

"Daddy's Girl"

an original TV pilot by

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. CORAL GABLES, FL - DAY

CG: September 11, 2001

A quiet neighborhood in a quiet town. Palm trees and Marlberry bushes surround single story stucco-ed ranch homes.

SFX: Answering Machine BEEP

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Hey, Gloria, I know it's my day off,  
but they're calling everyone in today.

A yellow school bus stops at the corner and disgorges one little 5-year old girl, her dark hair pulled back in pigtails tied with little anchor bows.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Couldn't stick around to pick up  
Diana from school. Can you meet her  
at the bus stop? Thanks!

The bus rumbles on as the girl looks up and down the street.

She crouches down and waits on the curb for a moment.

Finally she shrugs, shoulders her backpack and heads down the block towards home.

A dark blue Buick Skylark cruises in the other direction.

It goes past the girl.

And she's gone.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CORAL GABLES CITY HALL - DAY

A makeshift podium has been placed between two of the ionic columns. Behind it stands SGT. KING, 30's in uniform.

SGT. KING

...we're asking for the public's  
help in finding the missing girl...

Several reporters look up at her, taking notes.

Her voice fades into the background as a little further back, just out of sight of the press, a couple argues, their voices unintelligible, but getting louder, until:

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

No, I don't blame you, I blame me.

King pauses to look back at the couple, then resumes.

SGT. KING

So if anyone has any information as to the whereabouts of Diannette Case, please call Crimestoppers at 305-471-8478. Thank you.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FLORIDA DEPT. OF LAW ENFORCEMENT - HOLDING CELLS - DAY

DETECTIVE JOHN CASE, slightly overweight, in his 40's, but weathered from the Florida sun and the weight of the world, enters, dragging REGINALD HUTCHINSON, 50's, behind him.

He yanks open the first cell and practically throws him in.

CASE

She was 12 years old!

Though he sounds a little older, we recognize his is the voice from the answering machine earlier.

CASE (CONT'D)

She came to you for help, told you about the abuse, and you took advantage of her? You fucked a helpless little 12-year old girl?

Reginald smiles. Even in his nice suit, the grin gives him a creepy uncle vibe.

REGINALD

Hey, old enough to bleed...

WHAM!

Case SLAMS him hard against the back bars.

Their faces are inches apart, Case's eyes boring into him.

CASE

You like blood, asshole?

Reginald giggles.

He thrusts Reginald away and starts whaling on him, each word punctuated by a fist.

CASE (CONT'D)

I. Said. Do. You. Like. Blood.  
Asshole.

A myriad of voices begin crying out, but muffled, as if they're being heard underwater or from a great distance.

A crunch as Reginald's nose shatters.

Case continues beating him.

Blood on his fists, on his face.

Suddenly, he's yanked off of him...

He's being dragged out of the cell by several uniformed arms.

The cell door clangs shut.

As the voices begin to resolve...

HOPKINS (O.S.)

What the hell are you doing,  
Detective?

Case jerks himself away from the other officers, his right fist connecting hard with

MAJOR HOPKINS, 50's, a no-nonsense cop's cop in full uniform.

Everyone backs away quickly.

Hopkins wipes blood off his lip.

HOPKINS (CONT'D)

I am just about done with you.

INT. HOPKINS OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Hopkins sits behind the desk. The room is decorated sparsely, just a few commendations and diplomas framed on the wall.

Case sits rigidly in the chair across from him.

HOPKINS

A 1-month suspension. And you will not be coming back to this division.

CASE

But Major--

HOPKINS

Detective. I am told that you are a good cop. Maybe even great once.

(MORE)

HOPKINS (CONT'D)

The reports from your superiors are one of the only things that made me reconsider putting you in handcuffs.

He looks down at Case's file on his desk.

HOPKINS (CONT'D)

Eight months in Narcotics. Six months in D.A.R.E. Nine months in Child Protective Services. Interesting. 15 months in Sex Crimes. That is a record for you.

CASE

Sir, there were reasons--

HOPKINS

I am aware of your full history, Detective. And I appreciate the... Motivation behind your obsession. But I cannot - I will not - trust a cop who cannot control himself.

CASE

Sir--

HOPKINS

You beat that suspect within an inch of his life. Which will be the only punishment he gets. Your misguided passion to teach him a lesson destroyed our case. He goes free. And little 12-year old...

CASE

Daisy.

HOPKINS

Yes, Daisy. Her mom checked herself into rehab. So guess who her legal guardian is.

CASE

Major, no! We can't let that happen.

HOPKINS

We do not have a choice, Detective, thanks to you. Make it a 3 month suspension. Starting now. You can use the time to decide how you want to finish your career here.

END OF TEASER

## ACT ONE

EXT. PONCE DE LEON MIDDLE SCHOOL - DAY

School bus 797 sits at the curb in front of a nondescript white Ford Explorer. LED lights in the grill of the truck flash red and blue.

Det. Case, not looking much brighter after his forced vacation, climbs up the steps into the bus.

INT. MIAMI-DADE COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM BUS - CONTINUOUS

CASE

Speed limit in a school zone's 25  
when kids are present.

Case hands a clipboard to the frazzled School BUS DRIVER.

BUS DRIVER

I'm a school bus driver!

CASE

So you're aware, then. Your signature  
at the bottom is not an admission of  
guilt, but that you'll read and choose  
an option on the back. Press hard,  
there's three copies.

The driver angrily scribbles something at the bottom and practically throws the clipboard back at Case.

BUS DRIVER

You know, I could lose my job.

CASE

I'm counting on it.

He hands the bottom copy to the driver and climbs down.

CASE (CONT'D)

Drive safe!

He slaps the side of the bus, not seeing the driver give his final salute of disrespect.

INT. FORD EXPLORER - MOMENTS LATER

Case climbs into the SUV. In the passenger seat sits DETECTIVE RICHARD TURNER, 30's, a former military man who hasn't quite relaxed into the Florida lifestyle yet.

TURNER

Your first day back and you're pulling  
this shit again?

CASE

Protect and serve, my young protege.  
Protect and serve.

TURNER

Protect and serve, my ass. And in  
case you forgot, I'm the one who's  
supposed to be watching you.

CASE

So you're okay with your daughter  
riding back and forth to school with  
that irresponsible--

TURNER

I don't have a daughter, I have a  
son. And my ex home-school's him.  
The school system in this state blows.

CASE

Can't argue with that.

TURNER

Look, I didn't spend 12 years in the  
Army, making MP in my first tour to  
come home and get a damn babysitting  
job.

CASE

And I thank you for your service.

Turner just stares Case down for a moment. Then

TURNER

Thank me by not getting us both fired.

Case throws the car into gear.

TURNER (CONT'D)

And tomorrow, I'm driving.

The Explorer hangs a left towards the highway.

EXT. FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT (FDLE) - DAY

If it looks like a bunker from a war zone, that's because it  
is one. The only thing it lacks is the concertina wire wrapped  
around the top of the perimeter fence.

The dull off-white, nondescript stucco building feels dwarfed  
and inconsequential behind the two malls directly north of  
it. And the 14 miles to the beach might as well be a million.

INT. FDLE - DETECTIVE'S MUSTER ROOM - DAY

A typical police station - not like the movies, but more like an office rental space - a cubicle farm, with desks packed together in fours, only a 3.5-foot wall separating them from one another.

File cabinets ring the room. Paperwork is king here. And nowhere is it more evident than on Case's desk. Piles of files and loose papers litter the surface.

Pinned up on the half wall there is a well-worn photo of a gorgeous Latin woman on the arm of a much younger, slimmer John Case. A young couple in love.

Below it, a PHOTO of a smiling 5-year old girl in pigtails has all four corners pinned down, but looks faded. It's the girl from the teaser - wearing the same little anchor bows.

On the opposite wall are several commendations. All from different units and all 9-12 months apart.

Case tucks into the desk and glances at the message light blinking on his phone.

He sighs, then picks up the receiver and punches the button.

GLORIA (O.S.)

John, for the last time, you've got to let this go. I've made my peace with it. You need to too.

He sighs and shakes his head. Then taps the number 1.

REPORTER (O.S.)

Detective Case, this is Marguerite Peña from South Florida News SIX. We'd like to do a profile on you on the anniversary of your daughter's disappearance. Please call me at 305--

Case scrawls the number on the corner of his desk blotter along with her name.

He opens his laptop and logs in. As soon as it starts, a message pops up on his screen: "Started prepping your age progression photo as soon as I got in."

He clicks the message, types "10-4," then picks up the phone and dials.

CASE

Yes, Miss Peña?

(MORE)



CASE (CONT'D)

This is Detective Case, FDLE returning your call. Yes, I can meet you later this afternoon. 4pm? Great, I'll--

A loud shout tears through the room's everyday babble.

MALE (O.S.)

Why aren't you doing anything?

Case looks over in the direction of the shouting.

CASE

I'll see you then.

He hangs up and jogs across the room, popping his head into the cubicle.

At the desk is FDLE Junior Detective JESSICA RILEY (30's), all business, but with a kind face. Seeing Case, a small smile lights up her face.

Sitting across the desk, the anguished man, FRANK CASTILLO, late 30's looks up at Case.

RILEY

I was just explaining to Mr. Castillo how the system wo--

FRANK

I know how the system works. I have new evidence!

CASE

Mr. Castillo--

FRANK

Frank.

CASE

Frank. Why don't you come with me over here and we can see what options, if any, we have.

Frank scoops up everything he's got from Riley's desk: pictures, reports, mug shots.

Over his head, Riley nods to Case, mouthing 'Thank you'

As they walk back to Case's cubby, Frank hands him a photo. The girl looks 7 or 8.

FRANK

Clara.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

She would be 10 years old now. Her mom and I... She ran away. The police assured us she'd be back as soon as she got hungry, but...

CASE

Are you and her mom still together?

FRANK

That's what we were fighting about. Ovarian cancer. She died a few months after Clara ran away. Please. You've got to help me. She's all I have left.

Case drags a chair over to his cubicle. Frank sits down and looks at the pictures.

FRANK (CONT'D)

How old is your little girl?

CASE

She was 5 when she disappeared.

FRANK

I'm so sorry.

CASE

You mentioned new evidence?

FRANK

Her Sunday school teacher, she was visiting her sister over in Palmetto Bay, and she's pretty sure she saw Clara with some girls coming out of the Winn Dixie. She called out to her, but the girls started running.

CASE

I see. Well, that's not a whole lot to go on, but we'll--

Turner pops his head into the cubby.

TURNER

The boss wants us in the briefing in 5 minutes.

Case nods and starts straightening papers.

CASE

As I was saying... Wait, Mr. Castillo, was this the Winn Dixie on 162nd?