

LAW AND ORDER  
SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT

"CREDIT"

By

Matt Sheppo

Matt Sheppo  
matt@mattsheppo.com  
WGA Registered

LAW AND ORDER  
SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT

"CREDIT"

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. THAD AND BARRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

THAD, a preppy looking guy in his 20s, stands in his kitchen, perturbed by a smell in the air. He opens a cabinet under the sink and grabs a bag of trash. He sniffs it.

THAD  
Christ, Barry...  
(calling)  
Barry!

He heads through the bland, middle class apartment, arriving at:

BARRY'S ROOM

Entering the open door, Thad looks down at BARRY, a large, unkempt man strewn across the floor. PSYCHEDELIC MUSIC plays through a stereo.

THAD  
Barry, please, if all you're gonna  
eat is tuna, disgusting by the way,  
throw the empty-- Barry?

Thad nudges the unmoving Barry with his foot. Nothing. He bends down to get a closer look, putting his finger tips under Barry's oily nostrils. Again, nothing. He turns Barry's head to the side and a frothy white substance drains out of his mouth, down his cheek.

THAD (CONT'D)  
Oh Jesus, Barry. Barry!!

Suddenly, Barry lets out a stuttered HICCUP and rolls over. There is a bong underneath him, the water soaking the floor. A content smile comes to Barry's lips. Thad shakes his head.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING ALLEY - NIGHT

Thad opens a dumpster lid and tosses the trash bag inside. As he's about to close the lid, he does a double take. He looks in the dumpster, flinching in fear.

THAD'S POV:

A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, early 30s, partly buried in trash, lies dead inside. Her shirt is unbuttoned and there is blood everywhere, staining what appears to be a white sheet draped around her. Dim light from somewhere above bounces off her face, making her glow with warmth.

Thad, looking oddly calm, stands in place, staring at her.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING ALLEY - DAWN

Arriving on scene, detectives OLIVIA BENSON and ELLIOT STABLER approach the LEAD COP, badges displayed. Police work around them, the area roped off with tape.

STABLER  
Stabler and Benson, Special  
Victims. What do you got?

LEAD COP  
Tenant from the building found her  
in the dumpster, doesn't recognize  
her. There is a series of knife  
wounds and small cuts in her back,  
her throat's slit. No weapon in  
the dumpster, no blood trail.  
Looks like she was wrapped in a bed  
sheet and tossed. We found the ID  
in her jeans pocket.

The Lead Cop hands Benson a bag with the victim's wallet,  
Benson pulls out the ID.

STABLER  
Signs of a sexual assault?

LEAD COP  
Her jeans and shirt were unbuttoned  
and she's not wearing panties, so  
we called you.

BENSON  
(reading the ID)  
Jeannie Connors, age 32. Lives...  
(looks around)  
In this building across the street.

STABLER  
Lets get CSU over there, see if we  
can't find our crime scene.

The Lead Cop heads off. Benson looks up at the brightening  
sky.

BENSON  
 What a way to start the day...  
 (re: the ID)  
 She's pretty. Even for a driver's  
 license.

She hands Stabler the ID. He takes a look.

STABLER  
 (depressed)  
 Was... She was pretty.

CUT TO:

INT. JEANNIE CONNOR'S APARTMENT - A BIT LATER

A FORENSICS TEAM goes over the apartment reporting to Benson and Stabler, who stand in the living room near the kitchen. The place is in disarray with overturned furniture and puddles of blood scattered about. An INVESTIGATOR carefully sweeps up small rocks of shattered glass that cover the floor. The LEAD FORENSICS INVESTIGATOR approaches Benson and Stabler.

LEAD FORENSICS INVESTIGATOR  
 So far just blood, no semen. But  
 the glass is from a shattered table  
 top, we'll check it for fluids.

He motions to a bare table frame in the kitchen area. Benson and Stabler walk towards it.

STABLER  
 (to Benson)  
 So maybe the doer rapes her on the  
 table, during which it shatters. If  
 so, it likely would have cut him  
 too.

A TEAM MEMBER walks out from the bedroom. He's holding a large chef's knife.

TEAM MEMBER  
 Detectives, I think we have the  
 murder weapon.

STABLER  
 Lets dust that for prints, and see  
 if it matches other knives in the  
 kitchen.

From behind Stabler, JOHN SOLOMON, late 40s, dressed in Eddie Bauerish outdoor clothing, wanders hesitantly into the apartment from the front door.

STABLER (CONT'D)  
 (loudly, to everyone)  
 Listen up, we have a lot of blood  
 here, a lot of broken glass, and a  
 stabbing with a long struggle. So  
 lets find two types of blood if  
 it's there. Lets also get the  
 sheets off the bed, see if they're  
 a match--

BENSON  
 --Elliot.

Benson motions to John, who looks utterly shocked, as he  
 moves into the apartment.

JOHN  
 (to himself)  
 Oh no... Oh my God no...

Benson and Stabler rush over to John. They try to move him  
 back to the door.

STABLER  
 Sir, sir--  
 (pissed, to an officer)  
 Who secured this scene?

The police officer rushes off.

JOHN  
 Oh Jesus Christ no...

John falls to the ground pushing forward towards a large pool  
 of blood and glass. He falls into it.

BENSON  
 Sir, please, this is a crime scene,  
 You're going to--

JOHN  
 --Oh Jeannie, No! My Jeannie...

He wipes his hands in the blood, tears now filling his eyes.  
 Benson and Stabler's eyes meet. What a way to find out...

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

LOCALE CARD: APARTMENT OF JOHN SOLOMON - 264 CENTRAL PARK  
WEST - TUESDAY, MAY 24

INT. JOHN SOLOMON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Benson and Stabler sit on a sofa in a classy, well decorated apartment. Across from them in a modern leather chair is John Solomon, still very distraught. He's dressed as before, some blood now on his shirt.

JOHN

It was like out of a dream, or a television show or something. I got to her building to pick her up and the police were outside, and I just knew... A hundred people in her building, and even before I went upstairs, I just knew.

John tears up, Benson hands him a tissue.

STABLER

Mr. Solomon, your forearm, what happened?

John looks down at three small Band-Aids on his arm.

JOHN

From this morning, the glass. I'm sorry I touched the scene, I hope I didn't ruin anything?

BENSON

Why were you there for Jeannie so early?

JOHN

We were going hiking up state. Wanted an early start.

STABLER

And what about last night? Were you with Jeannie last night?

JOHN

It happened last night? Do you know when?

BENSON

We're not sure on the exact time of death, the Medical Examiner is looking her over now.

JOHN  
Oh Jesus...

John's eyes well up again. Stabler tries to keep him on track.

STABLER  
I'm sorry, but last night John?

JOHN  
I was home the whole night alone,  
writing.

BENSON  
You never left your apartment?

JOHN  
No, I was here from about 6 on. I  
have a new show, we're starting  
production.

BENSON  
You're a television writer?

JOHN  
Yes. And producer.  
(melancholy smile)  
That's how Jeannie and I met.

STABLER  
Mr. Solomon, I'm sorry I have to  
ask, but when were Jeannie and you  
last intimate?

JOHN  
I, I don't really-- Wait, why?

Benson and Stabler exchange a look. After a moment, John gets it.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
Oh my God...

John looks sick to his stomach. He stands and begins pacing, like he wants to run away from this.

BENSON  
John, we know it's been an  
emotional day, we can come back  
later if you--

JOHN  
--No. No I'm fine...

John composes himself, stops pacing.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Please, I want to help you in any way I can.

John sits back down.

JOHN (CONT'D)

It's, it's been a little while I guess. A week maybe. I think last Wednesday. We had a disagreement, hiking today was my way of making it up to her.

STABLER

You were fighting? What about?

JOHN

Not fighting really, we never fought, just a difference of opinion. I was trying to convince Jeannie to go back to work, to acting, she didn't agree that was best.

BENSON

Best how?

JOHN

Jeannie had been depressed lately, and I think the kids were getting to her. She spent all her time at a center for abused children in Chelsea. I thought she should get involved in other things. Have her mind other places.

STABLER

This children's center, that's how Jeannie supported herself?

JOHN

I don't think she took anything from the center, just volunteered. She has a wealthy family, trust fund. We met on the set of the first television series I produced about 7 years ago, this teen drama that never took off. She was an actress and model then, but an equally beautiful heart to match. What an angel she was...

John smiles at the memory.

BENSON

You had been dating for 7 years?

JOHN

No, just the last year and a half. We had stayed friends, but I got involved on a spin-off series that shot in Los Angeles, *The Precinct - LA*.

BENSON

Can you think of anyone who would have wanted to hurt Jeannie, anyone at all now or from her past, ex-husband or boyfriends?

John thinks for a moment, then shakes his head.

JOHN

No one.

STABLER

Have you seen anyone strange around her building, was she having problems with a neighbor, or did she mention an argument at the center?

JOHN

No... Nothing...

BENSON

Think hard Mr. Solomon.

After a moment, John has a thought.

JOHN

Wait. Actually, there is this man... This man, outside her building. An older guy, he looks Italian, he's always outside, waiting there at night, like he's waiting for a cab that never comes.

BENSON

This man, did you or Jeannie ever speak to him?

JOHN

I think Jeannie said she offered him some food once, but I wasn't there. She said he didn't even respond.

BENSON

Was he homeless?

JOHN

I didn't think so, he was dressed well enough. But he would just stand next to the street, by the door at all hours, he'd never move from the same spot. I always told Jeannie to move, that she could afford to live anywhere in the city... Do you think this man could have done something to her?

BENSON

We'll definitely look into it.

Benson jots something down in her notebook. John watches her for a moment.

JOHN

I suppose you two are used to this sort of thing by now?

STABLER

You never really get used to it. Or at least I hope I never do.

JOHN

It's funny, I wrote about this stuff for years, just flippantly putting words on paper like it was nothing. Murder, rape, stabbing, perp, vic... Those words sound so different when they're in reference to someone you love.

John looks off to the side out a window. His life forever changed.

CUT TO:

INT. SVU SQUADROOM - DAY

Benson and Stabler walk over to their desks, both tired. They sling their jackets over their chairs before falling into them. Just as they plop down, CAPTAIN CRAIGEN enters.

CRAIGEN

Olivia, Elliot, what did you get from the children's center?

STABLER

Six volunteers who said Jeannie was a gift sent by God, that no one would want to hurt her, and no offer of coffee.

CRAIGEN

I hate to be the one to break it to you, but the machine's down.

BENSON

Again?

Detectives FIN and MUNCH enter. They head over to table in a back area of the room.

CRAIGEN

Gentleman, tell me you got a little more to go on from her building?

FIN

Neighbor after neighbor reported they didn't hear or see anything last night. We got nothing but up early.

Munch picks up a coffee pot and pours.

MUNCH

That building was constructed at the turn of the century, when people took pride in their work and built things to last. It's not surprising it's so quiet, the walls are no doubt thick and sturdy, not like today's plywood and drywall jobs.

FIN

(to Munch)

I know something else built at the turn of the century that's plenty thick.

Fin playfully knocks on Munch's forehead. He's not amused.

MUNCH

Just for that I'm not sharing the rest of this coffee.

Fin, cup in hand, tries to get the pot from Munch.

BENSON

What? Captain, you said it was down?

CAPTAIN

I thought it was.

After a moment of "cat and mouse" Fin gets the pot, and pours a cup.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Ok, if the lover's quarrel is over  
lets get back to work. Elliot and  
Olivia, the M.E. is ready for you  
two. John and Fin, you can start  
by handing over that pot of joe.

Craiggen goes to pour himself a cup. Benson and Stabler stand  
up and begin slowly putting their jackets back on.

FIN

(to Benson and Stabler)  
What did you guys get from the  
boyfriend?

BENSON

Nothing really, pretty typical,  
though he did mention, quote, "some  
creepy old guy" who's always  
standing outside the building at  
night.

CRAIGEN

Well until we have more, Fin and  
John, you two are on that tonight.

FIN

(to Benson)  
But did you get a sense he fought a  
lot with Jeannie?

BENSON

Said he didn't, why?

FIN

No one hears squat in that building  
now, but the guy above her  
apartment swears he heard them  
fighting every other night back in  
the summer, when both places would  
have their windows open. Said it  
was always muffled, but sounded  
like pretty intense arguing.

STABLER

Well we'll see what the M.E. says,  
but I got to say I'm not surprised,  
he rubbed me the wrong way.

BENSON

How? He seemed like a typical  
grieving boyfriend to me?

STABLER

Don't know. Just call it a  
feeling...

Benson and Stabler head over to the coffee table.

MUNCH

Well if that feeling is right, this "creepy old guy" could be a wild goose chase.

CRAIGEN

Until we know more you're checking it out anyway. Besides I understand there's some turn of the century architecture for you to admire.

BENSON

Captain?

Benson displays the now empty coffee pot.

CRAIGEN

Sorry Olivia, I'll make a fresh pot.

He flips a switch on the machine and it shorts out, a bit of smoke wafting out from the top. Craigen tries not to laugh. Benson and Stabler share a defeated look and head for the exit.

CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL EXAMINER'S LAB - DAY

Benson and Stabler, cups of Starbucks in hand, stand with the M.E., DR. MELINDA WARNER, above Jeannie's body which is outstretched on a table, a blue sheet covering her.

M.E. WARNER

(re: the coffee)

You two really shouldn't have those in here.

BENSON

Please, you don't know what we went through for these. So what have you found?

M.E. WARNER

Take a look.

She peels back the sheet, showing Jeannie's face. She turns her face to the side revealing deep slashes on her neck.

M.E. WARNER (CONT'D)

She was killed when her left carotid artery was severed by the chef's knife found at the scene.

(MORE)

M.E. WARNER (CONT'D)

The cut starts here on the back of her neck, wrapping around. The knife's only prints matched Jeannie's, though we found traces of powder on the handle, the same type found in examination gloves.

BENSON

Could be from our guys?

M.E. WARNER

No, the NYPD switched to nitrile gloves, which are powder free. What I found matches the type of cheaper latex you get in drug stores, unfortunately it is by no means rare.

STABLER

But it does tell us this was pre-meditated. What else did you find?

M.E. WARNER

She was raped, just before dying. And it was pretty brutal, done with some sort of object. I found this.

Warner turns to her side and places a blown-up photograph against a lighted screen. It displays what appears to be a black tube.

STABLER

What is that?

M.E. WARNER

A blown-up image of a tiny piece of black plastic found half buried in her vaginal wall. I have no idea what's it from. Here's the actual piece.

She holds up a spec of plastic at the end of a long clamping instrument. Benson and Stabler take a look.

BENSON

Could it have broken off from a sex toy?

M.E. WARNER

No it's a soft plastic, pretty porous, the type you'd find in a child's toy. Sex toys tend to be sturdier, made often with hardened silicone. But I did find something else easier to identify.

STABLER

Tell me it's semen?

M.E. WARNER

Trace amounts, and not semen but rather pre-ejaculate fluid, enough to get DNA. And I also found traces of a spermicide put in the tips of condoms.

BENSON

So the attacker used a condom?

M.E. WARNER

Possibly, or it could be from earlier in the morning or the previous night, at the very latest. My guess is whoever used the condom wasn't wearing it when he started, then put it on.

BENSON

The boyfriend said they hadn't had sex in a week.

STABLER

Then he should have no problem sharing his DNA to rule himself out. Thanks Melinda.

CUT TO:

LOCALE CARD: APARTMENT BUILDING OF JEANNIE CONNORS - 44TH ST.  
& 8TH AVE

INT. PARKED CAR - NIGHT

Fin and Munch sit watching the building's entrance, a rap album playing from the stereo. Fin's enjoying the music, peering out the windshield. Munch is on a cell phone.

MUNCH

Yeah... Ok...  
(to Fin)  
Can you turn that garbage down!

Fin does so.

MUNCH (CONT'D)

(in the phone)  
Ok, thanks.

Munch hangs up.

FIN

What's wrong with you John, my  
tunes never bothered you before?

MUNCH

That was Elliot, the boyfriend just  
gave a DNA sample, they'll run it  
by the morning.

FIN

You didn't answer my question.

MUNCH

Sometimes the ears do not want the  
music of the streets blaring into  
them, rather passing by them at an  
appropriate resonance.

FIN

I'm starting to think the "creepy  
old man" we're looking for is  
sitting right next to me...

MUNCH

Can you lay off the old jokes  
please?

FIN

What happen to put you in this  
funk, an ex-wife come a calling?

MUNCH

It's nothing, I'm just not in the  
mood today.

FIN

Come on, tell me what's bothering  
you?

MUNCH

Nothing.

FIN

John, I know you...

MUNCH

Fine, it's my birthday tomorrow,  
ok?

FIN

(smiling)

Why the hell didn't you tell me,  
happy birthday man. I know the  
perfect rap album to give you as a  
gift.

MUNCH

Look, give me the gift of not mentioning this to anyone, alright? It's not a birthday I'm looking that forward to celebrating.

FIN

Oh I see, it's a milestone is it? The big seven-o?

MUNCH

This is why I don't mention these things to you, you know just what to say to--

FIN

(hurried)

--John, John. Look at this guy.

(pointing out the windshield)

Does that say "creepy old man" to you or what?

They open their car doors to exit.

EXT. JEANNIE CONNOR'S APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Munch and Fin approach the CREEPY OLD MAN. He's in his 60s, dressed in an older styled suit, but it is clean. His face is weathered, has no expression. He stares forward, not looking at the detectives.

MUNCH

Excuse me, sir... Detectives Munch and Tutuola, can we have a moment?

The man doesn't respond, doesn't even look over. Rather, he keeps his eyes out on the street.

FIN

Excuse me, my partner asked you a question.

Nothing.

MUNCH

Ok... Sir, we're investigating a rape and murder that occurred in this building, do you live here? Sir?!

CREEPY OLD MAN

(looking near Munch)

I... I wait... I wait out here.

MUNCH

That's great, but do you live here?

CREEPY OLD MAN

What time...What time do you have...?

MUNCH

(looking at his watch)

It's a quarter to 10. Sir, do you live in this building?

CREEPY OLD MAN

(satisfied)

Still time... It's still so early.

MUNCH

Can I get you to take a look at this photo, sir?

From his coat Munch takes out a picture of Jeannie. The Creepy Old Man continues to stare ahead.

CREEPY OLD MAN

A quarter of 10, still early... Still early...

MUNCH

The photo, sir?

CREEPY OLD MAN

I said there's still time!

FIN

Ok, that's it.

Fin grabs the Creepy Old Man by his jacket and swings him against the building, holding him by the collar and staring him in the face. He grabs the photo from Munch.

FIN (CONT'D)

Her name is Jeannie O'Connor, we have a witness that says she's talked to you, and now she's dead and raped- do you know her? Look at the picture!

The Creepy Old Man looks. He recognizes her.

CREEPY OLD MAN

Yes. Yes of course I know her.

He takes the picture in his hand, staring at it. Fin lets his collar go.

FIN

You know her from the building?

CREEPY OLD MAN

I know her from many buildings, I know her well.

FIN

How well?

CREEPY OLD MAN

(laughing a bit)

Very well. I love her. I've made love to her if that's what you mean. I know her well.

FIN

Wait, excuse me??

CREEPY OLD MAN

But her name's not Jeannie. This is Doris. This is my Doris... Where did you get this picture?

MUNCH

Sir, this girl's name is Jeannie O'Connor, she's 32 and she was raped and murdered in this building last night.

CREEPY OLD MAN

No... No, no she's coming here any moment. Any moment...

Fin and Munch exchange a look, unsure what to do.

The Creepy Old Man begins staring back out at the street, still clutching the photo in his hands, which begin to shake. Tears start to fall down his cheeks. After a moment, he is weeping. Munch and Fin exchange a look. Munch then puts his arm around the crying man.

MUNCH

Come on sir, let's take a trip, I think I might know where we can find your Doris.

CREEPY OLD MAN

A trip in a car?

FIN

Our car's right over here, let's take a trip in our car...

They begin walking towards the car.

MUNCH  
(to Fin)  
Now you see why I'm not excited  
about growing older?

Suddenly, the Creepy Old Man freezes, grabbing his chest. He starts to shake.

MUNCH (CONT'D)  
Sir? Sir?!

The Creepy Old Man's legs collapse from under him and he falls to his side, Fin catching him on the way down.

FIN  
John, I think he's having a heart  
attack.

Munch grabs his CB.

MUNCH  
This is Detective Munch-SVU, I need  
a bus at 1101 East 44th Street  
immediately.

Fin holds the man as he lays helplessly on the sidewalk, his eyes open, but blank, his body in pain.

Munch looks down at him, not knowing what to do.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Benson sits across a table from John, Stabler moves about behind her on his feet.

BENSON  
John, the fluids found in Jeannie came from you, we ran the DNA.

JOHN  
What?

STABLER  
That's right John, and you said it had been a week since you had sex, so we have a problem here.

JOHN  
Oh no...

STABLER  
Oh yes John, you wanna change your story now?

JOHN  
Wait, I'm so sorry, you're right we did have sex. I forgot, it was the night before she was killed.

STABLER  
You forgot? And you didn't remember until just now?

JOHN  
But wait, I didn't, I didn't finish.

STABLER  
Hold on a second, last night we asked for a DNA sample, you didn't remember this then?

JOHN  
You said you found semen, it couldn't have been mine.

BENSON  
Not semen, but there's always fluid prior to ejaculation John. Did you use a condom?

STABLER  
 Hold on, I'm still interested in  
 how he forgot having sex.

Stabler leans over the table, getting into John's face.

JOHN  
 It was a traumatic few days, I just  
 forgot because honestly we didn't  
 have sex long. She wasn't into it  
 so we stopped, she was still upset  
 with me.

STABLER  
 She wasn't into the sex or you  
 raping her with a piece of plastic?

JOHN  
 What?!

BENSON  
 Elliot!

Stabler steps back.

JOHN  
 What's he talking about?

BENSON  
 John, help us retrace these events,  
 you had sex with Jeannie the night  
 before you came to pick her up to  
 go camping?

JOHN  
 Yes.

STABLER  
 Consensual sex, John?

JOHN  
 Yes! But it was just for a few  
 minutes. It wasn't...I guess in my  
 mind it didn't count, so when you  
 asked I just forgot.

BENSON  
 Did you wear a condom at any point?

JOHN  
 No.

BENSON  
 Our medical examiner found pre-  
 ejaculate fluids from you, as well  
 as a spermicide used in condoms.

(MORE)

BENSON(CONT'D)

Could Jeannie have been seeing  
someone else?

JOHN

No, no way. So she was raped?

STABLER

Jeannie was brutally raped with  
something plastic, she had severe  
vaginal cuts and there was a piece  
of the plastic found inside of her,  
but I'm starting to think you knew  
this already.

JOHN

Oh my God...

John goes white. He turns to the side, THROWING UP towards  
Stabler. Stabler jumps back, as it has apparently splattered  
on his shoes.

STABLER

Damnit!

JOHN

(weakly)  
I'm sorry...

BENSON

Elliot, why don't you get some  
water for Mr. Solomon.

Stabler, looking at his shoes in disgust for a moment, exits.

JOHN

I'm sorry, I just--

BENSON

--It's ok. Look, at this point  
John, the evidence is pointing to  
you, and the strange man outside  
the building just had a heart  
attack and was in no shape to do  
this crime.

JOHN

I could never hurt Jeannie.

BENSON

Well help us then John, who could?

JOHN

I don't know... I don't know, just  
a random rapist?

Benson looks at John for a moment. He's a mess.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(pleading)

Look, I promise you I didn't do this. I wish I could help you more, but all I can tell you is it wasn't me. You can search my apartment if that will convince you. I have nothing to hide.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SOLOMON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Benson and Stabler are going through John's bedroom, a large space with shelves full of video tapes and typed pages scattered about. Stabler pushes hard on a stuck sliding closet door, forcing it open and off it's runner.

BENSON

Hey, you wanna take it easy? He volunteered for this.

STABLER

Exactly, that's why we're not going to find anything. Any evidence that might have been here I'm sure he took care of. He wrote crime dramas, he knows a thing or two about evidence.

BENSON

I don't know what you're watching on TV lately, but Hollywood doesn't know everything.

John enters the room.

JOHN

Did you two care for anything to drink?

STABLER

We're fine.

Stabler picks up a small trash can and somewhat haphazardly empties its contents on the floor to examine them.

BENSON

We're almost done, John, thanks.

Benson motions at a stack of video tapes on the desk.

BENSON (CONT'D)

These tapes, a lot of them are unlabeled, just numbers?

JOHN  
 Old episodes of shows I worked on.  
 I had them out trying to find a few  
 with Jeannie in them. No luck yet.

Benson turns from the stack.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
 You can take them if you want. If  
 seeing her could help in any way?  
 I don't know... I guess not, huh?

BENSON  
 I'll take some, thanks John. And,  
 I think we're done here. I'll let  
 you know if I find one with  
 Jeannie.

JOHN  
 Actually... Don't. I'm not sure  
 I'm really ready yet.

Benson smiles kindly at John, who looks out a window,  
 distraught.

CUT TO:

INT. SVU SQUADROOM - DAY

As Munch enters the main office everyone in the station  
 including Fin and Craigen glance at him, waiting for  
 something.

Munch arrives at his desk, looks down. There's a birthday  
 cake, the top in the shape of a hill and a "You Are Here"  
 sign sticking out one side.

FIN  
 Happy birthday!

Fin and the rest of the crew stick noise makers in their  
 mouths and blow. Munch looks at Fin, not amused.

MUNCH  
 (sarcastically)  
 Thanks.

He turns and starts walking towards a back room.

FIN  
 Hey John. John!

Munch exits, not looking back, and slamming the door shut  
 behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. SVU STATION HOUSE - BACKROOM - A BIT LATER

Fin enters the room where Munch sits, now looking over some papers at a table.

FIN

Listen, I'm sorry about that, you ok or what?

MUNCH

No I'm sorry, you were being nice.

FIN

So what's the deal, you hit'n a new decade with this one or something?

MUNCH

I'm 57 Fin.

FIN

So what's wrong with that? You're still every bit the pain in the ass you were when I met you.

MUNCH

It's not getting older, it's being 57. My uncle died when he was 57. He was basically the man who raised me after my father killed himself.

FIN

Oh. What did he die of?

MUNCH

Prostate cancer. He had been sick for a long time.

FIN

You worried about that?

MUNCH

No, my health is fine, checked out a few weeks ago. It's how he died. I had been visiting him for almost a year in a hospice, three times a week, we'd play pinochle. He loved card games. Then I got involved in a relationship with my second wife, stopped going so much. When he passed away I hadn't seen him in a month. He died on his 57th birthday, all alone.

Fin is quiet for a moment.

FIN  
I'm sorry John... But, that was a long time ago, you should forgive yourself.

MUNCH  
It's not above forgiveness, it's just about remembering.

FIN  
...And about worrying you'll be in the same position one day?

Munch looks across the table at Fin, unsure what to say. There's a knock at the door, Craigen opens it.

CRAIGEN  
Gentleman, you'll want to see this.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Craigen, Stabler, Fin and Munch look on at a television set, the image paused on screen.

BENSON  
I found this while I was looking through the tapes I took from John's apartment.

Benson hits play. The opening to an episode of the fictional show "The Precinct" begins.

FIN  
This is *The Precinct*, I know this show. They're about to find a body.

BENSON  
Look were they find it.

They watch for a moment. A CHARACTER on the television SCREAMS.

STABLER  
A dumpster.

BENSON  
The victim is a woman Jeannie's age, found in a dumpster across the street from her apartment building, slashed with a knife across the back and side of her neck. And there's more.

Benson fast forwards with a remote for moment. Then, ON SCREEN, a DETECTIVE speaks with a COP at the scene.

COP  
Detective, look at this. Found it  
in the dumpster.

The Detective looks down at something in the Cop's gloved hand.

DETECTIVE  
That looks like blood, bag it.

Benson hits pause.

MUNCH  
Well what is it?

BENSON  
A pez dispenser.

STABLER  
The inventory list from the  
dumpster, there was a pez dispenser  
wasn't there?

Benson nods.

STABLER (CONT'D)  
The black piece of plastic the M.E.  
found?

BENSON  
It's how the victim is raped in the  
show.

STABLER  
Jesus, this guy's sick.

CRAIGEN  
Fin and John, lets get that  
dispenser before they trash it.  
Elliot and Olivia, alert Warner, we  
need to find out if we have a  
match.

STABLER  
(very upset)  
I knew it. I knew there was  
something wrong here. He recreated  
a murder from his own TV show.

BENSON  
But why? Why would he do this and  
then let me have the tape?

STABLER

I don't know. But we're sure as  
hell going to find out.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. INTEROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Benson and Stabler are the middle of interrogating John, who is shocked by what's he's hearing. Stabler holds the video tape in his hand.

STABLER

It's all here John, the body found in the same location, slashes to the neck the same way--

BENSON

--It's just too similar John.

STABLER

How do you explain this? Huh?!

JOHN

I, I can't...

STABLER

Thought so.

BENSON

You let me take the tape. Why? Did you want me to find this?

JOHN

No. I didn't know it was there. I didn't remember this episode.

STABLER

Well you wrote it John.

JOHN

Twenty years ago!

There's a knock at the window. Stabler moves to the door and steps outside.

INTEROGATION ROOM VIEWING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Craigen is there with ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY CASEY NOVACK. Craigen hands Stabler a pez dispenser in an clear evidence bag.

CRAIGEN

This just came back from the lab. The piece of black plastic in Jeannie was this thing's ear.

STABLER  
(turning back to the door)  
Great, I'll arrest him.

NOVACK  
No, you won't yet.

STABLER  
We have a tape of a show he wrote detailing every aspect of the crime down to this thing.

NOVACK  
Yes, a show that a million people have watched. That series is still on round the clock on cable, I've probably seen that episode.

STABLER  
He's lied to us already about sleeping with her, and now he can hardly remember this episode? What's it going to take to arrest him, a confession?

NOVACK  
That would be nice. What you have is excellent circumstantial evidence, but we have nothing physical tying him to the attack or that pez dispenser. Not to mention the fact that he volunteered his DNA, his home for search, and has cooperated at every step of the investigation... That spells out reasonable doubt.

CRAIGEN  
She's right Elliot. Lean on him. He gave you the tape, either he didn't know what was on it, or he wants to be caught. Find out which it is.

STABLER  
(not pleased)  
Fine.

Stabler turns to the door.

INTEROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stabler enters, holding up the bagged pez dispenser for John to see.

JOHN  
What is that?

Stabler sits at the table across from John, sliding the pez dispenser over to him.

STABLER  
You tell me...

JOHN  
It's... It looks like a candy dispenser, ah, a pez dispenser.

STABLER  
Bingo. But it's not just a pez dispenser, is *the* pez dispenser you raped Jeannie with before you slit her throat and tossed her body in a dumpster.

John moves back in his seat, away from the dispenser.

JOHN  
(under his breath)  
Oh my God.

STABLER  
You left it right there in the dumpster for us to find, but then we missed it and so you had to give us the tape to help us along. Sorry about that John, not as fast I guess as your cops on TV.

John stares at the dispenser, shaking his head "no".

BENSON  
John, this will go a lot easier on you if you just tell us what happened.

JOHN  
I know who did this. I know who killed Jeannie.

STABLER  
So do we John, and I'm looking at him.

JOHN  
It's Mark Lethom. An old writing partner of mine.

STABLER  
What? Ok, that's it, you can discuss this with your attorney.

Stabler stands and moves to John, pulling out handcuffs.

STABLER (CONT'D)  
John Solomon, you have the right to  
remain silent...

BENSON  
Elliot, hold on.

Stabler continues to cuff John, roughly pulling him up from  
his seat.

STABLER  
Any thing you do say can and will  
be used against you a a court of  
law.

The door to the room opens, Craigen steps in.

CRAIGEN  
Detective Stabler!

Stabler stops, but doesn't undo the cuffs.

BENSON  
John, who is Mark Lethom, he wrote  
with you?

JOHN  
Yes, he helped me write that  
episode, now I know which one you  
mean. The pez dispenser, that was  
his idea.

BENSON  
His name isn't in the credits.

JOHN  
I know, and that's what this is  
about, I didn't give him a credit.

STABLER  
Oh come on, that episode is 20  
years old, he just now decides to  
get even and he does this?

JOHN  
He's tried hurting me before, he's  
brought suits against three times,  
but they never made it to trial.

CRAIGEN  
Elliot, remove the cuffs.

STABLER  
Captain?

CRAIGEN

Do it.

Stabler pauses for a moment, then undoes the cuffs, SLAMMING them down on the table, hard. He exits the room.

BENSON

John, why haven't you mentioned him before?

JOHN

He lives in Chicago, he doesn't even know Jeannie, I had no idea this had anything to do with me. He wrote with me on several episodes at the start of that show, he'd add little things here and there, but never enough to come close to earning a credit. The pez dispenser, he said it would make the case more interesting, more shocking for the audience. That son of a bitch.

CUT TO:

INT. SQUADROOM - A BIT LATER

Stabler sits at his desk, Craigen and Novak stand next to him. Fin and Munch hover about the room.

STABLER

(to Craigen and Novack)  
So you two are buying this?

NOVACK

I think it's a possibility, yes.

Benson is walking out with John from the interrogation room. Stabler watches John exit, their eyes meeting for a moment. Benson joins the group.

BENSON

I guess we call CPD and see what we can find on Lethom?

FIN

Already done, he's got priors for solicitation, busted by a female undercover.

STABLER

Solicitation is a long way from this.

FIN

There's more. Lethom didn't take kindly to the arrest and pushed the undercover into a brick wall, fractured her forearm.

MUNCH

History of violence against women, I'd call him a legit suspect. These Hollywood types hold grudges, and Lethom ends up paying for sex while his one time partner is producing his own shows, that would burn me up.

CRAIGEN

Your thoughts, Elliot?

Stabler looks across his desk at Benson. Her expression doesn't tell him much. He budges.

STABLER

Fine, then we'll check him out. See if he was in New York at least.

CRAIGEN

Start by calling Lieutenant Van Buren at the Two-Seven, she has a detective who used to work in Chicago, might have a friend there who could do us a favor and pay Lethom a visit.

NOVACK

Detective Fontana? If I'm not mistaken, he may be able to do us one better.

CUT TO:

LOCALE CARD: APARTMENT OF MARK LETHOM - 3611 SOUTH STATE STREET, CHICAGO - FRIDAY, MAY 27

INT. MARK LETHOM'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

The door opens and DETECTIVE FONTANA from *Law and Order* is greeted by MARK LETHOM, 40s. Mark has a rather passive and quiet, slightly creepy demeanor.

MARK

Can I help you?

FONTANA

Are you Mark Lethom?

MARK

Yes.

Fontana extends his hand to shake.

FONTANA

Detective Fontana, New York City  
Police Department.

After a moment of hesitation, Mark shakes his hand.

FONTANA (CONT'D)

Oh, sorry, here's my badge...

(finding his ID)

I'm off duty this week, my mind is  
elsewhere. I'm from your fair city  
originally, home for my baby  
Niece's Christening.

Mark looks at the badge.

MARK

Why are you here?

FONTANA

You mind if I come in? This hasn't  
been much of vacation really, I was  
the Godfather, so I'm a little  
tired.

MARK

Ok. But I don't understand, what's  
this about?

FONTANA

Thanks.

Fontana works his way past Mark into the apartment.

INT. MARK LETHOM'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The place is a mess- the floors covered in books, dirty  
dishes scattered about. Fontana walks around, taking a look  
at everything.

FONTANA

I'd ask to sit down but your couch  
looks covered there.

MARK

Excuse me, detective? Why again  
are you here?

FONTANA

Right, well I'm here because your name came up in a murder investigation in New York, do you know a...

(looking at a note pad)

John Solomon?

MARK

Yes. He was murdered?

FONTANA

Not him, his girlfriend.

MARK

And you think I had something to do it? I'm confused.

FONTANA

Well I don't know the case well, it's not mine, but from what I understand John's our suspect. If you were, the detectives there would be here, they wouldn't have sent me, if you follow?

Fontana stops walking, examining a framed White Sox jersey on the wall.

FONTANA (CONT'D)

Oh, you're a Sox fan?

MARK

Yes. Why have they sent--

FONTANA

--Me too. It figures, you living on the South Side. I grew up a bit further north in Little Italy, mostly Cubs fans, drove me nuts. I'm sure you know what I'm talking about?

MARK

Yeah, but why--

FONTANA

--Wrigley's a nice place to kick back a few beers, but there has to be something off with someone to keep rooting for those losers year after year, am I right?

Fontana, working his way back towards Mark's bedroom, looks over at Mark for a response. After a moment, Mark smiles.

MARK  
Absolutely.

FONTANA  
See, you're all right Mark.

MARK  
Well I'm no Cubs fan, I can tell  
you that. I'm not a freak'n moron.

Fontana half smiles and takes a look through the doorway to  
the bedroom.

FONTANA  
Oh, so I'm here because this John  
guy mentioned you had a beef with  
him?

MARK  
I haven't seen John in probably 4  
years.

FONTANA  
Not since you last sued him?

Fontana looks at Mark for a response. Mark doesn't say a  
thing.

FONTANA (CONT'D)  
Hey is that... Those are old time  
Sox pennants, huh?

MARK  
Yes, but I'm confused, John is  
saying I did this?

FONTANA  
I'm not sure what John is saying,  
but I thought I'd come by and ask  
you if you were in New York last  
week? You mind if I take a closer  
look at those?

MARK  
No.

FONTANA  
No I can't take a look at the  
pennants, or no you weren't in New  
York?

MARK  
New York.

Fontana turns on the bedroom light and enters.

BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is much neater than the previous, with toys and boyish memorabilia from the early 70's scattered about. Fontana examines the pennants.

FONTANA

Lot of good memories on this wall.  
And if you ask me, this could be  
our year again.

MARK

Maybe.

Fontana continues to look at them for a moment, and then returns to walking around as he speaks.

FONTANA

Well, the thing is Mark, my friends  
in New York took a look at a credit  
card record of yours and it showed  
you bought some items from a toy  
collector in Queens last Wednesday.  
Maybe you did that online?

MARK

(thinking)

Ah...

FONTANA

--No you didn't, it was an in store  
purchase. Are these the original?

Fontana motions to two Rock'Em Sock'Em Robots in their box on a shelf.

MARK

I'm, I was there, in Queens, not in  
New York City though, John lives in  
the city. There was a  
screenwriting convention in Queens.

FONTANA

Queens is part of New York City  
Mark, as is Manhattan where John  
Solomon lives, and his girlfriend  
Jeannie for that matter before she  
was raped and murdered.

MARK

Raped?

FONTANA

So when I asked you earlier, you  
were confused about the layout of  
New York City then, Mark?

MARK  
 Yes, I didn't know that. About  
 Queens.

Fontana looks Mark over for a moment. As he does, his cell  
 phone rings.

FONTANA  
 One sec.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION:

INT. CAPTAIN CRAIGEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

CRAIGEN  
 Detective Fontana, we took a mug  
 shot of Lethom from CPD to the  
 vic's building, got an ID from a  
 teenager. Says he saw him around  
 the building the day before the  
 crime.

FONTANA  
 That's great news.

CRAIGEN  
 Thought I'd give you the heads up.  
 We'd appreciate anything else you  
 can find for us.

MARK'S APARTMENT

Fontana turns and freezes for a moment. He looks down at  
 several rows of pez dispensers lined up on a dresser.

FONTANA  
 (phone)  
 That shouldn't be a problem...

Fontana hangs up.

FONTANA (CONT'D)  
 So Mark, you collect these things?

MARK  
 Yes.

FONTANA  
 What are they called?

MARK  
 Pez dispensers.

FONTANA  
 I haven't seen one of these since I  
 was a kid.

Fontana picks one up and Mark quickly moves towards him.

MARK  
Please don't!

Mark snatches the dispenser from Fontana.

MARK (CONT'D)  
Sorry, this one is special. And expensive.

Mark carefully puts the dispenser back in the row.

FONTANA  
No problem. That's how it works I guess, like anything, the rare ones are worth more, right?

MARK  
Yes.

FONTANA  
So lets say a 1970's yellow stemmed Panda with removable eyes, ears and nose, that would be pretty rare right?

Mark freezes. He's silent for a moment.

MARK  
Not that rare.

FONTANA  
So you have one here?

Fontana starts looking around the row of pez dispensers, then opens the drawers of the dresser. They are full of dispensers.

MARK  
I don't know. I, I might. Why did you ask about that one? You should leave.

FONTANA  
You must, there are tons here...

MARK  
I want, I want you to leave now.

FONTANA  
Well what's this?

Fontana holds up a few pieces of paper stapled together. He then starts thumbing through them.

MARK

I said I think you should leave now.

FONTANA

This is your whole collection and you have them in alphabetical order...

MARK

Detective, I want you--

FONTANA

--Here it is, Panda, Yellow, removable face features, with a "one" next to it, I guess indicating you have one, can I see it?

MARK

Detective--

FONTANA

--You don't have it anymore do you?

MARK

Leave!

FONTANA

You're right, I should get going.

Fontana pulls out a pair of cuffs.

FONTANA (CONT'D)

But you're coming with me. Mark Lethom, you're under arrest for the murder of Jeannie Connors.

Fontana turns Mark around against a wall and cuffs him.

MARK

What?

FONTANA

You have the right to remain silent, anything you do say, can and will be used against in a court of law. And I'd be especially careful what you say about the Cubs my friend, I've been a die hard "moron" my whole life.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. INTEROGATION - LINE-UP ROOM - DAY

Mark enters the room in a line of five men, all of the men are approximately the same height and weight.

INTERCOM VOICE

Please turn and face the window.

As the men turn around, we see Mark is number 4. Also, two of the five men have goatees, Mark and two others do not.

INT. PROTECTIVE VIEWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

SANDRA PHILLIPS, a sharp defense attorney, sits on one side of the room, on the other Novak stands with KYLE THOMPSON, 14. A CORRECTIONAL OFFICER sits between them at a mic.

NOVAK

Ok Kyle, tell us if you see the man you saw in your building's lobby that night.

Kyle looks out carefully, but no luck.

NOVACK

Take your time.

KYLE

It's just...

NOVACK

What's wrong Kyle?

KYLE

I think I know which it is, but did he have a goatee in the picture?

PHILLIPS

(to Novack)

Don't answer that.

NOVACK

(to Kyle)

Don't worry about the picture you IDed before, just tell us now if you see the man you saw that night.

Kyle looks back out for a moment.

KYLE

Number 4... I think.

NOVACK  
You think?

KYLE  
It's number 4. I'm sure of it.

NOVACK  
Ok, thanks Kyle.

Kyle exits. Novack gives Phillips a look.

NOVACK (CONT'D)  
Satisfied? I'd say that was a  
positive ID?

PHILLIPS  
And I'm sure it was on the up and  
up when your detectives showed him  
the line-up cards too?

NOVACK  
Completely, you can examine them  
yourself.

PHILLIPS  
Oh I will. But I don't think it'll  
matter.

Novack smirks a bit.

NOVACK  
(half joking)  
I take it you're ready to deal?

PHILLIPS  
Not quite.

Phillips gives Novack a document and her smirk back.

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)  
Motion to suppress the pez  
collection.

Phillips exits, Novack looks down at the papers. Her smirk  
is gone.

CUT TO:

LOCALE CARD: CHAMBERS OF JUDGE HENRY BLANKO - WEDNESDAY,  
JUNE 8

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

JUDGE BLANKO, distinguished, 60s, looks across his desk at  
Novak and Phillips.

JUDGE BLANKO

So Ms. Novack, let me understand this, Mr. Lethom did or did not ask your detective to leave his apartment?

NOVACK

"Did" Your Honor, but that was after he discovered the defendant's pez collection.

PHILLIPS

You mean after he coerced his way into my client's home under false pretenses.

NOVACK

What false pretenses, claiming to be a White Sox fan?

PHILLIPS

Claiming my client wasn't under suspicion and that the police already had their man in custody.

NOVACK

You know very well detectives can lie to suspects to obtain information.

JUDGE BLANKO

And you know well Ms. Novack that without a warrant your detective should have left the premises when requested by Mr. Lethom.

NOVACK

You're honor, the defendant allowed Detective Fontana into his home and Detective Fontana continued to ask for and was granted permission at every step along the way.

PHILLIPS

Right up until the point he was questioned about the panda pez dispenser, at which point he told the detective to leave- This was prior to his finding the inventory list.

JUDGE BLANKO

(to Novack)

Is this correct?

NOVACK

Yes, but--

JUDGE BLANKO

--Then the list is out.

NOVACK

Your Honor? Then I'll argue inevitable discovery, with Kyle Thompson's ID placing Lethom at the building we would have gotten a search warrant.

JUDGE BLANKO

But by the time you had the ID your detective was already in Mr. Lethom's home, going through his things. I may invite someone into my home, but I would expect them to leave when I asked and never would my invitation allow them to go through my drawers. I feel Mr. Lethom's rights were violated, the inventory list is out.

PHILLIPS

Thank you Your Honor, I'm also asking that the pez collection itself be excluded on the same grounds.

JUDGE BLANKO

Ms. Novack?

NOVACK

The majority of the collection was on display on a dresser, the detective saw them prior to being asked to leave.

JUDGE BLANKO

Ms. Phillips?

Her look shows this is the case.

JUDGE BLANKO (CONT'D)

Then we'll call this one a draw. The list is out, the collection itself stays in.

CUT TO:

INT. SVU SQUADROOM - DAY

Novack enters and is greeted by Benson and Stabler at their desks.

BENSON

How'd it go? Bad I take it, or you wouldn't be here.

NOVACK

We lost his inventory list, which means we can't prove he ever owned the panda dispenser used in the attack. Beyond some decade old threat letters to John and the ID of a 14-year-old, we don't have much.

BENSON

How rare is that panda dispenser?

NOVACK

Rare enough that if we could prove he once owned one and no longer does, it would look very good to the jury. Right now his knowledge of that episode and the dispenser used in it isn't any greater than John's, or anyone who saw that show.

Benson thinks for a moment, but she's got nothing.

STABLER

...My daughters used to mark their toys with their initials, especially if they both had the same toy. Any chance this guy did the same thing?

BENSON

Probably not, that would ruin their value, and we didn't find anything written on the dispenser used in the rape.

STABLER

Well maybe he marked them in a different way? It's worth a look.

NOVACK

There are over 200 of them from his apartment, if you want to look at them, you're welcome to.

STABLER

Why not... I owe it to John.

Novack and Benson both give Stabler a surprised look.

STABLER (CONT'D)

What can I say? I guess sometimes feelings are wrong.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - NIGHT

Sitting next to a table full of pez dispensers is Stabler, Benson, Fin and Munch. With gloved hands they look carefully over the different dispensers, inside and out.

FIN

Isn't the fact that a grown man would have collection like this enough to convict him?

MUNCH

Hey some of these are pretty valuable, not a bad investment. Just think of them as colorful, hyper-happy T-bills.

BENSON

Well I'm not finding anything, they hardly look touched, except to put the candy inside.

Stabler looks at the candy in a open dispenser, then picks up another and does the same.

STABLER

Wait a minute... The pieces of candy, they're all in a pattern. Take a look... All red, green, yellow, 9 total pieces each.

They look quickly through several of the dispensers. Stabler is right.

BENSON

There was pez in the one used in the attack.

STABLER

What do you want to bet it's in the same pattern?

Stabler and Benson hurry out of the room. Munch stops Fin at the door, closing it. He takes a pack of cards out from his jacket.

MUNCH

Found this at my desk, what's it about?

FIN  
Just a little birthday present.

MUNCH  
A pack of pinochle cards?

FIN  
There's more, take a look at the first card.

John flips opens the pack, pulling out a business card.

MUNCH  
"Brighton Senior Living"?

FIN  
Room number and best times for visits are on the back.

MUNCH  
And who's in the room?

FIN  
Harold D'Angelo.

MUNCH  
(not pleased)  
The "creepy old man" from Jeannie Connor's building?

FIN  
Listen, the nurse I met with said he's doing great but has no family. He's a big fan of cards and could benefit from some company from time to time.

MUNCH  
Fin, I see what you're trying to do, but it just doesn't work that way.

FIN  
Well why not?

MUNCH  
Because it just doesn't, you want me to go through the myriad of reasons?

FIN  
No John. Because life's too short.

MUNCH  
Look, I get it's a nice thought, but really...

Munch trails off, looking at Fin for a moment.

MUNCH (CONT'D)  
(heartfelt)  
Thanks.

CUT TO:

LOCAL CARD: RIKER'S ISLAND CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - MONDAY,  
JUNE 6

INT. RIKER'S ISLAND - MEETING ROOM - DAY

Mark and Phillips sit side by side at a table, Novack enters.

PHILLIPS  
What now counsellor, you have some  
Tinker Toys tying my client to a  
crime?

NOVACK  
Nope, these will do just fine.

As she sits, Novack slides a couple of pez dispensers across  
the table to Mark.

NOVACK (CONT'D)  
Recognize those?

MARK  
I may or may not have these in my  
collection, I don't know.

PHILLIPS  
(sarcastically)  
He doesn't keep a list, remember?

NOVACK  
Take a closer look, they're yours.  
Every one in your collection had  
the same pattern of candy inside,  
the same number of pieces and the  
same colors in the same order. A  
pattern that matched the dispenser  
you used to rape Jeannie Connors.

Mark looks at the candy inside. He smirks a bit, shaking his  
head.

PHILLIPS  
That's hardly DNA.

NOVACK  
But like DNA it can make a powerful  
argument for inclusion or exclusion  
in a group.

(MORE)

NOVACK (CONT'D)

Especially because the green pez isn't sold in the US, it's Japanese and doesn't come cheap. So I'm pretty sure the jury will conclude the dispenser belonged to Mr. Lethom. Couple that with the threatening letters you sent John Solomon, a witness that puts you at the scene of the crime the day of, and your connection to the *The Precinct* episode, and you're looking at life without the possibility of parole.

PHILLIPS

What are you offering?

MARK

No, no deals.

PHILLIPS

Mark, please.

NOVACK

Murder 2.

MARK

I said--

PHILLIPS

Sentencing recommendation?

MARK

NO!

Mark stands up, slamming the pez dispensers hard against the table. For the first time, he's showing some command.

MARK (CONT'D)

This will go to trial.

PHILLIPS

(somewhat quietly)

If it does Mark, it's going to be hard to win.

MARK

Listen to me. I've waited almost 20 years for this, to have the great creative genius John Solomon in court so he can be exposed for what he is, a liar, a thief and a fraud. I'm innocent, and I have nothing to hide. And I sure as hell am not taking a deal.

(MORE)

MARK (CONT'D)

(pointedly to his  
attorney)

You're not making any deals.

NOVACK

Mr. Lethom, you realize that it's you on trial, not John Solomon, whatever disputes you have over the credit for his television series aren't going to enter into his trial.

MARK

Oh no? So you're going to convict me without motive? Tell me, who would do something like this, if not for revenge for having been wronged?

Novack looks at Mark for a moment, then to Phillips. He has a point...

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

John paces near his window, Novack sits on a couch.

JOHN

So let me understand this, he murders and rapes Jeannie, in the process essentially framing me for the crime, and now his attorney gets to question me about allegations I plagiarized his work?

NOVACK

It's complicated. But I have to put you on the stand. What separates you and Lethom is motive. Their only defense is to paint you as another possible suspect. You had the same knowledge of the crime in the episode, and you had a personal relationship with Jeannie. Although the evidence against Mark is strong, I need you to explain he believed you stole his ideas and failed to give him credit. That's the motive that drove him to do this.

JOHN

Ms. Novack, he's delusional, his obsession with my success is at issue, his jealousy.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Only a sociopath would do what he did for revenge, even if I had wronged him, which I didn't.

NOVACK

I agree, and I believe the jury will see that. But I also think Lethom believes this is his chance to try you, to hold you accountable in front of the country for keeping him from the type of success you've seen. The attention this is already getting from the media, it's only going to increase during trial. Lethom's goal is to convince the world you're a fraud. It seems more important to him than the case itself.

JOHN

So then either way he wins? If I tell the truth, that he's a no talent hack who didn't deserve any credit, the jury's going to question his motive, because why would he want to hurt me? But if I lie, if I say he did have reason to want revenge, he's getting what he wanted all along... He's making it look like I stole from him.

NOVACK

I don't envy your position, and I would never instruct you to perjure yourself.

JOHN

Then what is it you're asking of me?

NOVACK

Jeannie is dead John. Lethom *murdered* and *raped* her. I'm just asking you to think about why he went to the lengths he did to put you in this situation. Is there any chance his claims about those episodes could have merit?

JOHN

(shocked)

Ms. Novack, I didn't treat Mark unfairly in any way. He didn't write enough of any of those episodes to earn a credit, and even if he had he wouldn't be in the place I am in my career.

(MORE)

JOHN(CONT'D)

I've worked in TV for 25 years, I'm the executive producer of the 4th *Precinct* spin-off. That series launches next season, I'm not about to ruin my reputation and that show's fate to make this case easier for you to win.

NOVACK

And I'm not asking you to. I just want you to know what to expect in court. And to think about what's on the line.

John looks to his side, out of the window. He knows all too well what is on the line...

CUT TO:

LOCALE CARD: TRIAL PART 28 - THURSDAY, AUGUST 4TH

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

John is finishing his direct testimony.

NOVACK

And at this point the connection was made between the events in the episode of *The Precinct* and Jeannie's murder, and that's when you pointed the police to the defendant?

JOHN

Yes.

NOVACK

And what specifically prompted you to suggest the police investigate Mr. Lethom?

JOHN

For years he had sworn to get even with me, to teach me a lesson as he called it. He felt he deserved writing credits for the early episodes of the *The Precinct* series, and he blamed me for not giving him those credits.

NOVACK

Those threats include the letters sent to you by Mr. Lethom previously shared with this court and presently marked people's 11 through 15?

JOHN

Yes. In addition, he's tried to sue me three separate times for plagiarism, each time the charges were dismissed. But, I just... I just never thought he would take it to this.

NOVACK

Nothing further.

As Novack sits, Phillips rises, moving quickly to the witness stand.

PHILLIPS

Mr. Solomon... If, as you claim, Mark was so bent on revenge, why didn't you suggest him as a possible suspect to the police right away?

JOHN

I didn't think Jeannie's attack had anything to do with me or my affairs.

PHILLIPS

It wasn't until you were actually on the verge of being charged with her murder yourself that you pointed out Mr. Lethom, isn't that right?

Novack stands.

NOVACK

Objection Your Honor.

PHILLIPS

This goes to the witness's credibility.

JUDGE BLANKO

I'll allow it. Please answer the question.

JOHN

Yes, it was at that point that the similarities between the show and Jeannie's murder became clear to me. The police had just previously uncovered them, that's why they suspected me.

PHILLIPS  
So you didn't pick up on those  
similarities right away, did you?

JOHN  
No. That episode was 20 years old.

PHILLIPS  
And moreover it was primarily the  
work of Mark Lethom, was it not?

NOVACK  
Objection.

JUDGE BLANKO  
Overruled. Answer please.

JOHN  
No. As I said, that episode was 20  
years old.

Phillips moves in even closer to John.

PHILLIPS  
Not to mention the fact that  
specific elements from that episode  
were the creative work of Mr.  
Lethom, correct?

JOHN  
Ok, yes, some elements. But not  
the--

PHILLIPS  
--Some elements, would you care to  
share with the jury which ones?

JOHN  
Well, elements like the pez  
dispenser for one.

PHILLIPS  
For one, there were more?

JOHN  
Yes, he framed several aspects of  
the crime, that was his job at that  
time, that's why he recreated those  
elements in the murd--

PHILLIPS  
--I'm sorry, his job? But I don't  
see his name in the credits of *The  
Precinct*. Was he paid for this  
job?

JOHN

I wrote those episodes on spec,  
none of us were paid at that time.

PHILLIPS

Who do you mean by "us", Mr.  
Solomon?

JOHN

The early writers and creators of  
*The Precinct*.

PHILLIPS

Including the defendant?

JOHN

No, he was never a writer.

Phillips is now in John's face.

PHILLIPS

Well I'm confused then Mr. Solomon,  
he is a writer or he isn't? You  
say he didn't write the episode in  
question, yet because of it you  
knew it was Mark? And you did  
write it, but don't remember it?

Novack rises again, she's had enough.

NOVACK

Objection! Despite the defendant's  
wishes, this proceeding is not to  
determine who stole who's credit,  
Mr. Solomon is not on trial here.

JUDGE BLANKO

Ms. Phillips, I think you have  
pursued this line of questioning  
enough.

PHILLIPS

These questions now go to motive,  
Your Honor.

NOVACK

What? Sidebar Your Honor?

JUDGE BLANKO

Approach.

Novack and Phillips do so, arriving at the bench.

NOVACK

(to Phillips)

I don't know what he's convinced you of, but you have a duty to defend your client. If you try to impeach the witness, all you're going to do is further show he had a reason for revenge.

JUDGE BLANKO

Address me, Ms. Novack.

PHILLIPS

Your Honor, it has been the defense's position that Mr. Lethom is not the only possible suspect here, Mr. Solomon had motive to frame my client for this murder.

NOVACK

That's absurd. Your Honor, the defendant is using this opportunity to argue his case for 20-year-old writing credits, this is a murder trial.

PHILLIPS

Yes, one the People have gone out of their way to establish is about those credits. I must be allowed to present the jury an alternate theory.

JUDGE BLANKO

I agree and I'm going to allow you to proceed counselor. But I advise you to do so carefully, you're on the edge here.

They return to their places, Novack unhappy.

PHILLIPS

Mr. Solomon, let me rephrase the last question. Your inability to see the similarities between the murder of Ms. Connors and that in the episode of *The Precinct* stems from the fact that Mr. Lethom actually wrote the majority of that episode, isn't that right?

JOHN

Yes.

Phillips freezes, as surprised WHISPERING erupts from the gallery. Mark is also caught off guard, a shocked smile starting to form on his face.

PHILLIPS  
Excuse me?

JOHN  
(with regret)  
Yes. That's right.

As the WHISPERING becomes louder, Judge Blanko POUNDS his gavel.

JUDGE BLANKO  
We will have silence in the gallery  
or I'll clear this room. Proceed  
counsellor.

Phillips is flustered, she didn't expect this.

PHILLIPS  
Your honor, I'd like to request a  
moment to confer with my client.

JUDGE BLANKO  
I don't see why, the witness  
answered your question, proceed.

PHILLIPS  
Your honor, If I could--

JUDGE BLANKO  
--Proceed.

Phillips is at a loss.

PHILLIPS  
So it is your testimony, Mr.  
Solomon, under oath, that the  
defendant, not you, actually wrote  
the *The Precinct* episode shown to  
the jury? You wrongfully  
plagiarized from him and denied him  
the credit he deserved?

JOHN  
...Yes.

MARK  
*Finally!*

Mark rises to his feet, screaming at John.

MARK (CONT'D)  
It took this, you son of bitch!  
After all these years it took  
*this!!*

Phillips turns to Mark to shut him up but it's too late. GASPS and CHATTER erupt from the gallery as the Judge POUNDS his gavel for order.

Mark, an elated smile still on his face, looks in at John with contempt, and then to Phillips. It takes him a moment to realize that his outburst has incriminated him. His smile turns quickly to shock and regret.

FADE THROUGH:

SILENT LOCALE CARD: TRIAL PART 34 - WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 17

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Mark stands with Phillips for the verdict.

JUDGE BLANKO

On the sole count of Murder in the First Degree, how do you find?

JURY FORMAN

We find the defendant, Mark Andrew Lethom, guilty.

The look of shock and regret on Mark's face remains. A content Novack looks back at Stabler, standing in the back of the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Stabler and Novack are moving down the courthouse steps, past a MOB OF REPORTERS waiting for John.

STABLER

So you think this is going to hurt John's career?

NOVACK

He seemed to think so, but was still willing to put the nail in Lethom's coffin. Have to admire that.

They stop walking, as Benson hurries up the steps to them. Her face is painted with shock.

BENSON

Is the verdict in?

NOVACK

Just now, guilty. What's wrong?

Benson pulls a bound script out from a bag.

BENSON

This. It's a script we had taken from John's apartment, a crime show called *The Jury Finds*.

NOVACK

His new show.

BENSON

I started reading it, and it's *this*.

NOVACK

Excuse me?

BENSON

It's this case. Almost exact. Only the credit hungry writer in the story didn't do it. He was framed. He was framed by the victim's boyfriend. You don't think...

She trails off and the three are silent for a moment, looking at one another. They then turn towards the Reporters who have jumped into action as John approaches them.

There's a smile on John's face as he addresses them, and a confidence he hadn't yet shown.

JOHN

I know you have a lot of questions and I appreciate that, we all want to know who wrote what. If you want answers I invite you and all of America to tune in Wednesday nights to my show, *The Precinct - The Jury Finds*, everything will be cleared up then.

Benson looks from the reporters back to Stabler. Their eyes meet.

STABLER

I guess sometimes feelings are right...

FADE OUT.

THE END