

THE LAST CHANCE DETECTIVE AGENCY

Written by
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One-Hour Pilot
"The Case of the Cafeteria Cats"

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TEASER

EXT. RAPTORS DEN - EVENING

A dirty brick building with a RAPTOR'S CLAW painted on the side, the home of the Raptors Motorcycle Club.

Through the busted screen door...

INT. RAPTORS DEN - CONTINUOUS

The blue glow of the TV bleeds out from behind a worn-down easy chair. There's somebody there, holding a LIT JOINT lazily over the armrest.

The sound of TIRES ON GRAVEL from outside.

EXT. RAPTORS DEN - CONTINUOUS

A RED PICKUP TRUCK slides to a stop out front. Two club members, RALPHIE FARINA (36) and JOHN POTTS (35), jump out. RALPHIE's carrying a BLACK DUFFEL BAG that looks pretty damn full.

INT. RAPTORS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Potts kicks open the clubhouse door and tosses his bag next to the armchair. Ralphie comes in behind him.

POTTS

Ralphie here swiped the dope before those Quack-ers even showed up.

Ralphie tosses Dick a pack of ROLLING PAPERS.

RALPHIE

We got your papers too.

The man in the chair, DICK ARMSTRONG (40), stands. He's an unkempt tattered man, stuck in a lifelong cycle of bad choices. He grabs the duffel and pulls out a BRICK OF HEROIN.

DICK

It's Quakers, dumbass. Nobody saw you?

RALPHIE

Nope, nobody.

POTTS

Now, be honest, Ralphie. They showed up when we was leaving.

ACT ONE**INT. GARAGE - MORNING**

MELODY TRAINOR (37), dressed in yoga pants and a hoody, sorts items in BLUE BINS. AN OLD BLACK TRUCK is parked behind her.

She opens the truck and rifles through the console. She pulls out a half-empty pack of smokes and a faded business card.

INSERT - The business card: **GOT A CASE THAT NEEDS SOLVING? HIRE "THE BEST CHANCE DETECTIVE AGENCY" - 1924 SOBOL STREET.**

Melody smiles as she pulls the garage door closed.

EXT. 1924 SOBOL STREET - DRIVEWAY - MORNING

A house straight out of a Home & Garden spread in Parade Magazine. The garage door CLINKS open, revealing a mess of geeky collectibles with a POLICE CAR parked in the middle.

A silhouette... Might be a chubby teenager?... rises up from behind the car in a too-tight t-shirt, carpenter shorts, and horn-rimmed glasses.

The figure steps forward, DANNY CHANCE (38), the boy detective with the freaky good luck. He's far past his prime.

He rolls a chalkboard out into the driveway.

INSERT - The chalkboard: **THE LAST CHANCE DETECTIVE AGENCY - DANNY CHANCE, OWNER - \$15 PER HOUR**

Danny pulls out a lawn chair, sits down, and places an EMPTY COFFEE CAN at his feet. He tosses a wad of bills in the can.

FOOTSTEPS. A WOMAN'S SHADOW eclipses Danny.

MELODY (O.S.)

This is, like, a dream come true.

It's Melody, all business in sunglasses and a suit. She carries a BLACK MESSENGER BAG.

MELODY

It's been a long time, Danny. You haven't changed one bit.

FADE TO:

EXT. 1924 SOBOL STREET - DRIVEWAY - MORNING - 1994

YOUNG DANNY (13) sits in his lawn chair.

INSERT - The chalkboard reads a little differently: **THE BEST CHANCE DETECTIVE AGENCY - DANNY CHANCE, OWNER - \$5.15 PER HOUR, PLUS LUNCH.**

YOUNG MELODY (12) stands in front of Danny. She's a tomboy: Jeans, t-shirt, baseball cap. Wad of gum in her cheek.

YOUNG DANNY

Welcome to the Best Chance Detective Agency. We're the best chance you've got! I'm Danny, and I run this whole operation. You're that new girl from History, right? Melody?

YOUNG MELODY

You know my name? Wow. I mean, you're Danny Chance, the Boy Detective with the freaky good luck, and you know my name!

YOUNG DANNY

Oh. You're a fan. Well, despite what you might have heard, it isn't all my freaky good luck. My dad's a cop. He shows me a lot of tricks.

YOUNG MELODY

I know. I even know your real last name... Duplas! I read about you in that story they did in Parade Magazine. When my parents said we were moving to Everly Heights I knew I had to meet you. I'm hoping to be a detective myself someday.

YOUNG DANNY

Oh, geez. This is PERFECT.

Danny plucks some bills out of the can and holds them out.

YOUNG DANNY

I'm investigating a bike theft involving a local gang of no-good teens, The Raptors. They're led by this jerk named Dick Armstrong, but he plays nice when there are girls around. Want to come with me to question him?

Young Melody snatches the money from his hand.

YOUNG MELODY

YES. This is a dream come true.
I'll work with you forever, if
you'll let me.

FADE TO:

EXT. 1924 SOBOL STREET - DRIVEWAY - MORNING

Danny shakes Melody's hand.

DANNY

You look great, It's been, what?

MELODY

Twenty years.

DANNY

Holy geez! Twenty years. You know,
I looked for you after the
graduation ceremony, but your folks
said you left right after.

MELODY

I couldn't get out of this loser
town fast enough. No offense.

DANNY

It's not a bad town. Just a few bad
apples.

MELODY

So you're really still doing this,
huh? Danny Chance, Boy Detective?

Danny turns away, embarrassed.

DANNY

Detective work is the only thing
I've ever been any good at.
Besides, Dad still needs all the
help busting crooks he can get.

MELODY

How is your dad? I heard he got
promoted to Captain.

DANNY

Heck yeah, he was. It meant a lot
to us, especially after Mom passed.

MELODY

Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that.

DANNY

I heard about your folks too. I'm guessing that's why you're back.

MELODY

Yeah. A lot of shit left unsettled. Mind if I grab a seat?

Danny jumps from his chair.

DANNY

Here. Take mine. The doctor says I should stand more anyway. Irregular heartbeat or something. So, you cuss now?

MELODY

Yeah. Doesn't everybody?

DANNY

I don't. And you never used to.

MELODY

We were kids. You don't cuss?

DANNY

Who's going to trust somebody who cusses to uphold law and order?

The front door SLAMS open. CAPTAIN DUPLAS (57) rushes out in full uniform. He's late.

CAPTAIN DUPLAS

DAMN IT! You can't set up your dumbass detective stuff before I get the car out of the garage, Dan.

DANNY

It's Danny.

CAPTAIN DUPLAS

Danny's a kid's name. You're god damn thirty-eight years old.

Danny sulks. Melody jumps up and shakes the Captain's hand.

MELODY

Mr. Duplas! It's Melody. You remember. Danny's bodyguard?

CAPTAIN DUPLAS

MELODY. You're all grown up. Heard your parents died. One of my best guys took the call.

(MORE)

CAPTAIN DUPLAS (CONT'D)
Another night, it might have gone different, you know? This whole town went to shit. You're lucky you got out when you did. You went to school for criminal justice, right?

MELODY
Yeah. I worked at the FBI after I graduated.

Captain Duplas smiles at the news, but his body tenses. He strolls down the driveway as he speaks, glancing for vehicles parked on the road.

CAPTAIN DUPLAS
FBI? Interesting. I hope they don't have you working while you're here.

MELODY
Actually, they decided they, uh, didn't "require my specific skill set for future initiatives."

CAPTAIN DUPLAS
They canned your ass, huh?

MELODY
Yep. Ass sufficiently canned.

CAPTAIN DUPLAS
Well, help Dan move his shit. He's going to take you out to lunch.

DANNY
I have office hours.

CAPTAIN DUPLAS
The Hendrick girl can wait an hour to find her Betsy Wetsy. You have a former FBI agent here. If you don't pick her brain while you have her, you might as well shut down your little "detective business" because it's never gonna do shit. Nice to see you, Melody.

MELODY
You too, sir.

Captain Duplas walks briskly over to his car and climbs in.

DANNY
So... Want to go to lunch?

MELODY

Sure. Is Gaston's still around? I could sure go for one of their open-faced turkey sandwiches.

INT. GASTON'S DINER - BOOTH - DAY

INSERT: A TV SCREEN. News 8 reports on a truck explosion.

Melody takes a bite of her OPEN-FACED SANDWICH. She gags.

MELODY

This is awful.

Danny sits across the booth. An older waitress, THELMA MEESE (60), puts Danny's CHICKEN TENDERS on the table.

THELMA

You said it was your favorite dish.

MELODY

It's not like I remember. You guys changed the recipe.

THELMA

Don't let Gaston hear you say that. He's used the same recipes for thirty years. See?

Thelma points to a SIGN on the wall -- A picture of GASTON, an old hippy cook. It reads:

30 YEARS - SAME FOOD, SAME RECIPES, SAME COOK. WE NEVER CHANGE A THING.

Melody hands Thelma her plate.

MELODY

It's all salty and runny now.

THELMA

Same as it ever was, sweetie. Maybe the food ain't the thing that's changed. I can get you something else, if you'd rather.

Melody lifts her coffee cup.

MELODY

This is fine, thanks. And don't worry. I'll pay for the sandwich.

Thelma CRACKS UP on her way back to the kitchen.

THELMA

Oh! You! Ha! You thought we was gonna give you this for free? Gaston! You'll never guess what this customer just said.

DANNY

Poor Thelma. She lost her cat a few weeks ago. I still haven't turned up any clues, although I have my suspicions. What if I told you the lunch ladies at our old school were collecting the neighborhood cats to turn into Monday's meatloaf?

MELODY

I-- That doesn't make any sense. Cats aren't any cheaper than your typical low-grade beef.

DANNY

They are if you steal them off people's porches.

MELODY

Are you serious?

DANNY

It's a theory.

MELODY

Yeah. A dumb one. No offense.

DANNY

It's not dumb. It's like when Dick's mom poisoned Billy Free at that blueberry pie-eating contest.

MELODY

Billy Free? You mean Billy Belly?

DANNY

It's always been Billy Free. We all called him Billy Belly, but he flipping hated it.

MELODY

Oh, shit. Did we bully him?

DANNY

A little, but you know Billy. He's too nice to say anything. You remember that day at the fair, right?

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)
 Just like this "Cafeteria Cats
 Conspiracy" I'm working, it was a
 crime of opportunity.

FADE TO:

EXT. EVERLY HEIGHTS COMMUNITY FAIR - DAY - 1994

MAYOR BROWN (40s) stands on a stage in front of a crowd.

MAYOR BROWN
 You'd better have a good
 explanation for this boy's sudden
 illness, Danny Chance. If not,
 we'll have to cancel this blueberry
 pie-eating contest.

Young Danny clutches a can of anti-freeze in front of the
 stage. Young Melody stands by him in an artsy outfit:
 Overalls, one side down, with a tank top underneath.

YOUNG BILLY "BELLY" FREE (13), normally as pleasant as he is
 chubby, lies on a STRETCHER, getting his stomach pumped.

YOUNG DANNY
 It's simple, Mayor Brown. Mrs.
 Armstrong put anti-freeze in
 Billy's pie to make sure her son
 Dick won the contest. Since anti-
 freeze is a rare poison that tastes
 sweet, Billy didn't notice.

YOUNG MELODY
 That's how she busted Billy's
 belly.

Billy Belly opens his eyes. He's still weak.

YOUNG BILLY
 My name... is... Billy... Free.

FADE TO:

INT. GASTON'S DINER - BOOTH - DAY

MELODY
 Everybody knew Dick's mom was a
 nutcase long before that contest.
 This cafeteria cats conspiracy? It
 sounds like something a middle
 schooler would make up after one
 too many Salisbury steaks.

DANNY

You've been gone too long. You forgot what Everly Heights is like.

MELODY

What about you? Same old garage. Same old sign. You still live with your DAD. I never thought I'd come back to find you doing the same shit you were doing when we were kids. It's not healthy, Danny. I'm worried about you.

Danny's face falls.

DANNY

At least I'm not traipsing all over the world cussing like you are.

MELODY

Every fucking adult in the fucking universe cusses! The fact that you don't is WEIRD. Christ, Danny. We're ADULTS. You need to move the fuck on, dude.

Danny grabs his things, throws some cash on the table, then stands.

DANNY

If you've moved on so much, then why the heck did you come to my dad's house? Just... Just take your cussing and your cynicism and get the heck out of Everly Heights.

Danny storms out of the diner.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - STREET - CONTINUOUS

Melody steps out of Gaston's. Dick Armstrong nurses a bottle of whiskey on a park bench.

She looks around. Where's Danny? There. In the PHONE BOOTH. His back is to her, but she'd recognize that shirt anywhere.

Melody marches over and swings the phone booth door open.

IN THE PHONE BOOTH

A surprised Danny clutches his GAMEBOY. Melody reaches around Danny and grabs the FRAYED PHONE CORD.

MELODY

You know phone booths don't work anymore, right?

DANNY

They work pretty perfectly for privacy, so GET LOST.

MELODY

Danny, you hired me to be your bodyguard. That's all I want to do. What you hired me to do.

Melody cracks her knuckles.

FADE TO:

INT. RAPTORS' DEN - DAY - 1994

Young Melody cracks her knuckles.

A group of rowdy teenagers menace Young Danny and Young Melody in a dark corner of the shoddy clubhouse.

YOUNG DICK (15) pushes his way through his underlings. His ginger head looms a foot above the others. He calls his gang The Raptors, but he should call them the Minnesota Gold Rush. These kids don't have a lot of prospects.

YOUNG DICK

Yeah. I took Timmy Delroy's bicycle. What's Parade Magazine's favorite boy detective gonna do about it, huh?

YOUNG MELODY

You suck, Dick! How about I take the frosting right off you, you big meanie?

Young Melody delivers a quick left to Dick's jaw. He falls.

Danny puts a hand on Melody's shoulder.

YOUNG DANNY

Wow. Being a detective and all, I need protection. If you can knock Dick Armstrong on his butt, you're just the girl for the job. Wanna be my bodyguard? You'll get fifteen percent, after expenses.

YOUNG MELODY

Hell yeah, I would!

Young Dick sits up, rubbing his jaw.

YOUNG DICK

Watch your mouth! No cussing in the clubhouse. We might be mean, but that don't mean we use mean language.

FADE TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN - STREET - DAY

Dick lurks behind Melody, sipping his whiskey.

DICK

If it ain't Marylin Vos Savant's fucking boyfriend! I still wipe my ass with Parade Magazine in your honor, you wannabe detective FUCK.

Dick lunges for Danny. Melody grabs Dick by his shirt. She covers her nose.

MELODY

You smell like SHIT.

DICK

You don't smell like fucking roses either.

A DAD standing behind Danny covers his YOUNG DAUGHTER's ears.

DANNY

Watch your language, Dick. There are kids around.

MELODY

Wait. Dick Armstrong. Like, the Dick Armstrong? The bully?

Dick leans close and squints at Melody.

DICK

Mel? Would'ya look at that? Danny got his little bodyguard back. Did the boy with the freaky good luck give you a freaky good f--

Danny steps between Dick and Melody.

DANNY

Come on, Melody. Talking to him is like pounding rocks with a feather.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

You can spend all day doing it, but
you won't get anywhere.

Dick grabs Danny's arm and winds it up behind his back.

DICK

That's it, Chance. You just had to
go and be a smartass today. Today
of all days... After the night I
had!

Dick pushes Danny's mouth down until it's almost touching the
curb and puts his boot on Danny's neck.

DICK

Go on. Bite it. Bite the curb.

DANNY

Dick! I know where there's some
scrap you can make a pretty penny
on at the old Chi-Chi's. Let me go
and I'll tell you where to find it.

DICK

Don't you watch the news? Some
asshole set my fucking truck on
fire. My scrapping business went up
in smoke.

Dick leans down on Danny's neck with his boot.

DANNY

Ow. Dick! Dick!

Melody raises her fists. Dick laughs.

MELODY

Dicks like you never change.

WHAM! Melody lands a right hook. BANG! She yanks Dick away
from Danny with a judo move. BIFF! BAM! POW!

Dick goes down.

MELODY

Get out of here before I drag you
to Southeastern Regional myself.

Dick picks himself up and retrieves his whiskey bottle.

DICK

Fine, fine.
(to Danny)
(MORE)

DICK (CONT'D)
Hey, you still talk to your
girlfriend from Parade Magazine?

DANNY
Here we go.

Dick grabs his crotch.

DICK
Why don't you ask Marylin how she
liked 'Little Dick' last night!

MELODY
Did he say he has a little dick?

She turns, but Danny's already down the block. She follows.

MELODY
DANNY CHANCE. Come on. We took that
bastard down. Just like old times.

Danny stops. He won't look at her.

DANNY
Yeah. Just like old times. Melody
Trainor stepping in to save me, yet
again. But you weren't here to help
me stop all the other "Dicks" in
this town. You didn't say goodbye.

MELODY
I thought it would be easier.

DANNY
You know what the biggest unsolved
mystery in Danny Chance's Secret
Case Files is? The Case of the
Disappearing Best Friend. I had a
theory your stepdad crossed the
Grecos and they put a hit out on
you. But no. You thought you'd make
it "easier on both of us." I can't
believe I spent so long trying to
figure out what I did to make you
hurt me like that. The solution was
in front of me the whole time. As
long as it makes things "easier,"
Melody Trainor doesn't consider
anybody but herself. Case closed.

MELODY
Danny, c'mon. I'm only in town--

He turns around. He's sad-angry, not angry-angry.

DANNY

I'll call you up next time I need
somebody to leave me behind. You're
just the girl for the job.

Danny turns and walks down the street.

MELODY

You're not getting off that easy,
Danny Chance.

She takes off in the opposite direction.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**INT. LEROY'S PUB - AFTERNOON**

LEROY BROWN (65), the kind old proprietor, wipes down the dinged-up bar with a dingy rag.

Melody walks in.

MELODY

You open? I could use a drink.

Melody boosts herself up on the barstool.

LEROY

What'll you have?

MELODY

G&T, thanks.

Leroy pours the drink. Melody takes a look around the bar.

MELODY

Nice place. Rustic.

Leroy puts down her G&T.

LEROY

Say, aren't you the Trainor girl?

MELODY

Melody. Yeah, it's me.

LEROY

Sorry to hear about your folks.
Your stepdad was a hoot!

Melody takes a sip of her G&T. She winces, then mixes it a little more with a swizzle stick.

MELODY

Glad somebody thought so. Say, you know Danny Chance?

LEROY

Good ol' Danny! He's saved my skin once or twice. Why, just last Christmas he caught my bar-back swiping people's wallets. I remember you two running around.

MELODY

Yeah. Things change I guess, even in this town. Tell me, is he happy?

(MORE)

MELODY (CONT'D)

Does he have any friends or a girlfriend or anything?

LEROY

Not that I've seen. He's busted half the town for one thing or another, so most folks hate him, until they need him, but you know how that goes.

Melody drains the rest of her G&T.

MELODY

It's hard to believe he has enough customers to stay in business. Everly Heights has one of the lowest crime rates in the country.

LEROY

There's a lot of piddly stuff. A kid's bike gets smashed? An old lady gets her pie stolen while it's cooling on the window sill? You think Duplas's boys are gonna take cases like that? See, the Captain was smart. He trained his kid to deal with piddly stuff so the cops can harass the rest of us.

MELODY

What about when big stuff happens? Like the Red Wagon murders a couple years back?

LEROY

I saw on the news Danny returned that wagon to its owner. His dad shields him from the harder stuff.

Melody slaps a twenty on the counter.

MELODY

That's great news!

LEROY

How do you mean?

MELODY

Danny isn't stuck in the past. His dad's the one holding him back, which means I can break him out of this rut. Thanks, Mr. Brown.

LEROY

You're grown now. It's just Leroy.

MELODY

Right. Leroy. Say, you don't happen to know where Dick Armstrong hangs out these days, do you?

LEROY

A lotta scroungers like him go to the library during the day for restrooms and air conditioning. Why do you want to find that guy?

MELODY

Because he's going to help Danny Chance move the fuck on.

INT. FRANKLIN W. DIXON MEMORIAL LIBRARY - AFTERNOON

Melody pushes through the security turnstile.

She walks the stacks looking for Dick. She spots him.

INT. STUDY ROOM - AFTERNOON

Dick kicks back at a desk, his feet propped up, shoes off. He reads a newspaper.

INSERT - A headline from the Everly Heights Gazette: **OPIOID EPIDEMIC STRAINS EVERLY HEIGHTS POLICE FORCE.**

Melody knocks on the glass.

Dick looks up from his newspaper. GRUNTS.

Melody gestures... *Can I come in?*

Dick shrugs and goes back to his paper. She enters.

MELODY

Sorry about roughing you up.

DICK

You think you hurt me? Fat chance. I was playing it up since you just came back to town and all. Figured I'd make you look good.

MELODY

(chuckles)

Oh, I could tell. I mean, I barely even tapped you.

DICK
Yeah. It tickled, actually.

Melody sits down across from Dick.

MELODY
Dick, I think we can help Danny.

DICK
Why the fuck would I want to help
Danny? Dude ruined a perfectly good
scam I was running out of Leroy's a
couple months back. If Danny Chance
was dying of thirst, I'd sew his
urethra shut so he couldn't drink
his own piss.

MELODY
Charming as ever. Look, you said
your truck is busted, right? My dad
has an old pickup out in the
garage. I was going to donate it,
but if you help me with Danny, I'll
sign the title over to you.

Dick leans back, an annoying smirk plastered on his face.

DICK
Hmm. Well, that sounds fair for
everybody. I always said you was
the brains of the operation.
(he spits in his hand)
Shake on it?

MELODY
Don't be gross, Dick.

Dick wipes his hands off on the newspaper.

Melody pulls a SKI MASK from her messenger bag. She tosses it
on the table.

MELODY
I need you to attack Danny.

Dick picks up the ski mask and smiles.

DICK
Like I planned it myself. See? You
are the smart one.

They shake on it.

EXT. 1924 SOBOL STREET - DRIVEWAY - EVENING

Danny shakes hands with a tall man in a chef's jacket, BILLY "BELLY" FREE (38), the former friendly fat kid who got his stomach pumped, now slimmed down.

BILLY

Danny, you've saved the Free Family Sweet Shop yet again. How can I ever repay you?

DANNY

Well, you already paid me, but I'll take a free Cookie Slush as an advance on your next case.

BILLY

Heck, after finding out who pilfered the cream I needed for my big catering job this weekend, you can have two.

DANNY

Billy, you've gotta quit hiring ex-cons. It's no wonder you have so many cases for me.

BILLY

They're people, just like us. All they need is for somebody to give them a chance. If I can give them that chance, why wouldn't I?

DANNY

And that's what makes you Billy Free. You'd lend your killer an apron to clean up your blood.

BILLY

Everybody struggles with something, so we've got to help each other out whenever we can.

DANNY

I'd expect nothing less. I'll stop by for that Cookie Slush soon.

BILLY

Two, remember. Night, Danny.

AT THE END OF THE DRIVEWAY

Billy passes Melody on her way up.

BILLY
Melody? Melody Trainor?

Melody looks Billy up and down.

MELODY
Do I know you? I feel like I--

BILLY
You telling me you don't remember
the blueberry pie-eating champion
of ninety-four?

It hits her.

MELODY
BILLY BELLY.

BILLY
It's just Billy Free now.

MELODY
Yeah. Sorry. I've just always
called you Billy Belly.

BILLY
(laughs)
It's fine. A lot of folks call me
that, usually when they're trying
to scam a Free muffin.

Melody looks up the driveway. Danny brings his sign in.

MELODY
Look, we'll have to catch up, but
he's closing up shop--

BILLY
And once the Last Chance Detective
Agency closes, nobody's seeing
Danny until morning. Same as it
ever was. Stop by the Free Family
Sweet Shop and I'll give you a
sample. It's in our slogan even:
"The first one is always Free."

MELODY
As a former federal agent, I have
some issues with that promotion,
but I'll take you up on it.

They hug.

BACK AT DANNY'S GARAGE

Danny pulls the garage door closed. Melody walks up behind him. A COUGH. He turns, sees her, then goes back to his work.

DANNY

We're closed. The Biker Mice From Mars reboot starts tonight and I have to get ready.

MELODY

This is serious. I need your help.

DANNY

Oh, that's rich! You blow back into town, embarrass me in front of Thelma, and now you want me to skip a show I've waited on LITERALLY FOREVER!?

Melody grabs Danny's hand. He fails at avoiding her eyes.

MELODY

I just always pictured you becoming a super-spy or a corporate hacker or something, but your dad holds you back, doesn't he? After all the help you gave him when we were kids. After all those tourists who flocked here to see the "boy detective with the freaky good luck." After all you've done for Everly Heights, he won't even let you go on a ride-along. Stop waiting on your dad to untie the apron strings and do something.

DANNY

What did you have in mind?

MELODY

I have a lead on a case you're already working. My friend in the Bureau tipped me off to a cat-smuggling ring running out of--

DANNY

The middle school cafeteria?

MELODY

You wish. It's the old Chi-Chi's. Turns out there's a black market in Hollywood for fur coats made from cat fur. They say they shimmer on the red carpet, the sick fucks.

DANNY

Mel, if we're working together we need to talk about your cussing.

MELODY

So you'll come?

DANNY

As much as I'm still very perturbed with you, I promised Thelma I'd find her cat, and I always keep a promise. I've waited two decades for the Biker Mice. I guess they can wait a few more hours for me.

MELODY

Yay! I love a good stakeout.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE**EXT. THE OLD CHI-CHI'S - EVENING**

The chain restaurant stands in ruin. No domestic beer or deep-fried apps are coming out of this hellhole. The cracked CHI-CHI's sign leans against the dumpster.

A shitty red car sits across the street. It's a rental.

INT. SHITTY RENTAL CAR - NEAR THE OLD CHI-CHI'S - CONTINUOUS

Melody and Danny sit in silence. The radio plays a 90S JAM.

MELODY

What about Bibby Bupkis? Did he go to college for broadcasting?

DANNY

Yep. He flunked out, came back, then OD'ed on heroin.

MELODY

It got Bibby too?

DANNY

I know. It's like, I thought I was stuck in the 90s.

They laugh, but they feel bad about it.

MELODY

How does this happen here?

DANNY

Drugs are bad, but how does Everly Heights become part of the black market black cat supply chain?

MELODY

What? Oh, right. The cat ring. I hope the guy they have skinning cats shows up soon. He should have been here ten minutes ago.

DANNY

We'll get 'em. Maybe when your old boss hears how you helped, he'll give you your job back.

MELODY

Not after what I did.

Danny tenses up.

DANNY
What did you do?

Melody looks away.

EXT. THE OLD CHI-CHI'S - CONTINUOUS

A light flicks on inside.

Dick Armstrong, wearing the ski mask Melody gave him earlier, stumbles out of the kitchen and tosses a heavy duffel bag down on the table.

INT. MELODY'S SHITTY RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

MELODY
That's our guy. And those must be
your missing cats.

DANNY
If that bag was filled with live
cats, they would have clawed their
way through it by now.

MELODY
I didn't think of that.
(under her breath)
Damn it.

DANNY
Yeah. Based on how he carries it,
it's filled with scrap metal. Look,
there on the bottom. That's soot,
like he put it down near a fire or
an explosion or something.

MELODY
I forgot how your mind works. You
just take everything in like a
sponge without losing a drop.

DANNY
Wait. Dick told us his truck
exploded. That must be Dick. Those
Hollywood crooks hired him. Yeah.
He's even wearing the same clothes
he was wearing this morning.

Melody tightens her grip on the steering wheel. This was not part of the plan.

MELODY

Of course. He must be a real idiot to think you wouldn't put that together.

DANNY

Why would he expect me to be here?

Melody looks away.

MELODY

Good point.

DANNY

I say one of us circles around and comes in through the kitchen. Meanwhile, the other one waits by the door to catch him when he tries to escape. I call that move the 'Last Chance Fake-Out.' We'll throw on the cuffs then take him--

MELODY

Neither of us has any legal authority. We can't arrest him.

DANNY

Maybe you can't, but as a deputized member and former President of the Everly Heights Junior Detective Club, I'm authorized to make a citizen's arrest.

MELODY

We can't get out. Not yet.

DANNY

Something seems off about you.

Headlights shine on the discreet detective duo.

MELODY

Who the hell is that?

EXT. THE OLD CHI-CHI'S - CONTINUOUS

A police cruiser pulls into the parking lot, lights off.

INT. MELODY'S SHITTY RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

DANNY

That's Dad's car. He must have caught wind of this cafeteria cat conspiracy.

MELODY

He's probably just on patrol or something.

DANNY

Uh, the Police Captain does not go out on patrol. If Dad's here, he has a reason.

MELODY

Great. Just great.

DANNY

I know, right? Wait. Who's that?

EXT. THE OLD CHI-CHI'S - CONTINUOUS

A BLACK SUV parks next to the police cruiser.

INT. MELODY'S SHITTY RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

DANNY

Is that your FBI contact?

MELODY

No, no. They aren't-- They couldn't get here in time. That's why they sent me.

Danny cracks a smile.

DANNY

It's okay. I know what you're doing. You can't get one over on me, Mel.

MELODY

Shit. What gave it away?

DANNY

I mean, it was a clever plan.

FLASHBACK - Meeting up with Dick on Main Street.

DANNY (V.O.)

The run-in with Dick earlier.

FLASHBACK - Melody and Captain Duplas shake hands.

DANNY (V.O.)

You and dad being all buddy/buddy.

FLASHBACK - Melody and Danny fight at Gaston's Diner.

DANNY (V.O.)
 Our lunch where you acted
 completely out of character.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

DANNY
 It's obvious, Mel. Dad asked you to
 help me lock Dick up to prove I'm
 ready to JOIN THE FBI.

Danny crosses his arms, beaming with pride. Melody sinks in her seat.

MELODY
 Oh, Danny, I didn't mean to make
 you think--

DANNY
 Look. Dad's getting out.

EXT. THE OLD CHI-CHI'S - CONTINUOUS

Captain Duplas slams his car door. A hand on his holster. A quick look around. He flashes a thumbs up to the SUV.

The DRIVER hops out, opens the door, and stands back.

JEBEDIAH ALBARN (45), dressed in coal-black church clothes and sporting a chinstrap beard, steps out. Most people would assume he was Amish, so they'd naturally also assume he was as kind as he looked. Both assumptions would be wrong.

INT. MELODY'S SHITTY RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

MELODY
 Shit. That's Jebediah Albarn, head
 of the Quaker Intercourse Mafia.

DANNY
 Excuse me. The what?

MELODY
 The Quaker Intercourse Mafia. They
 run drugs, mainly heroin, out of
 their headquarters in Intercourse,
 Pennsylvania. Those Jesus freaks
 supply every smackhead from Trenton
 to Detroit. But what are they doing
 in Everly Heights?

EXT. THE OLD CHI-CHI'S - CONTINUOUS

Captain Duplas, hand on his gun, eases toward Jebediah.

Jebediah strokes his beard. His other hand grips the billy club hanging from his belt.

The driver takes a step back as the two men get close. Closer. Right up in each other's faces. Jebediah puts his hand on Captain Duplas's shoulder.

The moment hangs. Anything could happen.

Jebediah smiles, then grabs Captain Duplas in a big bear hug. They exchange friendly words, but we can't quite make out what they're saying.

INT. MELODY'S SHITTY RENTAL CAR - EVENING

DANNY

So, to be clear, my dad is hugging the bad guy.

MELODY

Yeah? Ever hear him mention anything about the Quakers?

DANNY

He likes their oatmeal.

EXT. THE OLD CHI-CHI'S - EVENING

Dick runs out the front door, brandishing a baseball bat.

DICK

You ain't taking my Hollywood money, you lame-brained detective!

Captain Duplas and Jebediah stare at him like he just burst out of an old Chi-Chi's brandishing a baseball bat.

INT. MELODY'S SHITTY RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

MELODY

Not yet, you dick!

Danny looks at her. He'll remember that.

EXT. THE OLD CHI-CHI'S - CONTINUOUS

JEBEDIAH

What troubles you? I see a spirit in you that delights to do evil.

DICK

I... Uh... Captain Duplas. Have you seen your son? I was supposed to...

(MORE)

DICK (CONT'D)
 (he puts the bat behind
 his back)
 Have a little talk with him
 about... church.

CAPTAIN DUPLAS
 Dick, you haven't seen the inside
 of a church since I pulled you out
 of the baptistery at St. Esther's
 last Christmas.

JEBEDIAH
 You know this man, Donald?

CAPTAIN DUPLAS
 Yeah. He runs the biker club out on
 Short Creek. The Raptors.

JEBEDIAH
 So he has a calling, does he? I can
 sympathize with that. Would this be
 the same biker club that interfered
 with last night's drop-off?

CAPTAIN DUPLAS
 The very same.

DICK
 Shit.

JEBEDIAH
 It's always joyous, when the Lord
 brings people together. Come here,
 son. I'm with your police captain.
 You have nothing to fear.

Dick looks at Captain Duplas, who gives him an encouraging
 nod. He's still tapping his gun, of course.

Dick goes to Jebediah.

DICK
 Listen here, Father. I can explain
 everything.

Jebediah puts his hand on Dick's shoulder.

INT. MELODY'S SHITTY RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

DANNY
 We should help.

Melody turns to Danny, stone-cold serious.

MELODY

We most definitely should not.

EXT. THE OLD CHI-CHI'S - CONTINUOUS

Dick looks down at the hand on his shoulder.

DICK

Hey, Pops, I got a thing about being touched, namely that when you touch me, I touch back, hard.

Jebediah tightens his grip. Dick winces.

JEBEDIAH

I mean nothing by it, son. It just helps me connect with you. Now tell me, do you have anybody special in your life? Anybody who truly cares about you?

DICK

Yeah. My gang. We're like family. Then there's my family. My ex and two kids. I see 'em every Sunday.

JEBEDIAH

Oh, to have friends and family. What a blessing to think of them in your final moments.

Dick smiles, until his brain catches up with the sentence.

DICK

Final moments, my ass!

INT. MELODY'S SHITTY RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

DANNY

Well, they seem to be getting along, anyway. Like two peas in a pod.

Through the windshield, we see Jebediah take his other hand and grab the nape of Dick's neck. He twists his head. A MUFFLED SNAP cracks across the parking lot. Dick falls.

Danny sits, shaking.

DANNY

What? NO. WHY? You can't take that back! Why would he do that?

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR**EXT. THE OLD CHI-CHI'S - EVENING**

The men in the parking lot lean over Dick's broken body. They hear DANNY'S MUFFLED SCREAMS and turn around. Captain Duplas pulls out his gun.

CAPTAIN DUPLAS
YOU. IN THE CAR. GET OUT WITH YOUR
HANDS UP.

INT. MELODY'S SHITTY RENTAL CAR - EVENING

DANNY
Dad...? Why is he helping them?

MELODY
Shit! Hold on.

Key turns. Gearshift... shifts.

Foot on the pedal.

She takes off.

EXT. CITY SQUARE - EVENING

An EX-CON gets on one knee and proposes to her girlfriend KELSEY ABERNATHY, on a PARK BENCH. Kelsey takes the RING BOX.

KELSEY
Oh my God! How did you afford this?

EX-CON
I... My boss at the bakery gave me
a big raise.

KELSEY
You've only been working there a
week.

EX-CON
Dude has a soft spot for ex-cons.

KELSEY
Aww, that's sweet. Hey, I've been
meaning to talk to you about
things. I think we need some--

Headlights shine through the bushes behind them. The couple dives out of the way-- Melody's shitty rental cuts through the bushes, smashing the park bench into splinters.

Captain Duplas blows by in his police car.

The couple climbs to their feet. Look into each other's eyes.

KELSEY
Yes.

EX-CON
Yes?

KELSEY
Yes.

They kiss.

INT. MELODY'S SHITTY RENTAL CAR - COUNTRY ROAD - EVENING

Melody is one with the car, zigging and zagging with perfect acuity.

Danny shakes in the passenger seat.

DANNY
I think you hit somebody.

MELODY
No. They jumped out of the way, I think.

POLICE LIGHTS reflect off the rearview mirror.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The police car speeds up behind the rental.

Melody swerves down an old road. Her tires kick up dust. The police car drives into the dust cloud.

INT. MELODY'S SHITTY RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

DANNY
This is a dead-end!

MELODY
Danny, we're really in the shit now. Are you with me?

DANNY
I'm with you.

MELODY
Quick. In the backseat. Grab the flashlight out of my bag.

He grabs her messenger bag from the back. Rummages. Pulls out the FLASHLIGHT.

DANNY

Now what?

MELODY

This driveway leads out to Rowan's apple orchard. In a second, I'll turn off the headlights. When I tell you, turn on the flashlight and chuck it out the window. With all this dust in the air, he'll think we turned off. By the time he realizes his mistake, we'll be back out on the main road.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The rental car approaches the driveway.

The police car speeds up until it's right behind them, completely disregarding proper following distance. Captain Duplas turns on his SIREN.

INT. MELODY'S SHITTY RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

MELODY

Ready?

Danny nods. CLICKS the flashlight on. Rolls down his window.

DANNY

Ready.

She CLICKS the headlights off.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The rental car disappears in the dust.

INT. MELODY'S SHITTY RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Dark dust flies across the front windshield.

MELODY

Okay. We're coming up on the road in 3... 2... Shit!

A deer appears on the road.

Danny chucks the flashlight out.

Melody twists the wheel back and forth. The car swerves around the deer.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The deer jumps in front of the police car.

The brakes SCREECH. The back end whips around.

The rear tire catches the loose dirt on the edge of a drainage ditch. Captain Duplas SCREAMS as his car flips over into the water.

INT. MELODY'S SHITTY RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

MELODY
HOLY SHIT.

She slams on the brakes. Turns around. Drives back.

DANNY
Wait! He might be hurt.

MELODY
He was chasing us.

DANNY
He's still my dad.

Melody slows down as they pass the wreck.

MELODY
Can you see anything?

DANNY
Nope. I sure could use that
flashlight you had me throw away.

Danny peers down in the ditch. The driver's side door hangs open. The seat is empty.

DANNY
Oh no. He fell out. He's trapped
under there! We have to--

A GUNSHOT shatters the back windshield.

MELODY
Shit. This is a rental!

The rental car takes off. Captain Duplas stands in the road behind them and shoots at their tires.

MELODY
Still want to check on him?

DANNY
No. He seems fine.

They drive on.

EXT. CEMETERY - EVENING

The rental car rolls down a narrow path between gravestones, searching for a place to stop.

INT. MELODY'S SHITTY RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Danny points ahead. He's still shaking.

DANNY
Make this left and park at the end.

EXT. CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

Melody makes the left onto a roundabout, revealing a spectacular view high above Everly Heights. In the distance, the town hospital looks like a giant steamship, sailing through the forest surrounding it.

INT. MELODY'S SHITTY RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

MELODY
I need to tell you something.

DANNY
What? That you hired Dick to show me what real police work is like? Or that you never had an actual lead on those missing cats?

Melody shakes her head and LAUGHS.

MELODY
What was your big clue?

DANNY
You gave yourself away when Dick came out of the Chi-Chi's.

FLASHBACK - Melody's shitty rental car outside the Chi-Chi's.

MELODY
Not yet, you dick!

Danny looks at her.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

MELODY

I knew as soon as I said it.

DANNY

But you never expected that Quaker to show up and spoil your scheme.

MELODY

Right. God, what was I thinking? You must hate me.

DANNY

It was nice what you were trying to do. My dad, on the other hand... What the heck!? How could he be involved with those... those... those Quaker crooks.

MELODY

So what do you want to do?

DANNY

Well, my dad runs the police around here, so we'll need to bring in some outside help. What about your friends at the FBI?

Melody looks out at the hospital.

MELODY

They won't talk to me, especially if it involves the Quakers.

Melody leans over the steering wheel, weary. Danny puts his hand on her shoulder. It helps.

DANNY

So no FBI.

MELODY

No FBI.

DANNY

Then I guess we'll have to tackle this case ourselves. It'll be like old times. Danny Chance, the boy detective with the freaky good luck, and Melody Trainor, his bodyguard with the iron fists.

MELODY

You can't be serious. You don't fuck with the Quaker Intercourse Mafia, and I know I cursed and I'm sorry but this is all so FUCKED UP.

DANNY

Come on. Wouldn't it be nice to work a case together again?

Melody goes to argue again, but stops herself.

MELODY

Well, like you said, cracking this Quaker case could help me get back into the FBI's good graces.

Danny smiles.

DANNY

See? It's a good idea.

MELODY

But what about you? I mean, you live with your dad, and he's wrapped up in all this.

DANNY

He doesn't know this is your car. He has no idea! If I play it cool, I'll be there, watching, waiting for him to slip up.

MELODY

You sure you're up for this? Playing friendly with your dad, knowing what you know?

DANNY

I've been on the outs with Dad since high school. Flying under the radar at home is second nature to me now.

Danny sticks out his hand.

DANNY

What do you say? Want to join the Last Chance Detective Agency? I need some serious help here, and you're just the girl for the job.

Melody smiles at Danny. She spits in her hand and shakes his.

MELODY
Hell yeah, I would!

Danny pulls back his hand and wipes it on his cargo shorts.

DANNY
Eww. Gross. Germs, you know? We
aren't kids anymore.

Melody starts the car.

MELODY
No shit.

EXT. 1924 SOBOL STREET - DRIVEWAY - MORNING

A paperboy tosses the morning paper in the driveway.

INSERT - A headline: **LOCAL HOODLUM DIES IN FREAK ACCIDENT.**

Captain Duplas picks up the paper. He reads it and smiles.

CAPTAIN DUPLAS
Good. Now, where's Dan?

INT. 1924 SOBOL STREET - KITCHEN - MORNING

Danny leans on the counter in Biker Mice pajama bottoms, resting his eyes while he waits on the coffee to brew.

The garage door slams open. Captain Duplas barges in.

CAPTAIN DUPLAS
DAN. You're gonna love this. Dick
Armstrong is DEAD. After all these
years, he finally got what was
coming to him.

Danny tenses up, prepared to fight.

CAPTAIN DUPLAS
What's wrong, Dan? I thought you'd
be excited.

DANNY
Just confused. I ran into him
yesterday. He seemed fine. Well,
fine for Dick, anyway.

CAPTAIN DUPLAS
Oh. When did you see him?

DANNY

When I took Melody out for lunch.
He was hassling us, like always.
What happened?

CAPTAIN DUPLAS

The paper says he fell off the old
Chi-Chi's. Dumbass busted his neck.
He had dope on him too.

Captain Duplas puts his hands on Danny's shoulders.

CAPTAIN DUPLAS

I'm thankful I never had to worry
about any of this bullshit with
you. Sure, you might be a loser,
but at least I can trust you to
stay safe. If anything ever
happened to you, I swear your mom
would come back from the grave and
kill me herself.

Captain Duplas motions to a FRAMED CLIPPING of the three of
them from the infamous Parade Magazine article.

DANNY

(with a feigned chuckle)
She sure would, Dad.

Danny grabs his cup, fills it up, and heads to the garage.

DANNY

My office hours are starting. Where
are your keys? I'll move your car.

CAPTAIN DUPLAS

I left it at the station for its
quarterly maintenance. Officer Ross
is picking me up.

He opens the door. Captain Duplas grabs his arm.

CAPTAIN DUPLAS

Dan?

DANNY

Yeah, Dad?

CAPTAIN DUPLAS

I know...

Danny hears his HEARTBEAT. Sweat beads on his forehead.

CAPTAIN DUPLAS
 ... it's hard without your mother,
 Just remember, despite our
 disagreements, I'm still your Dad.
 You can talk to me about anything.

DANNY
 I know, Dad. You too.

EXT. 1924 SOBOL STREET - DRIVEWAY - MORNING

The garage door CLINKS open.

Danny rolls the chalkboard out into the driveway.

He pulls out a lawn chair, sits down, and places his coffee
 can cash register at his feet.

FOOTSTEPS. Melody arrives, dressed in baggy overalls with one
 side down and a tank top underneath.

MELODY
 Hi, Mr. Chance. Is this where I
 report for my first day?

DANNY
 Whoa, is that--?

MELODY
 The same outfit I wore the day of
 the blueberry pie-eating contest?
 Hell yeah, it is. Still fits too.
 (she catches her mistake)
 Oh, shit. I'll try to get better
 about cussing.

Danny smiles at her. Melody smiles back.

DANNY
 Frankly, my dear Melody, I don't
 give a shit about the cussing.
 We've got bigger problems, like--

A SPIT WAD hits Danny in the head. He spins around.

Ralphie and Potts saunter up. Potts chews a PLASTIC STRAW.

DANNY
 Seriously? A spitball? Freaking
 Raptors, man.

RALPHIE
 Will your mommy let you come out
 and play?

POTTS
Ain't his ma dead, Ralphie?

Ralphie cracks a smile.

RALPHIE
Oh yeah. I musta forgot.

MELODY
Like hell you did.

Melody steps between them, adopting a classic boxing stance.

MELODY
You want to fuck with Danny Chance?
You gotta get through me.

POTTS
It ain't like that. We need help.

Melody and Danny both relax.

DANNY
What is it this time? Somebody pee
on your bike again?

RALPHIE
We want to know who killed Dickie.

Danny feigns shock.

DANNY
Killed him? But wasn't that an
accident?

Potts tosses Danny a BIBLE.

POTTS
They found this bible in his
pocket. You know Dickie. Only use
he had for bibles was to roll up a
joint when he ran out of papers.

RALPHIE
Yeah, and he just had me buy him a
pack of papers the other night.
Something's fishy.

Danny smiles at Melody.

DANNY
And I thought I had freaky good
luck. Good news, we're already--

Melody smacks the back of Danny's head.

MELODY

Hey, boss. Can I talk to you over here for a second?

DANNY

Sure. Hang on, guys.

They take a few steps away.

MELODY

(whispers)

Don't tell them about our plan!

DANNY

Why would I charge them to work a case we're already working?

MELODY

Danny, we're undercover, which means we're going to need a cover story. These guys just walked up and handed us one.

DANNY

And if anybody gets suspicious, we just say we're working for the Raptors. Mel, you're a genius.

(to the Raptors)

Good news, guys. We'll take the case. It's fifteen dollars an--

Melody smacks Danny in the back of the head.

MELODY

We've adjusted our rate due to new staffing costs and inflation. Our new rate is thirty dollars an hour, if you think you scumbags can scam that much money off your grandmas.

Danny looks horrified.

DANNY

No, no, no. That's a little too--

RALPHIE

To find out who killed Dickie, I'd pay triple that.

Danny smiles and extends his hand.

DANNY
Sounds like we've got a deal then.

Ralphie takes his hand and shakes.

DANNY
Never fear. The Last Chance--

MELODY
Oh, can we say it together, since
we're a team and everything?

DANNY
Sure. Ready?

Melody nods and smiles at Danny. Danny smiles back.

DANNY & MELODY
The Last Chance Detective Agency is
on the case!

END OF EPISODE