

PUSHING DAISIES

"Water & Power"

Episode #3T7061

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FINAL DRAFT 

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. THORNDIKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

YOUNG EMERSON COD, AGED 11, sits in a wooden chair by a closed door, looking nervous.

NARRATOR

Young Emerson Cod is 11 years, 2 months, 8 days and 3 hours old.

A door next to him opens and a stern-looking MALE TEACHER leans out, motions for him to enter. Young Emerson takes a breath, stands and goes in the door.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

He is in big trouble.

As the door shuts, we see the lettering on the frosted glass for the first time: "PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE."

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Young Emerson sits in the middle of an oversized couch, staring ahead as the male teacher stands and talks to the O.S. principal (behind camera).

NARRATOR

In this case, the bigness was made slightly less big by the fact of its tedious regularity. For this was his 6th visit in 10 days.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - TIME CUT

Young Emerson in different clothes. A DIFFERENT TEACHER FADES IN, matching position, taking over the explanation to the unseen principal. ALSO FADING IN, another 11-YEAR-OLD BOY with a black eye and a bandaged nose.

NARRATOR

The previous Tuesday had seen Young Emerson punch future frat boy and current lunch money extorter, Guy Baxter.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - TIME CUT

A red-faced FEMALE TEACHER addresses the principal.

NARRATOR

Wednesday saw the return of Young Emerson to the Big Couch for the crime of inappropriate, intentional double entendre during the science fair.

The female teacher turns around a poster-board display with the headline: "RINGS DISCOVERED AROUND URANUS. Scientists plan probes."

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - TIME CUT

NARRATOR

The following Monday had seen two more visits. One for the vulgar use of a dead language and the second after a second encounter with Guy Baxter.

Guy, sullen again, now has two black eyes.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Young Emerson assured everyone that he would leave Guy alone now, as the bully had no more eyes.

Emerson remains silent, but a small satisfied grin breaks through...

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - TIME CUT

As SPECIALISTS BEGIN TO FADE IN and surround the young man, talking animatedly with one another as he sits quietly, staring straight ahead.

NARRATOR

Specialists were summoned, tests given, therapies administered. A boy of above-average intelligence who, previously, had nothing but respect for rules and regulations, Young Emerson's sudden proclivity for mischief remained an utter mystery.

CAMERA BEGINS TO TRACK BACK, away from the gaggle...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

An utter mystery to everyone but Young Emerson himself...

As we PASS BACK across the top of a large desk to a graceful set of folded HANDS.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...because what troubled him was not parental alienation or sublimated anger.

EMERSON'S POV of the crowd of specialists...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

It was a heart that felt as overstuffed as the couch on which he sat. He was in love.

The crowd parts, REVEALING PRINCIPAL SWINDLE, elegant, beautiful and calm. The COMMOTION starts to SLO-MO as she locks eyes with Young Emerson and allows herself the smallest of smiles...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

That 6th-grade year, Young Emerson learned his most important lesson from Principal Eleanor Swindle.

INT. THORNDIKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

As the door opens and Emerson is shown out by the first MALE TEACHER. The door shuts behind him.

NARRATOR

Love makes you stupid.

He smiles, turns and PULLS a nearby FIRE ALARM and sits back down on the chair to wait. As the door opens again and the principal sternly motions for him to come back in...

INT. PIE HOLE - MORNING

RANDY MANN ENTERS to find himself in the BUSY MORNING RUSH of Pie Hole customers. CHUCK, carrying a big tray of dirty dishes, sees him looking around a bit lost, approaches...

CHUCK

Randy Mann, what brings you in out of the cold?

RANDY

I think we're in for a mid-winter thaw. Normally, in the mornings, I can see my breath from under my covers, which is kinda daunting, 'cause I sleep in the nude. But at least I know if I cocoon myself in the comforter and hop to the bathroom--
(notices her load)
Can I help you with those?

CHUCK

I'll be okay if there's a satisfying and unexpected point to this story.

RANDY

I couldn't see my breath this morning.
(Chuck sinks under the weight)
And I'm looking for Olive.

CHUCK

Now we're talking.
(calls to the kitchen)
Olive. You have a gentleman caller come in out of the thaw.

OLIVE turns out of the STEAMING espresso machine, busy with the coffee--

OLIVE
A whatidy-what what?
(notices Randy)
Randy? Hi.
(to Chuck)
Can I...?

CHUCK
Go.

Olive smiles nervously. As she moves off to talk with Randy, NED comes out from the kitchen, ends up with Chuck behind the counter.

NED
Randy's back.

CHUCK
To see Olive. In an awkward, "I was nowhere near your neighborhood so I thought I'd stop by" kind of way. It's sweet.

They watch as Randy and Olive nervously flirt-talk.

NED
I'm happy. Olive's been through a tough patch that I may have made tougher. And by "may have" I mean "definitely did." I want this to work out with Randy.
(then)
And what better place to nurture romance than the Pie Hole? Warmth, pie and snuggly booths -- all the right ingredients.

CHUCK
Love doesn't need "all the right ingredients."
It's heartier than that.
(off his smile)
What?

NED
You just said love was "heartier."

CHUCK
It is hearty. Look at ours -- it's like those blind fish that live in volcanos at the bottom of the ocean. And we're two fish that can't even touch.

NED
'Cause normally, fish are all over each other.

CONTINUED: (2)

CHUCK

(giggles, then)

Our love has grown and survived in spite of *everything* we've been through.

NED

We have been through a lot.

CHUCK

(toasts with a coffee cup)

Here's to us -- for successfully navigating some extremely rough and complicated seas.

NED

And here's to Olive and Randy. May they have smooth sailing ahead.

OLIVE

(arriving)

Cheers. What are we toasting?

CHUCK

You and-- Why is Randy leaving?

OLIVE

We decided to call it quits. Too much, too soon. Actually, it was just me. Singular. So, more accurately, I'd say it was me decided to call it quit. I'll be in the kitchen rationalizing my panic attack.

And she exits to the kitchen. They see Randy heading out the front door...

CHUCK

Man overboard.

INT. PIE HOLE - BOOTH - MOMENTS LATER

Chuck sits with Randy.

CHUCK

Randy, you know that when people are nervous, sometimes it's easy to misunderstand what they mean.

RANDY

It was all fine, then suddenly she said, "Goodbye," and, "Thanks for coming," and shook my hand. Felt like closure to me.

CHUCK

It's hard for Olive. She's just come through a sticky swamp of emotion and she doesn't want to get stuck again.

RANDY

I know all about her getting stuck on Ned. But she said she's over it. And maybe I'm under-thinking this, but we seem to like each other.

CHUCK

But it's scary starting something new. It's about exposing your heart to a stranger. And putting your faith in the *idea* of someone, way before you ever really know the truth about who they are. It's like driving a car blindfolded -- you have to relax.

RANDY

"Relax"?

INT. PIE HOLE - KITCHEN - DAY

Ned talks with Olive.

OLIVE

"Relax"?

NED

Maybe bullfighting's the wrong comparison. But it's hard making these things work.

OLIVE

You are telling me these things are hard to make work? I know they're hard because you taught me.

NED

Maybe that's why Randy's scary to you -- because you're not used to something that's... easy, and maybe really great.

OLIVE

(thinks, then)

Oh, my God. I'm that girl. I'm that girl in high school who's afraid of a real relationship, so she's always attracted to guys in college or Canada.

(then)

Or... you.

NED

I want you to be happy, Olive.

OLIVE

So, what you're saying is that I shouldn't run away from Randy.

NED

Yes.

OLIVE

That Randy might be just what I need right now.

NED

Yes.

OLIVE

A quick fling. That I can use to heal the scars and rub ointment on the burns from us, then peel off and toss out like a used square of gauze.

NED

Not yes.

OLIVE

He's Randy Rebound.

NED

No, he's not.

NARRATOR

As the Pie-Maker began to doubt his plan to reunite the would-be lovers, a mile to the West, another reunion was taking place.

INT. EMERSON'S OFFICE

EMERSON enters. His desk chair swivels around to REVEAL SIMONE HUNDIN and BUBBLEGUM. He makes a move toward her -- she CLICKS her clicker.

SIMONE

Stay.

NARRATOR

Simone Hundin, breeder of well-heeled dogs, recently returned from the Merryweather Multi-city Canine Cavalcade with her dog, Bubblegum.

EMERSON

I'm afraid without more constant reenforcement, even the best training gets forgot.

He leans across the desk and kisses Simone.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

You go away like that again, I might just forget we got something goin' on.

SIMONE

No such luck. You should know, neither Bubblegum nor I are prone to bolting.

EMERSON

That's good. That's very good.

SIMONE

(off him)

Sounds like there's a story...

Emerson casually glances at the "Lil' GumShoe" pop-up book on top of some papers on his desk.

NARRATOR

There was a story: Emerson had once fallen for a woman who had bolted, and taken their baby daughter to boot.

SIMONE

(picking it up)

Does it have to do with this book?

INSERT - PUSH IN ON THE LIL' GUMSHOE POP-UP BOOK...

NARRATOR

Emerson had written a pop-up book about his missing daughter in hopes that, one day, he would get it published and she would read it and come find him.

Emerson reaches over and takes the book out of her hands and drops it into his desk drawer, shutting it tight.

EMERSON

It's nothin'.

She takes this in.

SIMONE

I realize what we have is still in the paper-training phase. But we did agree to be honest with each other.

EMERSON

I am being--

She CLICKS, he stops, she continues.

SIMONE

I like you. I am intensely optimistic about our prospects. But you need to know that, like any animal in a new situation, the thing I hate the most is being surprised.

They hear someone CLEAR THEIR THROAT. Both Emerson and Simone look up and STARTLE with a YELP to see:

AMELIA STINGWELL

CONTINUED: (2)

Well-dressed, matronly, 50s-60s, standing by the door.

AMELIA STINGWELL

Forgive me, but your door was ajar.

EMERSON

Just because it was ajar does not change the fact that it was still a door before it was ajar. Which would indicate to most people to a-knock before a-entering.

AMELIA STINGWELL

(smiles)

How are you, Emerson?

EMERSON

Simone, this is Ms. Amelia Stingwell, sister of Roland "Rollie" Stingwell, owner of the Papen County Dam. I'd tell you more about her, 'cept for various reasons, we haven't spoken in nine years.

AMELIA STINGWELL

Those "various reasons" are dead now. Rollie was killed last night.

EMERSON

I'm sorry for your loss.

AMELIA STINGWELL

I miss him terribly. He'd pop a vein if he knew I was coming to you to solve his murder. But you are the best in town.

(then)

Whoever killed Rollie must also have taken the Dam Ruby. It's gone.

SIMONE

"The damn ruby"?

EMERSON

The D-A-M, drop the "N," Ruby. As in, a very valuable precious stone dug up when they built the dam.

AMELIA STINGWELL

He always wore it as a pendent. Never took it off. Except to shower, and, I imagine, to sleep. But that always muddles the story.

(to Emerson)

You find that ruby, and you'll find Rollie's killer. After everything that went down all those years ago, Emerson, I'd say it's the least you can do. Good day.

Amelia exits.

SIMONE

What happened between you and Rollie?

EMERSON

It's nothin'.

As Simone SIGHS, annoyed...

NARRATOR

The facts were these:

OFF this--

INT. STINGWELL'S DAM OFFICE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Art Deco, well-appointed with a wall-sized map of the water pipe system infrastructure under Papen County. ROLAND STINGWELL stands behind his desk, gathering papers into his briefcase.

NARRATOR

Roland "Rollie" Stingwell, millionaire builder of the Papen County Dam and sole director of the Papen County Water & Power department, was last seen getting ready to leave after a busy day at the office.

He takes out a RUBY PENDANT on a watch chain and gives it a polish as his ASSISTANT, TRISH, enters to say good night.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

His assistant said nothing seemed unusual, as she said good night and headed out early for a dinner engagement.

Trish leaves by the front door...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

What engagements engaged Rollie Stingwell in the following hours were not known until the next morning, when his body was discovered in a dry riverbed one-half mile from the dam.

He exits out a PRIVATE ENTRANCE behind his desk and shuts the door behind him.

OMIT

INT. MORGUE - DAY

Chuck, Ned and Emerson stand over the sheet-covered body of Rollie Stingwell.

EMERSON

Thanks for coming down.

Emerson pulls back the sheet, REVEALING THE FRONT OF ROLLIE'S BODY, WITH THE HEAD completely twisted 180 degrees FACEDOWN. They react.

CHUCK

Oh, the poor man. And his poor head.

Ned touches the body, which SPARKS to life and sits up and swings its legs around to face us (with his head now facing away). As they walk around to the other side to speak with him...

NED

Just think of him like an owl.

STINGWELL

Who?

CHUCK

(giggles)

That was funny. He said, "Who?" Like an owl.

(to Emerson)

Why are you so quiet and grumpy?

EMERSON

How ya' doin', Rollie?

STINGWELL

Of all people, I didn't expect to see you here, Emerson Cod.

NED

You know each other?

EMERSON

You might say we were affiliates. Affiliated with a common third party.

STINGWELL

There was nothing "common" about her and you know it.

(re: Emerson)

He stole away the love of my life, and the daffy thing is I paid him to do it. I trusted you, Cod.

EMERSON

It ain't stealin' if the thing you're stealin' wants to be stolen.

NED

I have questions.
(off his watch)
Which I will wait to ask.

STINGWELL

Strange. I spent my life being angry about this, but now, here in... uh...

CHUCK

A limbo-y non-denominational way station.

STINGWELL

...the anger's gone and I can see I spent my life in the haze of a broken heart.

NED

(quickly, to Emerson)
I don't mean to step on toes, but shouldn't someone at this point ask him who did it?

CHUCK

Shhh.
(to Roland)
Go on...

STINGWELL

I've tamed nature. I've stopped rivers from flowing, but the one thing I could never do was make that woman love me.

EMERSON

If it makes you feel any better, Stingwell, neither could I.

STINGWELL

It does make me feel better.

EMERSON

Who killed you, Stingwell?

STINGWELL

Who do you think? It was Lila Robinson herself. I assume she came back to steal the ruby.

EMERSON

Man, I wish you'd said it was *anyone* else.

NED

(checks his watch, re-deads)
Thank you for your time.

CHUCK

Who the heck is Lila Robinson?

EMERSON

She's the baby-mama that took my daughter.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

OMIT

INT. PIE HOLE - BOOTH - DAY

Emerson reads the paper, ignoring Ned and Chuck.

CHUCK

How could you not tell me about your daughter? We've buried bodies together.

(joy)

You have a daughter. *A daughter.*

(to Ned)

And you knew this all along. How could you not tell me?

EMERSON

(to Chuck)

You're not fooling anyone.

(to Ned)

I know that any secret I tell you spends about twenty seconds being secret before spilling out into Dead Girl's ears.

CHUCK

That is so not true.

NED

It's true.

CHUCK

It's true. But I still can't believe you didn't tell me. What about Simone? Does she know?

Emerson looks back, remains silent.

NED

I'll take that as a "no."

EMERSON

As much as I'd love to ruminate on my painful past while enjoying this slice of rhubarb? How 'bout we find something else to chatter about.

Chuck looks at Ned...

NED

What? Emerson shouldn't feel any pressure to divulge the hidden details of his hidden past. It's not like we've ever shared big secrets with him...

Ned and Chuck stare at Emerson a beat, then:

EMERSON

It's complicated.

CHUCK

What's complicated about finding your baby-stealing baby-mama and getting your daughter back? We should be forming a posse right now.

NED

"A posse"?

CHUCK

Okay, no posse. A small bunch. *Us*. If Lila killed Roland Stingwell and stole the Dam Ruby, then we've all just been hired to track her down and find your daughter.

NED

Chuck's right. We could trace Stingwell's last steps. Maybe Lila left a trail behind.

EMERSON

I've spent the last seven years looking for her and my kid. Lila's a wily genius. A man-eating, shape-shifting grifter who knows how to get in, get out and vanish like heat off a blacktop.

NED

At least we could try. We need to try.

EMERSON

Maybe I could give it one more shot.

CHUCK

I don't even know your daughter's name.

EMERSON

Penny. My daughter's name is Penny.

NARRATOR

The facts were these: 9 years, 2 months, 14 days and 9 minutes earlier...

INT. EMERSON'S OFFICE (9 YEARS AGO) - DAY - FLASHBACK

A younger Emerson sits across from a client, a younger Rollie Stingwell, who slides piles of cash across the desk.

NARRATOR

...Rollie Stingwell hired the P.I. to tail his fiancée, Ms. Emily Von Alistair, an arrestingly-beautiful woman who Rollie suspected was having an affair.

As Stingwell hands Emerson a PHOTO of "EMILY" (LILA).

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY (WB SWAMP ROAD) - FLASHBACK

LILA ROBINSON is parked by the side of the road.

EMERSON

Watches from his car, with binoculars.

NARRATOR

The affair, however, was with a dead man... One Henry David Thoreau. And her furtive trips away seemed to show only her desire for a moment of solitude and ornithology to avoid the hubbub of wedding planning.

EMERSON'S POV: THROUGH THE LEAVES--

She reads *Walden*.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

But hiding from a bird-watcher in a Lincoln Continental is not easy...

She turns her binoculars on him. Emerson sheepishly waves.

INT. EMERSON'S CAR - WOODS - DAY - FLASHBACK

Lila joins Emerson, hands him half her sandwich and a thermos.

NARRATOR

...and so, Emily Von Alistair began sharing her daily solitude, as well as her sandwich and thermos of tomato soup. While unconventional, Emerson reasoned he was still very much keeping an eye on Emily.

TIME CUT:

EXT. WOODS - PICNIC SPOT - FLASHBACK

Lila and Emerson have a picnic. He accepts his sandwich, can't help smiling back at her.

NARRATOR

With each passing thermos, the Private Investigator grew more blind to the fact that he was fast approaching the thin line between stakeout... and make out.

He drops his sandwich in between them, they both lean in to get it. They are staring in each other's eyes very close...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Emerson hesitated, heeding not so much the code of honor among men, as the "grody" feeling one gets in a moment of weakness.

They both pull back from the almost-kiss.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

But Emily had a solution, and that was to tell the truth:

She begins talking.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Emerson Cod would discover that Emily was not Emily. She was Lila Robinson, a grifter come to town to play Stingwell for a fool. Her aim, not to marry the millionaire, but to divorce him of his famous Dam Ruby.

As they lean in, and kiss...

INT. EMERSON'S OFFICE (9 YEARS AGO) - DAY - FLASHBACK

Emerson pushes a stack of CASH across his desk toward Rollie.

NARRATOR

22 days later, the P.I. returned the money Stingwell had paid him. What he could not return...

Lila steps out of the shadows.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...was his client's fiancée, or the new life growing inside her.

PUSH IN on Lila to see the GLOWING IMAGE of a small fetus in her belly. Stingwell jumps to his feet, irate.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Heartbroken and furious, Stingwell swore he'd be watching. If the grifter ever grifted again, he'd make sure she got put away for good.

Stingwell scoops up his cash and storms out. Emerson turns to Lila, who gazes up at him, frightened and grateful. Emerson places a hand on her belly.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Lila promised to keep on the straight-and-narrow...

INT. STINGWELL'S OFFICE (9 YEARS AGO) - DAY - FLASHBACK

Stingwell, at his desk, sketches a drawing of the schematic for the pipe system.

NARRATOR

...while Stingwell, relieved of the distractions of a happy life, went on to build Papen County Water & Power into a juggernaut.

EXT. PAPEN COUNTY DAM - DAY

Establishing. Impressive. Digital.

INT. DAM TOUR LOBBY

START on a YELLOWED PICTURE of ROLAND STINGWELL standing with the DAM behind him, proudly holding up the RUBY as SEVERAL WORKERS with shovels look on.

Find the Mod Squad looking around the tour lobby with Art Deco fixtures and WPA-style works of art.

EMERSON

If we're gonna find Lila, we need to retrace Stingwell's steps and figure out how his body ended up half a mile away from here.

A TOUR GUIDE, a perky young man in blazer and badge, steps up.

TOUR GUIDE

Welcome to the Papen County Dam, source of Papen County's Water & Power. My name is Taylor Philbean and, should you choose to take a tour of this historic landmark and working utility, I'll be your dam guide.

(then)

When there's a bigger group, this is where I wait for the laugh to die down.

EMERSON

Actually, we're invited guests of the Stingwell family, here on the matter of Roland Stingwell's untimely death.

TOUR GUIDE

Damn sad is what it is. If you'll wait here while I get your visitor passes, I'll take you up to his private office.

As he moves off to get some passes...

NED

You said Lila chose to leave behind her life of crime.

CHUCK

What happened?

EMERSON

People's nature's like a river. You can only dam it up for so long. One day, she packed her bags, broke back into Stingwell's mansion and when she couldn't get the ruby, stole fifty grand in cash. She knew he'd chase her to the ends of the Earth, so she took Penny and they disappeared into the night.

The guide returns, handing them paper passes.

TOUR GUIDE

If you'll follow me...

They step through into a--

PHOTO STATION

Where families can pose in front of a "PAPEN COUNTY DAM - THE BEST DAMN DAM AROUND" big foam backdrop of the dam.

NED

You knew who Lila was. Did you really not see it coming?

EMERSON

Guess I was blinded.

TOUR GUIDE

Say, "Cheese!"

They look over as--

FLASH! The automatic camera snaps a picture.

ANGLE ON THE PHOTOGRAPH DISPLAY UNIT nearby, a microfiche-like roller with view screen, where we see Chuck, Ned and Emerson caught by surprise in the touristy photo.

EMERSON

(to the guide)

Does this camera automatically take every visitor's picture?

TOUR GUIDE

Yes, for security reasons, should you be planning to blow up the dam and flood the valley, one copy is kept on file and another is available for purchase as a keepsake in our gift shop on the way out.

OFF this--

INT. STINGWELL'S DAM OFFICE - DAY

Stingwell's assistant, Trish, 50s-60s, prim and quick, wearing gloves, looks at a tourist photo booth PHOTOGRAPH of LILA in a long dress and heels. [NOTE: there should be a vase of flowers from Brunt's farm somewhere on Stingwell's big desk.]

NED

You seen this woman before?

EMERSON

Name's Lila Robinson. This photo was taken of her entering the building the same day your boss was killed.

TRISH

I remember the woman. She did have a private meeting with Mr. Stingwell, but I believe she said her name was Marybeth Acres. The police have already been here asking questions.

EMERSON

They ask you about... Marybeth?

TRISH

No. They were asking about the multimillion-dollar contracts Mr. Stingwell was negotiating to replace all the old pipes that bring water into the city.

EMERSON

I'd say the police are on the wrong track.

TRISH

I agree. I tried to tell them *my* theory, but they weren't interested.

(conspiratorial)

I'm pretty sure this murder has to do with an ongoing legal action I vigorously encouraged Mr. Stingwell to pursue.

CHUCK

Really?

TRISH

I caught a local factory dumping toxic chemicals into the dam reservoir at night.

NED

And you blew the whistle? You go, girl.

TRISH

(rational)

It's my duty as a citizen to watch the reservoir. We are 90 percent water, after all. And just one drop of certain mind-altering drugs, and we'll all be zombies under the control of those secret signals on the FM radio. It's a public health issue.

Emerson looks at Ned and Chuck, then turns and notes Stingwell's door.

EMERSON

What's this door, here?

TRISH

Mr. Stingwell's private exit. It leads back through the inside of the dam to a private stairwell.

Emerson exits out the private door...

TRISH (CONT'D)

(to Ned and Chuck)

Do you care that I have important information?

CHUCK

(taking pity)

We do. We'd like to hear all about your theory.

OFF this--

INT. DAM SPILLWAY - DAY

We HEAR DRIPPING as Emerson walks down the spooky, windowless, long, narrow, dimly-lit passage. He uses a FLASHLIGHT to poke into dark corners for evidence...

EMERSON

Come on, woman. Give me something...

PUGET (O.S.)

Who you talking to, Cod?

LT. DETECTIVE LAWRENCE PUGET, 30-40, steps out of the shadows.

EMERSON

Detective Puget. Been awhile.

PUGET

Figured the Stingwells would hire a private peeper on this one. They never did like a cop they couldn't buy.

EMERSON

Being cocky in a cheap suit's less effective than you think, Puget. Papen County's finest have any leads?

PUGET

Who didn't want to knock off Stingwell? You got valuable re-piping contracts up for grabs, you got a hundred angry farmers who've had to cough up dough for water since he dammed up their river -- not to mention, a ruby he flaunted like a trophy wife at a high school reunion.

EMERSON

Maybe I got a lead for you. Maybe the only lead you need to follow. Lila Robinson's your mark. Last known address was local, but she's been on the fly for a few years.

Emerson hands Puget the photo of Lila.

PUGET

Never known you to share, Cod. What's your angle?

EMERSON

My angle's my angle. But maybe I wouldn't mind having a little help bringing down the hammer of justice on the lowlife that done this. Don't matter if said hammer happens to be public or private, so long as said nail gets hit on the head. You catch my drift?

PUGET

(a beat)

I do not.

EMERSON

Catch the bitch.

(then)

Use everything you got and move quickly, 'cause I guaran-dam-tee you she's moving fast and the trail's going cold.

INT. PIE HOLE - BOOTH - DAY

Olive sits with Randy.

OLIVE

Thank you for coming back.

RANDY

Sure.

OLIVE

First off, I just want to say I'm sorry if it seems like I'm giving you mixed signals by asking you to come back.

RANDY

I guess I was a little surprised.

OLIVE

Signals are like nuts -- mixed is better. Who wants all the same kind? But what's important is that we have a fresh start.

RANDY

Can I ask you a question? You're not planning to just use me to get over Ned, are you?

OLIVE

Sometimes, things are so absurd and far from the truth, I don't even hear them. Like you blew a dog whistle full of crazy, but I'm not a dog.

RANDY

If you're not ready, I get that. But I've been through this before and I don't want to be your rebound guy.

OLIVE

There it is again...

(listens)

Nothing.

OFF this--

EXT. EMERSON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Emerson enters to find Simone waiting for him calmly in his chair.

EMERSON

Simone? How'd you get in?

SIMONE

There's something I gotta tell you.

EMERSON

(rushing)

There's something I gotta tell you, too. And I feel bad 'cause it's gonna seem like I'm telling you 'cause I have to tell you, not because I want to tell you -- like I had an artificial leg and we're pulling up to the pool party, but that book you saw on my desk--

SIMONE

Emerson, may I go first?

EMERSON

Sure.

SIMONE

I'm sorry.

EMERSON

Why are you sorry?

LILA STEPS OUT from behind Emerson...

LILA

Long time, no see, honey.

She flashes a small handgun, shuts the door.

EMERSON

Lila...

OFF this--

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. EMERSON'S OFFICE - NIGHT (PICKING UP FROM ACT TWO)

Lila flashes a small handgun, shuts the door (as before).

EMERSON

Lila...

SIMONE

"Lila"? She told me her name was Priscilla Saltpeper. Said she'd shoot me if I let on she was here.

EMERSON

She's told lots of people lots of things.
(to Lila)
You in town to see a dead man about a ruby?

LILA

I'm in town to see you. And you really ought to lock your door. Never know what riff-ruff'll blow in.

Simone simmers, watching her.

EMERSON

Where's Penny?

LILA

Penny's somewhere you can't find her. But I'll make you a deal. I didn't kill Stingwell or take his Dam Ruby. But as soon as the police find out I was there the day he was killed, they'll be after me like weevils on rice.

EMERSON

Maybe they know already.

LILA

Then your job just got substantially harder. You find the real killer, put me in the clear, I'll let you see Penny. You can hang a red lantern in your office window and we'll arrange the reunion. But if I even smell the police closing in on me, you will never see me or your Penny again.

SIMONE

Who's Penny?

LILA

Penny's the price I paid for thinking with my heart instead of my head.

EMERSON

Penny is my daughter. It's what I was going to tell you.

(then, guiltily)

Surprise.

Simone falls silent, processing this...

LILA

I'll give you 48 hours.

SIMONE

She's lying to you. It's in her eyes.

EMERSON

She's lied so much in her life, her eyes are like that permanently.

(to Lila)

What's to stop me from taking that toy gun and pushing your delicate frame back through my office wall?

LILA

Xylazine.

EMERSON

Come again?

Lila blows a fog of dust from a cigarette-sized tube into their faces. As they pass out...

INT. PIE HOLE - DINING AREA - LATER

Ned, Chuck and Simone are at a booth.

SIMONE

It was horse tranquilizer. When we woke up, Emerson made sure I was okay, then took off. Said he was gonna start with all the angry farmers, find out who the real killer was.

NED

But we know who the real killer is. The dead man told us so.

(to Simone)

Insofar as a dead man could tell us anything by way of some very strong leads acquired in a normal and straightforward way.

CHUCK

If Lila has Penny, she holds all the cards.

SIMONE

We don't even know for sure if Lila has his daughter. She could be lying about that, too.

(then)

She's playing him. Dominating his will to the point he's no longer listening to his instincts.

NED

You don't dominate Emerson. You really think he's out there interviewing suspects he knows are innocent? Following leads he knows lead nowhere? He wouldn't do that. That's not who he is.

CHUCK

What if "who he is" isn't who he is right now? And maybe, instead of analyzing him, we should be out there *with* him, *helping* him, no matter how crazy it seems.

SIMONE

(stands to go)

Forgive me, but if helping Emerson means we all agree to blind ourselves to the truth, then I won't be part of it. Someone backs you into a corner, you don't get obedient. You bite back.

CHUCK

Simone, wait...

SIMONE

All I asked from him was that we start out with honesty and no surprises. I would say this qualifies as a surprise.

And she exits. Chuck tries to follow. Olive steps up to Ned.

OLIVE

Is this a bad time to talk? 'Cause I just wanted to say I'm pretty sure Randy's gonna do the trick, you know, wiping the emotional slate clean. He's picking me up after work tonight.

NED

(distracted)

That's great, Olive.

OLIVE

See, soon I'll be the one lost in some distracty thought, not caring, while you prattle on about your relationship problems.

NED

I'm sorry. I do care, and I am distracty.
(then)

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

NED (CONT'D)

Olive, hypothetically, if you and I had a love child, but I'd been a criminal all my life and then when our daughter was one and a half I kidnapped her and disappeared for seven years, then came back and asked you to prove I didn't commit a murder that I almost certainly did commit--

OLIVE

Yes, I will! I will! A year and a half is better than nothing, and even if you take the kid, I'll know we had it together and I'll love it forever and whoever you have to kill, I'm sure you have a good reason, and you said "hypothetically"--

(catching herself, calmly)

So, I dunno. Maybe. What was the question?

NED

Can love make you do something absolutely crazy?

OLIVE

I went. To a nunnery.

NED

Thank you. And have a great time tonight.

He finds Chuck, down the way...

NED (CONT'D)

You're right. If Emerson's desperate enough not to see the truth, then he's desperate enough to do anything.

CHUCK

He needs us.

NED

Let's go.

As they quickly exit out the front door and INTO CAMERA...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. FLOWER FARM GREENHOUSE - DAY (MATTE)

A greenhouse with flower farmland beyond. CRICKETS. BREEZE.

NARRATOR

It was the end of a long day, and Emerson, Chuck and the Pie-Maker had interviewed 28 disgruntled farmers, concluding that, due to various circumstances, none were guilty of the murder of Roland Stingwell.

INT. GREENHOUSE - DAY

As we MOVE IN past flowers...

NARRATOR

This was not a surprising fact, as Roland Stingwell had already told them that it was Lila Robinson who had killed him. What was surprising was that, in spite of this, Emerson Cod insisted on moving on to farmer number 29.

We find our Mod Squad with MICHAEL BRUNT, flower farmer.

EMERSON

Mr. Brunt, you had two hundred acres of riverfront farmland till they built the dam, isn't that right?

NED

If this were my flower farm, I'd be all thorns and no rose when it came to Mr. Stingwell.

BRUNT

My farm used to be the most prosperous in the county. Now with what I pay to truck in water, I can barely pay the rent, same as everybody else that stayed. But what else would I do?

(to Chuck)

When is your birthday, precious?

CHUCK

November.

Brunt holds a vase of flowers up to Chuck...

BRUNT

Funny. I would have bet you were an autumn birthday. The deep orange of orchid embers and Asiatic lilies makes your skin tone glow.

CHUCK

I have two birthdays, actually. And my second is in the fall, so actually, you're right.

BRUNT

Your gibberish is sweet, honey. Keep the flowers.

CHUCK

I'm telling the truth.

BRUNT

Well, so am I. If I'd killed Stingwell, I suppose I would have done it years ago, when my anger was fresh-cut. But nothing's gonna change. Whoever has the water has the power.

EXT. GREENHOUSE - DAY

They exit, Chuck carrying the vase of flowers. Ned and Chuck do their best to play hopeful and energetic...

EMERSON

Seems like most of the anger around here's gotten as dry and dusty as the riverbed. Angry farmer angle's getting thin.

NED

What about the contracts to re-pipe the county water supply? Might have been some bad blood there.

As Emerson heads for the car...

EMERSON

Nah. Stingwell was behind the plan, but the mayor would have been in charge of bidding out the construction, so there's no motive.
(then, sadly)
We got nothin'.

Chuck and Ned look at a broken Emerson, then at each other.

CHUCK

What about the big-business polluter angle?

EMERSON

Don't be humoring me. If you didn't think we were out of leads and I was high on Lila-berry juice, what would you call the "big-business polluter angle"?

CHUCK

I might call it "that crazy conspiracy theory from Stingwell's crazy assistant."

NED

Or "the last-ditch crackpot angle," for short.
But it's something...

Emerson gets his mojo back, heads for the car...

EMERSON

Well, it's all we got left. And we're running
out of time.

Ned and Chuck exchange a look, then follow.

INT. PIE HOLE - NIGHT

Chuck, Ned and Emerson (in between) sit across from THREE FAST-
TALKING LAWYERS.

EMERSON

We appreciate you coming in to talk to us on
such short notice. We're investigating the
death of Roland Stingwell.

NED

His assistant said there was a heated legal
dispute between Mr. Stingwell and your client,
the Fits and Giggles Novelty Company.

CHUCK

We know Mr. Stingwell was about to make public
the fact that your client's factory was
illegally disposing dangerous chemicals into
the Papen County Dam reservoir at night.

MR. CRAY

These are baseless allegations.

MR. ABNER

Our client did not, nor would they, ever
dispose of any kind of chemical into the
reservoir. This is a categorical denial--

MR. BOOKER

Maybe once.

MR. CRAY

And one time only.

MR. ABNER

Once. We may have inadvertently allowed a
small amount of chemicals into the reservoir.
But it was a long time ago.

MR. BOOKER

It was Tuesday.

MR. CRAY

Very, very early Tuesday. Nearly Monday.

CHUCK

What kind of lawyers are you?

MR. CRAY

We are Mennonites. Which would not normally be a liability were it not for our personal commitment not to lie.

MR. ABNER

But to be clear: In regards to the chemicals that were or were not--

MR. BOOKER

Were.

MR. ABNER

--dumped in the reservoir at an indeterminate time--

MR. CRAY

Last Tuesday.

MR. BOOKER

Two a.m.-ish.

MR. CRAY

Two-thirty-nine in the morning.

MR. ABNER

There was a spill.

MR. CRAY

That's the truth.

MR. ABNER

Our plastics division had an overflow. But it was only the chemicals we use to make things glow in the dark, which are nearly identical to pure drinking water.

MR. BOOKER

Pure drinking water with chemicals in it.

Abner's beaten.

MR. ABNER

We will pay the fine to the appropriate authorities.

OFF this--

TIME CUT - LATER

The lawyers are exiting. Emerson, Ned and Chuck talk.

NED

They're polluters, but they're no killers.

CHUCK

Every road's a dead end.

NED

Except one road. But we can't go down that road.

EMERSON

No, we can't.

NED

The police are gonna go down that road.

(then)

Let's say the police do find Lila? What's to say they don't also find Penny and put an end to all this?

EMERSON

And what if you're wrong? Penny is the only leverage Lila has. What if she's got it set up so the minute she sees that blue-and-red flashing light on her motel wall, she's dialing out to some accomplice who's putting Penny on a bus to Mexico?

(then)

Maybe my love for my daughter has made me stupid. But Lila doesn't seem to have that problem, so I will continue to jump through any hoop I have to, to get face-to-face with my little girl.

Emerson stands to head out.

CHUCK

What if Lila's lying to you? What if she doesn't have Penny at all?

EMERSON

Then I'm a chump. But at least I'm not a chump sitting down, doing nothing.

Emerson exits as Olive steps up.

OLIVE

(notices)

Why is Emerson such a mopey-marvin?

NED

Olive, remember that hypothetical story about
a man and his daughter who was kidnapped...?

OLIVE

Yeah. Kinda melodramatic.

(then)

Oh my gosh.

(lump in throat)

Really?

(off them)

Well, we can't just sit here. We gotta do something.

OFF Chuck and Ned, been there before--

EXT. EMERSON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A RED LANTERN PULSES FROM INSIDE Emerson's office window.

INT. EMERSON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Olive KNOCKS on the closed office door.

OLIVE (O.S.)

Emerson? Are you here? I just heard about
what's happened.

She opens the unlocked door and enters. A RED LANTERN FLASHES
slowly in the window. The office appears empty until Lila spins
around in Emerson's chair.

LILA

Who are you? Did you hang the lantern in
the window?

OLIVE

"Lantern"? What lantern? Who are you?

SIMONE

I hung the lantern, bitch.

Simone has stepped into the doorway behind Olive, holding a gun.

SIMONE (CONT'D)

We gotta talk.

Olive starts to back out...

LILA

Sit tight, sister. You're in the jam now.

OLIVE

I knew I shoulda' skedaddled while I had the chance.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. EMERSON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Simone, her gun drawn, squares off against Lila, with Olive in the middle. As Lila TURNS OFF THE RED LIGHT...

LILA

Emerson always was a sucker for tricky dames.

SIMONE

The only reason your tricks work is because he thinks you have him by the collar. But the truth will set him free.

LILA

I stand corrected. Now Emerson likes dog-training truth-seekers, is that it?

SIMONE

What he likes is a simple life without complications. As do I. I was ready to leave him for not showing me all his cards. Now that I know the card he was stuck holding was the Lying Snake of Empty Hearts, I'm back to deal again.

LILA

Then deal. You got the gun.

SIMONE

Penny's a bluff. A two-bit grifter like you wouldn't let herself get saddled with a child. My guess is you ditched her a long time ago. Then, when you ran out of money, you came back to try again for the Dam Ruby and rubbed out Stingwell in the roll.

OLIVE

(amazed, re: Lila)

Witch.

(then)

I'm sorry, am I playing, too?

(then)

I'm not. Continue.

LILA

I did come back to see Stingwell. He thought I came to kill him, but we talked it out and then I paid him back. Every dime I stole when I ran away.

SIMONE

So we're to believe that somehow, along the way, you suddenly grew a conscience?

LILA

I did grow a conscience. She's sitting in a hotel room right now watching TV and eating string cheese. She's got my eyes and her father's big heart.

OLIVE

(can't help herself)

That's so sweet.

(then)

And evil.

(to Simone)

Right?

Seizing the distraction, Lila lunges for the gun. Olive YELPS and lunges as well, getting caught in the middle, then coming out from underneath with the six-shooter.

OLIVE (CONT'D)

I got it! I got the gun!

Proudly she spins the magazine. The barrel unlocks and the bullets dump out all over the floor.

OLIVE (CONT'D)

Shoot.

Lila reaches into her pocket, but can't find something.

SIMONE

Looking for this?

Simone produces Lila's cigarette-esque horse tranquilizer-dust blower she took in the scuffle.

SIMONE (CONT'D)

Guess you're right. Emerson is still a sucker for tricky dames.

As she puts it to her mouth, Lila ducks out the door, running.

OLIVE

Get her!

But Olive doesn't run. She waits, looking at Simone as they LISTEN to Lila run down the stairs and out the door. Then:

SIMONE

Nice job, everyone. Well played.

Randy steps in from the hall.

RANDY

Did it work?

SIMONE

She was in a big rush. And we got her gun.
See if you can follow them in your van. I
need to find Emerson.

As they hurry out...

OLIVE

Isn't this more fun than dinner and a movie?

EXT. BACK ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Lila gets in HER CAR, starts the engine, puts it in gear. PUSH
IN ON THE TRUNK AS NED REACHES OUT FROM INSIDE, SHUTTING IT.

NARRATOR

*Unaware that Chuck and the Pie-Maker were
currently grifting the grifter to see if her
lucky Penny was a real or a fake...*

INT. DAM TOUR LOBBY - NIGHT

Deserted, with cool noir lighting. Emerson enters, pocketing his
lock-pick and moving to the PHOTO STATION MICROFICHE MACHINE. He
starts intently browsing rapidly through PHOTOS of guests...

NARRATOR

*...the desperate investigator returned one
last time in search of some dam evidence.*

PUGET

Looking for more pictures of your girlfriend,
Cod?

Emerson looks up, surprised to see Detective Puget step out of
the shadows.

PUGET (CONT'D)

I think I found your angle.

Puget pushes the button SCROLLING THROUGH TOURIST PICTURES (A
BLUR), stopping on the picture Emerson gave him of Lila.

PUGET (CONT'D)

Lila Robinson, aka, Sheila Slapikoff, aka,
Genette LaPetite, aka, Emily Von Alistair.
This wasn't the first time she'd tried to
steal the Dam Ruby from Stingwell. She's been
on the run from him for years.

EMERSON

(trying)
You got it all wrong, Puget.

PUGET

What I got wrong was you. Thought you were wild-goosing me with a bogus tip to throw us monkey suits off.

EMERSON

Maybe that's exactly what I was doing. Maybe I got you hook, line and sinkered, wasting time on Lila so I can pop the real perp. Think it through, Puge. All you got is proof she entered the building three hours before he disappeared.

Puget brings up ANOTHER PHOTO: of a woman in the same dress, whose face we cannot see, exiting the frame.

PUGET

Here she's on her way out, half an hour after Stingwell's assistant said good night to our victim for the last time. That's motive and opportunity -- how she got the body where she got it? I'll just let the jury use their imaginations.

(heading away)

Thanks for the tip, Cod. And don't worry. If she's still within a hundred miles, we'll have her in custody by morning.

Emerson watches Puget walk off into the shadows.

NARRATOR

At that moment, Emerson Cod was overcome with the 100% certainty that he would never see his daughter again. And then...

Emerson looks at the picture of Lila on the machine, then up at a large SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM of the "Papen County Water Supply System - Every Drop Counts!" (like the one in Stingwell's office).

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...he was un-overcome by an idea that had a 1% chance of being correct.

As his eyes narrow.

EMERSON

Hey, now...

SIMONE (O.S.)

Emerson.

He turns, brightens.

EMERSON

Simone.

SIMONE

I knew you'd return to the scene of the crime.
I'm sorry I bolted on you.

EMERSON

You're back now.
(then)
Come with me.

They exit through the photo station, setting off the FLASH--

NARRATOR

*As the private eye set off to test his new
theory for leaks...*

EXT. LILA'S CAR - DRIVING (STAGE) - NIGHT

WE COME OVER THE TOP OF LILA.

NARRATOR

*...the tall drink of water driving into the
darkness remained unaware of her hidden cargo.*

PUSH IN ON THE TRUNK, where the metal DISSOLVES transparent and
we see inside to--

INT. LILA'S TRUNK - NIGHT

Ned and Chuck, packed like sardines, her head to his feet and
vice versa, so they will not risk skin on skin. Each head-foot
pairing is lit by a small trunk light...

NED

If love does make you stupid, then we really
must love Emerson.

CHUCK

If we find Penny, this will be worth it.

They bump along in the semi-darkness. Then:

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Ned?

NED

Yes.

CHUCK

Were we stupid to fall in love?

NED

We didn't choose it. It happened.

CHUCK

I know I said our love was hearty, but that's just another way of saying it's hard.

NED

No more than other people.

(then)

Okay, maybe a little more than other people.

CHUCK

When you let me live more than a minute, you said you didn't have a choice, but you did. We tell ourselves we don't have a choice to fall in love, but we do -- and if Emerson hadn't been blinded by love, then he never would have had Penny, and he wouldn't have anything to lose. Which would have been so much easier.

NED

Do you want us to be easier?

CHUCK

I dunno. Maybe there's exhaust fumes. But why love something, if loving something means you do stupid things and just have more to lose?

NED

"Why love something?"

(then)

Because we can.

Misty-eyed, Chuck breaks into a big smile, hugs Ned's feet. The car BUMPS to a QUICK STOP. They HEAR a car door open, then look:

OUT THE TRUNK

At Lila.

LILA

In my experience, if you're hiding in a trunk, it's a good idea not to chat.

OFF this--

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

FADE IN:

INT. PIE HOLE - NIGHT

Closed for business. Olive and Randy enter, excited.

OLIVE

How could you lose them?

RANDY

They were three blocks ahead. I wasn't comfortable jumping the curb.

OLIVE

Ned and Chuck are okay, right? I mean, they have to be.

RANDY

(steady, reassuring)

Yeah. You did disarm the crazy-ass she-wolf.

(then)

Is it insensitive of me to say this is fun?

OLIVE

Only if they're dead. Which they're not, right? They're fine.

(then)

Can I be honest with you? If you could read my mind -- which I'm glad you can't, but it doesn't matter because I'm going to tell you anyway--

RANDY

When?

OLIVE

Now. You were right. I did want to use you to squeeze the feelings I have for Ned out of my head. But I don't think I can do that.

RANDY

I like you, Olive. I like spending time with you.

OLIVE

That's the problem. I don't want that to make you all muddle-headed so you make a bad choice. I've been through a lot. I'm going to be difficult.

RANDY

I know it would be stupid to be your rebound guy.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

RANDY (CONT'D)

But I also think, maybe, after a while, you'll forget you ever bounced. And I'm willing to take that chance.

OLIVE

Maybe if we're careful, there's a way to do it smart so that neither of us get hur--

He kisses her.

RANDY

How was that?

OLIVE

That was brilliant.

He holds her. She closes her eyes...

OLIVE (CONT'D)

For the first time... in a very long time, the thoughts I had of Ned are gone from my head...
(then, noticing)
...and standing outside the door.

TAP-TAP at the door. Randy turns around to see:

Ned, in his underwear, outside. He enters.

NED

(calling out behind)
Clearing...

Ned steps out of the way as Chuck enters, also shivering in a slip...

CHUCK

C... c... crossing.

OLIVE

What happened?

CHUCK

Lila caught us, took our clothes and left us by the side of the road.

NED

Randy, can you pull your car around? We'll get dressed and meet you out front.

RANDY

Sure.

CHUCK

We gotta find Emerson. Who knows what Lila will do now.

CONTINUED: (2)

Olive and Randy head for the front. Ned HITS THE LIGHTS AS HE PASSES TO THE KITCHEN. CAMERA STAYS IN THE DARK PIE HOLE FOR A MOMENT. The FLOWERS in the VASE from the flower farmer are GLOWING.

Ned, Chuck, Olive and Randy rush back, leaning into the glow.

NED

Why are these flowers glowing in the dark?

CHUCK

We need to get to the dam.

OFF this--

INT. STINGWELL'S DAM OFFICE - NIGHT

Emerson and Simone enter the dark office. We see that the FLOWERS ON STINGWELL'S DESK are also GLOWING.

EMERSON

I knew it.

He flips on the LIGHTS and goes straight to a vase of flowers.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

These are from Michael Brunt's farm.
Delivered on the day Stingwell died.

SIMONE

Were they glowing in the dark?

He moves to the transparent map of "PAPEN COUNTY PROPER" on the wall.

EMERSON

We know Stingwell was about to approve a multimillion-dollar renovation of the water pipes from the dam reservoir to the city, right?

(grabs map from wall)

Help me with this...

(she does)

Maybe I am crazy, but if those pipes need renovating--

SIMONE

It probably means they're leaky. And leaky pipes means...

He has guided her to the SCHEMATIC MAP of the water system behind Stingwell's desk. They place the transparent "County" map over the pipe map.

EMERSON

Water. Or in this case, glow-in-the-dark water on account of the toy company dumping its chemicals.

SIMONE

(points on the map)

There's Brunt's farm. Right over the biggest, leakiest water pipe in Papen County.

EMERSON

Say Brunt's found out Stingwell is planning to replace all the old pipes and he's afraid he'll lose everything, so he delivers the flowers personally, 'cause he wants to talk to the man. But Stingwell's in a meeting, so he waits outside the door.

SIMONE

Lila said she and Stingwell had it out. She said he thought she'd come to kill him for the ruby.

EMERSON

So maybe that's what Brunt overhears -- and now he gets the perfect plan to solve all his problems and steal the Dam Ruby for himself.

SIMONE

But if Brunt did it, what about the picture of Lila leaving the dam just after Stingwell was murdered?

EMERSON

Follow me.

They exit into--

OMIT

INT. DAM SPILLWAY PIPE

As Emerson and Simone walk and talk to the ladder...

EMERSON

End of the day, Stingwell takes the ruby, says goodbye to his assistant and leaves. He's walking down the pipe and he hears a noise, so he goes up to investigate...

As Simone follows Emerson up the ladder into--

INT. 2ND SPILLWAY PIPE

Simone follows Emerson from the ladder down the pipe, passing through the iron gate...

EMERSON

Now, Brunt had three hours to get ready for this moment. He would have been waiting. But to pull off the perfect crime...

(then)

This is nuts. I'm fooling myself.

SIMONE

It's Lila.

EMERSON

(defeated)

I know it is. She killed Stingwell. This was a crazy idea.

SIMONE

No, *it's Lila*.

They look back through the gate -- IT'S LILA, with a gun, backlit, at the end of the hall.

EMERSON

(looking hard)

No, it ain't.

(to "Lila")

I knew it. It was you.

"Lila" steps up, locks the iron gate. REVEAL it's BRUNT in a dress and heels.

BRUNT

Good guess. Too bad no one will ever know.

Brunt heads back to the large WATER VALVE.

EMERSON

Why'd you come back?

BRUNT

Stingwell hid the Dam Ruby somewhere in here before I did him in. One more visit as the murderous fugitive Lila Robinson should do the trick.

Brunt turns the VALVE wheel.

BRUNT (CONT'D)

See you later, suckers!

Brunt exits. We hear a RUMBLE... Emerson notices a glimmer in the pipe wall -- he reaches and pulls out the Dam Ruby.

EMERSON

Looks like he's going the wrong way.

SIMONE

I disagree.

A BREEZE begins to blow in their faces from down the pipe as the WATER RUMBLE GROWS LOUDER.

EMERSON

Come on!

They rush forward, coming to the SPILLWAY OPENING. Emerson and Simone stop, looking down into the VAST DROP.

SIMONE

Emerson!

With nowhere to go... Simone grabs Emerson, pulls him out onto--

EXT. THE FACE OF THE DAM (STAGE)

She pulls him to the side of the opening, just as 60,000 pounds of water jets out of the hole in the dam. Emerson and Simone cling to each other to keep from falling off the ledge.

EMERSON

(over the noise)

I think I just figured out how Stingwell ended up half a mile away. He didn't have you.

NARRATOR

The facts were these:

INT. 2ND SPILLWAY (THE FACE OF THE DAM) - FLASHBACK

Stingwell jiggles the now-locked gate as "Lila" (Brunt, from behind) turns the WATER VALVE and exits. The now-familiar DEEP RUMBLE as the BREEZE begins to blow from down the pipe. He pulls out his ruby on the chain and sticks it in the crack.

NARRATOR

Cornered by Brunt, but thinking it was Lila, Roland Stingwell decided his precious ruby should remain at the Papen County Dam where he'd found it.

Now resolute, Stingwell turns back, staring into the pipe. His HAIR BLOWS ahead of the thundering flow.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

As he considered the power of the immense hydroelectric power of a plant he had designed, Stingwell was struck by the irony...

He turns, resolute, as the massive FLOW slams a flailing Stingwell OUT OF FRAME.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...then by the water, discharged at 3,800 cubic-feet per second.

INT. PHOTO STATION, DAM TOUR LOBBY - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

In his Lila-inspired drag, Brunt walks with his head down as he passes through the photo station.

NARRATOR

After flushing Stingwell, still disguised as Lila, Brunt had allowed the photo booth to document his exit.

A FLASH--

INSERT - TOURIST PHOTO (SEEN EARLIER WITH PUGET)

Of Brunt, disguised as Lila.

INT. DAM TOUR LOBBY - NIGHT - THE PRESENT

As before, Brunt in drag, walking with his head down.

NARRATOR

And, after attempting to flush Emerson and Simone, Brunt left the same way.

ANGLE ON Ned and Chuck. They run onto the scene.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

This time, it was Brunt who was flushed out.

Brunt makes a run into the PHOTO STATION, unsteady on high heels. A FLASH:

INSERT - TOURIST PHOTOS (FLASHES AFTER EACH)

-- Brunt running into frame.

-- Brunt with Ned in close pursuit.

-- Ned grabbing Brunt.

INT. PIE HOLE - DINING AREA - DAY

Ned, Chuck and Olive look on as Emerson hands the Stingwell ruby over to Amelia Stingwell.

NARRATOR

Murder solved and ruby recovered, Amelia Stingwell informed the P.I. that his previous sins were now washed away.

Amelia hands Emerson (next to Simone) a stack of cash.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Emerson Cod would profit from the trickle-down.

EXT. WOODS - QUIET ROAD - DAY

Lila is parked on the road up ahead, standing by her car. Emerson stops HIS CAR 20 yards away, gets out. As they meet in the middle...

NARRATOR

The terms of the meeting in the woods were simple: come alone, no police and no surprises. While Emerson and Lila had complied easily with terms "A" and "B," there were still 2 surprises yet to come.

Emerson looks toward her car.

ANGLE ON LILA'S REAR WINDOW

We see the back of a LITTLE GIRL'S HEAD in a SNOW HAT.

LILA

Deal's a deal, Emerson. Penny's waiting in the car. I guess you two can catch up.

(then)

And, thank you. No one else could have done what you did.

EMERSON

No one else would have been stupid enough to try. This is a crazy life, Lila. Kid deserves some normalcy.

LILA

You'd be shocked how normal her life is. School, homework, braces.

EMERSON

She has braces?

LILA

My life may not always be on the straight-and-narrow, but Penny's is.

NARRATOR

Emerson Cod looked into the eyes that had lied to him so many times before, and decided they were lying to him again.

EMERSON

I don't want to see Penny for ten minutes, Li. I'm taking her back. It's my turn to be her parent.

Lila reacts.

NARRATOR

Surprise.

EMERSON

You leave us be, I'll do what I can to get the police to drop the kidnapping charge. Otherwise... well, there ain't no otherwise.

LILA

I kinda knew you might want this.

Lila tears up, Emerson notes it, surprised.

EMERSON

I'll take good care of her.

LILA

(looking down)

I know... Look, a lucky penny.

He bends and picks up a shiny penny in the dirt.

EMERSON

You keep it.

LILA

Thanks...

(so sad it's funny)

Since I gave back all that money to Stingwell, I'll take what I can get. I'm broke now. Car's on its last legs...

Emerson looks at her, fishes in his pocket, offers the keys to his car.

EMERSON

Here. Take mine. Penny and I'll find something else.

CONTINUED: (2)

LILA

(hugging him)

Thank you. I always could count on your big heart.

(starts off, then)

Maybe I was a fool to leave you.

EMERSON

People do stupid things when they're in love.

Lila breaks away and goes toward Emerson's car.

Emerson approaches her car, and Penny inside, only when he gets there, "PENNY" is a life-sized doll with a wool cap on the rear seat. The car's DISTRIBUTER CAP, with cut wires, is on the passenger seat.

NARRATOR

Surprise.

Emerson looks back in time to see the back door of his car slam shut. Lila SQUEALS past, eyes dead ahead. But IN BACK, we see a 9-year-old girl, PENNY, smile (sweetly) at him. She has BRACES. Emerson watches the car go.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*It was almost a familiar feeling for Emerson
Cod to be tricked by Lila Robinson. With all
his emotions in a race to his head, strangely,
it was a smile that reached his face first.*

A small smile.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Penny was alive and well...

INT. EMERSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Another day. Back to work, Emerson finishes writing on a yellow pad, turns to look through his daily PILE OF MAIL.

NARRATOR

*...and, perhaps, judging from her wide smile
full of braces, she was with a mother who maybe
even loved her as much as he did.*

He notices one LETTER from "On Pop of the World Publishing."

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

One way or another, he would find Penny.

Pauses, then rips it open and reads, a smile spreading across his face.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*And now, with the news that his pop-up book,
"Lil' GumShoe," had been accepted by a
publisher and was going to press, maybe it was
only a matter of time before Penny found him.*

As he leans back in his chair and smiles, we--

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW