscle boys freaked. What the fuck we gonna do? She's a cop. What the fuck? Jesus Christ. One of them, half-sane: "Charles, man We can't do her. She a cop."

Greggs reaches down, pulls a lockblade from an ankle holder. The only backup she could conceal She stabs one of the three, slices Charles in the arm, but the third punches her hard, blind-side and grabs the arm Greggs screams loudly enough that the DEA man on foot hears it, turns and looks into the darkness a block away But no, she's still inside. He stands there, watching the club, useless

27 Daniels at home. Call from DEA supervisor.

It's a clusterfuck Deal didn't go down. Informant and Greggs got separated. Where is she? Can't find her What? We thought she was still in the club. After an hour, when they realized no deal was going down, they kicked the door in. No one. Not the girl. Just customers and dancers Daniels getting dressed, upset. He pauses to call McArdle, who wakes up as well

28 Orlando's. No one there, but some customers, some dancers, a few employees All of them detained and being debriefed by DEA. No one knows shit McArdle arrives, as does Daniels. Angry. Where is she? How did she lose her backup? DEA supervisor defensive.

McArdle notices the near-sighted dancer, more freaked than she should be. He pulls her to the side and she insists she knows nothing That she was just sitting and talking with a guy and people were coming in and out. Name the guy "Angelo "

McArdle winces, describes D'Angelo "You know him?"

Shit. She was definitely made. Daniels drags the dancer upstairs to the room where the deal was going down Nothing. Where else could they go? Back door? No. It's bolted. And she never left through the front "That's the only way I know "

Storage door "What's here?"

"That's where they keep the beer."

They force the door, draw guns, step through Struggle past cases of beer and wine and other crap Moving about half a block through the storage space to find the door on the other side, a jar. They move through, exiting in the side alley, where McArdle notices the blood spray, as if something caught an artery He finds first the muscle stabbed by Greggs, then Greggs

herself. Both dead

Daniels breaks down. McArdle slumps against the alley wall.

END OF EPISODE 105

EPISODE 106

1. Funeral for Gregg. Full departmental honors. The mayor, the Police Commissioner -- a political figurehead -- and the Deputy, all paying respects. Daniels, McArdle stricken. A brief moment of awkwardness when the city officials and department brass don't quite know how to handle the presence of Gregg's partner. When they start to balk, McArdle, offended, escorts her behind the coffin.
2. Door of D'Angelo's mother's house comes crashing in. All the police in the world on him. The rage that follows the death of a cop. D'Angelo dragged out to an unmarked car as his mother screams.
3. Other doors come crashing in: The search for Orlando, Stringy Bell, anyone else with anything to do with that nightclub. Herc, Carver and the other hotheads are in their element here. They are actually useful in their brutality. All bodies being hauled into Homicide unit, including the near-sighted dancer and every other employee. Montage of detectives sorting through witnesses and statements, culminating in McArdle and Bunk, going at D'Angelo, who asks for a lawyer. McArdle punches that idea out of him while Bunk goes for a cigarette.
4. Bunk in the hallway learns from a sergeant that Slim Charles is at a hospital outside of Washington with a bad cut on his forearm, claiming that he got it in an argument at a card-game. Prince George's County police are holding him there for questioning.
5. Bunk goes back to McArdle, who is now pouring a soda for D'Angelo, comforting him. Good cop and bad cop all in the same one-man session. Bunk sits, waits. Slowly, D'Angelo acknowledges only that he recognized Gregg as a cop and that he said something to the people at the bar. Who was at the bar? He hesitates. They ask about Bell and Barksdale. No, no. Not them. The shit that went bad had nothing to do with them. They don't want to believe him, but he insists. Slim Charles, he says. Slim Charles had his own thing going that night. He works his own packages and Orlando lets him hang at the club because they're old rap buddies. Check it out, he tells the detectives, Orlando did a couple years at Hagerstown with that fat motherfucker. They rap buddies.
6. Bunk and McArdle exit, consult with Daniels. Bunk leaves with Santangelo to go take Slim Charles into custody. McArdle tells Daniels that he doesn't believe D'Angelo, that it goes past Slim Charles to Bell and Barksdale.
7. Bunk and Santangelo at the hospital with Slim Charles and Charles' other muscle. The two are cuffed, arrested. A nurse objects that Charles is still under treatment. Santangelo points to the other beefy cop. "That's Dr. Bunk. He's a specialist." They drag the two back to Baltimore.
8. Stringy Bell comes down to Homicide voluntarily, accompanied by the same lawyers who represented D'Angelo in the murder case earlier. They do all the talking, telling the prosecutor

on duty that they want to help in this investigation, provided they can speak frankly at an off-the-record proffer session. Prosecutor agrees. Daniels and McArdle sit in. Having not been given a Miranda, Bell speaks openly. This had nothing to do with him or Barksdale or even Orlando, except for the fact that Orlando let Charles hang at the club. Charles was working a separate package and he fucked himself on this. Bell gives up the names of Charles confederates, promises that if employees or patrons at Orlando's aren't cooperating and ID'ing the rightful suspects, they soon will. Ain't nobody I do business with stupid enough to kill a police. And if they are stupid enough, I got no use for 'em.

9 Hallway outside McArdle reluctantly having to acknowledge that maybe this was a rogue drug deal gone bad. No one -- not the white boys, not the DEA informant, not anyone at the club can put Bell or Barksdale or anyone other than D'Angelo in the club. But, points out Daniels, notice that these guys are willing to send Slim Charles -- a major player in his own right -- over. That shows how big they are; that they can do something like that and get everyone to fall in line behind them.

10. McArdle goes into interrogation room where Sydnor and Bunk are taking a statement from the near-sighted dancer, who is very upset. But she confirms that D'Angelo wasn't really interacting with Slim Charles or the white boys. He was in the club buying her drinks and fretting about his boots. What's with the boots.

There was blood on them. McArdle and Bunk share a look. McArdle goes into another interrogation room and looks down at D'Angelo's footwear. He yanks the boots off and has them sent down to the lab to make sure the blood isn't Greggs.

11. The dancer, her statement finished, is deposited at Lester's desk. He sits as well and, having a moment of peace, pulls out one of his hobby mags. She notices the mag, and a tiny kitchenette and divan that he has on his desk and makes polite conversation. She had a dollhouse when she was little. But not anything as nice as that. Lester looks up, smiles. A connection.

12. Leuco test on the boots. It's blood. Lab tech runs it through further tests for blood type.

13 McArdle goes back upstairs. Jumps on D'Angelo's shit. His boots are downstairs, getting tested. He better be telling the truth. I am, insists D'Angelo. I wouldn't have even said she was police if I thought they was gonna do anything crazy. No? Swear, he tells McArdle. I don't like violence. I'm a peaceful cat.

McArdle works on this. Talks about how D'Angelo did the one murder that he beat earlier this year in court. Talks about how the witness in that case was then murdered even though he backed up on his grand jury testimony in court. And -- here's the surprise -- he tells D'Angelo he knows all about his role in the murder of the Parham woman -- Barksdale's girlfriend -- years earlier. And from having worked back on the crime scene with Greggs that day, he gives a near perfect account of it all. The lure to the patio glass doors, the gunshot through the glass. Forty-five caliber. One shot to the head. We watch as D'Angelo sits stunned. As if they already have him.

McArdle talks about the bodies. How many bodies are landing all around D'Angelo. If you're such a peaceful cat, why are all these bodies here?

D'Angelo cracks. It's confession time.

14. Bunk returns, dumps Slim Charles and his confederate into separate interrogation rooms and is told that the case against these two is already strong. He finds McArdle, sympathetic with a grieving wounded D'Angelo, who is talking. Bunk sits slowly, pulls out pen and paper, starts writing.

D'Angelo pleads self-defense on the murder earlier this year. He was in the high-rises, working for his uncle, selling out of the 221 building, and this guy kept robbing him. Barksdale gave him the gun, told him to take care of business. He pulls it on the guy, tells him to get the fuck away. But the stickup boy just laughs at him, takes a step toward him. He fires twice and the guy falls. He was terrified.

Second murder? The witness? He doesn't know anything about it. But Bell and his uncle were involved. How do you know? I just know. Did they give you any details? No. It didn't make sense. The case was over. The guy even backed up. But it was like they wanted to send a message, that he shouldn't have even been talking in the first place.

Who was there when Parham got shot?

Stringy Bell did that one himself. Didn't even tell D'Angelo he was gonna do that. Just told D'Angelo to tap on the glass and get Parham to come close.

What did you think was gonna happen?

I didn't think about it. I really didn't.

Who else was there? No one. D'Angelo again pleads that he never wanted to kill anyone, that except for the stickup boy in the projects, who terrified him, he never has. He is utterly believable.

Who's blood is on your shoes.

D'Angelo tells them about the beating of the kid who had a short count. How he didn't even want to give the kid up, but had to because the short count would have come back on him.

Bunk and McArdle exit, confer with Daniels and prosecutor. Lab tech comes up and confirms that the blood isn't Greggs, as D'Angelo claimed. It's great stuff. A good break in the case. But there is no murder they can charge to Bell or Barksdale. The kid has only hearsay and no corroboration. No physical evidence, no weapon to link Barksdale and Bell.

What to do? Get him grand juried and on the record. Then, maybe, wire him up. But, adds Daniels, we do it secretly. No reports. No talk in the squad room. They have a leak somewhere. Remember the beeper warnings on the morning of the search-and-seizure raids. D'Angelo's status stays within a small circle of knowledge.

15. Press conference announcing arrests in the death of Officer Greggs. Slim Charles and his confederate only. Additional arrests expected? No, says the Deputy, all relevant suspects are in custody. The case is down.

16. Deputy meets with Daniels, commends the work in the wake of Greggs' death. A good, strong case against two copkillers. Daniels nods, still wary of the Deputy.

Deputy shows no hostility, however. Instead, he laments the loss of Gregg and, that the drug war isn't worth the cost. A fine young woman killed. And for what? It just goes on.

Daniels has to agree with that much.

Deputy says it gently, but with meaning: You believe too much in fixing the world, the world fixes you. Daniels nods.

Deputy comes around to the Barksdale probe. Anything new? No sir. The beeper logs are sufficient probable cause for a Title III wiretap, but seeing as the department doesn't want to go there, we have no other way in. He purposely doesn't mention D'Angelo's status.

Well, says the Deputy blandly, do your best.

Daniels gets up, asks again if a wiretap is completely out of the question. Talk to me after the election, says the Deputy. So it really is about the drug money going into the political arena. Deputy looks at him pointedly.

"Sir, respectfully, I have to say that we can't make this case with one hand behind our back."

"Some cases aren't meant to be made, I guess."

"What about the judge?"

"I haven't heard from Judge Watkins in weeks. Have you?"

17. Daniels and McArdle at the judge's home. Meeting with him privately. Judge is gracious, listens to what they tell him about the Deputy thwarting the probe.

And what happens to you both when I bring this up? Daniels admits he doesn't even want to think about it. But without some external pressure the case dies.

And with more pressure, you two get your throats cut.

Judge lays it out. If the reluctance stems from the election money coming from drug organizations, he can't very well go to the mayor or Dawkins or anyone else in the political realm. The Deputy is doing their bidding.

"You could threaten to go public. Say you have sources telling you of possible corruption, obstructing of a narcotics investigation."

But, the judge points out, if he names names, Barksdale and Bell will be alerted in any event and a wiretap will be useless when their whole organization is in a crouch. And if he doesn't cite chapter and verse, he's just a crank judge who doesn't know what he's talking about.

"You're telling us to quit."

"I'm telling you it's bigger than the three of us."

And, he says, I'll be frank. Even Circuit Court judges have to stand for election. My seat on the bench is up in five years. I may not be taking any drug money for my war chest, but I'm not looking forward to standing for reelection with the mayor, Dawkins and the police department against me.

Daniels and McArdle look at each other. They no longer even have the remnant of a political patron.

18. Herc, Carver and Santangelo hanging around office. They notice that D'Angelo walks through with Daniels and McArdle.

Santangelo "What's he doing here?"

"Full statement for the Greggs case."

They exit.

Carver to Santangelo: "I thought they got a full statement from that mope the other night."

19 Lester and his new dancer friend. He shows her his doll-house. Fixes her a tuna sandwich. Nothing sexual, just a little reaching out. He's turning her into an informant.

20. Omar and McArdle meet. Omar's relationship with the young kid who got killed behind the robbery is sussed out. We get a sense that Omar and the kid were lovers. That Omar is taking Barksdale's comeback on the kid very personal. McArdle plays on that, talking about Greggs murder. A shared sense of outrage between them.

McArdle: "How long you been sticking up dealers?"

Omar: Twelve years off and on.

McArdle: "Not the easiest work."

Omar: "Easier than you think. Most just write it off to a little spillage."

McArdle: "But some come back on you."

Omar: "Some. But they got to know I can always roll back on them."

McArdle: All about reputation, huh...

Omar: "Most definitely."

McArdle asks if Omar needs help. Omar shakes him off. He got sloppy the other night. Stayed put for a little too long. He'll be more careful where he lays his head for a while. McArdle tells him to call if he needs something. Omar responds in kind.

"If you workin' Barksdale, you lemme know what I can do. I'm sick of that motherfucker."

McArdle nods, leaves.

21 McArdle drives D'Angelo out to state police headquarters in Pikesville to have a trooper do a polygraph. Make sure the kid is telling the truth before they wire him up.

D'Angelo passes with flying colors.

On the way back, McArdle realizes he's late for his kid's soccer game. Has to go there with D'Angelo.

D'Angelo in the suburbs. Glimpses of a world he can never acquire. McArdle with his oldest kid. Ex-wife respectful since the kids are there and the moment bittersweet.

Driving back downtown with D'Angelo. A conversation about the boundaries of race and money. D'Angelo sad. McArdle, strangely, is sad for him.

22 Santangelo with the Homicide Captain, telling him he thinks that Daniels and McArdle have rolled D'Angelo. What are they going to do with him, asks the Captain. Wire him. Santangelo checked with ISD and found out that Daniels requisitioned a Kel recorder and body mike. For a buy-bust, according to the paperwork. But Sydnor's our main surveillance guy, and they haven't told him they got any buy-bust working. Captain pleased with his spy.

23. D'Angelo goes back down to the low-rises, discovers that Bodie, the boy wonder, has been running both shifts in his absence. Bodie greets him matter-of-factly, gives a report on how things are going.

Points down to D'Angelo's boots.

"You still wearing them shits? Motherfuckers all stained and shit."

A casual insult. D'Angelo looks down at the blood. Bodie walks away indifferently.

24. Cut to surveillance van. McArdle smiles at Daniels: You remember that kid? Boy we sent down to the Village and he walked away, right back in it slinging. Kid's hard as nails. We'll be chasing him in two years.

Daniels. "Shit. Our careers ain't gonna last that long."

25. D'Angelo covers his shift until Bell and muscle pull up. Order him into a car. D'Angelo, nervous, goes and the car pulls off. Surveillance van tries to stay close, monitoring. Bell asking about what the cops learned from him. D'Angelo acknowledging that he gave Slim Charles up, that he had to. He's gonna have to testify that he ID'd the lady cop and started all the ruckus. Bell nods, agreeable. Slim Charles got to go. That's all there is too it. What else did they ask about? Nothing. Nothing? They wanted to know if you or my uncle was a part of it. I told 'em that wasn't the play. They didn't ask about drugs or nothing like that.

26. Hard cut to Daniels, McArdle and the prosecutor Pearlman listening to the tape a day later in the State's Attorney's office. He's in and they still trust him. But the tape doesn't offer anything evidentiary.

Pearlman: "He's got to get him talking about drugs or murders specifically."

They know. They're just getting started.

27. Daniels back at office, called to Captain of Narcotics office. An empty suit who hasn't been heard from since the investigation began. Give him the name of the informant that they are wiring up.

Daniels stunned. How in the hell does everything leak so fast? Daniels hems, haws. Department regulations do not require an officer to name a CI unless the commander asking for such information has a legitimate need to know.

Captain agrees with him, says it's awkward but this directive comes straight from the Deputy. Captain has been told to charge Daniels with insubordination and relieve him from duty if the name of the informant is not forthcoming.

Daniels, trapped, gives up D'Angelo.

28. D'Angelo again sent in to talk to Bell, but this time Bell acts as if he knows what's what. Won't talk about drugs or murders. In fact, he acts as if he barely knows of such things or, for that matter, barely knows D'Angelo. What the fuck? McArdle tells Daniels that something's fucked. Daniels tells McArdle he's right.

29. Daniels, Pearlman, McArdle meet at an out-of-the-way bar. There's nothing they can do inside their own department. They're totally compromised. What can we do? Pearlman can't

help. Her bosses work for the city. The city belongs to the mayor, just like their department. McArdle convinces Daniels that the only thing they can do is go to the feds for help.

30 D'Angelo goes to his shift in the low-rises. Bodie, suddenly belligerent, kicks his ass, calls him a snitch. D'Angelo looks around for allies. But all his minions are now Bodie's crew. He stumbles home to find "snitch" and "whore" spray painted all over his mother's porch.

31. Daniels, McArdle lay it out for an FBI ASAC and the 1st Deputy U.S. Attorney. When they get to the part about the departmental interference and the political money tree, the feds get very interested. They look over the beeper logs. Good police work. Hell yes. They'll take this case to a Title III wire. Thank you very much.

32. Daniels and McArdle at a late night bar. Discussing what they've done. When it gets out they went back door on their department and the Deputy, they're done. Unless they can bring in a winner of a case. A high-profile thing like that could make them untouchable. Or not. Who knows? They're rightfully scared.

33, McArdle's pager goes off. He goes to meet D'Angelo, who is all alone, crying. What do I do now? McArdle has no answers. Where do I go? McArdle, feeling guilty, brings D'Angelo home to sleep on his sofa. On McArdle, the good shepherd, we end.

END OF EPISODE 106

EPISODE 107

1. U S. Attorney's Office comes to see Police Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner They want the Barksdale probe for a federal wiretap Deputy senses immediately that he's being outmaneuvered.

2. Deputy to Daniels: You did this. Daniels doesn't deny it.

Deputy talks of having been betrayed Daniels blows up finally, telling him he's tired of playing games. You stuck me with this case You tied my hands and sent me out. What the fuck do you expect. Deputy: I trusted in your honor I relied on it.

Daniels: You can rely on it now. You want to pull me off, do it. You want to transfer me to some midnight posting, do it. I don't give a shit. But don't ask me to turn my back on a case where a good police got killed. That's too fucked even for me.

Deputy broods on this. Finally, he asks, if I give you the tap, do we keep this case in house?

Why? We have a leak in the case already. He tells the deputy about the beeper warning before the raids, about D'Angelo being made useless as an informant.

Deputy acts surprised. Who do you think?

I have no fucking idea Maybe you

Deputy offended Why not? You were in the loop Anything we tried to do proactive on this case, it leaked. Why not you as the leak. Deputy tells him he'd never compromise an investigation

No? No Not one of these motherfuckers -- not the mayor, not Dawkins, not the police commissioner, not any of them -- is worth my pension "I'm not going to jail for anyone."

Daniels wants to believe him.

Deputy tells him he can handpick the people he wants on the wiretap, get rid of anyone he doesn't trust Guarantee of no interference.

What's the catch?

"You stay on the drugs. You stay off the money as best you can. You keep it as straight and as narrow as you can?"

Deputy knows. The feds care only about the money Fuck heroin Fuck cocaine Fuck West Baltimore. Fuck all except for the possibility of running a good wire into some political corruption That's the headline the feds would be after

"And are they wrong?"

Deputy smiles. "I have to live in this department, in this city. I don't live in the federal building I live in this motherfucker right here.. So do you "

It's Daniels choice. If it goes to the federals, he's giving up the case anyway It'll be worked by FBI agents and an AUSA And his career is over Or .

"What are you gonna tell the feds?"

"That we don't need any help That we're going to do the case ourselves "

"They'll be pissed off "

"You're pissed off. I'm pissed off The whole city is pissed off."

3 Meeting of Daniels, Lester, McArdle, Sydnor, Herc, Carver. These six only The rest are given the boot, sent back to their units. Santangelo carrying his shit out in a box, happy to go but sensing that he will not be missed. Shea and a couple of the head-bashing street cops follow him.

McArdle to Santangelo: "Say hey to the captain for me."

Santangelo belches, walks out.

4 Daniels briefs them about the coming wire, what it will require, what is at stake Anyone ever work a tap before? Only Daniels, years ago. And McArdle. They begin to explain the complications. And with Greggs dead, Carver or Herc are going to have to go on the affidavit for expertise in narcotics Daniels chooses Carver, briefs him on what is required.

Sydnor: "Why didn't this go federal?"

Daniels just looks at him.

Sydnor: "Never mind."

5. D'Angelo goes home to his mother's house with McArdle escorting him, picks up clothes and about a half dozen fresh shoes. Mother asks where he's going.

"I don't know."

6. D'Angelo eating a chicken box with McArdle at the harbor.

So what happens now? Now we take you in front of the grand jury and you tell your story. Then we do some more investigation Make a case against Bell, Barksdale and the rest. Corroborate as much of what you told us as we can.

What happens then?

"Everyone goes down."

"What happens to me?"

"You get a bye."

"A bye?"

"Get out of jail free."

"But where do I go?"

The question hangs

7 Daniels to McArdle, as D'Angelo sleeps on a courthouse office sofa. What the fuck do we do with him? No money in the city for witness protection. If it had gone federal... McArdle looks at Daniels, who shakes his head. If it goes federal, you and I are buried. Foot patrols, midnight shift, Khartoum precinct.

McArdle: "What guarantee do we have that we're not fucked in any case."

"The Deputy "

"The Deputy?"

"He gave me his word."

McArdle looks at him, laughs. Daniels turns away, angry He doesn't even want to think about that

"You don't think he wanted to keep the case for another reason?"

"He's not the leak "

"I guess he told you that too."

"Fuck you."

"Yep. Fuck me."

8. Female ASA prosecutor takes D'Angelo into grand jury. He tells everything true. The dealing Bell. Barksdale. The murders. On the grand jurors, transfixed.

9. Judge signing Title III, shaking hands with McArdle, Daniels and Lester. "That's the best affidavit I've seen in twenty years on the bench. Good hunting."

10. Montage. McArdle showing Herc and Sydnor how to set up on a pay phone booth, then relay for the wiretap. What's required.

Lester at another pay phone booth, explaining the process to Carver. McArdle and Daniels back in the wiretap room with the departmental electronics expert, starting to roll tape.

11. First calls. Talk in code, careful, but clearly about drugs. Reups. Arguments over short packages. They're slowly pulling back the veil. Our cops, elated.

12. McArdle going home at night with D'Angelo in tow, putting D'Angelo in the guest room. D'Angelo spends his days on the courthouse sofa, eating fast food, his nights with McArdle or when McArdle is manning the wire, on the couch in the narcotics unit. He's bored to death, scared and listless all at once.

13. First blood. Stringy Bell gets paged by a stash house. Told that a package is stepped on. Argument over a pay phone, coded, but still obvious. Talk on, motherfucker.

14. Second blood. Herc and Carver cracking up, listening to another mid-level dealer having phone sex with his girl. Lester walks over and pulls the plug, explains: You can only monitor calls that are drug related or have the chance of being that.

15. Finally, Barksdale's pager goes off with Stringy's code. Sydnor is on Barksdale, sees him go for a tapped pay phone around the corner from his girl's apartment.

Our guys, transfixed, listening to the high-end of the drug conspiracy, talking business.

Elation. Their case, making itself in front of their eyes.

Bell brings up "the other thing?"

"Say what?"

"You know. What D say?"

"Oh yeah. The other thing."

And what unfolds is the discussion of a bribe that will be paid to get Barksdale a HUD redevelopment loan for an apartment complex he bought three years ago off Hilton. Daniels recognizes the reference right away from when he looked at assets.

"D a motherfucker, man."

"Yeah."

"He sayin' one hundred thousand for a loan that would be worth like \$2 million "

"One hundred?"

"Not all up front Fifty now. Fifty when the loan comes."

"Why he need fifty up front?"

"He says there's lots of people downtown who got to be got "

McArdle open-mouthed Lester smiling like he expected as much. Daniels sick to his stomach. They're listening to bribery, influence peddling, extortion. The conversation ends.

McArdle, in imitation: "They got to be got."

Lester. "Who's D?"

"Dawkins?"

"You think Dawkins is gonna actually get in a room with these guys and a briefcase full of cash? No fucking way?"

But they're gonna find out.

"Fuck the money. Stay on the drugs "

Daniels talking, of course. But McArdle too curious.

16 McArdle, Lester and Sydnor do surveillance on Barksdale, who does all kinds of countersurveillance shit, and only with the helicopter do they manage to stay with him. Barksdale drives not to see Dawkins, but to see Damien Davies, the guy who Bubbles' ID'd as being the senator's aide. Barksdale meets Davies at a fast food place, leaves with him, carrying a small gym bag. Davies then drops Barksdale at a bar in Northwest. They note, Barksdale exists without the gym bag

"That was a drop right there."

They send Sydnor into the bar. He confirms that Davies sits at the bar drinking with state Senator Dawkins. So what do they have? Money going to Dawkins? Already they had the above-the-line shakedowns of Barksdale's political contributions to Dawkins and the mayor. Now they've got cash toward a chance at a HUD loan Jesus Christ.

17 McArdle briefs Daniels, who can only tell him of his deal with the devil. Okay, says McArdle, we stay on the drugs. But we feed the political juice to the feds. They want it, fine. They don't -- at least we did our job. Daniels shakes his head. I gave my word, okay. You can't go around my back on this one

Fine. McArdle pissed, but in agreement. As long as you don't brief the deputy on this. You want to let a sleeping dog lie, fine. But let it lie then

18 McArdle goes home, finds D'Angelo, bored, who asks McArdle for money to go to the movies McArdle gives it to him, but tells him he has to go down the road to the York

"You can't go in the city alone "

"Why not? Sick of all this leave-it-to-Beaverland shit out here. Soccer-mom looking women, lawnmowers and little blue mailboxes and shit..

McArdle laughs.

Tell you what tomorrow, I'm off.

19. McArdle takes D'Angelo and his kids down to DC for the day D'Angelo in the other world, happy to be out. Lincoln Memorial Capitol Reflecting pool.

D'Angelo talking about life, about what he had imagined for himself Finally, how's it going?

"What?"

"The case."

"They're done "

"Who?"

"Barksdale, Bell, all of them..."

"Yeah?"

"Between you testifying and what we're getting off the street now, they're done."

"And then what?"

"What do you mean?"

"Where do I go then? What do I do?"

"Um .."

"I mean, you ain't gonna adopt me or nothing."

McArdle laughing lightly, but nothing is really funny

20 Montage More wiretap evidence. Our guys picking up drug conversation after drug conversation. Following the mid-level dealers, the stash houses. They hear about a mule carrying \$400,000 in raw on an Amtrak train and they arrange for the railroad police to pick up the mule.

21 Lester and Sydnor flip the mule, confiscate the drugs and have her drop what looks to be the raw heroin with Barksdale's people And then: Our guys monitoring the wiretap as the bad shit is on the street and the complaints fly back. Everything they touch is now turning to gold

22. Deputy calls Daniels upstairs, asks how things are going Daniels tells him the case is going, finally. Deputy acknowledges this. Any unforeseen problems.

"Some "

Deputy looks at him.

Daniels "Do you need to know?"

Deputy "You tell me "

On Daniels, who is too scared not to tell him

23 McArdle looking up the land records and corporation records on the apartment complex that Barksdale is looking to renovate with that HUD loan, finds his partners are two other westside dealers, including Doughboy Willis The project, if it goes, is worth about \$5 million when completed With that kind of show, you can launder half the drug money in Baltimore

24 Lester to City Housing and Development Bureau. Looking up the loan application to see who is working on that Names of bureaucrats. They do an assets investigation, but nothing -- no large deposits for these guys, nothing to indicate they've been bribed. Letters in the file from

Dawkins, the mayor and others supporting the application, but nothing overtly improper.

25 Wire talk about covering their ass on both sides Barksdale says this to Bell What's that mean? They follow Barksdale to a meeting with a key political supporter of the challenger running against the mayor. Sure enough, Barksdale leaves the meeting and another minion enters with a gym bag.

McArdle to Lester: "You know what?"

"What?"

"I dunno who the fuck I'm gonna vote for "

Lester laughing.

26. Last montage of wiretap yielding one great conversation after another, the tapes spinning, our guys typing, photographing, and typing some more. Until finally, one morning, McArdle enters to find Herc and Carver asleep in the wire room. He gets angry What the fuck have we missed while you two slept?

Nothing, they insist. There were no calls. All night No reups. No side traffic. Nothing from Bells beeper after early evening Nothing on Barksdale's beeper at all

McArdle checks. Sure enough.

"Huh "

27 Two days later No beeper traffic None. No use of the tapped pay phones. None.

28 McArdle, Daniels They know that Barksdale has been tipped.

Once again, the leak McArdle to Daniels: You told the Deputy about the money, about Dawkins Daniels denies it

29 Daniels, McArdle and Lester closing a bar, trying to think it through. If not the Deputy, then who? Could be anyone. Could be someone down at the courthouse, a clerk, a judge's secretary, who fucking knows? No The leaks on the raids and informants, too. That came out of headquarters. Someone on the sixth floor

30 McArdle grabs the beeper logs going back two months, carries them up to planning and research, pulling the pages from the days before the raid leaks, before D'Angelo was outted and again, before the wire went dead How long it will take to run the recorded numbers of the logs against every departmental extension, cell phone or pager.

Computer geek: "you out your mind? That's two massive databases. That's one mainframe for half a day "

"Is that bad?"

"We're two months behind on crime stats I don't have time for this."

"Yeah You do Deputy Commissioner needs this by the end of the day "

"Fuck me "

"Fecal gravity, bunky."

31. Daniels with the Deputy

Deputy. "Everything? Dead?"

All phones. The pagers too.

Deputy looks at Daniels, curious. Daniels tries to assess the Deputy, can't.

32 McArdle returning to planning and research.

Computer geek. "Five hits. All to a pager."

On McArdle, looking at the number of their Judas

END EPISODE 107

EPISODE 108

1. Deputy Commissioner's office. A long, Mamet-like silence. The Deputy is lost in thought. Pull back to reveal Daniels, McArdle waiting on him.

Deputy, finally: "You're sure?"

McArdle explains the beeper logs again. The discovery of the contact with Stringy Bell. The fact that the pager number is listed as departmental and specifically assigned.

"Another explanation for it, maybe."

No

Deputy snaps into gear: "What can I do then?"

McArdle and Daniels share a look. We're left to believe that perhaps it was the Deputy all along.

2. Cut to detail office, where Santangelo and Shea, both worthless, are returning to the investigation. Santangelo a little smug about it. Wish you guys would make up your mind, is his general attitude. Cocky

"How'd the tap go?"

"Great. We got what we needed before it died out on us."

"It died?"

"Yeah. They stopped using their pagers and the tapped pays "

"Huh .."

"So why'd you bring us back?"

McArdle. "Babysitting "

Santangelo looks at him curiously

3 Motel Six, Baltimore County. Santangelo and Shea sit, trapped on a twelve hour night-shift with D'Angelo, guarding him while this case ostensibly waits for trial. D'Angelo and Santangelo interacting in a way that we get a sense of the cop's contempt and barely reconstructed racism

4 Exterior, motel six. Daniels and Lester sit, watching the motel room

Lester "He always was a piece of shit. But I'm amazed he went all the way over."

McArdle explains it, and at first we think he's talking about the Deputy, the rationalizations, the temptations to use information. But then we realize, the payoff wasn't power or self-interest, which goes to the Deputy. No, they're talking about someone else. It's money, pure and simple.

Lester "How much was he down?"

Resorts has him tapped for \$45,000 at Paradise Island, another thirty in Atlantic City "

Lester whistles "That's two years salary, without the OT "

"Yeah "

"You ready?"

Lester nods, they exit car, head for motel.

5 Motel room. Relief is here. Santangelo and Shea get ready to leave. Complaints that they've left the room a sty. D'Angelo talks to McArdle and Lester. He doesn't like the other cops. They

don't like him. But he likes the motel. Better than McArdle's pull-out sleep sofa. He likes having cable TV.

Lester: "You ain't got cable?"

McArdle: "Fuck no."

Lester: "Cheap motherfucker."

6. Shea and Santangelo exit, go to separate cars. Santangelo drives off and we pick up Sydnor and Carver, sitting in a non-departmental, following Santangelo to a pay phone, making a call. As Sydnor keys his radio.

7 Meeting with Prosecutor Pearlman. Daniels, McArdle explain the play. D'Angelo is their best witness and with what they got from the now-aborted wire, his testimony is corroborated enough to put together a drug case on Bell and everyone lower. Nothing on any of the murders, since none of that was ever caught on the wire. And Barksdale's conversations about drugs were so careful and coded that charging him in a drug conspiracy won't be easy.

But the beauty of it is that neither Barksdale nor Bell can know exactly what we did or didn't hear. And the story we're putting out is that D'Angelo warrants a hotel and round-the-clock security because his testimony, coupled with the wire, gives us Barksdale on a plate.

And he believes that?

Sure he does. This department wouldn't un-ass a dollar for a hotel room and full security otherwise. He knows that much. And furthermore, he wasn't around for the wiretap. He doesn't know what we have or don't have, call by call.

Sydnor walks in drops a Bell Atlantic readout on the table. Last night's log from the pay phone on Milford Mill Road. Call to Stringy's pager.

Pearlman: "He got smarter. Stopped using his own pager, anyway."

"Bawlmer's finest."

"So," asks Pearlman. "Who's with D'Angelo right now?"

"No one."

"He's alone at the Motel Six."

"No. He's at my house."

On Pearlman, a step behind.

8. On Lester, laughing softly, Herc and a lab tech with him in a surveillance van, watching from a distance as Barksdale's muscle arrives, kicks in the door of a Motel Six room and then, frustrated at the emptiness, hustles away. The lab tech snapping photographs all the time.

9. Santangelo arrives in the office to begin his shift, asks who's out at the hotel. He's told Herc and Sydnor. Santangelo seems to think about this for a moment.

Lester and McArdle watch him.

"You heard from them lately?"

"No."

"Maybe they want early relief. Or a food run or something?"

"You worried about them?"

"I'm just sayin'. It's a long time to be closeted with that asshole."

Lester and McArdle say nothing. Santangelo sits, awkward

"Fuck it then."

"Yeah Fuck it then."

Santangelo looks at McArdle, who looks blandly back.

Daniels enters, sighs, says the Deputy has looked at the budget. They can't afford to keep the detail afloat much longer with this much manpower. He looks at Santangelo: "You and Shea are going home. I already talked to your captain."

"Geez, make up yer fuckin' minds, already."

Santangelo starts packing. Daniels adds that the Deputy busted his balls over the motel room and full-on security. So he moved D'Angelo overnight.

McArdle: "Yeah? Where to?"

"Some relative of his, over on the Eastside."

"Huh "

As Santangelo continues to pack his shit.

10 McArdle, Lester with Bubbles in the surveillance van The old informant is wrath-like now. End stage AIDS Still on his feet but just barely

One last journey. Bubbles can't stop talking about Greggs, how good she was too him How he doesn't know what he's gonna do without her.

McArdle telling him that this was her last case. That this matters to her.

Bubbles nods, mentions that the thing is "scratching at my balls."

Lester. "But ain't no one gonna grab you there, right?"

Bubbles "Not in some time, no."

He takes thirty dollars from McArdle and slides out of the van, walking off.

12. Four blocks away, in the high-rises. We watch Bubbles cop from a street dealer and say something The dealer looks at him, nods, tells Bubbles to wait on the bench. Pull back to reveal Carver and Sydnor in a vacant rowhouse down the block, photographing as Bubbles is met by Stringy Bell himself, who comes up to talk. As the camera clicks, cut to the surveillance van where Lester and McArdle listen in via the body mike. Bubbles raps on about how he knows a man who knows some woman who knows his aunt and some boy who the knockers have testifying against Bell and Barksdale and everyone else in West Baltimore is staying somewhere over on Milton Avenue with his aunt

Bell tries to size up Bubbles He sits next to him on the bench, tells him he doesn't know exactly who Bubbles is talking about Bubbles says he was just trying to be helpful, hoped that me might pull a free blast or two from Bell's package, just for his trouble.

Bell: "Where on Milton this boy supposed to be at?"

"I never heard that part "

"I mean Milton a long fucking street, right?"

"Yeah. But I ain't heard."

Bell looks at Bubbles, who looks perfectly credible And, he knows it matches what Santangelo told him hours earlier.

"You gonna hook me up "

Bell looks to the street dealer, nods at Bubbles, holds up three fingers

"Next three on me "

"You a good man."

Back in the van McArdle pulls off headphones, smiles at Lester.

The motherfuckers ain't nibbling at shit. They're leaping on to the hook.

- 13 Herc at the gym. Busted by DEA agents investigating illegal steroids.
Tells them he's a city cop, like that's gonna help

- 14 McArdle and Lester outside Orlando's, which has been renamed Odell's after Greggs' death and a quick change of ownership and liquor license. They're in the van again, testing a Kel mike, which we assume is on Omar. With them is Omar, the stickup boy who has sworn revenge on Bell, Barksdale

Omar: "Used to be called Orlando's."

McArdle nods.

"Changed it when the lady cop got kilt, huh."

Lester lights a cigarette.

Tech nods. The mike is clear, the tech tells them. We're picking up good sound.

McArdle looks at Omar, who in some way he genuinely admires, if for nothing else his balls

Omar bums one from Lester, lights up.

"So tell me again why they don't light my ass up 'for I get a word out "

McArdle explains that after Greggs got killed and Orlando got tangled up with Slim Charles in that drug deal gone bad, Barksdale had to go through all kinds of trouble to change paper owners, keep the liquor license and stop a padlock from going on the doors

"After what happened with the cop, he needs that club to stay clean if he wants to keep it. He whacks you anywhere else but in there "

Omar nods

McArdle, after a pause "Or he loses his temper and he whacks you before you get a word out "

Omar actually smiles

"You don't have to do this. You worked off whatever I ever had on you."

No, he knows. But this is for his boy. His peoples.

"Get even time "

Omar, stubs out cigarette, exits.

- 15 Omar walks inside, sits at bar. The near-sighted dancer comes over and Omar smiles at her, puts money on the bar. She sits next to him, makes a show of introducing herself. Tells bartender to tell Barksdale that Omar is here

Bartender. "Omar who?"

"Omar who takes his shit and bitchslaps his niggers."

Bartender moves off, talks to the bouncer. Bouncer leaves

Back out to the van. McArdle listening, amazed at Omar's bravado

16. Stringy Bell pulling up with muscle, going inside the strip club, photographed by the cops. Stringy goes right to Omar, glares at him

"I asked for Barksdale."

"You got me, motherfucker."

"You 'ookin' for the boy D'Angelo Or you should be."

"What the fuck you know about anything?"

"I know where the motherfucker hiding."

Bell feigns indifference. Omar tells him he will only talk to Barksdale

"Naw, motherfucker. You ain't gonna talk shit."

Omar nods. "Whatever."

But Bell is clearly hungry He has the muscle grab Omar and drag him into the backroom. Out in the van, McArdle and Lester hear this Do they go in? Not yet. Wait. Wait .

The sound fades on the mike. What the fuck are they doing to him?

Back in the club's back office, Omar is shoved against a wall and ordered to strip. They're looking for the mike. Omar acts ignorant but complies. No mike Not anywhere. Not under his scrotum Not no how.

"Get dressed, nigger "

17 Daniels dealing with fallout from Herc's arrest, trying to get the DEA to ditch the case. Herc's name is on the wiretap affidavit, possibly tainting that evidence. DEA loath to let go of a good headline case. The case agent worked six months on this steroid thing

18 Barksdale himself arrives at the club, goes to the back office, looks at Bell who nods He glares at Omar.

"You out your fucking mind?"

"Man, fuck you You the one made it personal "

"You robbed my people."

"That's what I do, motherfucker. I take off corners Your corners, Doughboy's corners, Petey Dixon's. Ain't no thing. Ain't like none of you can't afford to go a little light now and then. But you got to go and get personal, raise up on my boy like that "

Barksdale has to laugh at the effrontery

"So what the fuck you sayin' bout my nephew."

"Look here, motherfucker. Half hour ago, I was smoking a Newport, sippin' some of your watered-down gin and rubbin' up against some girl's titty. Now you want to bring all that shit back to me, I might be ready to help you out on that."

Barksdale looks at Bell, who has to laugh Omar is Omar

19. Back in the van, we hear more than bar sounds We hear Omar's voice again.

McArdle "He's back We're up "

20 Cut to the bar, where Omar is again sitting with the Dancer, who is nervous in Barksdale's presence, but sits calmly, stroking Omar's thigh. Omar tells Barksdale he knows where

D'Angelo is hold up on the eastside Barksdale tells him he knows this already

Fuck you do, or he'd be got.

"I ain't need to get shit."

Omar laughs, says its all over the street that the cops have a case and that D'Angelo is the main stem. Else why would a westside boy, and Barksdale's nephew at that, be creeping along Milton Avenue. At the mention of the street name, Barksdale sees Omar as immediately credible

Omar offers the deal. He's tired of running Tired of the fight. Either Barksdale's gonna get him or he's gonna get Barksdale.

"Fuck it. You took my shit."

"Fuck it. I take out your nephew, we more than even."

Omar and Barksdale share a long look.

"You gonna do my nephew?"

"Fuck it. He ain't my nephew "

Barksdale ponders this. Asks how Omar knows that even if he does this favor for Barksdale and Bell, they won't come back on him afterward. Now, look here, Omar tells him. All your people and all your muscle and it's Omar who has to solve this problem for you. Now why would a smart motherfucker like you even think of hurting Omar after that.

"I'm a good friend I'm a motherfucker otherwise "

Barksdale smiles at this.

"Say the word and your nephew is dead today. Not tomorrow, today."

"Word."

Back in the van: It's down. Barksdale's down.

21 Daniels at DEA headquarters, pleading with the ASAC. Best they can do is charge Herc with misdemeanor possession, lose the distribution charges and the felony weight. And Herc will have to testify in grand jury

"You're gonna fuck up my case."

"Who's your case?"

"Barksdale Stringy Bell."

DEA ASAC: "Who the fuck are they?"

Daniels, incredulous

22 Elation back at the office Omar regaling Sydnor, Carver with his tale of the adventure as Bubbles sits in the corner, a ghost breathing softly McArdle is typing an arrest warrant furiously Enter Lester, escorting the dancer, who is wearing a trenchcoat

All applaud her entrance. She tries to smile but it's clear she's still terrified

She goes to a chair, takes off her coat, revealing her dancer's bikini

"You didn't even get dressed?"

"I wanted to get out of there I was shaking I told the manager my mother was sick "

Indifferent to the moment, she starts to reach down into her bikini bottom.

"Y'all need to take this shit off me "

Sydnor, Carver jump up immediately "You need some help with that?"

Lester takes her by the arm, points her to the adjacent office and some privacy. As the door closes, he turns to frown at the younger man.

"Shhheet," wails Carver. "Ain't the first bug she seen down there."

Even Bubbles laughs. The Dancer exits, holding the Kel mike. She drops it on a desk, puts her trenchcoat back on and asks where a ladies' room is. Sydnor points her down the hall.

Carver, off the mike: "Go on, Lester. Sniff the motherfucker..."

Daniels enters to all this elation, goes immediately to McArdle. "We got a problem."

23. Deputy Commissioner, McArdle and Daniels in the Deputy's office with Pearlman, the prosecutor. Herc's arrest. The tainting of the wiretap affidavit. What do we have if the wiretap's been thrown out? Jesus Christ. McArdle livid. All that work and now half the case gutted. No fucking way.

Pearlman saying it's just a worst case scenario. There are four affiants on the paperwork. Most likely, the case will stand and no city judge will toss it. But just in case...

Well, they've got Barksdale dead to rights on conspiracy to murder. They've got the buy-bust cases they did on the lower-rung dealers, most of which still have to get to court. And if they charge Santangelo and are able to roll him, they might get Bell for conspiracy for murder in the earlier attempt to get at D'Angelo at the Motel Six.

Also, adds McArdle, we get D'Angelo to testify about the earlier murder of Barksdale's girlfriend, they can produce some corroboration via ballistics -- D'Angelo ID'd the type of weapon used by Bell and McArdle and Greggs recovered a spent round and casing. But then again, chain of custody is a problem as the bullet and casing weren't found until months later.

And, of course, all of the evidence of illegal political contributions, extortion and influence peddling on the HUD loan -- all of the City Hall stuff is lost. Even as Pearlman acknowledges this, McArdle realizes that the Deputy is right where he wants to be. They share a look. The Deputy actually smiles at him blandly.

24. Leaving the meeting, McArdle tells Daniels that the fix is in. Daniels doesn't believe it. The DEA ASAC told him they'd been working the steroid case for six months.

25. McArdle goes down to the FOP union office, talks to one of the shop stewards. Finds out who in the last six months has been subjected to random piss tests. In Baltimore, all narcotics officers are required to submit to random urinalysis. Sure enough, Herc and Carver had both been piss tested a month prior, when the wire was going forward. Results? They don't tell us unless they're going to give a guy a number and charge it internally.

26. Montage of arrest warrants being typed and signed by commissioners, arsenal being opened. Our entire detail, and two dozen other detectives mounting up for a series of arrests and raids. Santangelo pulled right out of the homicide unit, cuffed and led down the hallway as CID veterans crowd around. Then on the street as the entire Barksdale-Bell organization is sent to the wagons. All the way up to and including Bell. The raids conclude without them locating Barksdale however.

27 Aftermath, arrests being prosecuted. Bell in an interrogation room, making no statement. No idea where Barksdale is. McArdle tells Daniels that the Deputy had Herc and Carver piss tested after Gregg was killed and their names were put on the affidavit.

How did he know?

McArdle checked with a doctor in the medical unit. Herc had already had one fuzzy return on a piss test two years earlier. To avoid disciplinary action, he voluntarily accepted substance abuse counseling without prejudice. Daniels never knew. Herc transferred to CID narcotics from a district drug unit after that incident. But the deputy knew. He went fishing and he got lucky. Then he called DEA because if he'd tried to do it in house, word would have leaked to Daniels. The DEA ASAC made up the bullshit about a six-month probe to take the stink away from the deputy. A favor between bureaucrats.

Daniels, stung

Off the record, says the steward, Herc came back with a positive on anabolics and the union lawyer asked department counsel if they were going to charge it internally. But no answer from the Deputy.

28 More raids, more locations. Looking for Barksdale.

Cops at a loss. Standing in Barksdale's mother's living room. Finally, McArdle frustrated, says "what the hell."

He goes to a phone and dials a pager number, then punches in his own number. They wait a minute. Barksdale himself calls.

"Who's this?"

"Detective McArdle."

"What's up?"

"Looking to arrest you."

"I know."

"You coming down, or do we keep kicking in doors?"

"I'll be down."

"Promise?"

Barksdale laughs. "I'm just waiting for the lawyer to pick me up."

"You're coming in with your lawyer, huh?"

"I think so."

"That's not very sporting, is it?"

Barksdale laughs again.

"One hour. Downtown. After that all the police in Baltimore come to your mama's house to drink beer and piss on the furniture."

Barksdale clicks off. McArdle to Daniels: "Cocky motherfucker."

29 Back at the office, Lester and Sydnor get a few minutes alone with Santangelo, who was willing to set them up to be killed at the motel. They take his cuffs off, walk him into the men's room and kick his ass.

30. Barksdale arrives with lawyer. Miranda'd, his lawyer says he has nothing to say
McArdle "I'd like to make a statement."

Everyone looks over curious. McArdle, gently, almost sympathetically, begins to explain why they are hear today. Not because of the drugs. That war is lost. Been lost for twenty years now. Barksdale could have sold drugs twenty-four seven in the westside projects until he was old and grey, and if he was careful as he was, he'd have never gone down. Fuck the drugs. Drugs are fucking legal in Baltimore when you get to be as good as Barksdale

But what about the bodies?

McArdle, as if he's genuinely curious, wondering why Barksdale couldn't do it without the bodies, the violence. That's what got the judge worked up, that's what brought the heat Why does it matter to you that you need to be more than rich, more than connected? That you can get politicians, and liquor inspectors and everyone else on the phone isn't enough? You have to be feared. Why? What's in that? Why can't a man like yourself just sell this shit and make your millions and be happy? Why did all these people -- and McArdle names them -- have to die for you to feel right in this world? McArdle, looking at Barksdale as if he's genuinely interested, as if Barksdale's pathology is interesting.

Barksdale, of course, says nothing.

McArdle to lawyer: "Well, that's my statement."

Daniels pulls out handcuffs. Greggs' name is still on them, stenciled into the metal.

"These belonged to a girl I knew."

Barksdale is cuffed to the table Lawyer clicks briefcase, tells his client he'll be at the bail review hearing on Monday, leaves. McArdle shows him out. Daniels sits, looking at his prize in quiet contentment

Barksdale, finally uncomfortable. "What?"

Daniels: "Nothing."

Barksdale: "What the fuck you lookin' at?"

Daniels reaches out, touches Barksdale's cheek: "You're just so beautiful to me right now " He glances down at the cuffs, smiles. "Don't ever change."

Daniels walks outside, meets McArdle. They stare through the wire-mesh window of the interrogation room door for a long moment, then walk away.

END EPISODE 108

EPISODE 109

1. Some months later.

A hearing in front of Judge Watkins, who originally started this whole mess and now proves remarkably malleable politically. Although Herc was only one name of four on the wiretap affidavit, the judge interestingly takes testimony from Herc, who knows he will soon be himself convicted of the steroid charge and fired, hears arguments from Pearlman and lawyers for Barksdale-Bell and then rules the wiretap to be inadmissible.

McArdle, Daniels, Lester watch, knowing It is only a coincidence that Watkins, who must soon stand for reelection for a full 15-year term on the circuit court has received the financial support of the Dawkins/Mayoral machine

2. Meeting with the Deputy Daniels alone

The Deputy, showing croc tears over the lost wiretap, which of course, benefits Dawkins more than anyone. Still, he is effusive and congratulatory in his praise for what remains of the case. The conspiracy to murder charge against Barksdale and the two-year-old murder charge on Bell, as well as the buy-busts at the lower rungs of the organization Remarks that a captaincy is opening up in Property Division when McAuliffe retires

Daniels asks what's to be done with the info on the wire if it's suppressed

Deputy. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, whatever else, we've got these connections between a state Senator and a drug dealer. The mayor's reelection effort getting money from .."

Deputy cuts him off. Sees right where he's going. And for the first time, shows real fangs.

"You go to the feds with that crap, I'll cut your fucking heart out "

Daniels shocked, but backs up quickly, swallowing pride

Deputy calms down "What about McArdle?"

"What about him?"

"Is he gonna jaw with his friends over at the federal building?"

"I don't think so." A weak lie

"You don't think so?"

"Jimmy's his own man " Daniels pauses, tries to help "A good man "

Deputy brooding

3 Goodbye party for Herc, who is being allowed to resign in exchange for a probation before judgment on the steroid charge. Carver finds that he's fourth on the sergeant's list One up, one down

4 McArdle and Pearlman in a proffer session with Barksdale and his attorneys Attorneys arguing entrapment, but they've since been able to fully corroborate the earlier attempt to kill D'Angelo when he was at the Motel Six

McArdle How do you entrap a guy who's already committing overt acts

Pearlman presses Barksdale to roll. Not only on his own organization, but on Dawkins and whoever else he has tied up politically That would be a career case for her. McArdle hungry as well. Still looking for a way to expand his shrinking case.

Lawyers: What would his deal be. Pearlman is only authorized to go down to 25 years, which in the state system, means about 10-12 in. Barksdale laughs Fuck no With his lack of priors, he's not exposed to much more than that under sentencing guidelines and his lawyers know this.

Twenty, says Pearlman. I can't take less than twenty for attempting to kill a state's witness My boss won't allow it

No. Barksdale would rather take his chances without a deal. Keep his rep for being stand up. Keep his political contacts. Who knows who might be helpful a few years from now The state parole commission is a patronage post

Barksdale "You saying I could do twenty with no friends. I'm saying I'll take thirty in with the friends I got. We'll see what gets me home faster "

4. Bubbles in the AIDS ward at Bon Secours McArdle makes a last visit, thanks him

5. Courthouse montage:

Barksdale trial. D'Angelo testifying

Mid-level players on trial. D'Angelo testifying, Sydnor and Carver too

Bell trial McArdle testifying, the found bullet and casing going into evidence

6. Lester and our near-sighted dancer, dressed more demurely. Bag lunch at the harbor.

The unlikely couple. She frets over his diet, surprises him with a new-piece for his dollhouse.

7 Barksdale found guilty Elation for Daniels, McArdle, Lester et al Their final hurrah

The party over at the Sidebar, across from the courthouse

Watkins sets sentencing date

8 McArdle back to the hospital to tell Bubbles. Empty bed. Gone

9 Bell trial concludes. Not guilty verdict McArdle, furious, polls the jurors, who didn't believe that he could have recovered the bullet and casing after so long a time Believed he planted it

Henson, the homicide prosecutor "Chain-of-custody problem I was lucky to get it into evidence at all."

10 D'Angelo, used, now to be dumped.

Lester and McArdle drive him to the train station Buy him a ticket to where?

D'Angelo has no idea I have an aunt in Atlanta, he says

Okay, when's the next train to Atlanta?

"Shouldn't I call and tell her I'm coming "

"I dunno. Maybe it's just best to show up "

D'Angelo, a lost puppy Our guys, guilty, go into their wallets Give him a couple hundred. He looks at the small sendoff. And then at McArdle.

McArdle: Fuck it, there's got to be a bank machine in here somewhere.

11 Party for Daniels as his captain's bars are pinned. He's been promoted.

12 McArdle drops the wire evidence into the lap of his FBI contact -- the same one he had originally tried to feed the wire to "Merry fucking Christmas."

13. Bodie in the low-rises, now running D'Angelo's crew Having matured Harder, smarter than before The future. We see a new face or two making the rounds, doing Stringy's old job It's a replacement worker world

14. McArdle called to see the Deputy

He goes up, sees Dawkins arrayed with his lawyer in the Deputy's office

The Deputy again congratulates him on the Barksdale conviction Gently brings the meeting to where Dawkins tells McArdle that there were no payoffs, that this was drug dealer braggart shit.

"What was in the briefcases?"

"The briefcases?"

"Damien Davies The deliveries we got photos off "

"Plans for the redevelopment effort No money "

Dawkins charming, flippant Yes, he knew of Barksdale's past. But redemption is a viable theme in the black community, detective. This man had property he wanted to develop off North Avenue and the city needs that neighborhood redeveloped. As far as I knew, Barksdale had turned a corner. The murders, the drugs -- I had no idea

"Why are you telling me?"

"I wanted to reassure you "

"It's too late "

"What do you mean?"

"The feds They know "

"What do they know?"

"Everything I got on my wire "

"How?" The Deputy, leaning forward

"I told them "

McArdle, smiling, perversely at the very idea of being punished for all of this, calm, as if a fever has passed

15 Orlando's, long since renamed, with Stringy Bell holding court, new dancers, new faces around the throne But the net effect is that the game goes on No matter what the government does or doesn't do, the game remains Bell is now Barksdale

16 A floater in the harbor. Grappling hooks reach out and pull the body close to the boat. It is an old drunk, someone who has been in the water for days. The body is slowly hauled aboard as crabs scamper away. Pull back to reveal McArdle, in his marine gear, retching overboard in a long, ugly heave.

17 Boat heads back to dock. Waiting there are Bunk and Lester, now partnered in homicide. Bunk the same as ever, Lester resurrected from his sojourn on the Barksdale case. They've caught the call on the floater, but since that's an old drunk who died natural, they soon put business aside. They are amused to see McArdle, even more amused when they see how green he is. Aside from seasickness, McArdle is in good spirits.

He asks about his girl. "How she doing?"

"She a secretary now."

"Yeah?"

"She says she's done with the dancing."

"How's that working out?"

"Oh. She types about four, five words a minute."

Laughter.

"So how you likin' the boat?"

McArdle wonders aloud how they knew. I mean, I would've taken any foot post any district. I'd've shuffled papers, been a house cat, work a desk. Shit, I'd've gone down to the morgue and not cared.

Bunk explains to Lester. McArdle hates the water. Hates boats.

"How did they fucking know?"

Lester, smiling. "Man, it's what they do."

Laughter.

They ask what McArdle's heard from the FBI and US Attorney. Not much. They raided the city development and housing offices for documents, but so far nothing. Dawkins certainly isn't running scared. Mayor is ahead by ten points in the polls. Judge Watkins gave Barksdale twenty-two in. Not even the maximum, but enough to make it look respectable. Stringy Bell has the high-rise drug trade sewed up.

"On paper, wasn't worth it."

"Never is."

But McArdle explains that he's happier for having done it, like something in him that had to come out. Except for the occasional three-foot swell, he's okay with the boat, with giving up the job, really. He sees his kids now. Shit, his ex says she's willing to go to counseling, maybe.

"Ya'll see much of Daniels?"

Sure. They tell him. He took over Property.

"Tell him I said congrats on making Captain."

They look at him.

"I'm serious. I gave that man some hell."

"You don't think he sold you out?"

"Sold myself. I'm glad he didn't go with me. I'm glad no one else went with me."

They all think for a moment Remembering Greggs

"Except. "

"Yeah "

18 Atlanta, the ghetto

D'Angelo, on another corner in another city, starting over in the only game he knows, selling someone else's vials. Alone

Seque in a vast panorama of the drug game: Corners, cell blocks, prison tiers, roll call rooms, stairwells, murder scenes, courtrooms, morgues, the game going on and on and on and nothing ever reaching a conclusion. A grand sense of the human cost involved. Finally pull up on D'Angelo's old corner, where a new kid, a new face touts Stringy Bell's latest package

He turns and a four-four is pressed against his cheek

"Smile, bitch "

Pull back to reveal Omar, taking him off.

The road goes on forever On Omar, with his big gun, getting paid, timeless and forever, we fade and end

END FIRST CASE

TRUE DETECTIVE:

AN INVESTIGATION

by

Nic Pizzolatto

True Detective is an hour-long serial narrative which functions as a layered, literary mystery novel for television. Ostensibly, the eight episodes are about an epic twenty-year hunt for a killer, but the true subject of the story is its two lead detectives, their families, and the changes and contradictions in their lives and characters over these two decades.

True Detective reinvents the procedural form using a unique, layered story structure which braids multiple time-periods and employs occasionally unreliable narration. Used in service of a novelistic story, these devices allow the series greater depth, human nuance, and sophisticated suspense than the genre has generally seen.

The first season of eight episodes details the twelve-year partnership between two Arkansas State Police Homicide Detectives, Hart and Cohle, in the northwest district of the Arkansas Ozarks. While dramatizing a variety of relationships and personal storylines over the years involved, the story structures itself around two cases in particular, believed to be the work of a bizarre killer who is captured and arrested by the detectives in 2000. That man subsequently killed himself in custody. Now, in 2010, the murder has happened again, in the same ways, involving aspects only the killer could know. Only the killer, or one of the men who caught him...

A UNIQUE STRUCTURE:

The narrative is structured in TWO TIME-FRAMES. The first is a dramatization of 1990-2002; the majority of the series exists as the dramatization of three central cases which relate to the hunt for the killer, as well as the complications of Hart and Cohle's personal lives over those twelve years. The second time-frame is 2010; punctuating, intercutting, and sometimes undermining the central

dramatization are scenes of Hart and Cohle in 2010, each separately giving testimony in a police interrogation room. Through these interrogations, Hart and Cohle are our occasional narrators, sometimes commenting on the action we watch, sometimes contradicting it with their statements. The entwining of these separate elements offers special storytelling opportunities through its juxtapositions, and allows suspense to be mined from unexpected corners. For example, an almost constant tension should result from the unreliability of Cohle and Hart's narration when it doesn't accurately describe what we witness on screen.

Though complex, this will be easy to follow onscreen, because of all the visual signifiers available and the unique way voice-over will operate. People will be surprised at how easily they track events. In that way, True Detective is designed specifically for the television medium, exploiting its advantages in ways few shows attempt.

Two rules for clarity— 1) the narrating voice may lie, but the images we see never will. So an audience can be sure they know exactly what happened, and also that they can tell when one of the detectives is lying. 2) We do not see Cohle and Hart's interrogators until the sixth episode. The interrogation scenes are sparse, confessional in their austerity, somewhat in the style of Errol Morris-- a man speaking into a camera.

SUSPENSE:

A.) A primary layer of suspense is created in the hunt for the killer and the personal lives of the detectives. **B.)** A secondary layer of suspense is created in 2010, as we try to understand exactly why the two detectives are being questioned. At first, we learn that Cohle and Hart's old files were lost in a flood at State HQ, and it seems current investigators want to pick their brains for old case notes, in light of this new killing. Then it becomes apparent that the 2010 investigators are looking at one of the former detectives for the current murder. Then we see that current investigators have valid reasons for their suspicions. **C.)** A third level of suspense is created when, about a fourth of the way into the story, the 2010 testimonies by the detectives start to contradict one another. Eventually, we'll learn that a central issue is whether the detectives falsified evidence against the

serial killing suspect in 2000, the suspect who killed himself in custody.

HUMANISM:

Part of the driving, underlying drama of the series is in learning how the Hart and Cohle depicted in the '90s become the men being interrogated in 2010, as each has changed significantly. As the main storyline finds drama in the procedural aspects of homicide investigation, it also mines the personal lives and the contradictions essential in these two men, Hart and Cohle.

In so far as the narrative is a calculated series of revelations, the series itself is a procedural, its subject a dissection of the characters of these two men as much as the hunt for a killer. The much larger subtext and theme for the show, however, is a sustained, intelligent exploration of relationships between men and women.

TWO LEADS:

Martin Hart: 36-56 (1990-2010) In 1990, Martin is a Detective Sergeant in Homicide for the CID of the Arkansas State Police, Company D, involving the most northwestern counties around the Ozarks. He is a large, muscular man, an ex-college athlete. Blunt, serious, and somewhat ignorant of his own character, in 1990, he's been married for twelve years to Margaret Hart, and they have two daughters, Macie, 7, and Audrey, 10. At the story's start, in 1990, he's been partnered with Rustin Cohle for three months and doesn't like him. Hart has served with CID for eleven years, and is a taciturn, protective man who also cheats on his wife, and is often absent from the lives of his family members. Much of the drama of Martin's personal life involves his daughters' crises as they grow up, and the eventual dissolution of his marriage in 2002. In the course of his story he vacillates between sins of personal betrayal and dramatic stabs at culturally convenient forms of redemption (discovering Christ, joining AA, etc.). Generally he falls back into who he always was— an obsessive, semi-intelligent alpha who heeds dangerous urges and tries to keep himself under control with philosophically empty and short-lived belief systems. Like Cohle, he becomes obsessed with the killer they're tracking, and possibly falsifies evidence against a suspect in 2000, a suspect who kills himself in custody. During the search for the killer, Hart becomes fascinated with a young prostitute who seeks him out when she's older, and they have an affair. In 2010, retired, he

is sober and successful as the founder and CEO of Paladin Securities, a private security firm in Little Rock.

Rustin Cohle: 31-51 (1990-2010) In 1990, Rustin Cohle is a recent arrival to CID Homicide, transplanted from Louisiana at the behest of the superintendent, though his fellow detectives don't understand why he's there. He doesn't make friends, doesn't drink, and the rest of the detectives don't care for him. Unknown to his coworkers, for the last four years Cohle had been conscripted into undercover narco work in Louisiana and Texas, in order to keep out of jail for infractions and criminal conduct as a police detective working robbery in Louisiana ('82-'84). Back in '85, when Cohle's two-year old daughter died in a car accident, his marriage collapsed and he spiraled: transferred from robbery to narco, started ripping off dealers, became an addict. Then, caught by IA, he was conscripted to the DEA and State Interagency Task Forces as a deep-undercover narc. Four years of that and he had a breakdown, was placed in an asylum, and when offered a Section 8 dismissal, he instead called in favors to get assigned to a state homicide unit (due to his undercover work, he can no longer operate in Louisiana). When the story starts, he's been partnered with Martin Hart for three months, and they have their first major case, a woman's body found posed in the forest, wearing wings. At the time, Cohle is living alone in a dismal studio apartment, without furniture or TV, only investigative textbooks, a mattress on the floor, a crucifix above the mattress. Smaller and much more cerebral than Hart, extremely well-read, he has a nihilistically pessimist philosophy toward life, which does not prevent him from speaking for the dead. He is more obsessed and a better investigator than Hart, but more unstable as a person. He vacillates between addiction and despair when not working a case, and the majority of his personal story through the years 1990-2000 is how he re-connects to human life, primarily through Martin's family. When Hart's marriage breaks up in 2002, Cohle is a significant reason why. In 2010, Cohle is retired, a part-time bartender and full-time drinker, steadily annihilating himself with booze and living in near total isolation in the rural Ozarks. He also owns a storage shed which he won't permit the police to search...

EPISODES:

ONE: *'Long Red Dark'* Through separate testimony being given in a police station in 2010, Martin Hart and Rustin Cohle narrate their early partnership in 1990, and finding the murder victim Dora Lange, whose body is discovered posed in a forest, with wings soldered on her back. We learn fragments of each detectives life at the time, as well as their lives now, in 2010. They haven't spoken to one another in eight years. They detail the early days of the investigation in 1990, and we learn that Cohle's daughter died almost five years earlier, that he rarely sleeps. It also appears that he at least occasionally is subject to low-grade hallucinations. Hart tells about having Cohle over for dinner to meet his family, and Cohle showing up drunk. In 1990, they visit the victim's ex-husband, who's in prison.

In 2010 both men voice a suspicion as to the cause of their questioning. Cohle has his interviewers fetch him a six-pack. He surmises that though they supposedly caught this killer in 2000 and he died, he's somehow killing again. Cohle implies that he is not surprised by this, indicating to his interviewers that he has a kind of leverage here which they had not suspected...

TWO: *'Seeing Things'* In 2010, Rust wants to see the files on the new murder, but his interviewers won't let him. Both detectives continue their testimony relating the investigation into the murder of Dora Lange. They visit the victim's Mother, her friend, and a Woman's Shelter, learn that Dora Lange came from poverty, had drug problems and at least occasionally prostituted herself. Though he doesn't admit it, in 1990 we learn that Hart is cheating on his wife with a young court reporter. He and Cohle fight about this, though neither mentions it in their testimony. Cohle develops a quasi-friendship with a prostitute from whom he buys barbiturates to help him sleep. From her, he learns of a co-op south of the county, where a number of prostitutes supposedly live. He and Hart check it out, learn that Dora Lange stayed there sometimes, and that she'd left a bag. Among other things in the bag, they find a kind of journal and a number of flyers for 'Friends of Christ', as though Dora had been meant to pass them out.

We learn that Cohle's erratic hallucinations are essentially chemical flashbacks; nuclear fallout from all his time undercover, years of using hard drugs and living in extreme paranoia. He lives with the visions because he knows they're not real, and after a couple years clean they go away entirely. We learn that in 2010 Rust is a part-time bartender who drinks too much. Martin Hart voices his

suspicion that his interviewers are trying to jam one of them up—probably Cohle. We receive indications that Cohle is in some way gaming his interrogators.

In 1990, the two men seek out the 'Friends of Christ' worship hall, but the closest thing they find is a demolished church, only its outer walls standing. Inside is trash and rubble, and it looks like a dead end. But Rust spots, painted on one wall, a naked, female angel kneeling, her head down, an exact reproduction of the pose in which Dora Lange's body was discovered..

THREE: Through testimony and dramatization, the investigation continues, now with Hart and Cohle focused on tracking down the 'Friends of Christ'. They're able to, and only find a 'Christian Identity' traveling revival preacher and his family, now traveling through southern Missouri. A few weeks back, they had a revival in the field outside the burned-out church Hart and Cohle found at the end of episode two. They vaguely remember Dora Lange, but so many various people come through it's impossible for them to get to know them. Cohle and Hart become convinced that Dora's killer is someone who attended the revival worship in Arkansas, and they requisition all camera footage of the revival (the church videos some of its services for promotional purposes). Hart and Cohle find Dora Lange on the video, but they cannot see who is with her, if anyone.

After that, in 1990, the case starts going cold. They continue with it, but there are no major breaks.

The next year Hart's wife, Maggie, sets Cohle up with a woman she knows, Amy. They hit it off, and Cohle begins to live more normally.

Hart's oldest daughter starts high school the next year, and starts getting into trouble. Hart encounters a young prostitute he first met in episode two; she's older now, and they begin a strange friendship. His youngest daughter is becoming more introverted and obsessed with death, and he and his wife are growing more estranged.

The next year, Cohle and Hart receive a case involving a 13-year old girl who was burned alive—

In 2010 testimony, Cohle asks again to see the case files on the new murder. He reveals that the 1990 case of the 12-year old girl would re-open the Dora Lange case. That it gave the killer a chance to talk to them..

FOUR: In 1993, Hart and Cohle investigate the torture murder of the 12-year old girl, almost instantly solving it. *This case is an analogue to the real-life murder of Shanda Sharer in Indiana in 1992. In that case the girl was

tortured and burned alive by four other girls, led by a ringleader. During the trial, and long history of child molestation and abuse involving several of the girls' families came out, and the case effectively decimated the small town. Cohle and Hart experience the same sequence of events during the investigation and the trial of the girls.

During 1994, the trial pushes Hart closer to the edge, and during the same time, a patrol officer brings his oldest daughter Audrey home late one night. She was caught parked in a car with two football players, their clothes off.

The trial and its associations cause Cohle to pull away from Amy and fall back into destructive behavior. He manages to stop his regression and repair his relationship to Amy, though he isn't in love with her, and fears that he's unable to be in love.

1996, Hart's marriage is becoming more fractured than ever. He sleeps on the recliner every night, and he barely talks to his wife. He has started having an affair with Beth, the young former-prostitute he first met in 1990. Cohle comforts Maggie Hart.

Cohle and Hart receive a letter at CID which purports to be from Dora Lange's killer. He admonishes the detectives for doing such a poor job, and indicates that he was familiar with some of the men recently involved in the girls' trials. He also indicates that he committed another murder and no one's connected it to him...

In 2010, Hart wants to know why his interviewers are looking at Rust.

In 2010, Cohle wants to know if his interrogators have any idea who he really is... He promises to talk if he can see the new case file.

FIVE: In 1998, Cohle and Hart figure out the new murder to which the killer's letter referred. A homicide outside of Mena, Arkansas. A woman found strangled, with black crow's wings attached to her. The local sheriff arrested her boyfriend and he's awaiting trial. Cohle and Hart talk to the boyfriend, learn that the dead woman had broken up with him weeks before, was seeing someone else, a man he didn't know, who didn't live around there. Cohle take over the case and re-open the Dora Lange case. The boyfriend is exonerated, and both detectives begin working around the clock.

The majority of the episode is spent on this investigation, moving from 1998-2000. Cohle and Hart both become more erratic. Hart's oldest daughter overdoses. His youngest has an eating disorder. Hart is obsessed with

Beth, and Cohle has begun using again, though neither talks about these things during their testimony. In the investigation they make significant headway and are able to tie the murders to a charity program sponsored by the Governor, involving several of his extended family members. The program works to encourage religious organizations into community outreach. After questioning all members of the organization and encountering bureaucratic resistance, when they have a field of possible suspects, a man confesses to the crimes, turning himself in...

In 2010, Cohle examines the case file on the new murder, obsessively, as if he were still on the case.

In 2010, Hart wants to hear what it is they think Cohle is guilty of. He is handed photographs of a grisly crime scene...

SIX: In 2000, Cohle and Hart take the man's confessions about the crimes. He's in his 50s, knows all the details, but something about it isn't right to Cohle...

Maggie discovers hard evidence of Hart's betrayals with Beth. She seeks out Cohle for comfort, and they begin an affair.

Amy breaks off with Cohle.

In custody, the man who confessed to killing the women hangs himself. This closes the two cases.

Maggie confronts Hart, tells him about her and Cohle. Hart strikes her. At CID, Cohle and Hart have a bloody fistfight, and their personal laundry is aired.

Cohle begins another downward spiral, swearing that they haven't caught the killer.

Hart insists on drug testing for Cohle, and buries him in accusations. Cohle is discharged from the force.

Hart quits a year later, when Beth leaves him for a man her own age, and he begins stalking the couple. His ex-wife and daughters no longer speak to him at this point. He discovers AA and joins the Promise Keepers, starts a private security firm.

In 2010, we see for the first time the two detectives doing the questioning of Cohle and Hart. They've shown Hart pictures of a gruesome crime scene that echose the Dora Lange murders. They tell Hart that they have eye-witness accounts of Cohle's car being in the area of the murder in the days around it—an area hundreds of miles from where he lives now. They begin to pointedly ask questions about Cohle's capacity for obsession and violence.

In 2010, Cohle has finished studying the new file, taking notes on it, and the interviewers begin to brace him

more aggressively, asking his whereabouts at the time of the crime, asking about his earlier testimony about possibly losing his mind, his 'visions'. They ask him if he ever blacks out, can't remember what he does...

This question gives Cohle pause.

The detectives want to look inside a storage unit he keeps outside the town where he lives. Without denying anything, Cohle says that without a court order he refuses to let them see what he keeps there...

The interviewers let Hart hear Cohle's refusal to cooperate, and for the first time he begins to believe that Rustin Cohle might have committed this new murder...

SEVEN and EIGHT: '*Antigonish*' In the final two chapters, the timelines catch up to one another, and the entirety of the story takes place in 2010. Rust is exonerated when another killing occurs, and he and Hart renew their association after eight years. Cohle reveals that he never stopped looking for the killer, always supposing they had the wrong man. He discovered that the man who confessed had lung cancer, that he might have received money for his family in order to confess. Still obsessive, alone, we learn that Cohle is not nearly the burnt-out alcoholic that he appears, and he was in some ways playing the men interviewing him until they showed him what he wanted. Working part-time at a bar, with all his spare time he's been working old open cases. Rust reveals what's in his storage shed— it's entirely filled with facts and research pertaining to the Dora Lange killer, and we learn that Rust has been tracking him all over the country, and this is why Rust's car was spotted in the area of the most recent murder. He's getting close to pinpointing his movements, but he still doesn't have an identity for the killer. Since he hasn't been a cop for eight years, he doesn't have access to evidence. Until this interrogation--

Going back through his old files, something Cohle saw in the new case file makes him reconsider a piece of old evidence that seemed inconsequential at the time.

This leads the two men to the real killer, and a decades long cover-up of murder by power.

The men find the killer, but not without paying a high price.

SEASON TWO AND FRANCHISE POTENTIAL

Part of the unique nature of True Detective is that it proposes a change in the way we think about series branding. Though Hart and Cohle's stories definitively end with season one, treating these eight episodes like a single novel, the story structure is the franchise signature. Every season is two major actors enacting a season-long epic narrative, with great cinematic directors and writing.

For example, season two could revolve around two female leads, say an I.A. investigator and a patrol officer, with two great film actresses, giving the narrative the chance to revisit its themes and concerns from the other side of the gender experience.

Due to the compression of time and terminal narrative, every season has enough reversals and revelations for an entire, multi-season run of any other show, as well as a depth and nuance of character usually reserved for literature and stage.