

THE WIDOW DETECTIVE

"Pilot"

Written By

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February 1, 2012

TEASER

EXT. SAN FERNANDO VALLEY STREET - MORNING

SUNRISE in the San Fernando Valley. WE ARE MOVING with a lone jogger as he bangs the pavement, pushing himself...

Meet DETECTIVE DENNY BRENNAN, 45, sexy and solid. Running isn't this guy's favorite thing, but he does it because slowing down isn't an option for him.

He suddenly cuts across a lawn and up onto the porch of a handsome-looking house in Studio City. He scoops up the LA Times. On the front page, a Column One article with the headline: *LAPD's Widow Detective*. And a photo of Denny.

DENNY

Shit!

Denny scans the article, cursing under his breath, getting more and more heated. We catch snippets -- "*unlucky career statistic*"... "*three fallen partners in a twenty-four year career*"... "*unprecedented in LAPD history*", etc.

JILL (O.S.)

(from inside the house)

Denny!

Denny tosses the paper into the bushes, burying it!

INT. JAWORSKI HOUSE - KITCHEN - A MOMENT LATER

Denny rushes in, finding JILL JAWORSKI (late 30s, a beauty with fiery eyes) and her three daughters -- AMANDA, 18, SAMANTHA ("SAM"), 16, and ELLA, 14. Jill, a struggling restaurateur, is making breakfast... the girls at the table, texting.

DENNY

Good morning!

Denny gives Jill a kiss on the cheek... greets each girl affectionately.

JILL

Did you get the paper?

DENNY

Didn't see it. So how'd everyone sleep?

No one answers, the girls lost in their phones.

DENNY (CONT'D)

Sam? Sleep?

SAM
Like a baby.

DENNY
That's my girl. Ella?

ELLA
I don't know. I was asleep.

DENNY
Good point. Amanda?

AMANDA
How can I sleep? I'm getting
married in six days.

DENNY
You are?!

AMANDA
Funny. What's not funny is my
psycho mother's complete flip out
with the most important person in
my life right now.

DENNY
Eric?

AMANDA
The woman making my dress.

JILL
(to Amanda)
That dress was supposed to be
finished three weeks ago. And now
she's copping an attitude like
she's Vera La-De-Da Wang.
(to Denny)
So I spoke my mind.

DENNY
You always do.

Sam and Ella giggle.

JILL
Amanda's final fitting's at noon.
We need backup. Bring your badge.

Before he can respond, she grabs Denny's phone and schedules
it in his calendar.

JILL (CONT'D)
Now sit. Breakfast.

Denny checks his watch, cringes.

DENNY

Sorry, I gotta finish my run.

JILL

Don't you dare, Denny. I made waffles!

Denny offers an apologetic expression (a frequent look of his). He kisses her, stuffs a waffle in his mouth, and is out the door...

EXT. SAN FERNANDO VALLEY STREET - MORNING

Denny jogging again. Breaking a real sweat now. He flips to "Lainey" in his address book. Calls her. He gets her voicemail. Disappointed. BEEP!

DENNY

It's me. Have you seen the Times? I knew they were thinking of writing an article... but front page! Picture! Call me back.

He hangs up... then runs up onto the porch of another house, more modest, in Van Nuys. He looks for the LA Times... but it's gone -- panic! He catches sight of it through the window on the dining room table, unopened.

INT. MAYA'S HOUSE - A MOMENT LATER

Denny grabs the paper, hurries into the kitchen and stuffs it in the trash! The kitchen is also modest, with a vast collection of PRAYER CANDLES, some lit, some not.

MAYA (O.S.)

Morning.

He swings around. MAYA DAVIS (late 20s, Hispanic, a knockout) has just entered. She is dressed in black mourning attire (or rather her own sexy variation).

DENNY

Hey!
(he kisses her)
You're up early.

MAYA

I couldn't sleep. We went to church.
(then)
By the way, Father Andrew asked about you again. He wants to meet you.

DENNY

Really?

MAYA

Yeah, I've told him all about you.
 (off Denny's surprise)
 He's my priest.

Maya's 5-year-old son, DANTE, charges into the room, grabs Denny's leg, attaching himself. Denny pretends not to notice, dragging Dante around, making the kid laugh.

MAYA (CONT'D)

The open house at Dante's school is today at four. You're gonna be there, right?

He forgot it was today. His day just got even busier.

DENNY

I wouldn't miss it.

Just to be sure, Maya grabs his phone and schedules it in his calendar.

DENNY (CONT'D)

Speaking of Dante... where is that kid?

He continues dragging Dante around, making him laugh harder.

DENNY (CONT'D)

He's always around here somewhere.

He finally shakes him off.

MAYA

That's enough, Dante. Eat your breakfast.

Denny grabs Dante off the floor and plants him in his chair.

DANTE

I caught a lizard, Denny. It lost its tail. Wanna see it?

DENNY

You bet. But it's gonna have to wait, buddy. I gotta run.

MAYA

But you just got here.

There's that apologetic expression again from Denny.

DENNY

I'll see you both at four.

A kiss for Maya, high-five for Dante, then out the door...

EXT. MAYA'S HOUSE/SAN FERNANDO VALLEY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Denny bolts from the house, takes off running again. Another call to Lainey. Gets her voicemail again. BEEP!

DENNY
Where the hell are you?

EXT. LAINEY'S HOUSE - CALABASAS - MORNING

Denny pulls into the driveway of the west valley McMansion, showered and changed from his run. He finds LAINEY VARGAS BECKER (early 40s, a strong blue-collar sexiness, owner of a valley hair salon) at the front door, reading the LA Times. Denny rolls down his window...

DENNY
So, what, you're ignoring me?

LAINEY
I'm reading the paper. Fascinating article.

There's a comfortable chemistry between these two. They've known each other, and loved each other, a long time.

LAINEY (CONT'D)
I especially like the part about how you stepped up with the families of your fallen partners to "fill the void." Gee, lucky us.

DENNY
Thanks for the sympathy.

LAINEY
So how'd Jill and Maya react? Or let me guess, you hid the paper from them.

DENNY
To spare their feelings --

LAINEY
To save your ass. Jill invited me to Amanda's fitting...

DENNY
You own a hair salon, you're doing Amanda's hair for the wedding, just talk to Jill about hair.
(re: newspaper)
It can be our little secret.

LAINEY
Don't kid yourself, honey. You have no secrets.

She leans into the car and gives him a sympathetic kiss.

LAINY (CONT'D)
 Drink later? Something I need to
 talk to you about.

DENNY
 Sure.

LAINY
 By the way, did you hear Troy
 passed his detective's test?

DENNY
 How would I hear? It's not like
 your son has me on speed dial. In
 fact, last time I checked he still
 hated me.

LAINY
 Troy doesn't hate you.

DENNY
 (half-joking)
 You're right. Hates too strong a
 word. He just wishes I was dead.

LAINY
 That was ten years ago, Denny.

DENNY
 I love your son, Lainey. You know
 that. And I wish it was different.
 But he's made it clear...he doesn't
 want a relationship with me.

Pains them both. Denny's late. He waves... drives off.

INT. LAPD - HOLLYWOOD DIVISION - MORNING

An antiquated squad room littered with 21st Century
 technology. Denny enters, full of respect, well-earned. As
 he anticipated, the room falls silent. He doesn't flinch...
 lets the awkwardness hang there a moment. Then finally...

DENNY
 And they say no one reads the LA
 Times anymore.

Tension eased. Several people shake Denny's hand... pat his
 back... offer their silent support. Denny settles in at his
 desk. DETECTIVE ERIC DWYER approaches (32, eager boy scout,
 Amanda Jaworski's fiance).

DWYER

If you ask me it's a cheap shot.
Makes it sound like you were taking
advantage.

DENNY

I appreciate that, Eric.

DWYER

And I appreciate you, Denny. I
mean it. As a cop. As a man. As
my future... what exactly are you
gonna be anyway?

DENNY

Your biggest nightmare if Amanda
isn't happy, that's what.

Dwyer cracks a smile... then realizes Denny is serious.

DENNY (CONT'D)

By the way, big day today. You
know why, right?
(Eric doesn't)
The last fitting for her dress.

DWYER

Am I supposed to go with her to
that?

DENNY

No. But you're supposed to know
about these things.

Dwyer returns to his desk, worried. His partner, DETECTIVE
NELSON LOPEZ (30, ADD energy), speaks up...

LOPEZ

Awesome picture, Denny. You look
ten years younger.

DENNY

That's probably because I was ten
years younger. But thanks.

LOPEZ

(lowering his voice)
So I spoke to that bruja I told you
about in my neighborhood. She's
all Cajun voodoo and stuff... the
real deal... and she said she could
remove your curse, no problem... a
hundred bucks.

Denny takes a couple steps toward Lopez, who leans an equal
distance back in his chair.

DENNY

I don't know, Lopez... truth is I've kind of come to enjoy the personal space you allot me by staying at least three feet away at all times.

Denny moves to his desk... intercepted by DETECTIVE CATHERINE PORTER, 42, African-American, a third level detective.

PORTER

What a PR nightmare for the department, huh?

DENNY

I'm sure it is.

PORTER

You hear from the Captain yet?

DENNY

Look, Cath... you got something to say, say it. I'm a big boy.

PORTER

You really wanna do this now?

Denny gestures, giving her the floor.

PORTER (CONT'D)

Okay. You're a great cop, Denny. I just think... three partners, three strikes. In my opinion -- And you know I love you --

DENNY

(mocking)

And I feel that love.

Increased tension between them... broken by LIEUTENANT ROB LUTTRELL, 50, African-American.

LUTTRELL

Denny.

Denny heads into Luttrell's office. As he does, he swings by Lopez's desk and smacks him on the back.

DENNY

Thanks again for the support, Lopez.

Lopez leaps up, freaked out!

LOPEZ

You douche bag, Brennan!

Denny smiles, disappearing into Luttrell's office, leaving Lopez frantically pulling off his "contaminated" shirt and cleansing his work area with a smudge stick.

INT. LIEUTENANT LUTTRELL'S OFFICE - MORNING

Denny and Luttrell. They came up the ranks together, a solid and loyal friendship. On Luttrell's desk, the LA Times.

LUTTRELL

It's pure trash. Don't let it bother you.

DENNY

You know what bothers me, Rob? Three decent cops are dead leaving three wives without a husband and five kids without a father and all anyone is focusing on is me.

Luttrell pulls a bottle of scotch from his bottom drawer, offers a drink to Denny. Denny shakes his head.

LUTTRELL

I got my friend at the Times to hold off as long as I could out of respect for Davis's widow. But like it or not, they have the right to print it.

(then)

Maybe you should consider taking a little time off.

DENNY

Somebody want me out permanently? Be honest.

Luttrell shoots him a look, a denial.

DENNY (CONT'D)

Just checking. Look, about finding me a new partner...

LUTTRELL

I told you, I'm working on it.

DENNY

I've heard the whispers. Half the guys out there believe Lopez's crackpot theory that I'm cursed... the other half aren't taking any chances.

LUTTRELL

We're shuffling a few guys over from Northeast.

DENNY

My point is, I don't need a partner. Been six months and I've been busting butt, and closing cases, just fine on my own.

Luttrell considers this. The phone rings. He answers it... TALKS a moment, writes down an address... hangs up.

DENNY (CONT'D)

What do you got?

LUTTRELL

Don't worry. I'll give it to Dwyer and Lopez.

Like hell he will. Denny snatches the address from Luttrell.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

The attractive 1940s building is swarming with police cars, UNIFORMED COPS, CURIOUS NEIGHBORS, etc. Denny's greeted by OFFICER MORELAND, who leads him to an apartment in back.

OFFICER MORELAND

Rachel Zamora. Late 30s. Nurse at Northridge Hospital. Neighbors heard a heated argument last night. Building manager found her when he entered to fix a leaky faucet.

DENNY

Is there a husband or boyfriend?

OFFICER MORELAND

Neither.

DENNY

I want to talk to the manager.

INT. RACHEL ZAMORA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Denny enters the apartment. Homey, well-kept. He heads down the hall... reaches the back bedroom where he finds the bloodied body of RACHEL ZAMORA on the floor. Collecting evidence is CSI technician PABLO RUIZ. He sees Denny... registers a look of pity. Obviously he's read the article.

RUIZ

Hey, Detective Brennan. How are you doing?

DENNY

I'll tell you, Pablo. I'd be a whole lot better if you were treating me with the same disrespect you did yesterday.

RUIZ
(understanding)
You look like crap, you know that.

DENNY
Feeling better already.

Denny squats down next to Rachel's body... takes her in. A ritual for Denny. It's almost as if he's introducing himself to the victim, making it personal.

DENNY (CONT'D)
So what do we got?

RUIZ
Throat cut. Multiple stab wounds.
Some sort of knife... clean edge.

DENNY
Put up a fight?

RUIZ
Doesn't look like she got much of a
chance.

Denny snoops around. He's drawn to a PICTURE on the dresser of a young boy, happy.

He heads back into the hall... stops, switches on the light. A wall of PHOTOS. All of the same boy, through the years.

Denny continues into the living room. Moreland has just entered with MR. KOZERSKI (60s, Russian).

OFFICER MORELAND
This is Mr. Kozerski, the manager.

DENNY
What can you tell me about Ms.
Zamora?

MR. KOZERSKI
Paid her rent on time. Quiet.
Real nice lady.

DENNY
She has a son, right?

MR. KOZERSKI
Wesley. Probably sixteen or
seventeen now. He moved out about
eight months ago.

DENNY
Why?

MR. KOZERSKI
None of my business.

DENNY
Thanks.
(to Moreland)
Who heard the argument?

OFFICER MORELAND
The couple next door.
(checks his notes)
Lee Mullen and Tammy Wu.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Moreland leads Denny to the apartment next door, home to LEE MULLEN (36, actor's good looks) and TAMMY WU (30, thin). Tammy is upset, almost traumatized. Lee comforts her.

DENNY
I'm Detective Brennan. So you heard some sort of argument last night...

LEE
Yeah.

DENNY
Both of you?

LEE
Just me. She wasn't home.

Denny looks to Tammy for further elaboration.

TAMMY
I didn't get off from dancing till after three.

DENNY
So this argument... know who it was with or what it was about?

LEE
No. Sounded rough though.

DENNY
Male voice... female voice?

LEE
Male.

DENNY
(to Tammy)
Did you know Rachel well?

TAMMY

No. I mean, we were friendly.
Always said hello.

DENNY

Know of anyone who'd want to hurt
her?

LEE

Actually she told Tammy to look out
for this one guy...

TAMMY

Yeah, a patient at the hospital.
He'd gotten her number... wouldn't
stop calling. Hector, I think.

LEE

She said she was gonna get a
restraining order against him,
right?

Tammy nods. Denny turns to Moreland --

DENNY

Do we have Rachel's cell phone?

INT. RACHEL ZAMORA'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Moreland leads Denny back into Rachel's apartment...
retrieves her phone. Denny, now gloved, flips through it...

DENNY

Hmm... she called 911 at 9:37.
Four second call.

OFFICER MORELAND

She got interrupted --

DENNY

911 called back. No answer. And
she called from her cell, so no
address --

OFFICER MORELAND

-- They couldn't send a patrol car.

Denny keeps scrolling through Rachel's phone.

DENNY

No calls from any Hector. But at
least three dozen in the last week
from the same number. All
unanswered.

Curious, Denny calls the number from his own phone...

DENNY (CONT'D)
 (in Spanish)
 Hello, ma'am. Is Hector there?...
 He's not, huh?
 (in English)
 Is this his mother?... It's Denny.
 Hector's friend from way back,
 remember?... Yes, that's right.
 Look, I'm trying to find Hector.
 Do you know where he is?... Great.
 And I agree, ma'am. Alcohol *is* the
 devil's poison.

INT. BAR UNO - SILVER LAKE - MORNING

At the bar, HECTOR TORRES, 42, and a few morning REGULARS.
 The BARTENDER is reading the LA Times when Denny enters.

DENNY
 I'm looking for Hector.

The Bartender does a double take.

BARTENDER
 Hey! You're this guy... this widow
 detective guy, aren't you?

Realizing Denny is a cop, Hector sprints for the back door!
 Denny chases him --

EXT. BAR UNO/ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

It's a short chase. The second Hector bolts out the door, a
 car speeding through the alley SLAMS into him, sending him
 crashing into the windshield!

He rolls off the car, writhing in pain on the ground. Denny
 stands over him...

DENNY
 I've got a message from your
 mother, Hector. Sober up.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. LOS ANGELES COUNTY HOSPITAL - DAY

Denny interviews Hector, who's laid up with a broken collarbone. The guy is weeping like a baby. Denny gives him a moment. Hector finally blubbers through his tears...

HECTOR
I didn't kill Rachel.

DENNY
You were sure running like you did.

HECTOR
I thought it was about violating
that restraining order.

DENNY
So you were still stalking her?

HECTOR
You don't understand. I've loved
Rachel... for twenty years. Our
timing just wasn't right. She was
married... had a kid.
(then)
But then life gave us a second
chance. I got cancer... she was my
nurse. Fate. Can't believe she's
dead...

DENNY
Where were you last night, Hector?

HECTOR
Got Stage 4 cancer. Chemo kicks my
ass. Spent the night in the
hospital.

DENNY
And this morning getting a leg up
at Bar Uno.

HECTOR
You'd drink, too. Point is, I was
nowhere near Rachel's apartment...
and in no condition to do what you
think I did.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - ESTABLISHING - DAY

SERIES of SHOTS of downtown Hollywood, including the exterior
of Hollywood High. BRING UP the SOUNDS of students --

INT. HOLLYWOOD HIGH SCHOOL/HALLWAY - DAY

As students scramble into their classrooms, PICK UP Denny on the move down the hall with MS. MILLER, the Principal...

MS. MILLER

... Rachel was such a hands on parent, gave a lot of time to the school. I can't believe this...

DENNY

Tell me about Wesley.

MS. MILLER

Always been a good student. Never in any trouble. Until this year...

DENNY

What changed?

MS. MILLER

He and his mother weren't getting along. You could tell he was angry. Started skipping school... getting into fights. I had to suspend him twice.

DENNY

So you knew Wesley wasn't living at home?

MS. MILLER

Yes. He's been living with a friend's family.

(arriving at a locker)

This is Wesley's locker.

DENNY

Open it.

PING! Denny's phone chimes. A thirty minute reminder of his appointment at the bridal shop. Meanwhile --

Ms. Miller uses the override key to open the locker. Denny searches it. A mess of books... dirty gym clothes... a baseball glove. Denny looks through the pockets of a jean jacket... finds a visitor's pass from the California State Prison in Lancaster. That's curious. He gets on his phone...

DENNY (CONT'D)

It's Brennan. Need you to call the prison up in Lancaster, find out who Wesley Zamora's been visiting.

Just then, Ms. Miller spots KEVIN CHEN, 17, eyeing Denny at Wesley's locker.

MS. MILLER
Kevin. Can I speak to you?

He joins them. Clearly, on edge.

MS. MILLER (CONT'D)
This is Detective Brennan.
(to Denny)
Kevin Chen. Wesley's been living
with Kevin and his parents.

KEVIN
Is Wes in trouble?

DENNY
Kevin, do you know where he is?
It's really important I find him.

Kevin hesitates. Something's eating at him. Denny's cop
radar picks up on this --

DENNY (CONT'D)
Worried about him, aren't you?

KEVIN
He called me last night... really
upset. Said something horrible had
happened.

DENNY
Did he say what?

KEVIN
No. And he never came home.

Denny gives him his card.

DENNY
I want you to give me a call if you
hear from him, alright?

PING! His phone chimes again. Second reminder. He's off...

INT. ROSEBUD BRIDAL SHOP - DAY

Amanda in her wedding dress. It has a sweetheart bodice with
a lace trim bib. Jill, Lainey and Denny looking on. The
DRESSMAKER, Hispanic, admires her work. Obvious tension
between her and Jill.

DRESSMAKER
... The lace on the neckline is
perfect.

JILL
 Look, we never approved lace. We never asked for lace. We don't want the lace...

DRESSMAKER
 Then good luck finding another dress by Saturday.

AMANDA
 (panicked)
 Mom --

DENNY
 Mandy, you look absolutely gorgeous.

Jill's glare tells Denny he's not helping. Lainey rescues him --

LAINNEY
 I have a suggestion. What if we put your hair up, like that photo I showed you at the salon? Maybe add a few flowers --

JILL
 -- So we just distract attention from the problem.
 (to Amanda)
 Your Grandmother's necklace is never going to work with that lace neckline.
 (to Denny)
 Right, Denny?

Lainey shoots Denny a look that says, "Zip your mouth." There is no good answer.

DRESSMAKER
 My dress does not need a necklace.

JILL
 This is not your dress...

MAYA (O.S.)
 Holy shit!

All heads turn. Maya is at the door, still dressed in black.

MAYA (CONT'D)
 That Eric is one lucky son of a bitch.

AMANDA
 Maya, you made it...

From Jill's expression it's obvious she didn't know Maya was invited.

JILL
Right. Great. Another opinion.

AMANDA
Maya?

Maya senses that Jill and Amanda are less than satisfied with the dress. The cues from Denny and Lainey affirming it.

MAYA
I love the dress. But the neckline... in my opinion... with what God gave you... could show the "girls" off a little more. "X" the lace...

JILL
Thank you, Maya.

Lainey prods Denny with a look, her hand drifting to her décolletage. Denny gets the hint.

DENNY
And then you can wear the necklace.

DRESSMAKER
I'm not "X"ing anything.

Jill's about to attack. But Maya steps in.

MAYA
(to Dressmaker)
You want to satisfy the bride, you satisfy her mother...
(in Spanish)
... A poor widow. This wedding is the only good thing in her life. Consider it God's work.

The stone-faced Dressmaker takes a beat. Jill, Lainey and Amanda all turn to Denny.

AMANDA
(whispering)
What did she say?

He feigns ignorance, shrugs, not about to repeat Maya's plea.

DRESSMAKER
(to Jill)
Fine. Whatever makes you happy.

Smiles all around. Denny and Maya share a knowing look.

DENNY

Okay. Well, this has been fun.
But I gotta report to prison.

MAYA

Denny, don't forget, four o'clock
at Dante's school...

He winks. Not missed by Jill and Lainey. Denny bolts...

EXT. CALIFORNIA STATE PRISON - DAY

One of California's largest maximum-security prisons.

INT. CALIFORNIA STATE PRISON - HALLWAY - DAY

Denny is escorted to the visiting room by the warden, STEPHEN HANEY, a burly, no-nonsense man.

WARDEN HANEY

George Dumas. Convicted of killing
a young woman seventeen years ago.
Sentenced to twenty-five to life.
Maintains his innocence. Although
the Parole Board has ruled
otherwise on three separate
occasions.

DENNY

Why has Wesley Zamora been visiting
him every week for the last eight
months?

WARDEN HANEY

According to the visitor's log,
Dumas is his father.

INT. CALIFORNIA STATE PRISON - VISITING ROOM - DAY

Behind the heavy glass partition is GEORGE DUMAS, 40,
balding, easy to smile. He picks up the phone. Denny does
the same.

GEORGE

What can I do for you, Detective?
Warden said you needed to talk to
me about a family matter.

DENNY

Your ex-wife was murdered last
night.

George reacts. It's a bad way to hear the news. He reels...
then panic flashes across his face.

GEORGE
 What about my kid -- is Wesley
 alright?

DENNY
 We haven't been able to locate him.

George reacts again, his worry mounting.

DENNY (CONT'D)
 Tell me... why did Wesley suddenly
 start visiting you eight months
 ago?

GEORGE
 Because for 16 years my son thought
 I was dead. Rachel was pregnant
 when I got sent here. She decided
 it was easier to tell him I was
 dead than a convicted murderer.
 Can't say I blame her. Although I
 did for years.

DENNY
 How'd Wesley learn the truth?

GEORGE
 How else? Internet.

DENNY
 Must've made him angry.

GEORGE
 I tried to explain why his mother
 did it. That she loved him... that
 she was just trying to protect him.

DENNY
 But he couldn't forgive her.

George shakes his head.

DENNY (CONT'D)
 You think Wesley's capable of
 taking his anger out on her?

The implication stops George cold.

GEORGE
 Wesley didn't kill Rachel.

DENNY
 You said he was angry. Had every
 reason to be. And maybe the apple
 doesn't fall far from the tree.

GEORGE
I know my son.

DENNY
Yeah. For eight months.

GEORGE
I know him! He's a good kid.
Smart. He takes after his mother.

DENNY
Then why'd he tell his best friend
something horrible happened? And
why hasn't anybody seen him since
yesterday?

George is at a loss. Denny starts to hang up.

GEORGE
Detective... you a father?

A complicated question for Denny to answer. As he ponders --

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Help my son. Please.

INT. VAN NUYS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

An open house. DOZENS OF PARENTS and their KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN mill about. MS. DARBY, Dante's teacher, is showing Maya Dante's drawings. Each depicts a happy family -- father, mother and son.

MAYA
Is there a problem?

MS. DARBY
Not a problem... just a concern.
Dante's been drawing a lot of
pictures of your husband...

MAYA
(understanding now)
Who's dead. You were concerned.

Suddenly Denny rushes in, out of breath, spotting Maya...

DENNY
Sorry I'm late. Traffic. You must
be Ms. Darby.

MS. DARBY
And you are?

DANTE (O.S.)
He's my daddy.

Dante has grabbed Denny's hand. An awkward moment.

MS. DARBY

Oh. I see. My mistake.
Congratulations.

DENNY

Wait, no, no. We're not married.
And I'm not Dante's father.

(to Dante)

Hey, pal, you know I'm not your
dad.

(to Ms. Darby)

I knew his father... we worked
together. Partners. But I'm just
a friend of the family, that's all.

Dante is crushed, rushes off. Maya shows her disappointment.
She starts after him, but Denny stops her.

DENNY (CONT'D)

That didn't come out right. Let me
talk to him.

Dante sits by himself in a tiny chair. Denny squeezes into
another one, his knees up to his chin. A beat...

DANTE

Did I do something wrong?

DENNY

No. If anyone did something wrong
it's me. I shouldn't have said
what I did. I'm more than just
your friend. Much more. Right?

A smile from Dante.

DENNY (CONT'D)

But, buddy... that doesn't make me
your daddy.

DANTE

But I want you to be my daddy.

A lump in Denny's throat.

DENNY

Look, your daddy was an amazing
man. And he loved you so much. He
carried your picture with him,
tucked behind his badge. And even
though you can't see him anymore,
he'll always be with you... and he
will always be your daddy.

(he's reaching Dante)

And me...

(MORE)

DENNY (CONT'D)
 well, I'll always be your best
 buddy. There's nothing I wouldn't
 do for you, not a single thing.
 And if you ever need me, day or
 night...

DANTE
 I should come find you?

DENNY
 You should come find me. Do we
 have a deal?

He sticks out his hand. Dante's small hand takes his. They
 shake. Then hug. Denny notices Maya watching them. Her
 look says it all -- she's as attached to Denny as her son.

INT. LUTTRELL'S OFFICE - EVENING

Denny knocks and enters. Luttrell looks up from his desk.

DENNY
 Hector Torres's alibi checked out.
 He was at Northridge Hospital all
 night. And the victim's son is
 still M.I.A.
 (then)
 So what's up? You wanted to see
 me.

Luttrell stands, comes around his desk. Denny reacts --

DENNY (CONT'D)
 Whenever you step out from behind
 that desk and assume the friend
 position, I know I'm about to get
 fucked.

LUTTRELL
 Troy Vargas passed his detective's
 test.

DENNY
 Yeah. Lainey told me.

LUTTRELL
 He's been assigned to our squad.

DENNY
 That's gonna be awkward.

LUTTRELL
 Y'know how I said I'd find you a
 partner --

DENNY
 -- No way! Not gonna happen.

LUTTRELL

He volunteered.

Denny's scrambling now. He doesn't want a partner. Any partner. Especially one with bad blood.

DENNY

Partners have to trust each other, Rob. Every night he dreams about pissing on my grave.

LUTTRELL

I'm sure he's not the only one.

(then)

Look, Troy talked to the Captain... Captain wants your partner issue resolved. And I don't see any problem. Troy's a good cop. And if he's anything like his dad, he's gonna be a great detective.

TROY (O.S.)

Rotations come up in three months --

Reveal TROY VARGAS (25), brooding good looks, stands at the door. No longer the kid Denny used to know.

TROY (CONT'D)

... If it isn't working... I'll get a new partner. No hard feelings.

DENNY

What does your mother have to say about this?

TROY

That there's a lot I can learn from you.

LUTTRELL

And whatever issues you two may have had in the past, they're in the past, right, Troy?

TROY

Yes, sir.

Troy can see that Denny's still not convinced.

TROY (CONT'D)

Look, I was seventeen when my dad was killed. I needed someone to blame. So I blamed you.

Denny wants to believe him. And a relationship with Troy is certainly enticing...

TROY (CONT'D)

So what do you say -- partners?

Troy extends his hand. Denny might live to regret this, but he takes his hand.

DENNY

... Until the next rotation.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. CA DEL SOLE - EVENING

Lainey at the bar, drinking wine, chatting with the BARTENDER. Denny hurries in.

DENNY
I know, I'm late.
(to Bartender)
Hey, Bruce. Usual. Actually, make
it a double.

The Bartender pours him a drink... then gives them privacy.

DENNY (CONT'D)
I was just meeting my new partner.
(off Lainey's smile)
So you knew about Troy?

LAINEY
He mentioned it.

DENNY
And you're really okay with it?

LAINEY
Hey, I figure if there's a next
time, it's your turn to get shot.
(turns serious)
Look, Denny, there's no one I trust
more in this world than you.

Denny notices a WOMAN, other end of the bar. She keeps glancing at him. It aggravates him.

DENNY
All day, people staring because of
that piece of shit article.

LAINEY
She's staring because your fly's
down.

Denny looks. Got him. *Very funny.*

DENNY
I need this to blow over.

LAINEY
Tomorrow it'll be old news. Things
will go back to your normal chaos.
Speaking of that... Maya earned a
few points with Jill today.

DENNY
Points?

LAINIEY

You have three "wives", Denny, and you still don't understand women.

(off his look)

Oh, c'mon. We all know Jill feels proprietary. I mean, the only reason we're friends these days is because she doesn't feel threatened by me. Not since I married Neil. But Maya's... *younger*. And, you know...

Lainey indicates her boobs. But Denny has no interest in continuing this conversation.

DENNY

Didn't you have something you needed to talk to me about?

LAINIEY

Oh, yeah. I'm leaving Neil.

DENNY

What?! What'd he do?

LAINIEY

He didn't do anything. I shouldn't have married him in the first place. And don't pretend you didn't think so at the time. But the embarrassingly obvious truth is I was tired of being the grieving widow whose saintly husband died a police hero. And Neil offered me... Calabasas!

DENNY

Is there anything I can do?

LAINIEY

What'd you have in mind?

The question makes Denny nervous. Lainey laughs.

LAINIEY (CONT'D)

I'm fine. Neil said I can stay at the house till I get a place. I'm busy with the salon... business is good. I can take care of myself.

PING! The calendar on Denny's phone chimes.

LAINIEY (CONT'D)

Let me guess... you gotta run.

Denny's apologetic look. Lainey knows that look well.

DENNY
 Cake tasting with Jill and the
 girls. Hey, why don't you come?

LAINY
 No thanks. I've had enough
 "family" for one day.

Denny smiles, kisses her, heads out, leaving Lainey with a
 feeling she knows too well... disappointment.

INT. JJ'S RESTAURANT - GLENDALE - EVENING

Jill's restaurant, popular with cops and locals. Jill is
 busy seating guests, talking to regulars. At a booth, Denny,
 Det. Dwyer, Amanda, Sam and Ella sample wedding cakes.

ELLA
 Ew! This one tastes like Sam's
 sneakers.

Sam gives her sister a shove.

AMANDA
 I'm not kidding, if you guys aren't
 gonna take this seriously...

ELLA
 I am! It seriously tastes like
 Sam's sneakers.

More shoving.

DWYER
 Y'know, most sisters would love
 being a part of their big sister's
 wedding.

SAM
 Yeah, well, most sisters don't have
 a mother who's turned into a
 complete control freak -- even more
 than usual -- planning this stupid
 wedding.

ELLA
 And there are eight different
 vanilla cakes. What difference
 does it make? It's vanilla!

Angry, Amanda flings cake at her sisters! Sam and Ella are
 about to hurl cake back, but Denny intervenes --

DENNY
 Whoa, whoa, whoa, wait a minute!
 (truce)
 I know things haven't been easy.
 (MORE)

DENNY (CONT'D)
 For any of us. And your mom's
 been... *challenging*. But we need
 to cut her some slack, alright?

DWYER
 Well said, Denny.

DENNY
 I'm not done.

DWYER
 Sorry.

DENNY
 This wedding is a big deal. It's
 the first big family event since
 your father's been gone and your
 mom just wants it to be perfect.
 So can we all just help her out and
 get along and not kill each other?
 (off everyone's nod)
 Good. Now where were we?

He flings cake at Sam and Ella. They can't believe he did
 that. Sam picks up a piece...

DENNY (CONT'D)
 Don't even think about it.

But she does, pelting him. Next it's Ella, and suddenly cake
 is flying everywhere, Amanda and Dwyer joining in, everyone
 laughing... that is until Jill appears, furious. *Whoops!*

INT. JJ'S RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Denny and Jill have retreated to a quiet corner of the
 kitchen, Denny trying to calm her down.

JILL
 You don't understand how stressful
 this wedding is!

DENNY
 Of course I do. Especially without
 Tommy. But everything's coming
 together. Dress is done. Flowers
 are ordered. And we've decided on
 a cake flavor.

He finds some on his shirt from the cake fight... scoops it
 off. Jill tastes it off his finger. Smiles.

DENNY (CONT'D)
 Good, right? Everything's gonna be
 perfect, I promise you.

Jill is reassured. But then...

JILL
So when were you gonna tell me
about the LA Times article?

DENNY
After the wedding? Never?

JILL
Am I just a charity case to you,
Denny? I'm curious.

DENNY
What are you talking about?

JILL
The girls rely on you. You've made
them certain promises.

DENNY
And I'm here.

JILL
Right. Because you care about us.
You care about *me*.

DENNY
I do.

JILL
Like you care about Maya?

Too loaded a question to even answer.

DENNY
I'm not sleeping with her, Jill.

JILL
Yeah. Of course you've got a six
month rule, don't you?

DENNY
A what?

JILL
You wouldn't sleep with me until
six months after Tommy's death.
Not a day before. It's your golden
rule, remember?

DENNY
Maya lost her husband. My partner.
I'm helping her and Dante out.

JILL
Why do you even do this, Denny?
You don't want a family... a
"wife." Let alone three!

(MORE)

JILL (CONT'D)
 You're allergic to commitment.
 You're married to the job.

DENNY
 What do you want from me, Jill,
 huh?

JILL
 I'll tell you what I want. I want
 you to stop trying to take Tommy's
 place because frankly you're a
 lousy substitute.

That stings. Denny knows there's no good response when Jill gets like this. Jill walks out, leaving him in her wake.

INT. SQUAD ROOM - DAY

Denny at the murder board with Troy, Porter, Dwyer and Lopez.

DENNY
 Still no sign of Wesley.
 (to Porter)
 Where's the warrant for his cell
 records?

PORTER
 Dixon is talking to Judge Morales.

DENNY
 Let's push him. What else?

TROY
 Forensics is backlogged. Said we'd
 have their report later today.

DWYER
 Lopez and I talked with Rachel's
 coworkers at the hospital. This
 woman was Mother Teresa. She
 didn't have enemies. She had
 people who liked her and people who
 loved her.

LOPEZ
 What she *did* have was an argument
 with an unknown male the night she
 died and an angry young son with a
 clear motive.

TROY
 A son who's been missing since the
 murder.

Denny notices the gun Troy is carrying. It stops him...

TROY (CONT'D)

What?

DENNY

I'd recognize that gun anywhere.

DWYER

Sweet! Smith & Wesson 4506. I've been trying to get my hands on one of those old-schools for years.

Troy is uncomfortable with the subject, but tries to hide it.

DENNY

It was his father's.

(to Troy)

I saw firsthand how good he was with that gun.

Everyone is looking now, making Troy even more uncomfortable. No choice, he pulls the gun out... lingers on it.

TROY

It's the gun I learned on. Just me and my dad...

(catching himself)

Fine, take a look. Everybody happy? Can we move on now?

Troy re-holsters his gun, holding it close to his side, his father always near. This strikes Denny, his mind calculating.

DENNY

That's it. Kevin Chen said Wesley was upset about something. But he wouldn't tell his best friend what it was. So who *would* he tell? Who would he turn to?

Denny points to the visitor's pass from the prison.

TROY

His father.

DWYER

Visitations are only allowed on Saturdays and Sundays.

DENNY

Not necessarily. Exceptions are made in hardship cases.

LOPEZ

You were up there. Warden knows we're looking for the kid.

DENNY

Hardship visits are at the discretion of the prison staff. Wesley's been visiting for the last eight months. Everyone says he's a good kid. He shows up, flashes a few tears... who's gonna say no?

INT. CA STATE PRISON, LA COUNTY - CORRIDOR - DAY

Denny, Troy and Warden Haney on the move...

HANEY

Wesley Zamora showed up an hour ago. We put him in a visitor's room, told him to wait, just like you asked.

DENNY

Good. Now let him talk to his father.

OFF Warden Haney's nod --

INT. CALIFORNIA STATE PRISON - VISITING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

WESLEY ZAMORA, exhausted, red-eyed, jittery, looks up as his father, George Dumas, is brought in. George takes one look at his son and assumes the worst. He sits, the glass separating them... picks up the phone. Wesley does the same.

WESLEY

Dad, I got into it with Mom. It was bad --

George cuts him off, pointing to the sign on the wall that warns: *"All conversations are monitored."*

GEORGE

This isn't the place, kid.

WESLEY

But Dad --

GEORGE

Wes! Unless you want to talk about the weather, we're done.

Just then, the door bursts open and Denny, Troy and TWO GUARDS storm in --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Don't say nothing to nobody. You got that? Don't say nothin'.

TROY

Wesley Zamora... LAPD. You're gonna have to come with us.

Wesley spins toward the glass and his father --

WESLEY

Dad?! --

DENNY

Wesley, I'm Det. Brennan. We need to talk about your mother.

WESLEY

(confused)

I got nothing to say...

DENNY

Wesley, I'm sorry to have to tell you this -- your mother's dead --

Wesley reacts... shocked, thrown, destroyed. He spins to his father --

WESLEY

Dad?! --

Just then, Troy reaches for Wesley's arm. Wesley loses it, he freaks out, throwing an awkward swing! Troy grabs him -- But Wesley fights him, a torrent of anger and pain!

George is on his feet now, pleading with his son to calm down. But he's inaudible through the glass.

More swings. As Denny jumps in, trying to break it up -- one of the Guards hits the ALARM. It BLARES!

ANOTHER GUARD tries to pull George away from the glass. He resists, wanting to stay connected to his son, pleading with the Guard not to hurt Wesley as --

Wesley keeps swinging. Denny and Troy finally overpower him. Push him up against the glass! Wesley gives a last panicked look at his father, as Troy handcuffs him...

INT. HOLLYWOOD DIVISION - INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Wesley's calmed down, but he's an emotional wreck... nervous and evasive. Denny stands, studying him. Troy leans in --

TROY

... So you've just been driving around by yourself. For the last 36 hours?

WESLEY

Yeah.

TROY

Okay. Tell us a street you were on and we'll verify it. We got cameras all over this city.

WESLEY

I don't remember.

TROY

I think you're full of crap.

Denny backs Troy off. He takes a seat across from Wesley.

DENNY

Look, Wesley. Let's take a breath. This isn't an interrogation. It's a conversation. Okay?

(then)

Your father told me why you moved out of your mom's apartment. You were angry with her for lying to you. Right?

(off Wesley's nod)

Have you had any contact with her since then?

WESLEY

No.

DENNY

Good. This is easy, see?

Troy's cell RINGS. He moves away to answer it.

DENNY (CONT'D)

On the night your mother was murdered you called your friend Kevin. You were upset. Why?

Wesley's thrown. Didn't think Kevin would give him up.

DENNY (CONT'D)

Know what I think, Wesley? I think you're scared. Maybe you have reason to be... maybe not. Either way, I wanna help you. But I can't if you don't tell me the truth.

Troy hangs up from his call. Knows Wesley's lying.

TROY

So, asshole, you're saying you haven't been to your mother's apartment lately?

WESLEY

I already told you... no.

TROY

And I already told you you're full of crap. Your fingerprints are in the system because of a fight at school. We just matched them to a nice, fat, *fresh* print at your mom's apartment.

Wesley's cornered. Has to come clean.

WESLEY

Alright, I was there that night. She called, said she had something for me. From my father. So I went... and she gave me these letters... dozens... that my father had written to me from prison. She'd kept them from me all these years. And the crazy thing is she thought she could make things right between us by giving them to me now. But it only made me angrier.

(with difficulty)

And I yelled at her... told her I hated her. She was crying, begging me. But I just walked out...

(emotional)

I didn't kill her, I swear.

Denny and Troy share a look, then --

DENNY

Maybe it was an accident. You were angry. Or maybe your father influenced you. I know he was angry with her, too. If he made you do it, it's on him --

WESLEY

No... it wasn't like that.

TROY

Or maybe you just wanted to be like him. Like father, like son.

WESLEY

My father shouldn't even be in prison! He's innocent!

DENNY

Then help us prove you are too! Tell us where you've been for the last 36 hours!

WESLEY

(breaking)

I don't know!... After I left my mom's I just wanted to... *not feel*.

(MORE)

WESLEY (CONT'D)

So I jacked a bottle of vodka and I started drinking. And then... I don't know what happened. I blacked out... woke up in Griffith Park. Sun was coming up. Only it wasn't the next day. It was today.

What he can't bear to imagine...

WESLEY (CONT'D)

Did I do it? Did I kill my mom?

Denny wishes he could tell him he didn't, but he can't. Wesley's anguish consumes him.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD DIVISION - PARKING LOT - EVENING (LATER)

Denny sits on the hood of his car. Troy walks up.

TROY

Wesley's being transported to Eastlake Juvenile Hall. DA's filing charges.

DENNY

It's all circumstantial.

TROY

They said it's enough for them.

Not for Denny. A beat, then --

DENNY

Your mom told me about her and Neil. You okay with it?

TROY

Let's keep my relationship with my mother off limits.

A brushoff. Denny nods. His phone RINGS. He answers it...

DENNY

Hi, Maya... Whoa, whoa, hold on, calm down... I'm on my way!
(hangs up; to Troy)
Dante's missing.

Denny drops his keys. His emotions showing, he's reacting as a parent, not a cop. Troy gets it and grabs up the keys --

TROY

I'll drive.

OFF Denny's anguished look --

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. MAYA'S HOUSE - EVENING

FIND Denny and Troy with an hysterical Maya, a rosary clutched in her hand. At her side, Lainey.

DENNY
We're going to find Dante. Maya,
look at me.

She brings her tear-swelled eyes to his.

DENNY (CONT'D)
We're issuing an Amber Alert. And
we're going to have the whole force
out there looking for him.

TROY
Maya, can you walk us through your
night.

MAYA
Dante and I had dinner around 5:30.
I got mad at him when he wouldn't
clear the table. It was stupid. I
sent him to his room...

She starts to lose it.

LAINNEY
You're doing great, sweetie. You
must've checked on him?

MAYA
... He was playing a video game.

DENNY
What time was that?

MAYA
Around seven... I think. When I
looked again...

Her emotions swell again. She breaks down. Lainey puts an arm around her.

TROY
Is there anything missing from his
room?

MAYA
No, I don't think so... I don't
know.

Just then, SEVERAL COPS come through the front door. Denny nods to Troy who splits off to brief them, as Denny follows Maya and Lainey into --

INT. MAYA'S HOUSE - DANTE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

On the wall are photos of Dante's father alongside photos and drawings of Dante's new family unit. Denny shakes off his "fatherly" emotion and stays focused --

DENNY
Look around. Anything out of place?

Maya's fear blinds her. But Lainey looks, then --

LAINNEY
Where's Dante's knapsack? The one with SpongeBob on it?

MAYA
It's gone --

DENNY
Alright, good. That's a good sign. Tells us he wasn't abducted. He has his knapsack... most likely he ran away.

That doesn't make Maya feel any better. Just then, Jill enters --

JILL
Amanda called...

Jill gives Maya a strong, supportive hug, mother to mother. Maya clings to her, grateful she's there.

JILL (CONT'D)
You're a great mother. We all know that. Kids just run away sometimes.

LAINNEY
Troy did.

Denny's wheels are spinning. Trying to figure this out.

DENNY
Dante doesn't get an allowance, right?

MAYA
No.

DENNY
Where do you keep your spare
change?

INT. MAYA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Maya leads Denny, Lainey and Jill into the kitchen.
Immediately, Maya notices a stool has been pushed up against
the counter.

MAYA
(re: stool)
That shouldn't be there.

Her eyes seek out the COOKIE JAR where she keeps her spare
change -- the lid's off. Denny crosses to it. It's empty.

DENNY
How much was in here?

MAYA
Five dollars maybe.

LAINY
Wherever Dante was going, he needed
money...

DENNY
Change... for the bus.

Denny's figured it all out. But we haven't. FOLLOW him out
the door --

EXT./INT. DENNY'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Denny speeds, Troy now rides shotgun. Denny's beating
himself up --

DENNY
This is my fault. We had a talk
yesterday... kid seemed fine.

TROY
A talk? You mean *the* talk? The
I'm-not-your-dad-but-I'll-always-be-
here-for-you-as-if-I-were-your-dad
talk?

(off Denny's silence)
He's six, Denny! That talk
confused me. And I was seventeen!

DENNY
I was just trying to tell him I was
there for him. That he's not alone.

TROY

But he is alone. His dad's dead.
And you can't bring him back. So
unless you're going to marry his
mother, move in and give the kid
your last name...

Before Denny can respond, he spots Dante at a bus stop.
Denny swerves between cars and skids to a stop. Leaps out --

EXT. VENTURA BLVD. - BUS STOP - CONTINUOUS

Dante looks up and sees Denny... smiles.

DANTE

Denny --

DENNY

What are you doing?

DANTE

Waiting for the bus.

DENNY

Do you know how worried your Mom
is? You can't just wander off like
this, buddy. It's dangerous.

DANTE

But you told me too.

DENNY

I never told you to take a bus
ride... in the middle of the
night... by yourself.

DANTE

Yes, you did. You said if I ever
needed you I should come find you.
(indicates backpack)
I need you to fix my lizard's tail.
They grow back y'know.

Something else Denny didn't know. He's struggling here.

DENNY

Dante... You can always call me.

DANTE

But I wanted to see you. And Mom
told me "you live at the police
station" because you're a "work-a-
lot-tic".

Denny can't help but smile. He lifts Dante off the ground in
a big squeeze, nearly crushing him. Troy, out of the car
now, watches. Not the relationship he had with Denny.

INT. DANTE'S BEDROOM/HALLWAY - LATER

Denny watches from the door as Maya tucks an already sleeping Dante into bed. Maya switches off the light... turns to Denny. He sees how scared she still is.

DENNY

He's okay.

Maya's on the verge of tears. She takes Denny's hand... leads him down the hall... and into --

INT. MAYA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

All Denny can see are the PHOTOS of Maya and Dante with her dead husband/his dead father on the bureau, the wall, etc.

DENNY

Wait... Maya...

MAYA

Do you know what day it is? It's the six month anniversary of Shack's death. And I've heard... that you have this six month rule.

DENNY

(deflecting)

Look, it's been a rough night... and you miss Shack, that's all. He was a good man.

MAYA

He was a dog! I loved him, but he wasn't faithful a single day of our marriage and you know it.

Denny does. Maya starts tearing off her black mourning dress, as if it's suddenly strangling her...

DENNY

Whoa, what are you doing?

She has stripped to her bra and panties. A sense of freedom.

MAYA

I'm done mourning him. I've given it your six months... more respect than he ever gave me.

She kisses him. He lets her, then pulls away.

DENNY

You're a beautiful woman, Maya...

MAYA

But you don't want me? I don't believe you.

She tries to kiss him again, but he stops her again.

DENNY

Listen to me, Maya. This isn't what you want. What you need. Trust me. Not tonight anyway.

He's right. Tears leap to Maya's eyes again. Denny grabs her robe and wraps her in it. He leads her to the bed. Lays her down. Covers her with a blanket. She holds out her hand. Denny lets her pull him down next to her. She puts his arm securely around her...

After a moment, Maya finally relaxes her body into his, feeling a sense of comfort for the first time in a long time.

INT. HOLLYWOOD DIVISION - SQUAD ROOM - MORNING

Denny's at his desk. Been there a while. The files from Rachel's case are scattered everywhere. He's studying the Coroner's report. A specific note jumps out at him --

"Victim's carotid jugular complex was transected by an extremely sharp instrument, most likely a large knife. The fatal laceration is consistent with an attack from behind, running left to right."

Just then, Troy enters. It's just the two of them.

TROY

Morning. How are Maya and Dante?

DENNY

Good. Thanks again for your help.
(then, closing the report)
Coroner's report just came in.
Wesley's not our killer.

Denny grabs his jacket and starts out, swiping an orange off Lopez's desk. Troy confused, follows.

INT. EASTLAKE JUVENILE HALL - HOLDING CELL - MORNING

Denny and Troy enter. Wesley sits on a bunk, looking even more scared than before.

DENNY

Got one last question.

With that, Denny tosses the orange at Wesley. Reflex, Wesley catches it... with his left hand.

DENNY (CONT'D)

Good answer. You're off the hook.
You didn't kill your mother.

WESLEY

I don't understand...

TROY

You and me both.

DENNY

The baseball glove in your locker
is a right-handed glove, making you
left-handed. Our evidence says the
killer's right-handed.

A shaky sigh of relief from Wesley, near tears.

WESLEY

So who killed my mom?

Denny unfortunately doesn't have that answer. Wesley's
relief quickly turns to anguish again.

WESLEY (CONT'D)

It's still my fault... if I hadn't
been so angry. If I hadn't moved
out, maybe I could've...

DENNY

Listen to me, Wesley. That's not
why she's dead --

WESLEY

-- I was ready to forgive her that
night, I was. But then she gave me
the letters...

DENNY

You never stopped loving her. She
knew that.

The thought comforts Wesley.

DENNY (CONT'D)

And now you can help her, by
helping us catch her killer. I
need you to think. Was there
anyone who might've wanted to hurt
her?

WESLEY

No.

TROY
 (rolling with it)
 Anyone she had a falling out with?
 An old boyfriend maybe.

WESLEY
 It was always just me and her.

DENNY
 How about a casual encounter?
 Someone she had words with.
 Doesn't matter how insignificant
 you think it was.

Wesley is thinking hard, desperate to help.

WESLEY
 There was this guy... who moved
 into the building. He was always
 pushing his girlfriend around. And
 one night my mom told him off.
 Said she was gonna call the cops if
 he didn't cut it out.

Denny and Troy share a look.

DENNY
 That's good, Wesley.

TROY
 You remember the guy's name?

WESLEY
 No. But he lived next door. His
 girlfriend was hot. Chinese maybe.

OFF a knowing look from Denny...

EXT. HOLLYWOOD APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Denny's car pulls up and Denny and Troy leap out... head into
 the courtyard...

They pass Rachel's apartment, still marked with yellow police
 tape... and approach the apartment next door, home to Lee
 Mullen and Tammy Wu. The door is suspiciously ajar. Denny
 and Troy pull their guns. Troy slowly pushes the door
 open...

INT. LEE MULLEN AND TAMMY WU'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Lee and Tammy are gone, the apartment stripped empty. *Shit!*
 OFF Denny and Troy's reactions --

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. DENNY'S CAR - DAY

Still parked outside the building, Denny anxiously waits as Troy runs Lee Mullen's name on the onboard computer...

TROY
Nothing, not even a parking ticket.

DENNY
Run the girlfriend. Tammy Wu.

Troy types it in. A match.

TROY
Got her. 415 Domestic with a
boyfriend. N.F.D., no further
details.

DENNY
So it went away. She probably
recanted. They name the boyfriend?

TROY
Stuart Dinsmore.

DENNY
Let's run him.

Troy does. Dinsmore's MUG SHOT pops up (but we recognize him as Lee Mullen). Bingo!

DENNY (CONT'D)
That's Lee Mullen.

TROY
Two-striker. 245 Assault and an
Attempted Rape.
(then)
He's on parole... had to register.
We can call his PO, find out the
last time they talked.

DENNY
Guy's on the run. He's not
checking in.

Denny collects himself, thinking...

DENNY (CONT'D)
Hold on. Tammy told me she didn't
hear the argument between Wesley
and his mom because she didn't get
off work until three. "Dancing."

TROY
Dancing? As in stripping?

DENNY
Her looks and that hour... that'd
be my guess.

TROY
There are over a hundred strip
clubs in L.A.
(ponders, then)
I can pull a list, start calling.

Denny's got a better idea --

DENNY
Or we can catch Tammy before she
and Lee have a chance to skip town.
(then)
If she's drawing a paycheck... the
club's withholding taxes. IRS will
have it in their system. And we'll
have the name of our club.

INT. THE BODY SHOP - WEST HOLLYWOOD - EVENING

Low flashing lights, naked girls on stage, a motley
clientele. Denny and Troy stride in.

TROY
This place looks familiar.

DENNY
Oh, yeah... your eighteenth
birthday.

TROY
Right. You thought a lap dance
would be just the thing to win me
over. Charming.

DENNY
Can't fault a guy for trying.

They're approached by the CLUB MANAGER, stylishly dressed.

CLUB MANAGER
I'd recognize LAPD anywhere. What
can I do for you gentlemen?

DENNY
We're looking for a dancer. Tammy
Wu. She work here?

CLUB MANAGER
Until tonight. A little skinny but
great ass. Sorry to lose her.

TROY

Let me guess... she quit?

CLUB MANAGER

Stopped by for her last paycheck.
She's upstairs right now, cleaning
out her locker.

The Club Manager gestures to the back of the club. Denny and Troy bolt upstairs...

INT. THE BODY SHOP - DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

Denny and Troy bust in to find Tammy packing her stuff. She's startled to see them. B.G., several other DANCERS.

DENNY

Where you going, Tammy?

TAMMY

(nervous)
Nowhere...

TROY

Where is he? Lee Mullen, Stuart
Dinsmore... whatever the hell you
call your psycho boyfriend.

TAMMY

I don't know.

DENNY

You move out of your apartment.
Quit your job. Ask for your last
paycheck... I'd say you and Lee are
skipping town.

TAMMY

I told you I don't know where he
is. We broke up.

Denny pushes up her sleeve, exposing an ugly black and blue handprint on her arm where she's been grabbed.

DENNY

I don't think he'd let you do that.

Tammy pulls away, hiding her bruises.

DENNY (CONT'D)

He killed Rachel, didn't he?
(stops Tammy cold)
Was Lee knocking you around again
that night? Did you scream?
Rachel heard you... and then
suddenly she was at your door,
telling him to stop.

Tammy can't bear to hear this, beginning to shake.

DENNY (CONT'D)

She threatened to call the cops again, didn't she? And she dialed 911. But what Rachel didn't know was that Lee already had two strikes against him. He wasn't gonna let her make that call. And so he killed her. And then you went to work.

Tammy braces herself against the counter. She's so scared of Lee that she continues to lie.

TAMMY

... I don't know where he is.

DENNY

He's gonna kill you too, Tammy.
 (that gets her attention)
 Maybe we'll find your body... maybe there won't be enough to find. But it's gonna happen and you know it.
 (he's reaching her)
 Rachel was trying to help you. Don't you think staying alive is something you owe her?

Tammy's hands tremble. Denny places his hand over hers, calming them.

DENNY (CONT'D)

Where is he?

EXT./INT. MOTEL 6 - ECHO PARK - EVENING

Denny and Troy bang at the door!

TROY

Open up, LAPD!

No response. Denny nods to the MOTEL MANAGER... who unlocks the door. Denny and Troy enter, guns drawn. A quick glance around. No sign of Lee. The bathroom door is shut. Denny and Troy acknowledge it. Troy pounds at the door!

TROY (CONT'D)

LAPD! Anybody in there?!

Nothing. Troy looks to Denny for his next cue. Before Denny can respond -- BANG! A GUN SHOT blasts through the door!

Denny kicks it in -- just in time to see Lee throw himself out the window!

EXT. ECHO PARK STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Denny and Troy chasing Lee, calling for backup, trying to close the gap...

A PATROL CAR suddenly appears, tight on Lee's tail! It's about to clip him... but at the last moment, Lee cuts into a driveway and leaps a fence!

Denny and Troy follow, over the fence. They chase him through several backyards... zigzag between houses... crash through some lawn furniture... outrun a BARKING DOG...

They finally emerge onto the street again... but Lee is gone. Denny spins around. No sign of him anywhere.

But then he notices it... an apartment building across the street, the lobby door slowly shutting.

INT./EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING/ROOF - A MOMENT LATER

Denny and Troy enter the building's lobby. A NOISE in the stairwell pulls them in the right direction.

TROY
I'll take the elevator, work down.

A moment of hesitation from Denny...

DENNY
Careful.

Troy steps onto the elevator, doors close. Denny enters the stairwell. More NOISE, several flights up. He starts climbing... floor after floor. He reaches the top. No sign of Lee. Or Troy. He listens. Quiet.

Then another NOISE, up a last flight to the roof. Denny bolts up the stairs and out the door...

Finding himself where he least expects -- STARING DOWN THE BARREL OF GUN! Only it's not Lee's gun... BUT TROY'S!

Denny freezes, heart stopped. And in that split second, he wonders if this was Troy's plan all along... to set him up and take him out in the line of duty as payback for his father's death.

Time ticks by, SLOW MOTION: Troy's decisive expression... his beads of sweat... his finger twitching on the trigger...

And then he pulls it! A BLAST of fire from the barrel!

Yet Denny is still standing. He quickly pivots, something behind him causing him to...

It's Lee, standing a few feet behind him, gun aimed. His body falls, skillfully taken down by Troy's bullet.

Denny pivots back. Troy's gun lowered now... but same decisive expression, staring at Denny, telling him... what?

Troy finally drops his gun. Was Lee his intended target all along? Denny isn't sure. He isn't sure of anything.

EXT. ROOF - LATER

A DOZEN COPS litter the roof now. The body of Lee Mullen is bagged and taken away. Denny stands alone, still a bit dazed... still trying to figure out what happened.

A little ways off, Troy is giving his preliminary statement to Porter. Denny watches them, unable to hear Troy's words, but studying his expressions... his body language.

Porter finishes up. Troy finally notices Denny. Their eyes lock. Troy gives a slight smile and crosses to him...

TROY
You alright?

DENNY
Fine. You?

TROY
Gotta meet with FID. But Porter says it's just a formality...

DENNY
You were doing your job. You had my back. And if I'm not mistaken, you just saved my life. Thanks.

TROY
Like you said... just doing my job.

Nothing left to say, Troy starts to go. Then, stops.

TROY (CONT'D)
You and me, Denny. This is gonna work out.

Denny nods. Troy walks away... meets up with an FID REP.

WE REMAIN ON DENNY, a man burdened with unsettling questions about his new partner's intentions and state of mind.

INT. SQUAD ROOM - EVENING

Squad room is quiet. Denny at his desk, writing up his report. Suddenly Lopez is there, keeping his usual distance.

LOPEZ
Got a visitor.

He steps aside, revealing Wesley, looking just a bit better.

DENNY
Wesley, hey.

Wesley thanks Lopez with a nod. As Lopez moves off --

DENNY (CONT'D)
Everything okay?

WESLEY
Look, I really appreciate what you
did for me... and my mom. And I
have no right to ask...

He pulls out a stack of letters bound by a rubber band.

DENNY
Your dad's letters...

WESLEY
(off Denny's look)
I know you think I just wanna
believe he's innocent because I'm
his son... But it doesn't mean I'm
not right.

He hands the letters to Denny.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
(pleading his case)
He wasn't at that bar when that
woman was murdered.
(re: letters)
Maybe there's something in there
that'll prove it.
(off Denny's look)
Just read them. Please...

Like the rest of Denny's life, he's now in a position where
he can't say no.

DENNY
I can't promise anything, but...

A glimmer of hope. Wesley smiles. Shakes Denny's hand.

WESLEY
Thanks.

Denny nods.

DENNY

Just so you know, that night, after you left your mom's apartment, she heard the guy next door beating his girlfriend again. She confronted him. Probably saved that girl's life.

(then)

You should be proud of your mom. She was a good person.

Wesley nods, emotional. Means a lot to him. He walks out.

Denny looks from Wesley to the pile of letters. A beat. He opens the first one. Starts to read...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SQUAD ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

It's busy. Everyone at their desks except Denny. The CAMERA FINDS him pushing through the door with a cup of coffee. He looks like shit, having been there all night.

Denny can see Luttrell in his office. He crosses to his desk, piled high with files, grabs one and heads for --

INT. LIEUTENANT LUTTRELL'S OFFICE - MORNING

Denny knocks and enters, carrying the file and the cup of coffee, which he hands to Luttrell.

DENNY

Cream. Two sugars.

LUTTRELL

Thanks. If this is about Troy --

DENNY

No. We're good.

(then)

I got a lead on a seventeen year old murder case.

LUTTRELL

Unsolved?

DENNY

No, we got a guy in prison.

LUTTRELL

Then what the hell you talking to me for?

Denny sets down the file and opens it to a flagged page...

INSERT - FLAGGED PAGE

"Victim, Leanne Johnson... 32 stab wounds... circumstantial evidence... conviction hinged on key witness who discredited George Dumas's alibi... key witness, Hector Torres"

DENNY

I went down to records last night,
pulled Dumas's case... it was a
sloppy job, mostly circumstantial.

LUTTRELL

George Dumas?
(shakes his head)
Now you've taken on his family?
Should I expect Wesley at my next
barbecue?

Denny doesn't take the bait.

DENNY

I'm telling you, Dumas didn't do
it. His best buddy was his alibi,
but he turned on him... for a run
at his wife. Fits with what we
know about Rachel. Hector Torres
had a thing for her.

LUTTRELL

Assuming you're onto something,
what makes you think this guy
Hector's ready to come clean?

OFF Denny's look --

INT. NORTHRIDGE HOSPITAL - CANCER CENTER - DAY

Hector, arm in a sling, is hooked up to an IV, receiving his
weekly dose of chemo. Denny appears, sits down next to him.

DENNY

Hey, Hector. Talked to your
doctor. Rooting for you.

HECTOR

(suspicious)
Thanks...

DENNY

But we both know the odds. So my
feeling, if you've got something to
confess, now might be the time.

Hector remains quiet, but shifts uncomfortably in his chair.

DENNY (CONT'D)

You loved Rachel, but your timing
was off. Isn't that what you told
me?

(MORE)

DENNY (CONT'D)

And as long as Rachel was with
Dumas... not gonna happen.
(off Hector's silence)
So when you testified Dumas wasn't
with you the night Leanne Johnson
was murdered, was that the truth?
Or was the opportunity to get him
out of the way just too tempting?

Hector is thinking hard now.

DENNY (CONT'D)

It's simple. If you loved Rachel,
and you can make it right, do it.
Her son's still got a father...

Hector remains stone-faced. Denny leans closer, almost
whispering to him now, like a priest giving last rites.

DENNY (CONT'D)

Rest in peace, Hector. Rest in
peace.

Hector makes a decision, a weight off his shoulders. He
turns to Denny... nods his head. He's ready to confess.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - ESTABLISHING - MORNING (DAYS LATER)

INT. JAWORSKI HOUSE - MORNING

Denny rushes through the door, dapper in his wedding tux,
greeted by an anxious Amanda, Sam and Ella.

DENNY

Beautiful day for a wedding!

ELLA

Mom's still in the bathroom.

SAM

She's locked the door.

AMANDA

I have to be at the church in less
than an hour!

DENNY

Don't worry. I got it.

He hurries upstairs, finds Lainey. She's worried.

LAINAY

She won't talk to me. She's been
crying. I think she's missing
Tommy...

DENNY

Got it.

Denny heads down the hall and into --

INT. JILL'S BEDROOM/BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Denny crosses to the bathroom, KNOCKS on the door.

DENNY

Jill...

No response. He tries the door. Locked. He puts his ear to it, listens. The faint sound of CRYING.

DENNY (CONT'D)

C'mon, Jill. Let me in.

JILL'S VOICE

I can't do this without Tommy.

DENNY

I understand. But you have to. For Amanda. For Sam and Ella. It's what Tommy would want. Because a wedding is a happy occasion and this family deserves some fucking happiness.

JILL'S VOICE

He should be here. It's not right that he's not here.

DENNY

It's not, it sucks. But if Tommy were here... we both know he'd be having the time of his life.

JILL'S VOICE

You bet your ass he would.

He can feel Jill's smile.

DENNY

So don't you think that's what the rest of us should be doing?

Jill doesn't answer. But then the door unlocks... and opens. She is dressed for the wedding. She looks stunning.

DENNY (CONT'D)

Wow.

JILL

What I said to you the other day about taking Tommy's place...

DENNY

I *am* a lousy substitute. He was a good man.

JILL

So are you.

He wipes a tear from her cheek. Jill takes a deep breath, finally ready.

INT. CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION - DAY

A full church, moments before the ceremony. Scanning the GUESTS we understand how tight a family the LAPD is. Luttrell, Porter, etc., all there. Dwyer waits nervously at the altar. Lopez, his best man, at his side. In the front row, Jill beams. Lainey and Maya next to her. No more mourning black for Maya, she's decked out in a sexy red dress.

The MUSIC starts. Ella is first down the aisle, watching her feet... then Sam, with a nervous smile, trying not to laugh.

The WEDDING MARCH. Guests stand. Denny proudly walks a radiant Amanda down the aisle. He reaches the altar... hands her off to Dwyer... and then takes his seat next to Jill.

Bride and groom turn to the PRIEST.

PRIEST

Friends and family, we are gathered here today to witness and celebrate the union of Eric and Amanda in marriage.

As the priest continues, the CAMERA lingers on the faces of Jill, Maya and Lainey, watching their reactions, as widows, to his words...

PRIEST (CONT'D)

Through their commitment to each other as husband and wife, may they nurture a love that supports and comforts them... a love that gives their life meaning... a love that will sustain them, with God's grace, for all their days to come.

The CAMERA ends on Denny, a swell of tears in his eyes.

INT. JJ'S RESTAURANT - EVENING

The wedding reception. Booze flowing. A LIVELY BAND plays. Amanda and Dwyer let loose on the dance floor.

Jill works the room like she works her restaurant. Yet at the moment, she's looking for someone. She tugs at Maya.

JILL
Seen Denny?

MAYA
He was dancing with Sam...

They scan the crowded room. No sign of him.

EXT. JJ'S RESTAURANT - SAME

A quiet patio out back under a lush canopy of trees. Denny and Lainey sip champagne, the bottle between them. As she refills his glass --

LAINNEY
If Jill catches us back here, I'm blaming it on you.

DENNY
Fair enough.

LAINNEY
So what's this I hear about my boy saving your ass?

DENNY
Yeah. Troy sure did.

LAINNEY
(sensing something's off)
What aren't you telling me?

DENNY
Nothing. He's a good cop.

Lainey knows there's more, but doesn't press him.

LAINNEY
(changing the subject)
Nice job with Jill today.

DENNY
And someone recently told me I don't understand women.

LAINNEY
You still don't. But you understand family.
(then)
Maya came by the salon yesterday. Said she wanted a haircut, but what she really wanted was to talk.

DENNY
About what?

LAINY

You. She's romanticized your relationship with her. And knowing you... you haven't discouraged her.

DENNY

So what'd you tell her?

LAINY

The truth. That she should take what you offer her... out of guilt or a sense of responsibility or whatever motivates you. But that she shouldn't expect anything more or you'll just disappoint her.

Denny hears what Lainey is saying... feeling. And it hurts.

DENNY

That how you really feel? That I can't give you what you need?

Lainey considers this a moment. Then makes a decision...

LAINY

I love you, Denny. You love me. It's about time we finally admitted this, don't you think? Neil was never the one. Jill... she's a survivor, she'll be fine. And Maya... she's young. So here's my proposition. We leave this all behind. You retire. I sell the salon. We head down to Mexico. Start a new life. God knows neither one of us is getting any younger. What do you say? You in?

Denny doesn't know if she's serious or not.

DENNY

C'mon, that's what you really want?

LAINY

That's what I really want. Question is, can you give it to me?

Denny wants to, he really does. He loves this woman. She leaves him dizzy. But...

JILL (O.S.)

What are you two doing out here?
Planning a secret getaway?

They turn to see Jill and Maya, now best friends, with an open bottle of champagne. If Jill only knew how right she was. As she refills everyone's glass --

JILL (CONT'D)
We'd like to propose a toast.

MAYA
To Denny.

JILL
And family.

MAYA
(in Spanish)
God bless.

Denny, still reeling from his conversation with Lainey, looks to her. So much left unsaid. Lainey raises her glass, joining in.

Denny raises his glass too. He has no choice. They all CLINK... and drink. Then Denny proposes his own toast...

DENNY
To my...

He catches himself. He just stepped on a land-mine. *Fuck!* Lainey rescues him...

LAINNEY
... three "wives."

The women toast! And drink. The CAMERA slowly pulls back, leaving the four of them talking, laughing, enjoying the moment. Like Jill said, they're a family, bound by deep, unbreakable ties.

EXT. SAN FERNANDO VALLEY STREET - MORNING

Denny jogging. Pushing himself hard. He suddenly stops, huffing and puffing, looking as if he might collapse. But he pushes on...

DENNY
C'mon, Denny. Pick up the pace.

His phone RINGS. He checks the caller ID. Better answer it. And as he does, we FADE OUT...

END OF PILOT