

"Hail Mary"  
3rd Revised Network Draft  
Written by Jeff Wadlow  
1.7.11  
(clean)

# Hail Mary

"PILOT"

By Jeff Wadlow

2nd Revised Network Draft

1.7.11

SILVER PICTURES TELEVISION  
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OVER BLACK-- panicked BREATHING-- SOUNDS of RUNNING--

CUT TO:

EXT. SOLOMON PROJECTS - NIGHT

Terrified THORNTON TATE, 17, RUNS for his life. Straight-out-of-the-suburbs and sleight of frame, Thornton clearly has no business in this part of town.

Swollen face and bloody clothes indicate he's already received a brutal beating-- he BANGS on one door after another--

THORNTON

(sobbing)

Please-- somebody help me--

Either no one hears him or no one cares. Suddenly his ATTACKER rounds the corner-- a large MAN in a dark tracksuit, face obscured by a baseball cap.

Thornton SCRAMBLES-- searches for a place to hide-- turns into an alley and finds... a dead end. His pursuer closes in... removes a .45 from his jacket. Thornton whispers a desperate prayer then... GUNSHOT.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ATLANTA, GEORGIA - ESTABLISHING MONTAGE

Sun rises over Hotlanta-- a city suffering an identity crisis.

As the soulful southern rock sounds of the Black Crowes' *She Talks to Angels* kick in, we see images of opulent wealth contrasted sharply with abject poverty.

Drive-by shots of McMansions, mega churches, and manicured private schools are intercut with homes in foreclosure, corner drug deals, and dilapidated public schools.

The morning bell RINGS, carrying us into:

INT. JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Just another drop-out factory. A particularly tough CREW scatters when they see pretty and petite guidance counselor MARY BETH BAKER, late 30's, headed their way.

MARY BETH

Oh my Lord-and-Taylor...

A little bit Erin Brockovich and a lot Leigh Ann Tuohy from THE BLIND SIDE (minus the beemer and the millionaire husband), Mary Beth likes to look good almost as much as she likes a good deal.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

Daryl Agee, I am so proud of you!

One of the teens-- DARYL AGEE, 16-- turns to Mary Beth.

DARYL

Hey... Ms. Baker.

MARY BETH

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

DARYL

It was a book report.

MARY BETH

It was an A minus-- Congrats!

INT. GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT, MARY BETH'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Mary Beth and Daryl enter her office. Her walls and desk are covered in Georgia Tech football swag.

MARY BETH

Brings your G.P.A. up to a 2.5-- exactly what you needed to play basketball next month. Have a seat.

He does.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

So how'd you do it? I want to hear all about it. You stay up all night? Read the book more than once?

DARYL

(looking up and away)

Lamont Williams... he helped me. Worked on it all weekend.

MARY BETH

Sure 'bout that? 'Cause you tend to look at the ceiling when you're fibbing.

DARYL

(busted)

Somethin' in my eye.

MARY BETH

Ingrid, could you come in here please?

The guidance department's admin assistant, INGRID COLLINS, 25, enters. A redhead punk pixie who dresses more like Courtney Love than a receptionist, Ingrid can do anything on a computer.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

Honey, can you pull up Lamont Williams' My Face page for me?

INGRID

My Space?

MARY BETH

The face one.

INGRID

Facebook?

MARY BETH

Not really a book, more of a page--

Ingrid types on Mary Beth's computer.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

That's it-- thank you so much, sweetheart.  
(to Daryl)  
Technology and I don't really get along.

Ingrid's already gone.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

Now according to Lamont's face-page, he was at a Mathletes tournament till Sunday... which proves that the only thing he was doing this weekend was long division.

DARYL

(looks up)

He, uh, came over after he got back.

Mary Beth points to the ceiling with a smile--

MARY BETH

Still got something in your eye?

*Busted. Again.* Mary Beth picks up the phone as Daryl heads for the door--

DARYL

Don't bother callin' my moms, got less time for this BS than I do.

MARY BETH

Oh sweetheart, I'm not calling your Mom, I'm calling your Mom's mom.

Daryl freezes-- pure terror on his face. As Mary Beth dials...

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

I was at a basketball game last year--  
Springfield, I think-- anyway your Mom told  
me your Grandma was the one person you  
minded... and that she was in a home  
outside the city. Piedmont Sunset, right?

Daryl locks eyes with Mary Beth... the phone to her ear... it  
begins to RING... the tension building... finally--

DARYL

Lamont wrote it for me-- before he left.

Mary Beth quietly hangs up.

MARY BETH

Thank you for your honesty. Now unlike  
Principal Teague, I'm not interested in  
punishment, I'm interested in justice. So  
here's what we're going to do-- after  
school today you'll read Tale of Two  
Cities-- out loud-- to your Grandma. And  
you're going to keep doing it every day  
until you finish. Then you're going to  
write that paper-- on your own this time--  
and turn it into me, personally. And if you  
don't... the only thing you're gonna be  
eligible for is Mathletes.

DARYL

(defeated)

You're a real Sherlock Holmes, ain't you?

MARY BETH

No sweetie, I'm just a people person.

CUT TO: A football SPIRALING in slow motion. POP OUT TO REVEAL:

EXT. BOBBY DODD STADIUM - NIGHT

It lands in the hands of a Georgia Tech RECEIVER-- he bobbles  
the ball and then drops it.

ANNOUNCER

Tech is down by six with two seconds  
left... gonna take a miracle, folks.

Large groups of fans give up and head home, hoping to beat  
traffic. Mary Beth and the diehards stick it out.

MARY BETH

Come on, boys-- where there's a will,  
there's a way!

A COLLEGE KID looks for a better view-- moves in on the empty seat next to Mary Beth.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

So sorry-- that's my son's seat.

College kid shrugs it off, quickly moves to the next empty seat.

ON THE FIELD: Tech lines up for the last play of the game. QUARTERBACK takes the snap-- U.V.A. LINEMEN rush toward him--

ANNOUNCER

Simmons is in trouble... scrambles in the pocket-- it's a long bomb!

Tech RECEIVER sprints for the end zone-- beats his man-- LEAPS into the air-- AND CATCHES THE BALL. Crowd goes insane.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

I don't believe it! Hail Mary to Pearson!

PUSH IN on Mary Beth as she looks at the empty seat next to her. Hint of sadness flashes across her face, leaving us to wonder...

If that's her son's seat, then where is he? As the deafening crowd noise echoes into oblivion--

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SINGLE STORY HOUSE, GRANT CIRCLE - NIGHT

Mary Beth parks her beat-up minivan in front of her dark home.

INT. BOY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

She walks into her son's immaculate room. From the perfectly made bed to the lack of clothing on the floor, it's obvious that no one has lived in here for a while.

She takes the Tech/U.V.A. ticket stubs out of her purse and pins them to the bulletin board next to dozens of other stubs... right below a picture of her and her TEENAGE BOY at a game. Off Mary Beth's face, FLICKER CUT TO:

Silent images of her boy, ten years younger. He plays pee-wee football with his friends. So happy... so full of life. A perfect memory. BACK TO:

Mary Beth. Her eyes well-up as she glances down at a funeral program with a school photo. Josh Baker, 1991-2010.

*He died just over a year ago.* That's when we realize that Josh's room is a museum and that the Tech games are Mary Beth's way of mourning the loss.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Mary Beth makes a late supper, local news on in the background. She's clearly more interested in breaking the silence than breaking stories.

Out of the corner of her eye, she spots a school photo of Thornton Tate on the screen... eerily similar to the one we just saw of Josh. Mary Beth grabs the remote, turns up the volume.

REPORTER (ON TV)

--murdered last night in the Solomon Projects. According to police, narcotics were found in Tate's possession, continuing to prove that the city's growing drug problem knows no racial boundaries.

As shots of the crime scene play out, someone in the crowd catches Mary Beth's attention... an African American MAN, 20's.

MARY BETH

Is that-- KZ...? Son-of-a-biscuit.

Mary Beth RUSHES into JOSH'S BEDROOM, GRABS a photo of Josh and a friend: the same man we just saw at the scene of the crime.

INT. CENTER HILL APARTMENTS - NIGHT

His name is KZ (20's) and like Eddie Murphy in TRADING PLACES, he's a small-time con artist with a quick wit and a fast mouth.

KZ (INTO PHONE)

Would you like to make a donation to People Against Violence...? Yes, it's real-- what, you for violence!?

JUMP CUT TO:

KZ (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)

Interested in a do-it-yourself gastric bypass kit...? Perfectly safe... guaranteed by the F.A.D.

JUMP CUT TO:

KZ (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)

Would you like to talk to your dead pet...? 'Cause I'm a pet psychic and your dog is pissed.

Suddenly there's a loud KNOCK. KZ peeks out the window and sees: a very agitated Mary Beth holding the photo of him and Josh.

MARY BETH

KZ-- I know that's your squeaky little voice in there-- been flashing your picture all over the neighborhood.

EXT. CENTER HILL APARTMENTS - NIGHT

KZ slips out the back when--

MARY BETH

Hold it right there, Mister!

Mary Beth SPARKS a taser-- KZ's trapped.

KZ

You insane, woman?

MARY BETH

What in the world were you doing down at the Solomon Projects last night?

KZ

Not talking if you're gonna tase me--

MARY BETH

You don't start talking-- I start tasing.

Taser CRACKLES again-- KZ flattens against the wall.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

Only time Josh ever got into trouble was when he was with you. Then I see you on TV-- returning to the scene of the crime where that boy was murdered-- the same neighborhood Josh was murdered? Also with drugs? You think that's a coincidence?

KZ

I think tasers ain't toys--

MARY BETH

Good, 'cause I'm not playing around. I know you had something to do with Josh's murder-- and now I think you had something to do with that Tate boy's, too-- and you can bet your bottom dollar I'm not gonna stop till I prove it.

KZ fakes right-- then cuts left-- SPRINTING down the alley. Off Mary Beth's fierce look of determination *She Talks to Angels* kicks back in and we...

SLAM TO TITLES

ACT ONE

EXT. JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

MARY BETH (PRE-LAP)

--I will stop calling Mr. Cox, when he  
calls me back.

It's a new day--

INT. MARY BETH'S OFFICE - DAY

But Mary Beth looks exhausted.

MARY BETH (INTO PHONE)

Because I paid him every penny of my  
savings last year to look into my boy's  
murder-- that's why.

(forced smile)

Have a nice day.

As a frustrated Mary Beth hangs up, PRINCIPAL GERTRUDE TEAGUE,  
50's, enters her office.

PRINCIPAL TEAGUE

I am not happy, Ms. Baker-- not one bit.

MARY BETH

You and me both, Principal Teague.

A morbidly obese bureaucrat, Principal Teague is neither liked  
nor respected by her employees.

PRINCIPAL TEAGUE

You missed morning meeting-- again.

MARY BETH

So sorry 'bout that-- just been dealing  
with a family issue.

PRINCIPAL TEAGUE

I know... but it's been over a year. I  
can't keep covering for you.

Mary Beth is taken aback.

MARY BETH

I'm sorry. You know how important this job  
is to me.

PRINCIPAL TEAGUE

Then you need to do this job. And that  
starts with attending mandatory meetings.

Principal Teague exits, passing Ingrid's desk-- she's wearing a torn "Wildlife Conservation" tee shirt.

PRINCIPAL TEAGUE (CONT'D)

Not what I meant by "dress more conservatively."

Ingrid casually scratches her face with her middle finger... then notices Mary Beth watching. They share a smirk.

EXT. COX PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS - AFTERNOON

Situated in a strip mall, Cox Private Investigators offers fees as nominal as their results. Just as BARNEY COX, 50's, unlocks his LeBaron-- a minivan SKIDS to a halt, blocking him in.

Cox's expression changes from confusion to mild annoyance when he sees that the driver is Mary Beth.

COX

Before you start pissin' and moanin'--

Mary Beth gets out of her car, puts on the full charm offensive.

MARY BETH

Don't be silly, I've got a check for you.

COX

You do?

MARY BETH

Now I've post-dated it but I can assure you I do have the money--

COX

Mrs. Baker--

MARY BETH

Ms. Baker-- it's a "z" sound--

COX

Mzzzz. Baker, we've been over this a thousand times. Josh's case... it's hopeless. No witnesses, zero physical evidence, and every indication that it was drug related--

MARY BETH

There's been a break-- another boy-- Thornton Tate-- was also murdered in the Solomon Projects. And I saw my son's friend, KZ-- he returned to the scene of the crime. Isn't that what they say, the guilty always returns to the scene?

COX

Sure, but--

MARY BETH

Please, I've called you over a dozen times--

COX

Closer to three dozen--

MARY BETH

--to ask for your help. I'll do anything.  
Even beg. Do you want me to beg, Mr. Cox?

Cox takes a deep breath...

COX

'Bout to say something I've never said  
before...

MARY BETH

Prayin' for "pro bono."

COX

I can't take your money.

Mary Beth is floored.

MARY BETH

You have to... this is your job.

COX

My job is to help people with their  
problems. But right now I can't help you.  
Believe you me, if I could-- I would-- just  
to get you to stop calling.

Cox hands the check back to a stunned Mary Beth.

COX (CONT'D)

See, your real problem, Ms. Baker, is that  
you can't move on. And the only person who  
can help you with that... is you.

The words hit Mary Beth like a ton of bricks.

MARY BETH

You're right... just gonna have to do this  
myself.

EXT. MARY BETH'S HOUSE - DAWN

Although the sun is just peeking over the horizon...

INT. KITCHEN - DAWN

Mary Beth has been up for hours, slaving away. Slices fruit, rolls crust, and then slides not one-- not two-- but three pies into the oven. Phone to her ear, she leaves a message for--

MARY BETH (INTO PHONE)  
Ingrid, will you do me a favor and tell Teague I'm under the weather? Hopin' to trade some pies for some answers. Thank-you so-much!

Mary Beth sets the timer and RUSHES into--

MASTER BEDROOM

And picks out a sexy little red dress.

MARY BETH  
Hope you girls still fit in there.

*Yes, she's talking to her breasts.*

EXT. ATLANTA P.D., MAJOR CRIMES DIVISION - MORNING

Overworked and understaffed, this is a police department that only has resources to handle the most pressing cases.

MARY BETH  
(to the Desk Sergeant)  
Excuse me, Sir-- I'm looking for Detective Moreno?

Despite the chaos, they still drop everything when Mary Beth rolls in, looking like a million bucks and carrying pie.

DESK SERGEANT  
(into intercom)  
Detective Moreno, there is a fine looking woman here to see you... who is definitely not your wife.

CARLOS (O.S.)  
You mean "ex-wife."

Ex-military and an Atlanta native, DETECTIVE CARLOS MORENO, 40's, has been in love with Mary Beth since they were kids.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
My god-- still as beautiful as you were in high school.

MARY BETH  
Say that every time I see you--

CARLOS

And every time it's true. How are you?

She gives Carlos a big hug.

MARY BETH

Better now.

CARLOS

Wish I had news on your son's case.

Mary Beth gets her best flirt on... holds out the pie.

MARY BETH

Can't a girl visit her high school beau?

CARLOS

And you're still a terrible liar. Not that I'm complaining; just hoped that if we were going to get a bite, it would be under different circumstances. Like at a restaurant. At night.

MARY BETH

I was just hoping we could chat about Thornton Tate-- so I can rest easy, knowing that his murder isn't connected to Josh's.

Carlos hesitates... so she leans over, giving him a full view of the merchandise.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

If we talk about it now, we can talk about something else over dinner, Saturday night?

*Hook, line, and sinker.*

BULLPEN, CARLOS'S DESK - MOMENTS LATER

Mary Beth sits while Carlos flips through the case report, pie tin between them.

CARLOS

Looks like Thornton was carrying meth--

MARY BETH

Like Josh.

Carlos looks up at Mary Beth. *Is she really doing okay?*

CARLOS

But ballistics determined that a different weapon was used-- a .45, Josh was shot with--

MARY BETH

A 9mm. You have any suspects?

CARLOS

You know I can't say--

MARY BETH

I just thought you might've talked to KZ,  
Josh's friend?

CARLOS

Been down this road, Mary Beth. He's got an  
air-tight alibi for the night of Josh's  
death--

MARY BETH

And Thornton's?

CARLOS

If KZ becomes a person of interest, we'll  
talk to him. I'm sorry, I really am, but  
all this confirms is that Atlanta is  
getting more dangerous. Violent crime rate  
is three times New York City's--

VOICE

Lookee-lookee... pie.

Carlos slides the Tate file under some paperwork as his  
commanding officer, Lieutenant ZEKE TAFT, 40's, joins them.

MARY BETH

Morning, Lieutenant Taft.

Zeke digs into the pie-- eating right out of the tin.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

(under her breath)

Help yourself.

A good ol' boy who sincerely believes a lady's place is in the  
home, Zeke's not a fan of "uppity" women like Mary Beth.

ZEKE

Call me "Zeke," darling-- Lieutenant Taft  
is what I make these boys call me.

Zeke pushes aside some files... spots Thornton's case report on  
Carlos's desk. Gives Carlos a look.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

(to Mary Beth)

See the news? Poor parents.

(MORE)

ZEKE (CONT'D)

Just can't accept that kids do drugs--  
especially theirs.

Mary Beth bristles-- *is he talking about the Tates, or her?*

MARY BETH

You spoke to them?

ZEKE

The father-- mother's too upset. You know  
women.

MARY BETH

Not as well as you-- clearly.

CARLOS

She's scheduled to come in tomorrow.

MARY BETH

Tomorrow... right.

Mary Beth's gears are turning... *maybe she'll talk to her first?*

ZEKE

This pie is fantastic-- what is that,  
vanilla?

Zeke goes for more-- Mary Beth "accidentally" knocks his coffee  
onto the floor-- SPLASHES all over his cowboy boots.

MARY BETH

Oh-- I am just so clumsy. You know women.

Zeke fumes while Mary Beth exits, turning more than a few heads.  
Carlos can't help but smile...

CARLOS

Hate to see her leave... but I love to  
watch her go.

As Outkast's *Ms. Jackson* kicks in... CUT TO:

MONTAGE - SOLOMON PROJECTS - DAY

In a series of shots, KZ wanders the Solomon projects, talking  
to TEENAGERS playing ball, BANGERS shooting the shit, and young  
MOTHERS walking their BABIES. He asks them all the same thing--

KZ

Y'all know that white boy who got shot?

EXT. BASKETBALL COURTS - DAY

While KZ's talking with one crew, RAFUS JACKSON, 20's, rolls up.

RAFUS

What's the word, Ten Spot?

KZ stiffens. Clearly he doesn't like that nickname.

KZ

No money, mo' problems.

Muscular and covered in prison tats, Rafus is the kind of guy who scares people with just a smile.

RAFUS

Why don't you come sling caps for me?

KZ

Rather sling burgers.

RAFUS

That's right-- you ain't no corner boy.

Clearly KZ has his own code. He tries to change the subject.

KZ

Ain't no choir boy, neither... you see Chaka Watkins little sister? Damn.

The other guys LOUDLY concur-- Rafus is stone cold.

RAFUS

Don't get you, Ten Spot. You ain't no Kanyé and you ain't no Kobe... what makes you think you better than me?

KZ

(all smiles)

This ain't prison, dog. Don't have to prove you the biggest "cock" in the yard.

RAFUS

Your Moms sure wasn't better than me. She loved my product... loved it so much, dumb bitch OD'd on it.

KZ's easy-going nature evaporates-- LUNGES at Rafus-- who easily SWATS him back. Crowd quickly gathers to see the brawl.

KZ puts up a good fight but he's no match for the prison-hardened Rafus-- who knocks KZ down again and again. Despite the ass whuppin' he keeps getting back up--

KZ

Damn, Rafus-- just looking at you hurts more than that.

--and keeps running his mouth. Clearly what KZ lacks in strength, he more than makes up for in heart.

KZ (CONT'D)

For real-- I got ass pimples prettier than you.

Rafus finally just gives up, leaving a beaten KZ on the ground.

KZ (CONT'D)

Don't make me hit your hand with my face again.

As the crowd disperses, we CUT TO:

INT. MINIVAN - DAY

Mary Beth's on the phone, mid conversation with Ingrid.

INGRID (THROUGH PHONE)

Seriously-- even you can use google.

MARY BETH (INTO PHONE)

Hush up and find Thornton Tate's address-- I need to talk to his mother. If anyone knows why he was down at Solomon, it's her.

INT. JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGH SCHOOL - INTERCUT WITH ABOVE

INGRID

Shouldn't the police be doing that?

MARY BETH

I'm done waiting on them.

INGRID

By the way... Daryl's Grandma phoned to thank you.

Mary Beth lights up...

INGRID (CONT'D)

Teague took the call. Said she's going to have to expel him for cheating now.

...and then crumbles.

MARY BETH

That woman is pure evil.

EXT. TATE FAMILY HOME, BUCKHEAD - DAY

Mary Beth gets out of her car in the mega-affluent neighborhood. Pulls a dark coat over her red dress.

MARY BETH

Not exactly mourning attire...

But it will do. Grabs a second pie out of the car and heads up the driveway towards the opulent home.

INT. TATE FAMILY HOME - DAY

Inside she finds a sea of people-- and even more food. Mary Beth examines some framed photos lining the walls. As she stares at the frozen image of Thornton's face she can't help but get choked up. Off Mary Beth's face, FLICKER CUT TO:

Those same, silent images of ten year-old Josh, playing pee-wee football with his friends. So happy... so alive.

INT. TATE MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

VIRGINIA TATE, 40's, sits alone... her face red from crying.

MARY BETH

Excuse me... have you seen the ladies room?

VIRGINIA TATE

Rather not see it-- been meaning to re-do it for years.

(tries to smile)

Down the hall on and on your right.

Mary Beth can't help but chuckle; she's still carrying her pie.

MARY BETH

Probably shouldn't take this with me.

Virginia Tate smiles back...

VIRGINIA TATE

Virginia Tate. Apologize for my appearance.

Mary Beth lights up-- exactly who she was looking for.

MARY BETH

Mary Beth Baker-- and please, don't. I lost my son just last year. He was nineteen.

VIRGINIA TATE

Thornton... he would've turned nineteen next month.

MARY BETH

That's why I'm here, actually. Saw your story on the news, and my heart broke all over again. Thought I'd come by, let you know you're not alone.

They share a look that speaks volumes-- *total strangers bound by similar tragedies.*

VIRGINIA TATE

They're supposed to bury us, right?

MARY BETH

Just makes no sense...

VIRGINIA TATE

No sense at all. Thornton was a straight A student, a Varsity tennis player, and first violin in the school Orchestra-- he didn't have time to do drugs.

MARY BETH

Not with that schedule.

VIRGINIA TATE

He was just so full of life. Week before he confided in me that he had met a girl.

MARY BETH

She here-- today?

VIRGINIA TATE

I didn't even know her name. Didn't want to pry... he'd never had a girlfriend before.

Her voice falters... Mary Beth takes her hand.

VIRGINIA TATE (CONT'D)

Not sure why I'm gabbing like this...

MARY BETH

Guess I'm just a people person.

EXT. SOLOMON PROJECTS - AFTERNOON

Mary Beth walks through the Solomon Projects with her coat buttoned up and her third pie in hand.

Although she gets more than a few odd looks from the residents there's nothing particularly scary about the place. In fact, it's quite full of life. She spots a HOMELESS MAN...

MARY BETH

What's your name?

HOMELESS MAN

Gus.

MARY BETH

You want a slice of peach rhubarb, Gus?

He nods, "yes" so Mary Beth obliges--

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

Excuse my fingers... you wouldn't happen to know anything 'bout that boy, who was murdered?

GUS

Second person who's asked me that today. Young brother-- squeaky voice.

Mary Beth shakes her head... she knew KZ was involved.

EXT. ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

Gus shows her where they found the body. The police tape is gone but the pavement is still stained red. Mary Beth just stares for a moment... until the homeless man clears his throat. She offers him the rest of the pie.

MARY BETH

For your troubles.

GUS

Appreciate it... but I'd appreciate five bucks more.

She pulls out a five spot.

MARY BETH

Take them both.

He thanks her and then quickly exits. Alone now, Mary Beth studies the crime scene carefully... she's not sure what she's looking for but she's going to keep looking until she finds it.

We move through a series of DISSOLVES as the sun begins to set.

Just as Mary Beth is about to give up, she looks to the heavens and hears... *a baby crying?* It's coming from an open window... with a perfect view of the alley.

INT. HALLWAY, SOLOMON PROJECTS - SUNSET

Mary Beth knocks. No answer. Tries several more times until the door flies open revealing a young mother (TASHELLE, 20's) with a SCREAMING INFANT.

TASHELLE

Whatever you're selling, I ain't buying.

She SLAMS the door in Mary Beth's face.

MARY BETH

Well then.

Mary Beth inhales... and then KNOCKS. Again. Door WHIPS open--

TASHELLE

Said I ain't buying.

MARY BETH

If I could just have a moment--

TASHELLE

Didn't have time for the police, sure as hell don't have time for you.

Mary Beth catches the door before Tashelle can slam it again--

MARY BETH

Your baby prone to sore throats?

TASHELLE

(taken aback)

How you know that?

MARY BETH

He has spit-up all over his shirt, his voice is hoarse, and he's arching his back.

Mary Beth pushes past Tashelle and heads for the kitchen.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

Poor little guy has chronic acid reflux-- just like my boy did.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

A shocked Tashelle watches while Mary Beth searches the cupboards until she finds... a bottle of Tabasco.

MARY BETH

Only thing that doesn't taste like spit-up to a baby suffering chronic acid reflux is spicy food.

She puts a drop on his pacifier and sticks it in his mouth. To Tashelle's complete surprise, it works-- the baby stops crying.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

My Josh-- he loved the spicy.

MOMENTS LATER

The baby is sleeping soundly while the women have coffee.

MARY BETH

Your window looks right down on the alley where that boy was murdered... thought you might've seen something.

TASHELLE

No, but I sure heard a fuss. Didn't really think 'bout it. I guess it's gotten so bad 'round here, we've all stopped caring.

MARY BETH

You've got a lot on your plate. You alone?

TASHELLE

My mom helps out some. Come to think of it-- I did see that white boy before. Over near her house, arguing with some girl.

MARY BETH

What'd she look like?

TASHELLE

Blond-- teenager... had a crazy accent.

MARY BETH

Like she was from up North?

TASHELLE

Like she was from Europe or somethin'.

Not what Mary Beth was expecting... *takes a mental note.*

INT. HALLWAY, SOLOMON PROJECTS - MOMENTS LATER

MARY BETH

Thanks again for the coffee--

Mary Beth makes her exit when Tashelle suddenly HUGS her.

TASHELLE

Thank you-- tonight's gonna be the first good night's sleep I've had in months.

EXT. SOLOMON PROJECTS - CONTINUOUS

The sun has set and the vibe has definitely changed to something a little more frightening. Mary Beth heads down the stairs but gets turned around when she hits the courtyard.

MARY BETH

Now where'd I park that car...

She starts hitting the clicker-- hoping to hear a honk. Suddenly Mary Beth becomes aware of an ominous THUG following her. She reaches into her purse for her taser... *doesn't dare look back.*

Another set of FOOTSTEPS joins the first-- Mary Beth starts to JOG-- turns a corner-- trips and SLAMS her knee. Gets up quickly-- taser ready-- her two stalkers start to LAUGH...?

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

You boys sure had me going.

They're in their late teens, African American, and very big.

THUG

You was running... damn.

MARY BETH

You all ain't seen an old blue minivan parked 'round here, have you?

THUG

Happy to help-- but you gonna have to pay.

MARY BETH

Sure thing... how 'bout ten dollars?

FLASH of a knife.

THUG

How 'bout all of it.

Mary Beth knows these two want more than money-- girds herself for the fight of her life when--

VOICE (O.S.)

Hold up!

She turns to see... KZ?

KZ

You all can't mug her-- I got dibs on this white woman.

Before her flustered attackers can protest, KZ grabs Mary Beth and whisks her away. The thugs share a stunned look...

THUG

Can he do that?

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. PARKING LOT, SOLOMON PROJECTS - MOMENTS LATER

MARY BETH

What do you think you're doing?

KZ

Saving your ass.

MARY BETH

I mean here, in Solomon.

KZ

I been down here all day, asking folks about Thornton Tate. It's like you said... two white boys carrying Meth getting shot in Solomon? That ain't no coincidence.

MARY BETH

That's why you were at the crime scene--

KZ

Josh was my boy-- I wanna find out what happened, too.

MARY BETH

Why didn't you say so?

KZ

Know what makes me all chatty? A taser.

MARY BETH

Thanks... for saving my biscuits.

KZ

You gonna admit you were wrong 'bout me?

MARY BETH

Please-- Josh always got into trouble with you, all the way back to middle school... you all stole street signs, threw water balloons at cars... even streaked the mall.

KZ

Those girls dared us-- cute girls.

MARY BETH

And the shoplifting?

KZ

N'Sync CD-- definitely not my idea.

Mary Beth gives him a look... *N'Sync?*

KZ (CONT'D)

Your boy liked boy bands.

MARY BETH

Certainly wasn't afraid to be different...

KZ

Yeah... think that's why were friends.

Clearly KZ's talking bout Josh's willingness to be friends with him. Mary Beth smiles... Josh left a hole in both their lives.

MARY BETH

Woman I just spoke with-- she said Thornton was arguing with some foreign girl.

That's when KZ remembers--

KZ

Josh-- he had met some girl, too. Said he was learnin' French for her.

MARY BETH

Never said anything to me... he tell you how they met?

KZ

No, he wasn't coming around much.

Before Mary Beth can ask "why" KZ takes a swipe--

KZ (CONT'D)

His mommy told him not to.

MARY BETH

Maybe Josh and Thornton were hanging out with the same French girl?

KZ

She's gotta know something.

MARY BETH

Then we've got to find her-- and I know just the person who can help.

KZ

So what-- we workin' together now?

MARY BETH

It's like you want me to tase you.

EXT. MARY BETH'S HOUSE - MORNING

Next morning, KZ walks in the open door to find--

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Mary Beth cooking pancakes for Ingrid.

MARY BETH

You're late.

KZ

For a Saturday, this is early -- too early.

MARY BETH

Ingrid-- KZ, KZ-- Ingrid.

KZ takes in Ingrid's punk-pixie wardrobe.

KZ

You're... sort of cute.

INGRID

You're sort of rude.

KZ

Just saying you'd be hot if you weren't dressed like a freak.

INGRID

And you'd be charming if you weren't moving your lips.

Phone RINGS--

MARY BETH

Claws in, both of you.

(into phone)

Hello?... yes, of course... send him over.

Mary Beth hangs up, turns back to KZ.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

I asked Ingrid to crack Thornton's computer--

INGRID

"Hack."

MARY BETH

Thought it was like "crack a safe?"

INGRID

It is-- but it's called "hack."

MARY BETH

(bewildered)

Mine just makes so much more sense...

KZ does a double take when he looks over the couch and sees--  
the front door open and then close by itself.

VOICE

Hey M.B.

From behind the couch emerges 10 year-old BILLY SHIFFLET.

MARY BETH

Billy say "hi" to Ingrid and KZ.

(to KZ and Ingrid)

Billy lives next door with his Mom-- I  
watch him when she has to work.

(sotto)

Or has a hang-over.

Billy offers KZ a pound--

KZ

We don't do that anymore.

--then turns to Ingrid.

BILLY

Hello, gorgeous.

INGRID

Hello, handsome.

MARY BETH

Billy, baby-- go watch cartoons while I  
make you my super-secret bacon-cakes.

KZ

Guessin' they're just pancakes with bacon.

MARY BETH

(sotto)

You gonna tell him Santa's not real, too?

Billy's head whips around--

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

"For real," baby-- "Santa's for real."

Billy breathes a sigh of relief. Mary Beth glares at KZ while  
Ingrid flips through photos of Thornton on her computer.

INGRID

Ran a password program on the Tate's home  
server-- so far I've only found pictures on  
Thornton's computer from band camp...

KZ

Not gonna find any blond hotties there.

MARY BETH

Now that is an unfair stereotype.

INGRID

Says the sassy southern white woman to the street-smart black man.

MARY BETH

Tashelle just saw them talking--

KZ

Not talking, fighting. Maybe they broke up?

BILLY

When my Mom breaks up with a guy, she throws out all the pictures.

MARY BETH

That's nice, sweetie-- but we're looking in his computer not his waste basket.

Ingrid shrugs-- *it's not a bad idea.*

INGRID

Run a quick data recovery program and...

ON THE WEB PAGE: pic of Thornton and a blond.

MARY BETH

Oh my Lord-and-Taylor... it worked.

KZ

(re: photo)  
She's hot.

INGRID

You're an idiot.

BILLY

Get a room.

KZ and Ingrid look like they might puke.

MARY BETH

'Least we know who we're looking for now...

MONTAGE - ATLANTA STREETS - DAY

Mary Beth and KZ flash the French girl's picture while they work the streets around Solomon. Together there's no one they can't chat up; everyone from corner dealers to crabby old men.

INT. MINIVAN - DAY

As they get back in the car--

MARY BETH

Is there anyone you don't know?

KZ

Halle Berry-- yet.

MARY BETH

I'm serious-- you're smart, funny, people like you. You could do anything...

KZ

Don't really need a guidance counselor.

MARY BETH

...if you ever stopped being a jerk.

KZ

Gonna admit you were wrong about me before?

MARY BETH

Sure... when the pope does a cartwheel.

KZ looks out the window... almost smiles. *Clearly he hasn't received a lot of encouragement in his twenty-two years.*

VOICE (PRE-LAP)

Yeah, I've seen her.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURTS - DAY

Mary Beth and KZ show the photo to a BALLER.

BALLER

Over at the corner mart, buying cigarettes.

Just as KZ thanks him, Rafus rolls up-- takes in Mary Beth.

RAFUS

Mmm, mmm... Chocolate milk. Damn, Ten Spot--

KZ

Ain't like that.

RAFUS

I was you, I'd be driving Miss Daisy crazy.

Mary Beth sizes up Rafus-- takes note of the prison tats.

RAFUS (CONT'D)

Wait, I know-- she's your new Momma, right?

MARY BETH

(to KZ)

Don't give him what he wants.

Rafus follows them towards the car...

RAFUS

Sure need one since that crack-head OD'd.

KZ's about to turn on Rafus when-- Mary Beth beats him to it.

MARY BETH

Maybe this whole tough-guy act keeps you on top out here, but I'm guessing that in prison you were on the bottom...

She gets right in Rafus's face.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

And I think you know what I mean by "bottom."

Rafus's crew CRACKS UP. He takes a threatening step towards Mary Beth-- so she points her cell phone camera at him.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

Go 'head... you'll be back in prison faster than you can say, "mind if I pick up your soap?"

Humiliated, Rafus STEAMS while Mary Beth and KZ retreat.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

Hurry-- not too sure this phone actually has a camera.

EXT./INT. CORNER MART - DAY

KZ and Mary Beth walk in-- an apathetic clerk covered in piercings (DALE HICKS, 20's), doesn't even look up.

MARY BETH

How you doing?

Hicks keeps reading his issue of "Martha Stewart Living." Mary Beth gives KZ a look... *your turn.* KZ grabs some smokes, Hicks rings them up.

HICKS

That be all?

KZ

I'll also take your job, pin cushion.

Hicks is stunned. So is Mary Beth.

KZ (CONT'D)

We Atlanta P.D.-- and you didn't ask for my I.D. So now you're either gonna answer our questions or run back to the circus.

HICKS

You... you two are cops?

KZ

Would I be hanging out with this white woman if it wasn't my job?

KZ flashes the picture of Thornton and the French girl...

KZ (CONT'D)

You know this girl?

Hicks hesitates.

KZ (CONT'D)

You pierce your brain too, Tommy Lee? Asked you a question.

HICKS

Uh, no-- I just started here.

KZ nods towards the security cameras.

KZ

Then we gonna need to see those tapes.

MOMENTS LATER

Mary Beth and KZ wait--

MARY BETH

What's taking so long?

KZ

Nose ring probably can't program his microwave-- doubt he can pull security tapes.

MARY BETH

(beat)

You can program a microwave...?

From the back ALLEN LEGGET, 60's, enters. Kind eyes and workman's hands, Legget is one of the few small business owners left in the neighborhood.

LEGGET

Afternoon, Officers. I'm the owner, Allen Legget. Be happy to help... do you mind if I see some ID?

*Busted.* Mary Beth's turn--

MARY BETH

Actually he was just teasing... we're friends of the boy who was murdered-- Thornton Tate-- and we're trying to find the girl in this photo with him.

LEGGET

Breaks my heart. This neighborhood just keeps getting worse and worse-- If I could sell this place I would.

MARY BETH

Do you mind if we look at your security footage? See if she's with anyone else?

LEGGET

Oh, they don't work. Just a deterrent.

Looks like they're S.O.L., until Mary Beth gets her flirt on...

MARY BETH

Mind taking another gander? I'd bet a businessman like you never forgets a face.

Legget blushes, even the old boys are susceptible to her charms.

LEGGET

Actually... she does look familiar. I also own a chicken restaurant, "Wing and a Prayer," on Savannah Street. Girl like this picks up orders sometime with a man-- mouth full of gold teeth, drives a blue Cutlass.

Off KZ's look to Mary Beth-- CUT TO:

EXT. CORNER MART - SUNSET

KZ

I know that guy-- his name is P-Dub.

Mary Beth walk to her car with KZ.

KZ (CONT'D)

Lieutenant in the south side Six Six gang. Maybe our French girl is his baby momma? If P-Dub got jealous, that would give him reason to take out Thornton. Josh, too.

MARY BETH

I doubt Thornton or Josh were much of a threat to "P-Dub."

KZ

Best lead we got so far...

As they get in the car, Mary Beth can't help but ask--

MARY BETH

P-Dub? Really? Why can't anyone use their god-given name? I don't even know what 'KZ' stands for.

KZ

Far as you concerned, it stands for keepin' it zipped.

That's when Mary Beth notices the time--

MARY BETH

Oh, fudge-- I'm gonna be late.

INT. PEACH TREE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Dolled up and looking like a million bucks, Mary Beth moves quickly through the posh restaurant until she finds--

Carlos. Sitting alone. Although he's clearly been waiting for a while he still smiles and stands when she enters.

AFTER DINNER

Carlos and Mary Beth share a dessert. Mary Beth smiles.

CARLOS

What?

MARY BETH

Nothing.

CARLOS

That smile-- that wasn't nothing.

MARY BETH

It's just... it's been a long time.

CARLOS

You ever wonder-- what could have been?

MARY BETH

You mean if you hadn't left me for Uncle Sam right out of high school?

CARLOS

I mean if you had waited while I got Uncle Sam to pay for college?

MARY BETH

You know me, always a live-for-the-moment kind of girl... 'till I had a "moment" that gave me my boy.

Suddenly Mary Beth's face falls. *Feeling like shit for enjoying herself... even for just a few moments.*

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

Then I lived for him, I guess.

Mary Beth composes herself-- back to business.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

You don't know anything about a P-Dub, do you? Member of the six-six gang?

CARLOS

Six-six gang? Control the south-side. Why?

MARY BETH

No reason, just thought he might be someone you should talk to.

CARLOS

When you try to manipulate me like one of your students-- it's insulting.

MARY BETH

Don't be mad--

CARLOS

I'm mad at myself-- for believing my own lie. I knew you probably didn't want to go out, that you had some agenda, but I told myself that some part of you might want to give us another shot.

MARY BETH

Carlos, I am so sorry--

Mary Beth's phone RINGS-- Carlos drops some cash on the table--

CARLOS

No, I'm sorry-- I really am-- you've suffered a terrible loss, nothing can change that. But at some point you're gonna remember that life is for living... when you do, call me.

He exits-- leaving Mary Beth alone with her phone.

MARY BETH (INTO PHONE)  
Hope you're having better luck than I am...

KZ (O.S., THROUGH PHONE)  
Just found out P-Dub is going to the fights  
tonight...

EXT. PARKING LOT, SALVAGE YARD - NIGHT

KZ (V.O.)  
...maybe Miss France will be there, too?

The minivan parks between stacks of junked cars. In the distance we can see work lights and a crowd gathering for the fights. KZ slips out of the passenger seat--

KZ  
Stay here-- doors locked.

MARY BETH  
I'm coming in--

KZ  
I needed you to get me here-- now I need  
you to stay put.

Mary Beth looks around-- something very creepy about this place.

MARY BETH  
What kind of fights are these?

KZ  
You don't want to know.

EXT. SALVAGE YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Inside the salvage yard and hidden by walls of old cars are a couple hundred SPECTATORS drinking and getting rowdy. Most of them are packing and all of them are intoxicated. There's violence in the air and KZ is on edge...

INT. MINIVAN - SAME

Mary Beth notices a truck pulling up. She slouches down as the MEN open the back, removing a kennel with a massive PIT BULL.

Now Mary Beth knows exactly what kind of fights these are.

EXT. SALVAGE YARD - SAME

In the center of the yard the crowd loudly places bets. *They're as disgusting as the activity they're engaged in.*

Across the ring, KZ spots a pumped up spectator with a mouth full of gold teeth... P-Dub, 20's. *No sign of the French girl.*

As the pit bulls are brought in, a PROMOTER sticks a small terrier with his mouth duct-taped closed in front of a caged dog. *He's about to be slaughtered.*

PROMOTER

You all ready for the opening act?

CROWD

BAIT DOG-- BAIT DOG-- BAIT DOG--

INT. MINIVAN - SAME

Mary Beth can't sit still-- every fiber of her being is screaming for her to stop this cruelty. Unsure what to do, she dials KZ... it goes to voicemail.

MARY BETH (INTO PHONE)

You brought me to a dog fight?!? I cannot sit here while this happens.

She hangs up-- about to crawl out of her skin-- opens her phone again and types a text to KZ. ON THE SCREEN: *get out-- i'm calling the police.*

INT. SALVAGE YARD - SAME

Pleasantries exchanged, KZ shows P-Dub the picture--

P-DUB

Don't know no French girl.

KZ

You sure?

P-DUB

Step off, KZ. Trying to watch the fights--

Just as they're about to open the cage and let the agitated pit bull TEAR the bait dog to shreds, someone yells-- "FIVE OH."

Girls SCREAM-- SPECTATORS run-- Dog HANDLERS try to GRAB their prizefighters as two patrol cars RACE UP, sirens blaring. Off KZ's face, trapped in the chaos...

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. ATLANTA POLICE DEPARTMENT, MAJOR CRIMES DIVISION - NIGHT

If Carlos was unhappy with Mary Beth before, now he's just plain pissed. As he escorts her out of booking...

CARLOS

So after dessert... you went to a dogfight?

MARY BETH

We were looking for P-Dub-- thought he would know where she is--

Mary Beth flashes the picture of the French girl... with Thornton. Big mistake. Carlos hits the roof.

CARLOS

Are you trying to get me fired?

MARY BETH

We think P-Dub might have something to do with Thornton's death--

CARLOS

You know where P-Dub was the night Thornton died? At a dog fight. We've got a hundred some-odd witnesses that put him there-- half of them are being processed right now.

Mary Beth is speechless... *so much for that theory.*

CARLOS (CONT'D)

You need to stop playing private eye-- and it's not just friendly advice anymore. Next time you interfere with the investigation, I'm not going to be able to stop Zeke from booking you.

MARY BETH

I understand... I do.

CARLOS

I hope so. You're breaking my heart here.

Carlos turns to leave as Mary Beth exits past Zeke-- he starts to BARK like a dog. Cops SNICKER. Mary Beth steams...

EXT. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS - DAWN

Blinding white light-- KZ squints as he walks outside. When his eyes adjust he sees-- Mary Beth. KZ keeps walking.

MARY BETH

(sheepish)

I bailed you out-- gotta count for something?

KZ

Also got me charged with attending a dog fight. What the hell were you thinking?

MARY BETH

I'm so sorry. I tried to email you-- or text you-- whatever it's called. Carlos said he'll talk to the judge--

KZ

You don't get it-- this is my second strike. I can't risk getting arrested for interfering in an investigation.

Mary Beth's heart is breaking. *This is all her fault.*

MARY BETH

What about Josh?

KZ

Josh would tell me to fly straight. 'Cause if I don't, I'm gonna end up like my Dad in jail. Or worse... like my mom, so strung out I'd sell my own kid for ten bucks.

That's when Mary Beth realizes why Rafus called KZ--

MARY BETH

Ten Spot.

As KZ walks away from a destitute Mary Beth, Lynyrd Skynrd's lonely *Tuesday's Gone* carries us to...

INT. JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

Mary Beth is sitting in her office... lost in thought. Suddenly Principal Teague is at her door.

PRINCIPAL TEAGUE

Feeling better?

MARY BETH

Excuse me?

PRINCIPAL TEAGUE

Friday-- you called in sick? Or were you taking another three day weekend?

MARY BETH

(checked out)

No... I wasn't. I mean, I don't.

PRINCIPAL TEAGUE

Good. I let you get away with it last year, even though you weren't really sick, but I can't this year.

That's when Mary Beth checks back in-- and she is pissed.

MARY BETH

You know what-- you're right-- I wasn't sick last year-- I was in mourning. And I don't understand why you have to be such a See-You-Next-Tuesday 'bout it.

PRINCIPAL TEAGUE

You best watch your tone, Ms. Baker, if you care about this job--

Suddenly it dawns on Mary Beth--

MARY BETH

You know what? I DON'T. I care about the kids-- like Daryl Agee-- who you expelled. But it's getting harder and harder to help them with all this bureaucratic bees wax. I'm not sure how we're going to improve their test scores but it sure as heck ain't gonna happen while we're all sittin' around watchin' you eat our annual budget in reduced-fat muffins.

Before a shocked Principal Teague can respond, Mary Beth grabs her bag and storms out past Ingrid's desk.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

Don't bother firing me-- I quit.

All Principal Teague can do is stand there... speechless.

INGRID

That... was amazing.

EXT. MARY BETH'S HOUSE - DAY

Mary Beth sits on her front porch, holding an unlit cigarette. She rolls it between her fingers as Billy approaches. Mary Beth quickly throws the cigarette away.

BILLY

It's okay if you want to smoke in front of me. My Mom does it all the time.

MARY BETH

Josh asked me to quit for his sixteenth birthday.

She stares at the pack.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

I've failed him so many times now... I'm not sure failing him once more really matters. Our only lead is a dead-end, KZ has called it quits, and I've lost my job. And even if I tried to keep going... Zeke is gonna have me arrested for interfering with an investigation.

Mary Beth exhales... *utterly defeated.*

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

Time to face facts-- can't keep playin' private eye.

BILLY

You can't give up; you just got to try harder. That's what Josh taught me. When I couldn't shoot a basket-- and all the kids at school were making fun of me-- Josh told me how he did it. Said he just kept trying... till he could.

Billy grabs the cigarettes... shoots them into the trashcan.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Josh never gave up-- neither should you.

MARY BETH

If playing detective is the problem... maybe I need to go pro?

INT. COX PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS - DAY

Barney Cox is pouring whiskey into his coffee when he looks up and sees Mary Beth pushing past the RECEPTIONIST.

COX

It's okay, Laverne.

Cox quickly hides the bottle--

MARY BETH

Don't bother-- smelled whiskey on your breath the first time we met.

COX

Then why'd you hire me?

MARY BETH

'Cause you were all I could afford.

COX

Then I need to raise my rates...

MARY BETH

Here's the deal-- police can't charge me with interfering in an investigation if I have a private investigator's license. Only problem is I can't get one myself--

COX

Only companies owned by individuals with degrees in criminal justice or a background in law enforcement can.

MARY BETH

Exactly... individuals like you.

COX

(confused)

My company already has a P.I. license.

MARY BETH

That's why I need you to hire me.

Cox practically does a spit-take.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

Please. Mr. Cox-- you said you would do anything for me-- that the only person who could help me was myself.

Cox is speechless.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

We don't have to work together, just put me on the paperwork. Once I find out what happened to my boy-- I'm done.

Cox takes a deep breath...

COX

You promise-- you'll never call me again?

Mary Beth practically JUMPS on Cox-- hugging him.

MARY BETH

There's one more small thing...

Cox tries to pull out of the hug-- she won't let him go.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

I've got a partner.

INT. KZ'S APARTMENT, CENTER HILL - DAY

KZ's right back where he was when we first met him; on his phone in his decrepit apartment. In a series of jump cuts we see him pouring through "help wanted" ads.

KZ

You all hiring a security guard?

But instead of running scams, he's calling "help wanted" ads.

KZ (CONT'D)

No, I haven't been convicted... recently.

(beat)

Hello...?

If KZ was fast-talking and full of life before, now he sounds just plain beat.

His phone RINGS. He checks caller ID: CRAZY WHITE WOMAN. He hits ignore. Suddenly there's a knock at the door. He looks---

OUTSIDE THE WINDOW

Sees Mary Beth on the phone-- she waves. KZ just walks away.

KZ (O.S.)

I ain't here.

Mary Beth takes a deep breath... *here we go.*

MARY BETH

Look... I was wrong. About you. Truth is I've been wrong about you for a long time now. You were Josh's best friend, and although I don't appreciate all the trouble you got my boy into, I do appreciate all that you've done to help him... to help me... since... well since he was...

Mary Beth can't say it... can't hold back the tears anymore. A year of grief, a year of being strong, finally comes to an end.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

Besides me you're the only person who still cares about Josh. You and I both know he deserved better... better than dying in a ditch like that.

Just as Mary Beth is about to walk away, the door opens...

KZ

I come out there... you gonna tase me?

MARY BETH

You come out here, you can tase me.

KZ

For real?

MARY BETH

Don't be foolish.

KZ steps outside...

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

I will, however, guarantee that you won't be arrested for interfering in an investigation.

KZ

How you gonna do that?

MARY BETH

Just had these printed at Kinko's.

Mary Beth hands KZ a business card from her purse.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

We're now employed by a fully licensed and bonded private investigating firm...

As KZ reads the card, his smile fades...

KZ

Why we gotta be Cox Investigators?

INT. MINIVAN - DAY

While Mary Beth drives, KZ rehashes what they know so far.

KZ

Josh met a French girl before he was murdered-- so did Thornton.

MARY BETH

And Thornton's girl was spotted with P-Dub.

KZ

Except P-Dub claims he's never seen the girl before. If he's not the killer, why would he lie?

That's when the truth dawns on Mary Beth...

MARY BETH

Maybe he's not the one lying?

A car honks-- Mary Beth swerves.

KZ

Maybe you should watch the road.

MARY BETH

Legget-- the Corner Mart owner-- he was the one who said he saw the French girl with P-Dub. If P-Dub doesn't know the girl--

KZ

Then you think Legget is the one lying?  
Seems like a stretch...

MARY BETH

Trust me-- if I could catch a football like I can catch a liar, I'd be in the NFL.

INT. JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Ingrid's on her computer, phone to her ear.

INGRID (INTO PHONE)

Allen Legget is actually pronounced "Alain Leggey." He's French-Canadian, born in Montreal. Everything else checks out... small business owner, dual citizenship, no criminal record.

INT. MINIVAN - INTERCUT WITH ABOVE

INGRID (O.S, OVER SPEAKER PHONE)

Owns two chicken joints, a house in Hampton Heights... two dozen muffins for pick-up tomorrow...

MARY BETH

Did you say muffins?

Ingrid watches Principal Teague walk away.

INGRID

Sorry, Teague was walking by.

(back to the computer)

Looks like he also bought a second house on Market Street-- about a year ago.

KZ

Market Street's just a few blocks from the Solomon Projects.

Mary Beth lights up--

MARY BETH

Legget said if he "could sell, he would."  
If the neighborhood is only getting worse,  
why buy more real estate?

EXT. MARKET STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Down the block from the house, Mary Beth and KZ sit in the minivan... waiting.

KZ

What are we lookin' for?

MARY BETH

Not sure... but I'll know when I find it.

After a series of DISSOLVES... Mary Beth's eyes go wide--

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

Found it.

Or more appropriately, "her." Walking out the front door of Legget's house is the French Girl from the photo with Thornton.

She waves to another teenage GIRL in the second floor window before getting in an SUV with a white MAN in his 20's.

EXT. DEKALB AVENUE - MOMENTS LATER

As the SUV heads towards downtown, Mary Beth does her best to stay close without getting too close--

INT. MINIVAN - CONTINUOUS

MARY BETH (O.S.)

Trying to keep a low profile--

KZ

What's not low profile 'bout a minivan?

EXT. DEKALB AVENUE - CONTINUOUS

The SUV coasts through a yellow traffic light-- the minivan isn't going to make it-- so Mary Beth FLOORS it, runs the light.

Tires SQUEAL as the minivan just barely avoids a major accident... but stays on the tail of the SUV.

INT. MINIVAN

KZ

Fast and the Furious ain't exactly low-profile...

EXT. THE ATLANTAN CLUB - DAY

The SUV pulls up to the Atlantan Club valet. An exclusive members-only restaurant and club in downtown, the Atlantan caters to the city's elite.

The French girl gets out as her companion circles the block.

DOWN THE STREET

Mary Beth and KZ watch helplessly from the minivan--

KZ

What now?

MARY BETH

We wait.

KZ

She's on her own in there-- won't be when she comes back out.

MARY BETH

What about club security?

KZ

Who you talking to?

EXT. THE ATLANTAN CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

KZ walks right up to the front door--

SECURITY

This is a members only establishment.

KZ

Oh I see... you're not going to let me in 'cause you hate the black people, right?

SECURITY

No-- it's because you don't have a membership.

KZ

And how do you know I don't have a membership?

The security guard hesitates...

KZ (CONT'D)

Say it with me now, "it's cause I hate  
black people!"

While KZ pitches a fit, Mary Beth casually walks past security.

INT. THE ATLANTAN CLUB, RESTAURANT LEVEL - MOMENTS LATER

Mary Beth approaches the MAITRE D'--

MARY BETH

Have you seen my friend? Blond, early 20's?

MAITRE D'

Afraid not, Ma'am.

MARY BETH

Mind if I look around?

MAITRE D'

Go right ahead.

MARY BETH

You are so sweet, thank you...

That's when Mary Beth spots the French girl heading up the stairs towards the members-only guest rooms.

Mary Beth RUSHES after her-- desperate to catch the girl-- rounds the corner into the--

HALLWAY

Where she catches a glimpse of the girl entering a room with--

MARY BETH

Councilman Davenport?

COUNCILMAN DAVENPORT, 50's, could not look guiltier. He tries to quickly move the girl into the room--

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

Councilman Davenport, can I have a word--

COUNCILMAN DAVENPORT

I'm afraid this is not a good time for me--

MARY BETH

Might want to make time... unless you want my next conversation to be with Channel 19.

COUNCILMAN DAVENPORT

She's just a family friend--

MARY BETH

Then why do you look like you're lying?

A COUPLE at the other end of the hall shoots them a look--

COUNCILMAN DAVENPORT

Please lower your voice.

MARY BETH

(for the Couple's benefit)

I WILL NOT REMAIN SILENT WHILE YOU CAVORT  
WITH PROFESSIONAL ESCORTS, COUNCILMAN  
DAVENPORT.

Security arrives at the other end of the hall--

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

She's in here!

COUNCILMAN DAVENPORT

(to Mary Beth)

They're coming for you--

The French girl panics-- pushes past Davenport--

COUNCILMAN DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

Elodie-- wait--

--and makes a break for the fire-exit. Terrified of losing their  
only lead, Mary Beth RACES after her.

INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Unfortunately the French girl is much quicker--

MARY BETH

How are you so fast in heels?

EXT. ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

Mary Beth BURSTS outside-- just in time to see the girl escaping  
with her driver in the SUV.

A frustrated Mary Beth tries to go back inside... but the door  
has locked behind her.

MARY BETH

FOR RICE CAKES.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. THE ATLANTAN CLUB, FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY

Mary Beth rounds the corner-- finds KZ arguing with a very unhappy HEAD OF SECURITY. She signals "let's go." As KZ exits--

KZ

Be back for my membership!

MARY BETH

Girl we've been looking for-- Elodie-- is a prostitute.

KZ

Maybe Thornton was running 'round with a pro? Not meetin' many girls at band camp--

MARY BETH

And he certainly had the money... But not my boy-- not Josh.

KZ

Definitely not on the allowance you were givin'. Maybe he met her somewhere else?

MARY BETH

Truth is... I have no idea what Josh was up to the last few months of his life.

As she begins to despair, we FLICKER CUT TO:

Those silent images of ten year old Josh once more, pee-wee football with his friends. It plays a little longer... and for the first time we realize one of them is a young KZ.

EXT. MARY BETH'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

As Mary Beth gets out of the car... she finally comes clean to Josh's oldest friend.

MARY BETH

Last time I spoke to Josh... we fought.

Mary Beth tears up... the pain, the guilt... overwhelming.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

I gave him this medical alert necklace when he was eight-- he was allergic to bees.

KZ

Never took it off.

MARY BETH

Said it was magic, that it protected him from bad guys. Even when he was old enough to not wear it, he still did... then about a week before he died, I noticed he'd stopped. I looked in his room, couldn't find it. He caught me in there and I lost it. I was so hurt, so upset... he just threw it away. He was my everything and he just threw me away.

Mary Beth takes a deep breath...

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

I guess I needed someone to blame... so I blamed you.

KZ

You weren't wrong. 'Bout me getting Josh into trouble. The shoplifting? He was covering for me. Knew I'd get sent to a state home, so he took the blame... Josh stood up for the people he cared about. That's something you gave him that he never let go of.

Mary Beth's genuinely touched...

MARY BETH

Thank you... I had no idea you were such a fan of N'Sync.

KZ

--featuring Nelly. Nelly. Can we end this pity party and get back to Legget?

MARY BETH

Well, we know he's running at least one high-end prostitute out of his house on Market Street. If Thornton was involved with Legget's girl, that gives him motive for the murder. He must have lied about P-Dub to throw us off his trail.

EXT. DESERTED PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Mary Beth and KZ wait by her van in a deserted parking lot. An old Jeep pulls up and Carlos gets out. He's not happy to see KZ.

CARLOS

Thought I asked you to come alone?

MARY BETH

We're together.

Carlos raises an eyebrow... Mary Beth can't help but laugh.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

Just partners.

CARLOS

Not sure that's better.

Carlos shoots KZ a look. He waves back-- shit-eating grin.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Looked into Legget for you... guy's clean.

MARY BETH

Then why the cloak and dagger?

CARLOS

He's too clean. No health code violations, unpaid parking tickets, or noise complaints-- nothing. Only way a small business owner like Legget can have a record that clean is if he's got some very powerful friends. More than just Councilman Davenport.

MARY BETH

Why would they protect him?

CARLOS

Atlanta's number one in the states for underage sex trafficking-- instead of Johns flying to Thailand for the week, they fly here for the day. It's big business.

Mary Beth shivers.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

If Legget killed Thornton Tate, he did it because he knew he could get away with it. We're not talking about some gangbanger from the projects.

(to KZ)

No offense.

KZ

None taken, Ese.

CARLOS

I can't take on someone that connected with just a theory.

Mary Beth takes a deep breath...

MARY BETH

Then I'll find out the facts.

CARLOS

It's not going to bring Josh back.

MARY BETH

My boy died in a ditch. Shot in the back of the head. He deserves better.

CARLOS

So do you. Be careful.

INT. MARY BETH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mary Beth and KZ huddle around Ingrid's laptop.

INGRID

Been by his place twice today-- and talked to all the neighbors.

ON THE SCREEN: Recent photos of Legget's house.

INGRID (CONT'D)

Apparently the girls used to walk to the Corner Mart for cigarettes and candy-- but no one's seen them for the last year.

KZ

'Bout the same time Josh died.

MARY BETH

They must've lost the privilege.

KZ

"The pimp give-ith and the pimp take-ith away."

MARY BETH

So the plan is to get inside-- find the girl and find out what she knows. I'll text you when I'm done.

KZ

You sure this is a good idea?

MARY BETH

No, but I'm sure we've got to try...

EXT. LEGGET'S HOUSE, MARKET STREET - NIGHT

KZ walks up with a pizza box, rings the bell. A large THUG in a baseball cap answers-- the same baseball cap the killer wore.

KZ

This 42 Market Street?

He shouts back to a HEAVY watching TV, 9mm on the table.

THUG

Hey-- you order a pizza?

HEAVY

Nah-- maybe one of the girls snuck a call?

UPSTAIRS

The heavy heads upstairs where eight underage girls live in cramped quarters. Not one of them is over eighteen... most are quite a bit younger.

HEAVY

Any of you girls use the phone?

Nothing but blank stares.

DOWNSTAIRS

KZ's pushed his way inside now... looks around the house. Feels more like a prison than a home.

KZ

So... how many people you got living here?

The Thug just stares him down...

KZ (CONT'D)

Somebody's grumpy. Know when I get grumpy?  
When I'm hungry...

The heavy comes back downstairs-- shakes his head "no."

THUG

Time for you to go--

KZ

No wait-- found the name...

KZ fumbles with the hand-written receipt--

KZ (CONT'D)

"Allen Legget?"

THUG

I promise-- Mr. Legget did not order that  
pizza.

KZ

Well I ain't leavin' till an "Allen Legget"  
pays me \$19.97. Plus tip.

INT. UPSTAIRS, MARKET STREET HOUSE - SAME

One of the girls-- no older than 12-- hears a TAP on the window.  
Terrified she runs to an older GIRL, 15, for protection.

TAP-TAP. There it is again. The older girl gazes outside and  
sees... Mary Beth's smiling face. The girl opens the window and  
Mary Beth climbs in off a ladder Ingrid is holding outside.

YOUNG GIRL

(broken English)

Are you... angel?

MARY BETH

No, but I'm here to help.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS, MARKET STREET HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

HEAVY

You need to go. Now.

KZ

If I come home with a pie-- I pay for the  
pie. Me. Out of my paycheck. Now I don't  
know what you guys do for a livin' but if  
you can afford this house-- and all these  
nice bars on these windows-- you clearly  
can afford \$19.97-PLUS-TIP.

Behind him the thug makes a call.

THUG (INTO PHONE)

We got a guy over here, says you ordered a  
pizza. Knew you by name.

KZ

Who ever you callin', tell him you need to  
borrow twenty bucks!

The thug hangs up-- turns to KZ

THUG

Mr. Legget's on his way...

KZ glances down at his phone... the screen is blank.

KZ

(mock bravado)

Tell his ass to stop at the ATM first.

INT. UPSTAIRS, MARKET STREET HOUSE - SAME

Mary Beth moves from room to room, motioning for the girls to keep quiet.

She searches the last room where she finds the girl... Elodie.

ELODIE

You can't be here-- they will kill you.

MARY BETH

That what happened to Thornton?

ELODIE

Go-- now.

MARY BETH

Not leaving till you tell me everything.

ELODIE

I made Thornton think we were in love so he would help me run away. Told him it was over if he didn't. We argued-- I won. When he finally tried to get me out... they beat him in front of us.

MARY BETH

You just... watched?

ELODIE

I helped him escape... but they found him. Killed him.

The cruelty is overwhelming. Mary Beth trembles as she speaks...

MARY BETH

The other boy who was murdered, last year?

Elodie motions towards a terrified BRUNETTE, 17, in the corner.

ELODIE

He met Jeanvieve-- at the store.

As Mary Beth moves closer, she sees that Jeanvieve is wearing Josh's missing medical alert necklace.

MARY BETH

That was his...

Jeanvieve holds it up for Mary Beth... shimmering in the light.

JEANVIEVE

(broken English)

Keep me safe. From the bad men.

Mary Beth can't hold back the tears... *Josh didn't throw it away, he gave it to someone who needed it.*

MARY BETH

My son... he died trying to get you out of here?

Jeanvieve nods, "yes." Mary Beth clenches her jaw, the picture of resolve.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

Than that's what we're going to do.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS, MARKET STREET HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

KZ checks his phone again. Still nothing.

HEAVY

Why do you keep looking at your phone?

KZ

My... uh... Manager. He texts me it's okay, I'm out of here.

KZ knows he should go but he won't leave Mary Beth high and dry.

LEGGET (O.S.)

What's going on?

KZ's shit just hit his shorts. Legget recognizes KZ--

LEGGET (CONT'D)

You're that kid-- who was asking questions, with the woman-- pretending to be cops.

KZ

Must be thinking of someone else. We all look the same to white people.

LEGGET

Lock the door. No one's going anywhere.

Heavies PUSH KZ into a chair while Legget makes a call.

LEGGET (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)

We have a problem.

EXT. MARKET STREET HOUSE - NIGHT

Mary Beth is funneling the girls out the window and down the ladder to Ingrid. She is not happy.

INGRID

Thought the plan was to just talk to her?

MARY BETH

Changing the plan-- we need witnesses.

Ingrid points the girls towards the side street and the minivan. The girls keep coming... and coming.

INGRID

How many witnesses do we need?

The last girl comes down the ladder... and Ingrid sends the text to KZ. ON THE SCREEN: *get out*

INT. DOWNSTAIRS, MARKET STREET HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

In the Living Room, KZ gets the text. Finally.

KZ

You know what-- keep the pie, I got other deliveries.

He moves towards for the door... but the heavy cuts him off while the thug grabs an old baseball bat.

INT. UPSTAIRS, MARKET STREET HOUSE - SAME

All the girls are gone now, Mary Beth's the last one. She's about to head out the window when she hears--

INT. DOWNSTAIRS, MARKET STREET HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

WHAM-- KZ getting the snot kicked out of him. No running his mouth this time... these guys are hurting him and hurting him bad. Blood STAINS the carpet...

Just when it looks like KZ is done... he LUNGES at Legget, who drops his phone. KZ grabs it before he's CRACKED in the ribs.

THUG

(laughing)

You gonna call for help?

LEGGET

We dumped two white kids in the projects... you think anyone will care if we do the same to you, boy?

MARY BETH (O.C.)

I'd care.

Legget turns to find Mary Beth on the stairs-- taser ready.

MARY BETH (CONT'D)

And I just called 911.

LEGGET

The police-- who do you think planted the meth?

MARY BETH

The thing is, in self defense class they teach girls never to call for help... always shout "fire."

LEGGET

So...?

MARY BETH

So I called the fire department.

Flashing red lights illuminate the windows as two fire trucks roll up. Legget's cocky grin evaporates. Now he's just pissed.

LEGGET

This isn't over...

Mary Beth quickly helps KZ up and out the front door. Legget and his goons just watch.

MARY BETH

Maybe, but we're leaving.

That's when Legget sees--

OUTSIDE

--his stable of underage prostitutes in the front yard. EMT's examine the youngest. Two patrol cars arrive as Mary Beth calls back over her shoulder...

MARY BETH

Now it's over.

Off Legget's look of defeat... CUT TO:

CHANNEL 19 NEWSCAST - LATER THAT NIGHT

A REPORTER does a live report in front of Legget's house. Dozens of news vans and police cars are visible behind her.

NEWSCASTER

Police arrived after two local citizens alerted the fire department to the prostitution ring.

Images of Mary Beth and KZ follow footage of Legget in cuffs.

REPORTER

Murder weapons for both the Thornton Tate  
and the Josh Baker cases were found inside.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ATLANTA - DAWN

The sun rises over the city...

INT. MARY BETH'S HOUSE - MORNING

...while Mary Beth makes bacon cakes for KZ, Ingrid, and Billy.  
KZ's arm is in a sling, but he'll survive.

BILLY

Hey MB-- KZ taught me the new pound. It's  
called the "chop."

Billy makes a chopping motion with KZ-- then runs into the  
living room to watch TV.

MARY BETH

Just made that up, didn't you?

KZ

Obamas didn't invent the pound...

Mary Beth's phone BEEPS.

MARY BETH

Darn thing hasn't stopped since the news  
ran last night.

INGRID

I'll check it for you...

Alone now, KZ pulls Legget's phone out of his pocket... the one  
he palmed during the fight.

KZ

Didn't give it to the police 'cause I'm  
pretty sure it'd just get "lost." If you  
wanna know who's been covering for Legget  
at the Atlanta PD... just hit re-dial.

EXT. MARY BETH'S HOUSE - MORNING

Mary Beth steps outside... alone. She looks at the phone...  
takes a deep breath and then hits redial. Phone to her ear, she  
listens to it RING... and then RING... finally--

INT. ATLANTA P.D., MAJOR CRIMES DIVISION - INTERCUT WITH ABOVE

ZEKE

Lieutenant Taft, here.

After an eternity of silence... and heartache... Mary Beth hangs up. The door behind her opens. It's KZ--

MARY BETH

I won't stop, not till I make him pay.

KZ

Don't you mean, "we?"

Mary Beth nods... it's good to know someone's got your back. Ingrid sticks her head out--

INGRID

You have like six messages from total strangers who saw you and KZ on the news-- they want to hire you.

MARY BETH

Certainly could use the money... what do you think?

KZ

One condition: we get new business cards.

CUT TO: A football SPIRALING in slow motion. POP OUT TO REVEAL:

EXT. BOBBY DODD STADIUM - NIGHT

Mary Beth's at the game again, like she is every Saturday night. We pan over to the seat next to her... and find KZ.

KZ

Casey. That's my real name.

MARY BETH

Shut-the-front-door.

KZ

I know, right? Got a white boy's name.

MARY BETH

No... you got a white *girl's* name.

Just as KZ is about to give Mary Beth a hard time ("Who needs TWO first names?"), Tech kicks a field goal and the crowd ROARS. As Mary Beth and KZ CHEER, *She Talks to Angels* kicks back in...

END OF PILOT