

The Closer
Pilot Script

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Second Draft
The Shephard/Robin Company
Warner Brothers TV/TNT
July 22, 2004

THE CLOSER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT: HOLLYWOOD HILLS BUNGALOW (MR. COLLIER'S HOUSE) -- NIGHT

A SWARM OF POLICE CARS and AN AMBULANCE huddle by the narrow curb outside A CUTE, COMPACT COTTAGE and its DETACHED GARAGE in an isolated corner of LAUREL CANYON. Lots of b.g. action.

ELLEN (O.S.)

But Dr. Collier would never, ever
kill anyone. Never.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE FRONT YARD - NIGHT

DETECTIVE LIEUTENANT ANDY FLYNN, handsome, in his forties, takes NOTES from a tearful woman in her early thirties. This is ELLEN PARKS. Ellen wears A GOLD CRUCIFIX around her neck.

DET. FLYNN

Uh-huh. Ellen?

ELLEN

Ellen Parks.

DET. FLYNN

P-a-r-k-s. And your relationship to
Dr. Collier?

ELLEN

His secretary. He's not a medical
doctor, you know. He's a - a highly
respected mathematician. And he
doesn't go around killing people.

FLYNN

Yeah. Well, Ellen. There's a dead
woman on the floor of his master
bedroom. And she's got a big, big,
big gunshot wound in her face.

(looking up at ELLEN)

So how do you think that happened
if Dr. Collier didn't kill her?

Ellen tugs nervously on her cross, but seems befuddled. A
TECHNICIAN walks up beside them.

FLYNN (CONT'D)

You brought the keys to his garage?

ELLEN nods and hands THE KEYS off to FLYNN, who, in turn, passes them off to the TECHNICIAN, who disappears. FLYNN begins walking up the driveway and ELLEN follows him. The conversation never stops.

FLYNN (CONT'D)

Any idea where your boss is now?

ELLEN

On vacation. In Hawaii. He...he stayed longer than he planned.

As she speaks, FLYNN is joined by JOSEPH WATERS (another plainclothes detective, African-American, early fifties).

WATERS

Okay, Flynn. They're ready.

FLYNN

So. Ellen. We'll be back in a minute. All right?

Ellen nods. Det. Waters and Det. Flynn leave her and head towards the bungalow's front door.

FLYNN (CONT'D)

Got an I.D. on the victim?

WATERS

Several. Two driver's licenses. Two passports. All fakes. Good fakes though. Except the pictures have been cut out.

They pass by the NERVOUS LATINA MAID weeping on the edge of the porch and pause to pick up PLASTIC GLOVES and PROTECTIVE MASKS from A BIG CARDBOARD BOX. Behind them, we see NUMEROUS TECHNICIANS and UNIFORMED OFFICERS moving in and out of the house, all with masks covering their faces.

FLYNN

Guess Collier didn't tell his maid he was staying late at the luau.

WATERS

Well, who wants to come home from vacation and clean up a murder?

INT. MASTER BEDROOM OF DR. COLLIER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Bright, bright light surrounds the unseen corpse, the effect of SEVERAL PORTABLE LAMPS clamped about the room. THREE RAISED SHEETS form a U, demarcating the area of the corpse.

Shadows move behind the tightly stretched linens. DR. GONZALES, mid-thirties, wearing plastic gloves, and a BULKY ROBE over his SHIRT, TIE AND SLACKS, steps into the frame. A MASK wrapped tightly around his face gives the grumpy pathologist the air of a mad scientist. He bends down so that we get a dismaying glimpse of the WOMAN'S SHATTERED FACE.

DR. GONZALES

Let's hurry it along guys. I have a date and the clock is ticking.

FLYNN and WATERS enter, masks also strapped around their faces. They look disgusted at the crime.

FLYNN

We really need these masks?

DR. GONZALES

I declared her dead from the foyer, but hey, you decide. She was naked like this when we got here.

FLYNN

That's what they all say, Doc.

Waters moves towards the closet and we GO WITH HIM as he opens the door. Empty except for a few women's clothes.

FLYNN bends down over the body. Waters looks in the bathroom.

FLYNN (CONT'D)

And that's a shot to the face?

DR. GONZALES

Uh-huh. But that's not what killed her. I'd lift her head up and show you, but she's been dead for two weeks now and stuff would fall out. Here's the order. Blunt force instrument blows to the back of the head. Four or five of them. I mean hard. Then the hair was cut off. Then her clothes were removed. Then while she was lying on the floor, someone shot her in the face.

BRENDA (O.S.)

(southern accent)

Sounds like love.

FLYNN and GONZALES look up towards the hallway to find...

...DEPUTY CHIEF BRENDA JEAN JOHNSON standing in the doorway. Early forties, and wearing a businesslike skirt and blouse, her hair unflatteringly pressed to her head by the strap of her mask, BRENDA looks peculiarly out-of-place. Her manner is one of utter calm and professionalism, her tone, courteous (despite the rudeness with which she is treated). Behind her stands DET. SGT. DAVID GABRIEL, a clear-eyed, handsome, up-and-comer, early thirties.

DR. GONZALES steps in front of the sheets and, behind him, we see DET. WATERS re-emerging from the bathroom, an open box of tampons in his hand (which he hands off to a nearby CSU TECHNICIAN, who dutifully bags and labels the find).

DET. GABRIEL

(introducing BRENDA)

Dr. Gonzales, this is Deputy Chief Brenda Jean Johnson, head of our new Priority Murder Squad. She's...from Atlanta.

DR. GONZALES

Atlanta?

BRENDA

Nice to meet you, Doctor.

GABRIEL

You remember Lieutenants Flynn and Waters, don't you, ma'am?

BRENDA

(stooping by the body)

I do. Nice to see y'all again. Pardon me for just jumping in. Any sign of sexual assault, Doctor?

Brenda pulls out a small flashlight from her pocket and closely examines the victim's head.

DR. GONZALES

I won't be doing a complete exam 'til tomorrow. I'm just here to declare the victim dead and write it up as a homicide. Something a coroner's attendant usually does, but some asshole at Parker Center insisted on a doctor.

BRENDA

Mm-hmm. That asshole was me.
(as Gonzales reacts)
See doctor?

(MORE)

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Just inside the ear canal and on the edge of the lobe: that's not blood. It's vomit. Caked. Dried. The killer threw up. Over there. To the right. See? The rug's discolored.

Brenda takes a breath, grimaces and removes her mask.

The men exchange glances. Who is this woman?

Brenda thinks through the smell, then bends down next to the area she indicated and puts her nose in it.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Someone used a detergent here. To clean up the vomit.

(looking up, coughing)

The mess seems to have come from the blows to the head. The gunshot came later. After all the blood had drained away. This crime doesn't look premeditated to me.

(she stands)

Sorry to interrupt your evening, Doctor, but I'm going to have to ask you to expedite this autopsy. When the body's ready, I'll go with you to the morgue. Oh, and Detectives, if you could report on what you've found so far to Sgt. Gabriel here, I'd be very grateful.

Brenda looks one last time at the victim, shakes her head and exits. Flynn glares after her. Gonzales practically hisses.

GONZALES

What the hell?

FLYNN

Uh - did I miss something? Are you people taking over? Is that it?

GABRIEL

Look. You think I was sitting at my desk tonight thinking up ways to piss you off? This comes directly from Assistant Chief Pope.

FLYNN

(storming past them)

Pope.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Flynn tosses off his gloves and mask and hurls it next to the cardboard box. Waters and Gabriel do the same, albeit more calmly. As they discard their paraphernalia...

FLYNN

Priority Squad? What makes this a priority? And who's Miss Atlanta here trying to impress? She's got six detectives working for her full-time. And she comes down here herself? In person? And orders us around? No.

Flynn stalks off. Waters follows after him. Then Gabriel.

EXT. DETACHED GARAGE AREA OF DR. COLLIER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Waters, Flynn and Gabriel catch up with Brenda, who's popping lemon drops in her mouth on her way to the garage.

FLYNN

Excuse me. Ms. Johnson.

BRENDA

(politely)

Yes, Lieutenant?

FLYNN

I don't know who you think you are, but we were assigned this case by Captain Taylor.

BRENDA

There's been a change of plans. Look. Since you're feeling emotional about this, why don't--

FLYNN

I'm not feeling emotional. I don't get emotional. I'm damn angry.

BRENDA

(a beat; still polite)

Well, thanks for speaking your mind. Look. I hate to pull rank on my very first week, but I think it would be best if you handed over your notes to Sgt. Gabriel, took a deep breath and went back to your car. I can get what I need from your partner here.

BRENDA turns from Flynn, as if he had ceased to exist, and gives her full attention to his flummoxed partner.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Does your search warrant include the car and garage?

FLYNN

Hey, Gabriel. You might explain to Deputy Chief Brenda Johnson here that this house is a crime scene. (handing over his notes) The maid found a body in the bedroom. In L.A., that's probable cause and we don't need a warrant.

BRENDA

(her patience wearing thin)

The garage is not physically attached to the house. The car is inside the garage. You need a warrant to examine both.

WATERS

This Collier guy murdered someone. He's a fugitive.

BRENDA

That might be, Det. Waters. But we still require the proper authorization to collect evidence, or everything you find can be challenged in court. So, I repeat. Do you have a warrant?

(off Water's silence)

I'll take that as a no.

(turning to Ellen; polite)

You're Dr. Collier's secretary, yes? Did he give you permission to open his garage to strangers?

ELLEN shakes her head. Brenda steps forward. As she speaks, the technicians slowly stop working and exchange glances.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Excuse me. Everyone. Could you step away from what you're doing and come out of the garage. Thank you.

WATERS

(condescending)

Look. It's one house.

(MORE)

WATERS (CONT'D)

The guy's secretary offered to open the garage. No need to be a bitch about it. We'll get it done the right--

BRENDA

I'm sorry, Detective, but if I liked being called a bitch to my face, I'd still be married.

Brenda steps out of frame. Grim-faced, Waters tears sheets of paper from his notebook and hands them to Gabriel.

WATERS

Love this elite, little squad you guys are in. Lots of luck to you, too. Lots of luck.

Waters hands Gabriel the pages and follows his partner into the dark. Gabriel, disturbed, moves towards Brenda.

EXT. FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Gabriel steps up beside Brenda, who is finishing up a phone call. Behind them, the body of the victim is carried out of Dr. COLLIER's house by CORONER ATTENDANTS.

BRENDA

And see if the victim matches up against anyone declared missing over the last month. Thank you.

Brenda flips her phone shut, drops it in her pocket and joins the body on its way to the ambulance. Gabriel catches up. As they walk-and-talk, Brenda appreciatively eyes one of the MORTUARY ATTENDANTS, then looks back at Gabriel, who's a little stunned by the nature of her split focus. Under the circumstances.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

If the victim has these aliases, we can bet she has a record. Maybe I can get the F.B.I. to run her prints for us tomorrow. Also...the cleaning lady and his secretary had keys. Check them out. But quietly.

GABRIEL

Excuse me, ma'am. Are you planning on conducting this investigation yourself? Personally?

BRENDA

Is that a problem?

GABRIEL

Well, you have a whole squad of experienced detectives working for you. And the truth is...you're still a little unfamiliar with how our department works.

BRENDA

For example?

GABRIEL

Det. Flynn is a family friend. And I've worked with Det. Waters. They both have a lot of experience. And pride in their work.

BRENDA

Uh-huh. Good. And?

GABRIEL

And you were...a little impatient with them just now. And you're new. And, well, as they say in your part of the country, "You catch more flies with honey." You know?

BRENDA

(calm and courteous)

I do know. And the next time I'm out hunting flies, Sgt. Gabriel, I'll bear that in mind. Right now, though, I'm trying to catch a killer who shoots women in the face and leaves them lying naked on the floor with their hair cut off. And honey isn't the grease I need to move the machine.

The irritated medical examiner walks past her. As he goes:

DR. GONZALES

Body's ready. Just waiting on you.

BRENDA

Charming as y'all have been. I'll have one of the officers here drive me to the morgue.

(to herself)

I don't understand why her hair was cut off. What's that about?

(to Gabriel)

(MORE)

BRENDA (CONT'D)
I'd feel better if you stayed to supervise until the warrant arrives.

GABRIEL
Yes, ma'am.

Brenda walks off. Gabriel watches her go.

TAYLOR (O.S.)
She was ordering my boys around like they were janitors.

INT. PARKER CENTER (LAPD HEADQUARTERS) - OFFICE RECEPTION AREA - DAY

TWO MEN move through the HUSTLING OFFICERS, past SECRETARIES at desks, ETC.. One is African American, mid-fifties, military bearing: this is the fuming CAPTAIN TAYLOR, head of the ROBBERY/HOMICIDE DIVISION. His companion, and the recipient of his bitter complaints, is ASSISTANT POLICE CHIEF HENRY POPE, late forties and businesslike.

TAYLOR
(imitating Brenda)
"I want a warrant to look under the victim's skirt, y'all."
(his own voice)
Look, Pope. This idea that we need a specialized murder squad: it's expensive and redundant.

POPE
These were not objections I heard when the squad reported to you.

TAYLOR
When it reported to me, it wasn't undercutting my authority as Captain of the Robbery/Homicide Division. And to bring in this woman from Atlanta - and I heard she resigned out there after an ethics inquiry, and that's never been addressed - this Southern belle -

They reach POPE's office and he pauses to take a report from his secretary, Linda, a young, businesslike working-Mom type.

LINDA
Mr. Pope, sir? The budget overruns in Vice. And the Chief called from his car.

(MORE)

LINDA (CONT'D)

He'll be late and wants you to start without him. Morning Captain Taylor.

POPE

Thanks, Linda.

As she walks off, POPE opens his office door and continues his conversation with Taylor while reading his notes.

INT. POPE'S OFFICE - DAY

Pope follows Taylor into his work space.

POPE

Listen Taylor. You've been handing these big cases off to the District Attorney's office with less than compelling evidence. Robert Blake. Specter. We're heading back to O.J. territory. These big defense attorneys are eating our lunch. And...so...the Priority Murder Squad is now a fact-of-life.

TAYLOR

Well, why is this case so important? Or are you telling me a geek like Collier's a celebrity?

Sighing, Pope closes the door to his office and begins searching his desk for papers.

POPE

Dr. Collier is an cryptologist. Know what that is?

TAYLOR

Code stuff.

POPE

Computer code stuff. As in preventing illegal downloading of video and music files off the internet. He's working on an anti-piracy program that his boss - Dr. Harlan Brown, by the way - third richest man in America? - I just mention that in passing - an anti-piracy computer program valued at around fifty billion dollars.

TAYLOR

The money isn't what's missing.
It's a man. I can't handle that?

POPE

A missing man who's already represented by a team of six defense attorneys. Courtesy of his company. Look. We tried arranging this new squad your way. And due to the overzealousness of your handpicked lead detective, who lied on the stand, our first case ended with a twenty-five year LAPD veteran indicted for perjury. And now the murderer's off doing interviews with Larry King.

Pope finds what he needs and exits. Taylor follows him.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY

...past the office workers and towards the corridor.

POPE

This is not a judgement on your ability. It's an acknowledgement that we - the department - need more specialization. Brenda is a C.I.A. trained interrogator with excellent references from the Atlanta police department. And a reputation for obtaining confessions that lead directly to courtroom convictions.

INT. HALLWAY TO ELEVATOR - DAY

Pope and Taylor continue their walk to the lift.

POPE

I saw her at work. And I'm telling you - she's not Miss Congeniality, and I'm aware of that - but she's a closer.

(arriving at the elevator)

And the Chief wants this to happen. And he's given me responsibility for pulling it off. And I intend to do that. And I'm willing to demote or transfer anyone who gets in my way. Anyone.

TAYLOR

People work all their lives to make Deputy Chief. I've given the LAPD thirty-one years. And she walks in here? From three thousand miles away? Not one day of experience on our beat. And now she outranks me?

POPE

You know the rules. She starts as a rookie officer or as a Deputy Chief. There's nothing in between.

The elevator door opens. Pope steps inside. Taylor hands him the manila folder he's been carrying.

TAYLOR

You might find this helpful, sir. When you're thinking of who you have to transfer and demote to make your little murder squad work.

Taylor turns and exits. Pope looks down at the folder as the doors close on him.

INT. LOBBY OF MOTEL - EARLY MORNING

Brenda eats from a low-fat yogurt container while staring through her translucent reflection at the tantalizing snacks in the vending machine. Fascinated, she turns sideways, critically inspecting her profile; then turns the other way. Her cell phone rings; she pulls it out of her pocket, checks the number and sighs heavily before answering it.

BRENDA

Hi, Mama...No, waiting for my ride.
(picking up her briefcase)
No, they gave me a car but I still don't know my way around here yet...Well, it's big. Spread out all over the place. One week isn't hardly long enough to learn it. Beautiful. Sunny....Fine, but everyone here is so thin....Uh-huh. Thank-you, but I'm not...Yes, just last night. My first investigation. Yep...The same thing as always, Mother. Listen. You always ask that. And when I tell you, you're always horrified. And it ends up being an argument about what I do for a living and it's just too late to go back and try the ballet.

Honk, honk. Brenda gazes out through the front door to see...

...Sgt. Gabriel, hopping out of the car and stepping round to open the passenger door of the car.

EXT. FRONT OF HOTEL - MORNING

As Brenda steps up to and inside the car...

BRENDA

I'm not mad, Mama. I just don't have time for a life discussion. ...No, tell Daddy I'll call back. Mother? My ride is here...My ride is here. Okay...You, too.

Brenda pulls her dress inside as Gabriel - his face blank - shuts the door.

INT. CAR - DAY

Brenda examines FOLDERS open on her lap.

GABRIEL

Dr. Collier deleted his entire employment record.

BRENDA

So we have no picture of him and no fingerprints.

GABRIEL

Right.

BRENDA

What about the DMV?

GABRIEL

Never had a California license.

BRENDA

What about his company? They have cameras throughout their building.

GABRIEL

If you look on the bottom of Detective Garth's report...

BRENDA

They tape over everything after two weeks. Crapenzola. What about medical or dental records?

GABRIEL

He listed himself as a Christian Scientist. So nothing.

BRENDA

(turning a page)

Wait a minute. This can't be right. The victim's prints are everywhere in Collier's house. And car. And his office, too? She was in his office?

(turning a page)

But Collier's prints are nowhere? How is this possible?

(reaching the end)

Where's the financial report?

GABRIEL

Can you wait until the banks open?

BRENDA

What about a portrait artist working with some of his--

GABRIEL

We're already doing that, ma'am. You might be surprised to hear it, but we were investigating murders in L.A. before you got here.

Silence. Brenda glances over at Gabriel, who avoids returning her gaze; she resumes examining the files.

BRENDA

We need information off Dr. Collier's office computer. Access to his professional e-mail. And I'm sorry if you're tired, Sgt.

GABRIEL

I already asked for that stuff. His company won't cooperate. And I'm not tired.

More silence. Brenda doesn't know how to respond.

INT. THE MURDER ROOM - DAY

DETECTIVES, A COUPLE OF SECRETARIES and THREE OR FOUR UNIFORMED OFFICERS go about their work in a LONG, RECTANGULAR ROOM lit by UNFLATTERING FLUORESCENT LIGHTS. A FEW CUBICLES denote small office areas. FOUR OR FIVE DOORS lead off to HALLWAYS, BATHROOMS and BRENDA'S OFFICE.

COMPUTERS and RETRO-OFFICE FURUNITURE ABOUND. A GIANT PLASTIC BULLETIN BOARD, on which one can write or post pictures or reports, etc. runs about half the length of one wall, fronting AN OPEN AREA around which Brenda's team can occasionally gather.

Brenda and Gabriel enter. Brenda heads straight for the door to her office, but is intercepted by a rotund, Cantonese-American, who pushes himself out of a RICKETY DESK CHAIR. This is DETECTIVE LIEUTENANT MIKE TAO, an L.A. native with a passion for local sports. THE WALLS OF TAO'S CUBICLE are A SHRINE TO THE LAKERS, HIS WIFE AND FOUR CHILDREN. Though physically going to seed, his mind is still agile.

BRENDA

Det. Tao. How are you today?

TAO

Excuse me? I mean, fine. Sorry. Look. I was doing background on Dr. Collier and something odd came up with his Social Security number.

Suddenly alert, Brenda strains to hear over the rumble of the room's conversation. She gives up.

BRENDA

Could y'all keep it down please? Just for a moment. Thank you.

Folks exchange glances, but lower their voices.

TAO

Well, I used the Social Security number to, like, get to Collier's early employment records. He had a part-time job frying taco shells when he was sixteen. Got me city, state, address, parents. And I talked to his mother this morning. And the boy with Elliot Collier's name and Social Security number died when he was nineteen.

Brenda listens, stunned, as she takes the report from Tao.

BRENDA

So who is this guy?
(exiting into her office)
Thank you, Det. Tao. Good work.

People around the squad room watch Brenda exit.

GABRIEL

Okay. I got an autopsy report we have to go over. Everyone. Garth? Can you hit the lights.

INT. BRENDA'S OFFICE - DAY

Brenda's work space has A LARGE GLASS WINDOW looking out over her squad. Exits lead off to a corridor and the Murder Room. There is nothing on the walls but A MIRROR; the DECOR is INSTITUTIONAL AND SPARTAN, but Brenda's work space still manages to be something of a mess. MAKE-UP, GUM WRAPPERS and the REMAINS OF A BRAND NAME DIET MEAL clutter her blotter.

And Henry Pope sits opposite Brenda's desk, next to an EXTREMELY LARGE PURSE. Pope clutches the manila folder Taylor handed him a few minutes ago. As Brenda enters, he stands.

BRENDA

Hi, Henry. Oh. Oh. Don't look at all of this. That door isn't locked? I didn't lock it?

POPE

No. Sorry. I just kind of - barged in. How's it going here?

Brenda grabs her huge purse off the sofa and begins sweeping stuff from her desk into its copious folds. The box from which the diet meal appeared disappears in the trash. Some lipstick falls on the floor and she picks it up. As she cleans: *through the window, we see most of the lights in the Murder Room go out.*

BRENDA

Fine. Fine. Well. It's a little - whoops - it's not as straight forward as I would like. You have a pained look on your face.

POPE

(handing her the file)
Yeah. Yeah. Take a look.

INT. MURDER ROOM - DAY

The squad splits its focus between GABRIEL's recitation of the autopsy, accompanied by A SLIDE SHOW, and their view of Pope and Brenda as they talk in her office.

GABRIEL

The marks here, on the back of the victim's head, came from two different objects. One smaller and cubelike with a density of granite. And the other--

INT. BRENDA'S OFFICE - DAY

Brenda thumbs quickly through the contents of the file. Reluctantly, she puts on a pair of reading glasses.

POPE

Those are requests for transfer back to Robbery/Homicide. From every single member of your squad. Uniforms. Detectives. Everyone.

Brenda glances out her window at the darkened...

MURDER ROOM - DAY

...as Sgt. Gabriel displays more pictures from the pathologist's report. The squad looks away from Brenda's office as she glances out towards them.

GABRIEL

The victim was turning as the first blow landed. The others came after she had fallen, and in rapid succession, smashing the skull...

INT. BRENDA'S OFFICE - DAY

Brenda looks back at Pope; she straightens.

POPE

I'm pretty sure Captain Taylor put them up to it. Everyone here was originally supposed to report to him. But, truthfully, we may have... vastly underestimated the institutional prejudice against having a murder squad operating outside the control of the Robbery/Homicide Division. And run by someone from outside the department. You'll note the requests are all dated last Wednesday. The day after you arrived. So. Sorry to have placed you in such an...awkward situation.

(MORE)

POPE (CONT'D)

And I'd understand if you wanted to withdraw. Naturally, the department would put together a separation package for you. Pick up your relocation expenses and--

BRENDA

Henry, I sold my house. I turned down a position in Homeland Security, which is no longer available. If I lose this job - after the ethics inquiry I was forced to undergo - my career is effectively over. Now. You brought me here to expedite these cases. And to close them. So if you'll excuse me...

Brenda moves to exit, then pauses and looks back at a troubled Pope with genuine ice in her eyes.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

You know, right now they may dislike me just because I'm new. Or because I hold a position above their old boss. But I want you to relax, Henry. Because once I roll up my sleeves and go to work, and they see me in action, why, they'll have a whole list of other reasons to hate my guts. Feel better?

She exits, closing her door harder than necessary.

THE MURDER ROOM - DAY

...as Gabriel finishes his presentation.

GABRIEL

In addition, about nine-to-twelve years ago, the victim had a breast reduction surgery, as well as an enhancement around the jawline, which made her face squarer. Indications are she also had a nose job.

Brenda takes a moment to collect herself, then moves up to replace Sgt. Gabriel, who stands aside as Brenda addresses the squad (which includes only one other woman: an attractive African-American in her late twenties). As she speaks each of her detectives' names, she removes that person's REQUEST FOR A TRANSFER, and tosses it into the trash, calmly, but firmly.

BRENDA

Which means she was serious about changing her appearance. So. What do we know about this crime? Really? Or the motive Dr. Collier had for committing it? Not much. We have a slug from a .44 Magnum, which Det. Provenza might walk over to Ballistics. See if the markings match up to a known criminal weapon. Det. Garth, if you could assemble Collier's finances? There may be something there. Det. Sanchez and Det. Daniels, maybe you could join Det. Lieutenant Tao in putting together a more complete picture of this guy. And keep Sgt. Gabriel informed of your progress. And we need to focus on progress. Because all we have right now, lady and gentlemen, is a woman we can't identify, murdered by a man who doesn't exist.

And off the stunned faces of the squad we slam to black.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. HALLWAY IN PARKER CENTER - LATE MORNING

DET. JULIO SANCHEZ, a member of Brenda's squad, and a handsome, athletic young man, walks through the corridor accompanied by DET. IRENE DANIELS, an AFRICAN-AMERICAN woman who projects swift confidence and striking femininity. Sanchez carries an OFFICIAL FORM.

DANIELS

So. What do you think's going to happen here? Is she gonna stay?

SANCHEZ

We did our bit. I say let the brass fight it out. Your shoes are hot. Make your legs look longer.

DANIELS

Yeah, your wife liked them, too. I'll send her a pair.

Daniels walks away. Julio smiles to himself and knocks on the door to Brenda's office.

BRENDA (O.S.)

Come in.

INT. BRENDA'S OFFICE - DAY

Sanchez enters to find Brenda listening to Dr. Collier's confident boss, DR. HARLAN BROWN, dressed-down, late fifties and pompous, accompanied by an attorney, PHILLIP BANKS, early forties, slimy, and rich, rich, rich. Brenda nods at Sanchez; he takes a seat on the sofa.

BANKS

But allowing you entree to Dr. Brown's computer systems also gives you access to his company's new encryption system. I can't allow that. Besides, the idea that Dr. Collier committed this crime is ridiculous.

BRENDA

Where is your client then, Mr. Banks? Why did he delete his personnel records? His fingerprints? Why did he never check into his hotel in Hawaii?

(MORE)

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Dr. Brown, who set up your company's internal security system, by the way? Or should I guess?

DR. BROWN

Dr. Collier. Security systems are his speciality.

BRENDA

And as CEO of your company, were you responsible for hiring him?

DR. BROWN

Yes, and I'm very proud of that decision. Look. I know Elliot very well. He's a little affected. A bit reclusive. But not a murderer.

BRENDA

What do you mean: affected?

DR. BROWN

Well. Like Steven Jobs - you know who he is, right? One of the inventors of Apple computers - Mr. Jobs always wears khakis and black turtlenecks to work. In the winter. Elliot copies him in that. I've never seen him in anything else. And he's terrified of colds. Won't use the same bathroom as anyone else. Puts on plastic gloves before touching another person's keyboard.

BANKS

Obsessive-compulsive behavior, yes, but it came with real genius, Ms. Johnson. The code he developed is possibly the most profitable innovation in internet technology since e-mail. One studio executive estimated its long-term revenue potential at half-a-trillion dollars at least.

BRENDA

Really? How much revenue will it generate if we never find this so-called Dr. Collier? If he just disappears. I reckon, under those circumstances, your little encryption program's probably worth, oh, air in a jug.

BANKS

What do you mean by so-called?

BRENDA

(handing BROWN a report)

The man who worked for you using the name of Elliot Collier? He created that identity by stealing the Social Security number of a boy who died in 1989. The mother never filed a death certificate with the federal government. So, Dr. Brown, the person who created your security system is an imposter.

DR. BROWN

(genuinely shaken)

Are - are you sure about this?

BRENDA

Does this look like the place of your questions, Dr. Brown? Or mine?

BANKS

(haughty)

Ms. Johnson, you're new in town. And you may not realize this. But in addition to the fact that Dr. Brown's company is the third largest software development firm *in the world*, my law firm, which represents him in this matter, includes some of the most important members of the Los Angeles Bar. The Mayor's cousin is one of our senior partners.

BRENDA

Really? I'm fascinated. Leave your resume at the front desk, Mr. Banks, and I'll get back to you.

(to BROWN)

Here's an interesting question, Dr. Brown. How do you suppose the share value of your company will be affected when the world finds out the person whom you entrusted with your most valuable asset wasn't who he said he was?

DR. BROWN

It's possible you made a mistake.

BRENDA

What's possible, sir, is that when I release information on this case to the press, I can speculate in front of every camera I can find, and to every reporter who calls me, about how your company, whose whole reason for existing is to make things more secure, could have been deceived - on a daily basis - by its most valuable employee.

(to BANKS)

Oh. And by the way? Just so we know each other better? During an arrest, I was once attacked by a man who'd bitten off the tongue of his own mother. He stabbed me three times with a pen knife before I was able to draw my revolver and shoot him in the head. So knowing you're partners with the cousin of the Mayor of Los Angeles, Mr. Banks? That just doesn't scare me so much.

She reaches out to Det. Sanchez, who looks impressed in spite of himself as he hands Brenda the form he's been carrying.

Brenda passes the form to a stunned Dr. Brown.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

I need you to sign the bottom of this waiver in order to search your company's computers and offices. Or I can call back this reporter from the Times. Entirely up to you.

BANKS

You don't have to sign that.

Dr. Brown is already affixing his signature as Banks speaks.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BALLISTICS - EARLY AFTERNOON

POPE walks up to find DET. SGT. GABRIEL and DET. LIEUTENANT PROVENZA, another member of Brenda's squad, and the oldest (early fifties with that lean and hungry look), in the middle of an argument with Captain Taylor outside the door to Ballistics. Other police officers and detectives mill about, passing in, out and by the argument.

TAYLOR
She may have the right to
push us aside, but you don't
have the--

PROVENZA
Hey, you know what? I been
here too long to get mixed up
in this political shit. So I
tell you what, Taylor.

TAYLOR
You'll tell me what?

PROVENZA
Yeah, I'll tell you what.

POPE
What the hell is going on here?

TAYLOR
My men have cases been waiting
three or four weeks down here. And
they push past 'em? No, no, no.

GABRIEL
Sir, I requested a transfer
yesterday back to--

POPE
Okay, Gabriel. You can just shut
the hell up. You wanted this job.
You campaigned for it. You're
working as adjutant to a Deputy
Chief, allowing you to manage
officers of a superior rank, and
you pleaded with me to put you
there. I still have your thank-you
note.

GABRIEL
That was when I was reporting to
Captain Taylor. And when--

POPE
--when it looked like a great way
to kick-start your career.

GABRIEL
That's unfair, sir. And if that's
how you feel, maybe I should quit.

POPE
After we paid for your graduate
degree in Public Administration?
From USC? Gee, I wonder what kind
of recommendation I would write you
if you quit on us.

(MORE)

POPE (CONT'D)
 (in the young man's face)
 You and Provenza get your report?

GABRIEL
 No, sir.

POPE
 Give me the slug and move on.

Gabriel hands him the bagged bullet; he and Provenza start to exit. Provenza pauses and points a finger at Captain Taylor.

PROVENZA
 You don't make this about us. You have a problem with Miss Atlanta, you take it up with --

POPE
 (over him)
 Out, out, out.
 (back to TAYLOR as GABRIEL and PROVENZA exit)
 I'm trying to accommodate your concerns. I recognize that there are problems here - some traced directly back to you - but problems none-the-less.

TAYLOR
 You haven't let me explain my side.

POPE
 I'm not interested in your side, Taylor. This is a unified department here. The sides should be inside and outside. But you have no idea how hard we're being pressed to find Collier. And if we don't get him, someone's going to be held accountable, all right?

TAYLOR
 Yeah, and if Miss Atlanta crashes and burns, your whole idea of a specialized murder squad looks pretty shabby, doesn't it? Inside.

POPE
 Fair enough. But why don't you just let Brenda have her way, all right? Because if this case has to crash, well, don't you think it would be better for everyone if we let her do that by herself?

TAYLOR

I don't know what you're implying, sir, but I would never deliberately screw up a murder investigation.

POPE

Yeah. All right. So. To review. The rules are, the Priority Murder Squad goes first. Thus, the word priority.

(holding up the slug)

You have a problem with me cutting in line?

TAYLOR

Not at all, sir. Not at all.

Taylor graciously motions Pope towards the door to ballistics. Pope enters and disappears.

INT. MURDER ROOM - MID-AFTERNOON

BRENDA receives a report from the Waspy, metrosexual Det. Garth, a formal man in his early thirties. Gabriel follows

GARTH

Dr. Collier was transferring nearly every dollar he made to different accounts connected to the victim's aliases. I mean Collier pays his mortgage, gas and electric, phone.

(indicating a computer display)

And the rest went mostly to the victim. Like here. Three days before he left. Collier wired everything he had left into two of the victim's bank accounts.

BRENDA

Was he a cosigner? Collier?

GARTH

No, ma'am.

SGT. GABRIEL

Sounds like blackmail.

BRENDA

Except...why would he transfer money to her, where he couldn't get to it, when he was planning on disappearing?

(MORE)

BRENDA (CONT'D)

That makes no sense at all. And why cut her hair off? And shoot her in the face? How does that connect to blackmail?

(back to Garth)

What did she spend the money on?

GARTH

Hardly anything. I have some receipts from a drug store, but it's penny ante stuff.

GABRIEL

What expenses did she have? She'd taken over Collier's house.

BRENDA

Except no one in the neighborhood ever saw her.

GABRIEL

The house is off by itself.

BRENDA

(frustrated)

Someone must have noticed his car. Her fingerprints are all over it. She was driving it. Where was Collier living? What car was he driving? And where is he now?

MIKE TAO sits with technicians looking over some of the downloaded material from DR. COLLIER'S computers.

TAO

Hey! The doctor didn't get rid of everything.

Brenda moves to TAO's station, where he pulls some printouts from the computer that TECHNICIANS are helping him pick over. As he talks, Tao gestures with a doughnut he's just taken from a box. Gabriel takes one, too.

Brenda glances longingly at the box of doughnuts.

TAO (CONT'D)

No one gets in or out of their secure area...

(holding up a photograph)

...without a cornea scan.

A beat. The people around the Murder Room laugh.

GARTH

Wow. And does the cornea have any identifying characteristics? Like a limp? Does it talk with an accent?

Brenda picks up a doughnut and just holds it.

TAO

Make fun. But in the land of no I.D. and no murder weapon, and no witnesses, the right-eyed cornea is king. He's our friend and I'm calling him Max. Oh. And then I have these. From Dr. Collier's e-mail account.

TAO hands a large stack of print-outs to Brenda.

BRENDA

"Ellen, I cannot tell you how much last night meant. Just to hold your hand meant so much. But when your lips touched mine..."

Brenda looks up at Mike, Garth, Gabriel, suddenly realizing she still has the doughnut in her hand. She starts to put it back in the box, but then scrunches up her face: unsanitary. The conversation never stops.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

He and his secretary were doing it.

(to TAO)

Run her through the system and see what we have on Ellen Parks. With the little cross around her neck.

She exits. With the doughnut. Gabriel follows her.

INT. BRENDA'S OFFICE - DAY

Brenda sets the printout down on her desk, puts the doughnut next to it, and thumbs through the files as she speaks.

GABRIEL

What if Ellen found her boss in his house with another woman?

BRENDA

And killed her in a jealous rage? Then why remove pictures from the passports? The driver's licenses? No, it's more likely she helped him escape. But is she helping him now?

(MORE)

BRENDA (CONT'D)

(a beat; thinking)

Does she know who he really is? And more importantly, *where* he is? Because if we don't find him....

GABRIEL

Maybe Collier was planning on going off with this woman, and Ellen killed both of them.

Brenda stares at Gabriel for a moment, suddenly struck by something he has said. Det. Provenza leans his head in.

PROVENZA

You wanted me?

BRENDA

What about the slug? Did you get anything from ballistics?

PROVENZA

Didn't college boy here tell you?

BRENDA

Tell me what?

PROVENZA

(throwing his hands up)

Hey! I'm not involved. Ask him.

Provenza walks off as Brenda looks to a sulky Gabriel.

INT. PARKING GARAGE OF PARKER CENTER - NIGHT

Pope strides toward his car, then suddenly slows, seeing Brenda sitting on his trunk waiting for him, wading through a thick sheaf of files. She looks up as he approaches.

BRENDA

Don't I even warrant a return call before you head home to the beautiful and lovely Estelle?

POPE

I was going to get back to you from the car. I have dinner plans.

BRENDA

Sounds vaguely familiar, doesn't it? Me, waiting to hear from you. You off with your wife.

POPE

Different city.

BRENDA

And different wife. But still. The F.B.I. hasn't gotten back to me on the victim's prints.

POPE

That could take weeks.

BRENDA

Maybe not. I have some good friends there. But not hearing from them makes the ballistics report more important. So. How did your turf battle go?

POPE

I moved you to the head of the line and I made it clear that's where you belong.

(Brenda bows her head,
disgusted)

I just upheld your authority. You should be thanking me.

BRENDA

You promised there wouldn't be any questions about my authority. Because women were treated so much better here than they are in the South. "We love diversity in L.A." And every time I turn around, I'm having to remind people that I go first. It's made me really popular.

POPE

Well, why do you always push harder than necessary? What's this slug got to do with anything? Really?

BRENDA

Because the more I find out about the victim, and the man calling himself Dr. Collier, the more they have in common. They lived together. They were both drop-out artists, obsessed with hiding their identities. And why do people do that, Henry? Maybe because they're criminals.

(as if to a child)

The gun that fired the bullet we pulled out of the victim's face?

(MORE)

BRENDA (CONT'D)

That gun could have been used in another crime. One that Collier - or the victim - or both of them - changed their identities to escape. That slug could tell me who they are. Which might actually help me find Collier. Listen, Henry. Now is no time to go all wobbly on me.

POPE

Brenda, you have my total support. You know that. I just -- well - there's a problem with your management style that I didn't anticipate. And I can't change--

BRENDA

And you're the person I was depending on.

POPE

Wait a minute. Okay? It's - it's - that suspiciousness and that -

BRENDA

I know what you're up to. You've always played both sides of the fence. I can just hear you with Taylor, doing your song and dance. "Back off. Let her take full responsibility." You're so obvious.

POPE

That's paranoia, Brenda. You know how much I admire you. You know.

BRENDA

Yes, that's the problem. I do know.
(starting to walk off and wheeling back on him)
You've led me on, Henry. Again. And now you're playing for time, which is what you've always done with women. And it's forgivable from a personal standpoint. Except this is my life you're screwing with. My life. I want that slug back. And I want that report.

BRENDA strides off, clutching her files. POPE watches her g exasperated.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

ELLEN sits at the table, waiting. She takes a tissue and wipes her eyes.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Brenda paces back-and-forth getting a report from Det. Daniels and Det. Sanchez while simultaneously examining Ellen's record. Sanchez is now decidedly intimidated by Brenda, which Daniels finds amusing.

SANCHEZ

I think the secretary's worried,
but I just told her she might have
info she didn't know was important.

BRENDA

(reading)

She's a little Miss Goldilocks.
Lives with her mother. Volunteers
on weekends for work in her parish.
Never married. One arrest. Oh,
great. In front of a Planned
Parenthood Clinic. Lovely.

She leans over and looks through the glass at the tearful Ellen, then turns back to Sanchez.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Okay. You've been with her all day
so you stay with me, but just smile
and look reassuring. I'm only going
to test her tonight. Det. Gabriel,
you can head on out. I'll be
driving myself to work from now on.
Ask Officer Jackson for a lift.

GABRIEL

Excuse me. Ma'am?

Brenda moves down the hallway with Gabriel. Daniels and Sanchez watch them, exchanging glances.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

I should be in this interview.

BRENDA

I don't need you.

GABRIEL

Can I say something?

BRENDA

Certainly.

GABRIEL

You're taking this whole business about people asking to go back to Robbery/Homicide way too personally. I mean, it's just - nobody should come in the way you did. To our department. So there's no reason to get, you know, even more formal. And more distant. And one more thing. Captain Taylor is - I know you've had trouble with him - but he's a great guy. I mean, he helped me get into USC. He's given me several terrific breaks. He's - not a jerk. Really.

BRENDA

Well. Thank you for that thoughtful analysis of my behavior, Sgt. Gabriel, but, firstly, I think I'm old enough to drive myself to work without being thought vindictive.

GABRIEL

Okay. Now wait a minute.

BRENDA

And as for Captain Taylor, I should probably explain that I do not form my relationships with other people based on how they're treating you. That would be your mother, maybe.

(deadly calm)

Look. When I take something personally, I will let you know. You will not find out about my feelings via a third party, or a request for a transfer, because I will inform you in the instant. To your face. You worked late last night. That's all. Go home and get some sleep. And I'll see you tomorrow. Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

She leaves Gabriel looking after her, not sure what to think
Which is, no doubt, what she intended.

INT. MURDER ROOM - NIGHT

The detectives and uniformed officers gather round to observe the broadcast of their chief's first interrogation. The frontal view, however, is only of ELLEN, who sits opposite her questioners.

BRENDA'S VOICE

This is January 10th, 2005 and it's
7:25 pm. I'm Deputy Chief Brenda
Jean Johnson with Detective Julio
Sanchez interviewing Ellen Parks.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Brenda rustles files in a friendly, secretarial manner. Ellen is nervous, shy and uncomfortable. Naive.

BRENDA

That's just the formal stuff we
have to say before we ask you
questions about Dr. Collier.
Nothing serious. And thanks for
staying late and helping us.

(indicating ELLEN's
necklace)

I love that cross.

ELLEN

Oh, thanks. My mother gave it to me
when I was thinking of becoming a
nun. Years ago. Funny, really. She
was so against it at the time.

BRENDA

My mother doesn't like what I do
for a living, either.

ELLEN

Mine's okay with my job. Now.

BRENDA

Your mother didn't want you to be a
nun? But she's a bit of a church
activist. You were both arrested
outside a Planned Parenthood--

ELLEN

We're very Pro-Life. Yes. But. I
guess...there's a difference
between living by Church teachings -
which we do - and withdrawing
completely from the world.

BRENDA

Well, the world's in a sorry shape right now, if you ask me. I certainly understand people withdrawing from it. Could do with a few more people wearing crosses. Sure was a pleasant surprise to see you have strong beliefs and stand up for them.

(chatty; still sorting)

So, Dr. Collier passed the all-important mother test.

ELLEN

Oh, yes.

BRENDA

So she met him then? Dr. Collier?

ELLEN

(a beat)

Well. Yes. Yes. She--

BRENDA

She visits you at work sometimes.

ELLEN

Well - uh - she has.

BRENDA

So. She met Dr. Collier there?

ELLEN

Right. Uh-huh.

BRENDA

Do you think your mother...would she mind looking at the portrait of Dr. Collier you helped us with?

ELLEN

Oh. Uh. Yes. Okay. Actually, now that I think about it, she first met Elliot - uh, Dr. Collier - he came over to the house for dinner.

INT. MURDER ROOM - NIGHT

Mike Tao wrinkles his forehead. Provenza grabs a seat. It's dark in the murder room, and the primary illumination is now coming from the screen broadcasting the interview.

BRENDA'S VOICE

So you still live with your mother?

ELLEN (ON THE MONITOR)
Well, yes. Yes, I do. My
father died when I was
fifteen and - and - I help
out with the mortgage and
stuff like that.

PROVENZA
(over her)
C'mon. Show her the e-mails

TAO

Shhh.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

ELLEN
Besides, I think I'd - be afraid to
live by myself. In the
neighborhoods I could afford.

BRENDA
So you and Dr. Collier? You had a
relationship outside the office?

ELLEN
A friendship. Dr. Collier was
lonely. And I sometimes ate with
him. Out. Or at my house. My mother
cooks. So.

INT. MURDER ROOM - NIGHT

Det. Garth wanders over to the broadcast of the interview.

BRENDA (O.S.)
But...and am I wrong about this? I
thought, perhaps, and Dr. Brown
suggested -- you were closer
than...just friends? I mean you had
keys to his house. So I assumed--

PROVENZA
What's the kid glove bit?

ELLEN (ON THE MONITOR)
No. Oh, no. He left keys with me
when he went on vacation. I - I've
never spent - those keys didn't
mean - uh - romance. No. I've -
I've never had a boyfriend. Ever.

The detectives exchange glances. What is Brenda doing?

PROVENZA

I'd have that woman singing
already. Opera. Singing opera.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -- NIGHT

BRENDA

Let me explain because I don't want
you to be nervous.

ELLEN

Okay.

BRENDA

When conducting a murder
investigation, I have to be
extremely careful not to lead you
on, or direct you into saying what
I want to hear.

ELLEN

I see.

BRENDA

And I also wanted to be sure I
didn't hurt your feelings, which is
why I'm glad we got all the false
assumptions about your dating your
boss out of the way. Now. This
might be surprising, but did you
know Dr. Collier was living with a
woman? In his house?

ELLEN

Oh, no. No, I didn't. Really?

BRENDA

It was the victim. He never
mentioned that? Never told you he
had a visitor?

ELLEN

No.

BRENDA

You never met her? Think about it.
We found her fingerprints in his
office at work.

ELLEN

Well, she shouldn't have been
there. That's against the rules.
I'm surprised at Dr. Collier.

BRENDA

I know. It's always hard when we discover someone we care about isn't who we think he is.

ELLEN freezes. Literally. Then makes an involuntary gasp. Julio Sanchez looks at Brenda, who ignores Ellen's reaction

INT. MURDER ROOM - NIGHT

Gabriel wanders in to collect his things. He drifts over (against his will) to join those watching the interview.

TAO

She knows something. Look at her.

Garth, Tao, Daniels and Provenza all lean forward a little staring at Ellen. Gabriel moves nearer to the screen.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

BRENDA

All right, Ellen. I'm sorry to have put you through all this. You've been an enormous help.

Brenda reaches over and turns off the recording.

INT. MURDER ROOM - NIGHT

The screen goes blank. The other detectives are stunned.

PROVENZA

(sarcastic)

That's it? The great interrogator? Wow. I'm so impressed.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Brenda stands. Sanchez looks surprised, too.

ELLEN

You're - oh. That's all?

BRENDA

For now. Yes. I think we may just have to put everything aside until we manage to get more information off Dr. Collier's computers and e-mail accounts. By the way, if you know any of his passwords...

ELLEN

No. No, I wouldn't.

BRENDA

Well. Once we find our way into his private correspondence, we might know better what we're up against. But now, listen to me, Ellen, if he gets in touch with you, you must let us know. Because helping a murder suspect isn't only illegal. It's dangerous. Don't make me leave here concerned about you.

ELLEN

Oh. Oh, no. No. I - I want to help.

Brenda nods, putting a reassuring hand on Ellen's shoulder as she leads her out of the room.

INT. MURDER ROOM - NIGHT

This seems to have been a very unsatisfying interview as far as the detectives are concerned.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Brenda and Sanchez watch as Ellen exits from the corridor.

SANCHEZ

That's it, ma'am?

BRENDA

Mm-hm. For today. Paitence. Let her contemplate her sins.

Sanchez watches Brenda walk away.

INT. BRENDA'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Institutional room and furnishing. In the b.g., we hear THE RESTLESS CHANGING OF CHANNELS on A TELEVISION SET and the consequent displacement of voices as program succeeds program. We PAN ACROSS the SURFACE OF THE WADDED UP BEDSPREAD, following a trail of debris: EMPTY DIET FOOD WRAPPERS, A POLICE REVOLVER, LOOSE FILES, MISCELLANIES FROM A WOMAN'S PURSE. We end with Brenda, sitting in her underwear on the edge of the MATTRESS. In one hand she holds the T.V.'S REMOTE CONTROL, in the other she picks disinterestedly at a SKINLESS, BONELESS CHICKEN BREAST from room service. She divides her flailing attention between the screen, her tasteless meal, and a report from her office.

After a moment of this, she sighs, tosses the remote control down and lies back on the bed, gazing at...

...a framed picture of her parents, posing formally at a wedding anniversary. The frame has seen better days.

Brenda closes her eyes. The phone rings. She answers.

BRENDA

Hello...Fritz? Really? Well, hi.
Where are you? How did you get this
number? Oh, you're kidding.... No,
I'll be right down...Not at all.
(throwing on clothes)
Give me two minutes. Two-and-a-
half. And order me a cabernet.

INT. THE HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

A handsome man in his late forties sits at the generic bar nursing a Diet Coke. This is Special Agent Fritz Howard of the F.B.I. He stands and smiles as Brenda enters, offering her a friendly embrace. Brenda grabs hold of him like an exhausted swimmer crawling to shore.

BRENDA

Fritz! Fritz! I didn't even know
you were living here. Since when?

FRITZ

Three-and-a-half years and thirty-
five pounds ago. You should try and
stay in touch more. You know?

BRENDA

I'm terrible. I can't even keep an
address book together.

Brenda obviously appreciates Fritz's appearance, becoming almost giggly. He pulls out A BAR STOOL for her.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

I can't believe you'd ever accept a
transfer to L.A.

FRITZ

Oh, I love it here. And what I like
best - there's your wine -

BRENDA

Oh. Thank you. Thanks.

FRITZ

The thing I like best is no matter how hot it gets during the day, the nights are always cool. Washington and Atlanta? You'll forget them in one summer. Here's to no humidity.

(they clink glasses)

Working with Pope again, huh?

BRENDA

I know. I should've gone for the F.B.I. like you. All the creeps I met in Spookville. How's...Elaine? Was it Elaine?

FRITZ

Cindy. Gone. She started therapy and blah, blah, blah. Long story. Some other time. He's a slippery guy, Pope. And that's an insular department over there. LAPD.

BRENDA

And I take getting used to.

FRITZ

It's worth it.

(he holds up a packet)

Jackie sent this out to you from D.C. this morning. Normally you'd get it tomorrow, but when I saw your name on it: did a little investigating and decided to hand deliver it tonight.

He offers it to her; as she reaches for it, he pulls it away

FRITZ (CONT'D)

Before I give this to you, though, Brenda, I don't want you to just... tear it open and run upstairs. Promise me you'll finish your drink and catch up. Just for a minute.

BRENDA

Well, of course I will. Why do people think I'm so horrible? And really, Fritzi, do you expect me to believe - after spending three years around the women here - that what you really want to do is sit around a crummy hotel bar with me?

FRITZ

(passing her the folder)
 Shut-up. You look terrific. Hey.
 Wanta feel really bad about
 yourself? I'll drive you up to
 Santa Barbara some day. It's like
 visiting Stepford. I kid you not.
 That's the I.D. on your Jane Doe.
 And you were right. Your victim has
 a criminal record. In fact, she's
 wanted for murder.

Brenda opens the envelope and pulls out a photograph. Glances
 over it. And smiles at Fritz. And she looks really happy.

BRENDA

Bartender, back us up, will you?
 And charge it to my room.

INT. MURDER ROOM - MORNING

The photograph of A LONG-HAIRED YOUNG WOMAN IN HER EARLY
 TWENTIES makes its way to the crowded bulletin board. Det.
 Garth positions it and stands back, looking at the picture
 critically.

Brenda addresses the squad. We CIRCLE THE ROOM, getting
 reactions from the listeners.

BRENDA

Our victim's name was Alana Devon,
 and she would have turned forty
 next month. In 1991, Alana shot a
 security guard at a pharmaceutical
 company in Winston-Salem during an
 ACT-UP protest. I suppose you all
 know what ACT-UP is. Det. Provenza
 doesn't know. ACT-UP is an
 organization dedicated to raising
 awareness about AIDS.

PROVENZA

Oh, jeez. You're telling me she's a
 killer and a lesbo?

BRENDA

I am sure, Det. Provenza, that when
 you say lesbo, you do not mean it
 in a derogatory way, since that
 would mean you'd be spending the
 next two weeks at a sexual identity
 and gender sensitivity seminar.

PROVENZA

Again? Nah. Lesbo is -- I just thought it was short for lesbian.

BRENDA

I'm glad to hear that. So. Yes. Alana was a lesbian. There is also some question as to whether she acted alone. Or actually meant to fire the gun. Like Collier, she was a computer scientist. And, like him, after the crime, she dropped out of sight and changed her identity.

(she holds up the slug)

And the gun that fired this bullet into her face, is the same weapon used in the original crime.

TAO

So you think Collier was connected to this crime, too? May I see that?

Brenda hands the report to TAO and turns to Gabriel.

BRENDA

I need to take another look at Alana's body.

Gabriel nods and steps off to a phone.

GARTH

(coming up to Brenda)

I don't know how she figures into this anymore, but she was--

BRENDA

She who?

GARTH

Collier's secretary. Ellen. Here.

(handing her a file)

The last day we know he was in town? She closed her checking and savings accounts. Then, the following Monday, she reopend them. Does that make sense to you?

As Garth reports, Gabriel interrupts, upset.

GABRIEL

They released the body from the morgue.

BRENDA

What? On whose authority?

INT. POPE'S OFFICE - DAY

Brenda, Pope, and Captain Taylor sit. Gabriel stands next to the door. Taylor is in the middle of an explanation.

TAYLOR

As soon as the I.D. comes out, and the Medical Examiner certifies he's finished, the body is released, by law, to the family. Unless the supervising officer-

BRENDA

(to Taylor)

You had no right what-so-ever to send that information to the morgue.

TAYLOR

They called me. They always call me with that stuff.

Pope surreptitiously glances up at...

...Gabriel, who, with a pained expression, looks away.

BRENDA

The family has waited fifteen years for Alana to come home, they can wait three more days. I need her body to make my case.

POPE

You're telling me you're close to finding Collier?

BRENDA

Yes, if I can get his secretary to cooperate.

TAYLOR

(to Brenda; a superior)

And how does the body figure into this? Why is it so important that--

BRENDA

I don't answer or report to you, Captain. So your question is irrelevant.

(MORE)

BRENDA (CONT'D)

In fact, I should like to ask who gave you the right to supercede my rank and communicate with the morgue about our victim.

TAYLOR

Excuse me?

BRENDA

Because if you were deliberately interfering with my investigation, that's obstruction of justice.

POPE

All right, all right. Just - just - everybody calm down.

(to Brenda)

You need the body? Really?

BRENDA

I wouldn't be here if I didn't.

POPE

And you're going to find Collier? Because that's almost as important as dealing with the murder.

BRENDA

If you get me the body back: yes. I don't know if it will save the computer program he was developing, but I will locate him.

Gabriel looks surprised. Taylor glares at Pope, who ignores him, staring at Brenda.

POPE

You'll have Alana back by the beginning of business tomorrow.

Brenda rises and walks out of the room. Gabriel follows her Taylor stands.

POPE (CONT'D)

Sit down. We need to talk.

Taylor, trying hard not to look worried, resumes his seat.

INT. MURDER ROOM - NIGHT

It's late; everyone's gone.

Except Brenda. She walks along the bulletin board in the half light, working her way backwards past the PICTURE OF ALANA, the scan of Max the Cornea (so labeled), PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE AUTOPSY AND THE CRIME SCENE, finally ending on the graphic artist's computerized drawing of Dr. Collier. Brenda stares at it for a moment. Sensing someone behind her, she turns quickly to find Gabriel at the door.

GABRIEL

Uh -- I just wanted to say that -- I didn't mean anything by it? But. I'm the one who told Taylor you'd identified the body. He asked me how things were going. And I told him.

BRENDA

Well. Why wouldn't you? No, I - I understand that.

GABRIEL

(a beat)

Um. I usually get along better with people around here. Than I have with you. I'm - I'm organized.

BRENDA

Uh-huh.

GABRIEL

And I'm pretty good at figuring out what people need. What they think they need anyway. What they want from me. But I'm having trouble. Figuring that out. With you. I - I'm not sure...who you want me to be.

BRENDA

Well, when all else fails, you can try being yourself.

GABRIEL

(smiling)

Yeah. Okay. Well. Sounds radical but I'm willing.

(another beat)

So. That bit about getting the body back and finding Collier? Is that...true? Or were you bluffing?

BRENDA

Oh, I never bluff, Sgt. I just express my optimism forcefully.

GABRIEL

You ordered Ellen Parks picked back up and held overnight?

BRENDA

I did.

GABRIEL

I don't see how she helps us unless you can get her to tell you where Collier is. We don't have the gun. We don't have the murder weapons. We don't have witnesses.

BRENDA

Oh, Ellen will be very helpful with all of that. I promise.

GABRIEL

More of your forceful optimism?

BRENDA

No, Sgt. Gabriel, that's my experience. Because no matter how difficult a secret is to uncover, it is even harder to keep.

Gabriel thinks about this. Shrugs. Maybe.

GABRIEL

Well, get some rest ma'am.

BRENDA

Thank you, Sgt. You, too. See you in the morning.

Gabriel watches Brenda for a moment more, then exits.

Brenda takes Max the Cornea off the bulletin board and stares at it as we FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. HALLWAY TO INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Brenda, looking tired, walks down the hallway leading Sanchez, Daniels, and Tao.

TAO

We picked up Ellen Parks like you asked. She spent the night in jail, but she's getting pretty hysterical. And if we keep her 'til tomorrow, we're going to have to charge her with something.

They come to a complete stop as they reach the door to the murder room, which is open. Brenda stares as...

INT. MURDER ROOM - DAY

Detectives Flynn and Waters, whom she dismissed from the crime scene, finish wheeling a BAGGED BODY on a gurney into the area in front of the bulletin board. The initials P.M.S. are painted on the bag's exterior. Squad members react.

Gabriel, irritated, crosses to the body.

GABRIEL

You guys are seriously out of line.
P.M.S.?

BRENDA

(entering, serene)

It stands for Priority Murder Squad, Sgt. Isn't that right?

FLYNN

(smiling)

That's right, Deputy Chief Johnson, that's exactly what it stands for.

BRENDA

Thank-you for your promptness. And how nice to know you have at least the primitive longings for a sense of humor.

Provenza laughs at this. Brenda grabs the gurney on which the body rests and wheels it toward her office.

PROVENZA

Hey. That's funny. Primitive longings. Like cavemen, guys.

As Flynn and Waters try to keep smiling...

...Daniels walks past them and grabs the other side of the gurney. And then Tao follows her. And Gabriel. Garth opens the door to Brenda's office.

Flynn and Waters stand around for a moment, still trying to act like they played a good joke. Waters, eventually recognizing their stunt seems to have backfired, pats Flynn on the shoulder, laughs uproariously, and moves to exit.

Provenza shakes his head at them as they leave.

INT. BRENDA'S CAR - DAY

Alana's bagged body has been placed lengthwise in the back seat so that its feet gruesomely stretch between the front passenger and driver's seats. Gabriel winces at both the macabre package and Brenda's driving, which is haphazard.

GABRIEL

Is the idea here that Alana was doing Dr. Collier's work?

As she speaks, Brenda abruptly changes lanes. Gabriel winces grabbing hold of the hand rail above his window.

BRENDA

Yes. Alana was a genius at computer science. Which was how she managed to cobble together all these identities. These false personas. But she was better at it, even, than I realized.

GABRIEL

And these tests you're going to run on her at the morgue...that's going to tell you...what?

BRENDA

If I'm not mistaken, Dr. Collier left us a clue to his whereabouts in Alana's body. One the autopsy missed.

Brenda abruptly changes lanes again. Gabriel has had enough.

GABRIEL

Hey! Hey! Can I have your signaling device? Since you're not using it.

BRENDA

I would use it, Sgt., but every time I turn on my blinkers, the people behind me speed up. And I think, in this city, signaling to change lanes is a sign of weakness.

GABRIEL

Look. Look. You want me to be myself. Fine. Just - just - let me out. I'll walk. Or let me drive. Whichever. But I'm only up for dropping off one body at the morgue. Seriously. Thank you.

As he speaks, Brenda elaborately turns on her signal and pulls over.

BRENDA

Living in Los Angeles. It's like being trapped in a driver's ed film. I'm not even kidding.

INT. MURDER ROOM - NIGHT

Pope strides into the squad and intercepts Sanchez at the bulletin board. Sanchez treats Pope with wary friendliness.

POPE

What's going on here, Sanchez? What are we doing with Collier's secretary?

SANCHEZ

She's being brought up from detention right now, sir.

Pope looks surprised. He glances towards Brenda's office.

INT. BRENDA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The natural chaos of Brenda's work space is augmented by five or six of her dresses spread out on hangers over every available surface. An old doughnut sits on her desk.

Two BOXES OF FILES, one marked "ALANA" and the other denominated "ELLEN" are set by the mirror, in which Brenda critically examines her outfit: sharp, gray and a little loose. A knock from the door leading to the murder squad.

BRENDA

Come in.

POPE

(entering)

Why did you pick up this woman last night and then ignore her all day?

BRENDA

I'm preparing myself. And letting her stew. It's perfectly legal.

POPE

You're denying her counsel.

BRENDA

(to a child)

I'm not denying her counsel. Don't worry. I'll handle the interview in such a way that we will be able to use all the information in court.

POPE

You're going to interrogate her, and walk out of that room knowing where Collier is? Knowing why the murder took place?

BRENDA

I already know those things. But while I was carting Alana's body around in my car, I decided sharing information around here might not be the best way to close my case. Are you here to encourage me? Or make me nervous?

POPE

I'm just reminding you that there's billions of dollars riding on this. And if you blow it, I'm not sure what happens here. With this squad.

BRENDA

Best of luck to you too, Henry.

Pope strides past her and exits into the hallway. Brenda picks up the boxes by the mirror and exits, awkwardly slamming the door behind her with one foot.

INT. THE MURDER ROOM - DAY

Gabriel moves to help Brenda with the boxes, taking them from her and setting them down on the ground.

GABRIEL

Ellen's ready. And a little nuts.

Brenda turns and looks at herself in the opaque reflection of her office window. As she does so:

BRENDA

Remember. Every time I look directly at you -

GABRIEL

Go over her rights.

Brenda shakes her head at her reflection: she looks terrible.

BRENDA

Go on. Take the boxes. And I'll be right there. One - one minute.

Brenda exits back into her office. Gabriel nods to Sanchez, who helps him with Brenda's cartons.

INT. HALLWAY TOWARDS INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Having changed into a black skirt, jacket and white blouse, Brenda marches down the corridor towards her rendezvous looking somewhat like a jazzed up nun.

Gabriel and Sanchez exchange looks. She changed clothes? That's what they were waiting for?

Brenda takes a deep breath. Adjusts her jacket. Glances through the window at Ellen. Shakes her hands out.

BRENDA

Okay. Okay.

She opens the door.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY - NIGHT

Ellen is a mess: a physical and nervous wreck.

Brenda takes her boxes and sets them down on the table, glancing at Ellen and nodding sympathetically.

BRENDA

I'm so sorry you've had to--

ELLEN

You made me spend the night in jail! I thought you were my friend. I thought you were --

BRENDA

Ellen! Ellen! Hold on. You have to be quiet until I'm done here.

INT. THE MURDER ROOM - NIGHT

GARTH, TAO, DANIELS, PROVENZA and a COUPLE OF UNIFORMED OFFICERS observe the interview on the monitor.

BRENDA

It's January 14th at 7:14 pm and this is Deputy Chief Brenda Johnson with Det. Sgt. David Gabriel interviewing Ellen Parks.

TAO

Oh. Here we go. Here we go.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Brenda sits opposite Ellen. Gabriel joins her.

BRENDA

It's important, Ellen, that you don't say anything yet. And let me explain why. I know you're upset.

ELLEN

Why am I being held here like this? Why? I've done nothing.

BRENDA

Ellen? Unless you let me finish speaking, I'm going to have to put you formally under arrest. Is that what you want?

ELLEN, near sobs, shakes her head: no.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

I've been trying to avoid it, too. But you should know, if I do charge you with a crime, or officially declare you a suspect in the murder of Alana Devon, then you would be entitled to an attorney. Do you want me to charge you? So you can have a lawyer with you?

ELLEN

I don't want to be charged. Please.

BRENDA

Okay. But we have to do this by the book. And there are things I have to say whenever we investigate a murder, or I'll get in trouble. Sgt.

(MORE)

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Gabriel here is going to inform you of your rights. Because we don't want to break any rules.

GABRIEL

Ellen Radcliffe Parks, you are under investigation in connection to the murder of Alana Devon.

INT. MURDER ROOM - NIGHT

The detectives watch as Gabriel recites the legal warning. They speak over it and some of the interview.

GABRIEL

You have the right to an attorney. If you can't afford an attorney, one will be appointed for you by the state. You have the right to...

PROVENZA

She should shake the bitch by the shoulders and see what pops out.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

...remain silent. Anything you say could be used against you in a court of law. Do you understand these rights?

DANIELS

Why do you call every woman a bitch?

ELLEN ON THE MONITOR

Yes. Yes.

PROVENZA

Hey, shut-up, Daniels. She's a murder suspect.

BRENDA (O.S.)

All right then. First, I want you to know that I have personally prevented the police from charging you with a crime. And I did this--

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Sanchez watches the interrogation, mesmerized.

BRENDA'S VOICE

--because I want to help you, if I can. And because we want real justice here. But I have to tell you--

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Brenda begins emptying the boxes. There's a lot of stuff inside of them. Ellen watches, her nervousness growing.

BRENDA

--how disappointed I am, Ellen.
Because I trusted you. And you lied
to me. And I was badly surprised
that someone as committed to living
by moral principles as you are
would ever do such a thing.

Brenda takes a SHEAF OF COMPUTER PRINTOUTS and passes them
across the table to Ellen.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Here's the e-mail correspondence
between you and Dr. Collier, which
directly contradicts this notion
that you and he were only friends.
You were not just friends. You were
lovers. Isn't that so?

Ellen's hands tremble as she touches the notes. She tries to
answer. Brenda leans across the table and speaks more kindly

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Ellen. You cannot lie to me again.
I have learned a great deal since
the last time I sat down with you.
And if you lie to me again, I will
know it. And I will end this
interview, Sgt. Gabriel will arrest
you --

ELLEN

Yes, yes, I was dating him. Yes.

BRENDA

Thank-you, Ellen. That's better. So
we'll start with the affair you
were having with Dr. Collier.

ELLEN

Don't - don't call it that. It
wasn't an affair.

BRENDA

He loved you. You loved him.
(picking up a page)
Here. You wrote it.

ELLEN

It wasn't physical.

BRENDA

You kissed. You were romantic with each other. You were--

ELLEN

I - I didn't - we never were --

BRENDA

(abruptly getting up)

This isn't going to work, Ellen. I'm sorry. Sgt. Gabriel?

ELLEN

No. No. Wait. Please, wait. I'm sorry. I - I'm sorry.

INT. MURDER ROOM - NIGHT

The detectives exchange glances. Brenda is surprisingly in charge. And in control.

ELLEN (ON THE MONITOR)

I was - very close - Elliot and I were close. But not physical.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

BRENDA

But you were emotionally intimate?

(off Ellen's nod)

Now, Ellen, I know the answers to most of these questions. And I won't be lied to. Do you understand? I am here because I care about you. So do not lie to me again, or I'll have to accept that I can't help you. And I'll have to leave. Now, you were very close to Dr. Collier. You loved him. He loved you. Did he tell you that he had changed his name?

ELLEN

Yes.

BRENDA

See. That's good, Ellen. That's a relief to me. You're telling the truth now. Let's stick with that. And Dr. Collier told you he had been living with a false identity for many years.

ELLEN

Yes.

BRENDA

And did he tell you that he'd been involved in the shooting of a security guard? That he had been partly responsible for killing a security guard?

ELLEN

Yes.

BRENDA

And you kept that information from the police, didn't you? Why?

ELLEN

It was an accident. The gun went off by accident. He didn't mean to kill anyone.

BRENDA

And he showed you that gun?

ELLEN

Yes. Yes. He showed it to me. Yes.

BRENDA

(a beat; staring at ELLEN)

And did he tell you that someone had recently recognized him? That someone knew who he really was.

INT. MURDER ROOM - NIGHT

The detectives look at each other, surprised.

GARTH

She's guessing. That's a guess.

They stare at ELLEN ON THE MONITOR.

BRENDA

In spite of everything he had done to hide himself. Someone figured out Collier's real identity. Isn't that right, Ellen?

ELLEN

Yes.

Brenda sighs. Takes a breath. That was the big guess.

INT. MURDER ROOM - NIGHT

The detectives are impressed.

DANIELS
She's going to do it. Ellen's
going to tell us where
Collier is.

BRENDA
And so Dr. Collier decided
he'd have to go away. That he
would have to disappear.
Start over again somewhere.
But that it could be done.
Because he'd done it before.
Is that right?

ELLEN
Yes.

BRENDA
And he wanted you to go with him?

ELLEN
No. I - I wasn't going.

Brenda pauses for a moment, then passes across Ellen's
financial statements to her. Ellen takes them.

BRENDA
You closed your checking account.
And your savings account.

Ellen lets the papers fall back on the table.

BRENDA (CONT'D)
I warned you, Ellen, about lying. I
just can't - I'm sorry.

Brenda gets back up, glancing at SGT. GABRIEL.

GABRIEL
Ellen Radcliffe Baker, you are
under arrest for -

ELLEN
Wait. Wait. I didn't lie. I didn't.
I - I wasn't sure what to do. I
wasn't sure. I didn't think I could
leave my mother. Let me explain.
Please. Let me explain.

Brenda pauses at the door, waiting.

INT. MURDER ROOM - NIGHT

TAO seems especially mesmerized. He sits, stunned.

TAO
 Hey. I think I know where
 this is going. Guys. I think
 I know where we're headed
 with this.

ELLEN (ON THE MONITOR)
 If I left, he told me I would
 never see my mother again. He
 told me I couldn't
 even...call her.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Ellen struggles to get the words out as fast as she can.

ELLEN
 I - I wasn't sure what to do. I
 never made up my mind. I never -

Ellen breaks down weeping. Brenda comes back to the table and
 sits down. After a moment...

BRENDA
 But you went to his house the night
 he left. And he had a passport for
 you. A fake passport. You can just
 nod if you want to.
 (off Ellen's nod)
 And now we have to talk about Alana
 Devon, don't we? The victim.
 Because that's when you first saw
 her, isn't it?
 (holding up ALANA's
 photograph)
 This woman.

ELLEN
 Please. Wait one second. Please.
 Can you send him outside? Please?

Brenda nods to Gabriel, who, surprised, gets up and exits.

Ellen pulls herself together. Brenda reaches out across the
 table and takes her hand.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Gabriel joins Sanchez, watching as the interview continues.

BRENDA (ON THE INTERCOM)
 I'll help you through this. But
 these things have to be said. Even
 though what Alana did was so
 unfair. And so unkind.

ELLEN (ON THE INTERCOM)
 It was horrible.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

BRENDA

Let me go back to the killing of the security guard. The actual shot was fired by this woman. By Alana Devon. And people saw her. And she disappeared. She used her computer skills to hack into ATMs and credit card accounts. She changed her physical appearance. She changed her jawline and her nose. She stole someone else's name and Social Security number, and used them to get a doctorate in computer science, and then proceeded to live her life in permanent disguise.

Brenda fishes out another picture, the portrait of Elliot Collier. She holds it up.

INT. MURDER ROOM - NIGHT

Stunned expressions from the squad as Brenda lays it out.

BRENDA

She always wore turtlenecks, to hide the fact that she had no Adam's apple. She pretended to be a hypochondriac, so she would never have to use the same bathroom as men. She also claimed to be a Christian Scientist, so she wouldn't have to take the company physical.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Gabriel leans forward, stunned.

BRENDA

That's why we only found Alana's fingerprints in Dr. Collier's house. And his office. And his car. Isn't it?

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

BRENDA

Not because Alana was living with Dr. Collier. But because she was Dr. Collier. Do you know how I can prove this Ellen?

ELLEN

How?

BRENDA

(holding up "Max")

The shot fired in her face missed the right eye. And when I took her body back to the morgue, I found the cornea scan of Alana's right eye matches exactly the scan of Elliot Collier's right eye. So the man with whom you were having an affair - for whom you were leaving behind your life, your job your mother - the man you were in love with wasn't a man at all. He was a woman. And the night you were going away together, he told you the truth. He showed you who he was. Isn't that right? I have it right, don't I Ellen? Or are you a lesbian? That's fine if you are. Maybe you're a lesbian and there was someone else involved I don't know about. If you're a lesbian, you can say you're a lesbian and --

ELLEN

How could you think that? How could you possibly think I was something so horrible and disgusting. I - I would never - never in a million years - never -

INT. MURDER ROOM - NIGHT

The squad listens, breathless - pins and needles.

BRENDA

But you didn't mean to kill him, did you? You hadn't planned on that?

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Gabriel listens. Sanchez, too. Pins and needles.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

BRENDA waits for Ellen's answer.

ELLEN

No. No.

BRENDA

Just for the record, though. So that's clear. Would you tell me whether or not you meant to kill him?

ELLEN

I didn't mean to kill him.

INT. MURDER ROOM - NIGHT

Tao shoves his hand up in the air: yes!

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

ELLEN

I was - I was kissing him. And she - she pulled my hand down. While I was kissing her. She pulled my hand down and put it against -- against her --

Ellen can't go on. She bows her head for a moment. Brenda waits. But when Ellen lifts her head, she's crying.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

I loved him. And he - he lied to me. She lied. And -- and I grabbed the clock off the night stand and smashed her head in. And when she fell, I beat her with the crystal paperweight I'd given him for his birthday. I beat her head in with it. I beat her head in. And then...

BRENDA

And then...

ELLEN

I threw up.

BRENDA

But her face still looked like that of Elliot Collier.

ELLEN

So. I - I clipped off her hair. So no one would recognize his - his hair cut. So it wouldn't look like a man's hair cut. And I took off her clothes, so people would see - they could see she was a woman.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

BRENDA (ON INTERCOM)

And then you took the gun he had shown you, and you shot him in the face. So no one would recognize him. So no one would know you had been having an affair with a woman.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

ELLEN

Yes.

BRENDA

And what did you do with the clock, and the gun, and the --

ELLEN

I buried them in Griffith Park. That night. I put them all in the trunk of Elliot's car. And drove them to Griffith Park. With his suitcases. And I buried them there.

Brenda stares at Ellen for a moment, saddened.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

I am not a lesbian. I'm a good Christian. And I have been every day of my life.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The detectives of the squad cluster at the back table of a restaurant bar. Everyone but Provenza shares a beer.

PROVENZA

Talk about being a woman in a man's world, huh? That Alana woman! So how long are we gonna wait here.

DANIELS

(ignoring Provenza; to Gabriel)

Do you know if Ms. Johnson's coming? Maybe she just went back to her hotel.

TAO

How long you think she's staying in a hotel anyway? What kind of life is that?

Gabriel waves at Brenda, as she suddenly appears (back in her more regular clothes) and joins them at the table. Gabriel raises a glass to his boss. The SQUAD follows suit.

BRENDA

Y'all deserve a toast, too.

POPE (O.S.)

Here, here.

The squad looks up to find Pope standing at the table. A WAITER steps up behind them with ANOTHER ROUND OF DRINKS (which are immediately distributed to all but Provenza, who holds on to his water, glumly). As this activity commences...

POPE (CONT'D)

We all had a little victory, not just for us, but for the department as a whole. This is what we can accomplish when we pull together.

The detectives all react with subdued positivity. They drink again. Pope, too. He beams at them before checking his watch.

POPE (CONT'D)

Well, reporting to the Chief. I'm sure he will want to send you his congratulations in the morning.

BRENDA

(as POPE leaves)

Thanks, Henry, for all your help.

Provenza snorts. Gabriel looks after Pope disdainfully.

INT. BRENDA'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

As she puts the last dress back in her small, overcrowded closet, Brenda's cell rings. She fumbles for the phone, checks it, throws it on the bed. She opens the drawer of her tiny desk and withdraws a foil-wrapped Hostess Twinkie. And while ignoring her ringing cell, she eats it, sitting on the edge of her bed. Then falls back across the width of the mattress, letting out a moan of unadulterated ecstasy.

THE END