

**Trent Lively's
Paranormal Detective Agency**

The Case Of The Stone Cold Heart

Sample Pages

from the

Screenplay By

P.K. Silverson

Paul Silberberg
writing as P.K. Silverson
pksilverson@hotmail.com

REGISTERED WGAw No. 1123362

LIMBO - BLACK

Steady FOOTSTEPS ECHO on hard pavement. Our hero strides through a heavy fog into the hazy light of a street lamp...

TRENT LIVELY, 32. Cool, not cold. Self-assured, not smug. Powerful, not musclebound. His signature outfit exudes professionalism and grace: flattering blue two-piece suit, crisp white shirt, solid maroon tie, polished black shoes.

Lively draws a sleek alloy flashlight from his jacket. Turns suddenly, shines the beam at us. Blinding glare forces our P.O.V. to jump and squirm. Trent's light tracks us mercilessly. With a FLUTTER of wings, we take flight into...

BLACK

FADE IN:

EXT. ANGELA'S MANSION, DRIVEWAY - DARKEST NIGHT, 5 YEARS AGO

No moon in the blackened sky over L.A. Paralyzed in fear...

ANGELA, then 28. Her perfect, unearthly beauty corrupted by stark terror. Wide empty eyes search helplessly for answers she'll never see. GROWL! Low, savage, very close. Intended to heighten mortal dread. Her voice a choked whisper...

ANGELA

Jurgens?

Another GROWL. Smoke of putrid breath bathes her face.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Please... don't...

The GROWL builds to a savage WAR HOWL. A tear washes down her cheek, the final realization... her time is up. Gunshots ring out, BANG-BANG-BANG! GRUNT! THUD! Silence. Raising shaky hands to her face, Angela's shoulders heave as she cries.

INT. LOS ANGELES COURTHOUSE, COURTROOM - DAY, 5 YEARS AGO

Face in hand, shoulders heaving gently, Angela regains her composure on the witness stand. The JURY deathly quiet as she dabs her tears, then replaces dark glasses over her sightless eyes. The judge watches solemnly from his bench...

The Honorable FRANCIS CRENSHAW, then 51, his wispy skeletal frame more than imposing enough. Stern, skeptical eyes deep set in their sockets. He's heard it all... except for this. A mannerly Southern lilt colors his voice.

CRENSHAW

The court appreciates how difficult
this is for you, miss. Can you continue?

ANGELA

That's all I can tell you, except I wouldn't be here today if it weren't for that brave policeman.

CRENSHAW

I can certainly see how you feel that way, child. In the interest of time, I wonder if counsel will permit me to question this witness directly.

He shoots a withering gaze at the Defense Counsel in front of the witness stand. Sweeps it to the District Attorney's table to include the PROSECUTOR.

DEFENSE COUNSEL

Of course, Your Honor.

The Prosecutor spreads his hands in surrender.

CRENSHAW

Miss, your condition isn't merely legal blindness but a total lack of vision, isn't that correct?

ANGELA

Just because I can't see doesn't mean I lack vision, Your Honor.

CRENSHAW

All the same, you can't see a thing.

ANGELA

Yes, Your Honor. I'm completely blind.

CRENSHAW

The court thanks you for your cooperation, miss. You are dismissed.

ANGELA

But...

CRENSHAW

Can you make your way out, or do you need a bailiff to assist you?

DEFENSE COUNSEL

Let me help you.

Hastily, the Defense Counsel takes Angela's hand. She nods helplessly. Leaves the stand.

CRENSHAW

If I may have a word with counsel. This will be off the record, please.

The COURT REPORTER stops typing. Defense Counsel joins the Prosecutor at the bar. The judge covers his microphone.

CRENSHAW (CONT'D)

Now, you both know this is my last case. As fascinating as this all is, I don't see how sending this mess to the jury can benefit anyone.

PROSECUTOR

Your Honor, we're talking about murd...

CRENSHAW

This can be resolved without wasting the court's time any further. I'll meet with the officer in private and explain why he's going to resign.

DEFENSE COUNSEL

You can't take this man's future away over some John Doe who was about to...

CRENSHAW

This is justice. He took the victim's future away. Or, would you rather burden the taxpayers with the expense of his very few remaining days once I consign him to the delightful company of the many felons he's sent to the state pen?

PROSECUTOR

The prosecution has no problem with Your Honor's recommendation.

CRENSHAW

What do you say, Counselor? It makes no difference to me. Either way, I'll be safely tucked away in retirement at my little old house by Canyon Creek.

DEFENSE COUNSEL

I'll consult with my client.

CRENSHAW

Be convincing. Have him in my chambers in five minutes.

DEFENSE COUNSEL

Yes, Your Honor.

CRENSHAW

This court is in recess.

The judge slams his gavel, BANG! He leaves the bench.

INT. JUDGE CRENSHAW'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Moving boxes line the wall. Crenshaw tosses his robe onto a coat stand. Wears a very new, very expensive suit. Opens his closet, looks into the mirror on the door, smiles at himself.

CRENSHAW

Money time.

KNOCK-KNOCK! Crenshaw closes the closet, seats himself, scowls.

CRENSHAW (CONT'D)

Enter.

Five years younger than the man we saw in the opening sequence, Trent Lively enters purposefully. Wears LAPD dress blues.

CRENSHAW (CONT'D)

Take a seat, officer. There are greater forces at work here than you may be aware of.

TRENT

Try me, Your Honor.

CRENSHAW

I don't believe I will. Let's try this instead: for the good of your department, for the good of the city, for your own good, I'm going to accept your resignation in exchange for dismissing this case. I'm only going to make this offer once. If you get stupid and decide to fight what has to be done, I'm going to instruct that jury to burn you but good. Do I make myself clear?

Trent takes off his badge. Tosses it on the desk.

TRENT

This isn't over.

CRENSHAW

Pray that it is. You're free to go.

Trent's already gone. Crenshaw picks up the badge. Glances toward the closet door. CREAK! It opens slowly. The flicker of distant flames in the mirror.

CRENSHAW (CONT'D)

He's all yours now.

From deep inside the closet, perhaps from the depths of hell itself, DEMONIC LAUGHTER thunders... the sound of pure evil.

FADE OUT:

OPENING CREDITS

FADE IN:

EXT. WEST L.A. STRIP MALL, PARKING LOT - MORNING, PRESENT

The steady ROAR of traffic provides the urban backdrop as a slender woman glides toward the outdoor staircase...

PRECIOUS McAFFEE, 30. Dark glasses barely conceal her sultry features. Her blazer and skirt unite old school elegance with contemporary grace. Nestled in her arms, a tawny cat. Cautiously, she heads up the stairs.

A sleek town car pulls into the mall. Parks next to a powerful '57 Harley Sportster. The vintage motorcycle so beautifully restored it gleams in the sun.

STRIP MALL, SECOND FLOOR BALCONY

KNOCK-KNOCK. Precious tries the door marked: *LIVELY DETECTIVE AGENCY*. No answer. RING. Still no answer. Turns the handle. Open. She goes in.

STRIP MALL, PARKING LOT

The driver gets out of the town car...

JURGENS, 40. If a bludgeon mated with a tomahawk, he'd be the offspring. His crisp black chauffeur's uniform, moderate hair and short beard do nothing to soften his appearance. Danger lurks behind his calm eyes. Watches Precious go into Trent's office. Shrugs, gets back into the town car.

INT. LIVELY DETECTIVE AGENCY, OUTER OFFICE - MORNING

Okay, it's no corporate headquarters. The reception desk seems neat, organized, but no receptionist. Precious calls out, her voice honey-coated in a soft Southern accent...

PRECIOUS

Hello?

FLUSH! The sound drifts from the inner office. A door CREAKS.

TRENT (O.S.)

That you, Jurgens? About time you got here. I get nervous when they deliver these things...

Trent hustles out. The jacket of his signature suit draped over his arm. Drags a wheeled jewelry sample case.

TRENT (CONT'D)

...through my office instead of direct pick-up... Oh, hello.

Precious takes stock of him. The way she caresses her cat, Trent obviously exceeds her expectations.

PRECIOUS
You were expecting someone else. Am I intruding?

Trent sets his case by the wall. Smiles disarmingly, offers his hand.

TRENT
I'm sorry, I didn't realize I had an appointment, Miss... ?

The cat seems annoyed with him, HISSES. Smoothly, Precious shifts her pet, offers her hand to shake his.

PRECIOUS
Precious McAfee. I hadn't made one.
That nice Detective Campanos suggested you might make some time for me.

TRENT
Wasn't that sweet of him? Of course, Miss McAfee. Your case is our sole concern. It says so right on the wall.

Points to the agency logo on the wall. Right under the name, it reads: *Your Case Is Our Sole Concern*.

PRECIOUS
So it does. Are you Mr. Lively?

TRENT
I am. Can I offer you a cup of coffee?

PRECIOUS
A seat will do just fine, good sir.

Trent holds the inner office door for her even though it's already open. She glides by regally as if this were expected.

LIVELY AGENCY, TRENT'S OFFICE

Trent motions to the chair in front of his desk. Circles behind the desk. The glare of the sun through the picture window gives him the advantage of sitting in shadow. By-passing the chair, Precious glides to the sofa against the side wall. Sets the cat on the far cushion.

PRECIOUS
There you go, Old Tom. Be a good boy.

OLD TOM yawns and stretches. Precious sits close to the desk. Her dark glasses remain in place. Trent picks up a pad and pen. Circles back to the chair.

TRENT

Let's get started then. How did you come to meet Fingers Campanos, Miss McAfee? And why did he send you to me?

PRECIOUS

This is an urgent matter, Mr. Lively. Rather personal. I realize friendly shoulders are hard to come by in this big old city, but may I inquire as to your credentials?

TRENT

Certainly. I was Officer Campanos' partner for two years before I... left the force. He made detective shortly afterwards. I work the other side of the fence on the same side of the street, so to speak. Does that help?

Precious fidgets uncomfortably. Looks at the cat. Old Tom seems indifferent.

PRECIOUS

I believe it does, Mr. Lively. It's stupid, really. The police... it's their job but they say...

TRENT

Let me guess. They'll look into the matter but there's very little chance they'll find what you're looking for. This is a big city, Miss McAfee. Our police have to prioritize their resources. They assist where they'll be the most effective. I gather this is about personal property gone missing.

PRECIOUS

You are good at what you do, sir. Yes. I'm afraid I'm the victim of a burglary. A piece of jewelry. A necklace.

TRENT

How valuable is it?

PRECIOUS

I don't think it's worth much, really, unless you count sentimental value.

TRENT

That explains the police position. Sentimental value is considered an acceptable casualty.

PRECIOUS

I'm afraid I simply can't agree with that. You see, it's been in my family for about two hundred years, Mr. Lively... may I call you Trent? Please, can't you do something?

TRENT

I can try. Do you have a photograph of the piece... your necklace?

PRECIOUS

This is most unfortunate, but I never expected I'd need one. However, Detective Campanos arranged for me to sit with a... what did they call him again? Some kind of artist.

TRENT

Sketch artist, although they often use computers to render their subjects. Did you get a printout?

Precious takes a page from her jacket pocket. Offers it to Trent. The color page shows a massive emerald. Smooth and round, set into antique brass.

PRECIOUS

He... what did he say... put this together for me.

TRENT

This is excellent. With a little legwork, I think I can track this down.

Opens her purse. Takes out a stack of bills. Checks with the cat. Old Tom seems to agree.

PRECIOUS

That would be wonderful. Will this do for a retainer?

She hands the money to Trent, who peels off several bills, hands the rest back.

TRENT

Let's start with a couple of days and worry about things from there.

Precious stands, gathers Old Tom into her arms. Rendering still in hand, Trent guides her to the door.

PRECIOUS

Detective Campanos told me you'd treat me fairly. Oh, dear!

Her high heel catches on the carpet. Trent catches her as she stumbles. Her hand grasps his arm. They connect like somebody flipped an electric switch. After a breathless moment, he helps her right herself. The cat never stirs, watches with more than mild interest.

PRECIOUS (CONT'D)
I'm terribly sorry.

TRENT
Not a problem.

Her smile almost tender. Her gaze shifts to his shoulder. Notices a loose hair on his shirt. She picks it off.

PRECIOUS
There. Everything in its place.

TRENT
Thank you.

Precious pockets the hair as Trent turns to hold the door.

LIVELY AGENCY, OUTER OFFICE

Trent opens the front door for her.

TRENT
I'll do what I can, but no promises. Is there somewhere I can reach you.

PRECIOUS
I'm at the Beverly Regency Hotel. Do you know it?

TRENT
Everybody knows it. I'll report in as soon as I know something.

Precious stops, turns slowly, her eyes serious.

PRECIOUS
Be expeditious with your efforts, Mr. Lively. The sooner you recover my necklace, the greater the reward.

TRENT
I'll keep that in mind, Miss McAfee.

PRECIOUS
I have a good feeling about you, Mr. Lively. A very good feeling. Good day.

Trent watches her walk along the balcony, glances into the parking lot. Jurgens stands by the town car.

TRENT

I'm glad somebody has a good feeling about something.

Trent nods toward Jurgens. The driver gets into his town car. Trent folds the rendering, tucks it into his shirt pocket.

EXT. HOCKNEY'S JEWELS, DOWNTOWN L.A. - DAY

The town car slides into a loading zone space in the bustling jewelry district. Fully suited, Trent emerges from the passenger seat. Jurgens rolls his window down. Trent approaches from the street side.

TRENT

Thanks for getting the door.

Jurgens doesn't even turn to look at him.

TRENT (CONT'D)

I'll need the case.

Jurgens releases the trunk lid. Trent thinks about saying something clever. Jurgens turns slightly. Trent thinks about never saying anything again. Walks to the trunk, retrieves the sample case. Wheels it toward the shop. Gates across the window. Squares himself. BUZZES the doorbell.

INT. HOCKNEY'S JEWELS - DAY

Typical cross between high volume and high end in an urban battle zone. Lush carpet, glittering display cases. A cage barricades top end merch counters from the general floor. Through the cage's window, a doughy-walrus deals with a NERVOUS CUSTOMER...

HOCKNEY, looks 60, sounds 90. Behind him, at the desk...

SKID, 40, razor sharp features make him look more menacing than this barely competent bookkeeper actually is.

HOCKNEY

Sixty bucks.

NERVOUS CUSTOMER

It's worth five times...

HOCKNEY

Skid, do you believe this guy?

SKID

Unbelievable.

HOCKNEY

Heard it. Don't care. This ain't no pawn
shop and I'm busy. My delivery's here.

NERVOUS CUSTOMER

You'll be sorry.

HOCKNEY

I already am. Get out.

The nervous customer brushes past Trent.

NERVOUS CUSTOMER

Take my advice, Mister. Go someplace
else. These guys are crooks.

TRENT

I'm counting on it.

The nervous customer leaves.

HOCKNEY

Hey, Skid. Look who just rose from the
dead.

SKID

Lively, is that you?

TRENT

Gentlemen.

HOCKNEY

You see any gentlemen around here, call
a cop. Wait, didn't you used to be a
cop?

SKID

Maybe five million years ago.

TRENT

Can we get on with this?

He wheels the case toward the cage.

HOCKNEY

Are we inconveniencing you, Mr. Lively?

TRENT

As it so happens, you are.

HOCKNEY

Pardon me for providing you with a living
when nobody else would look at you twice.

SNAP! Trent pops a latch on the case, opens the lid. The
brilliant glitter of diamonds in black felt compartments.

HOCKNEY (CONT'D)
Hey, never on the floor! Never!

He glares at Skid. BUZZ. Cage door release. Hockney reaches, guides the case in. SLAMS the door in Trent's face.

TRENT
I was hoping you might have some information.

SKID
Do either of us look like snitches?

TRENT
Once upon a time, you both did.

HOCKNEY
Careful. You ain't a cop no more.

TRENT
But you're still a greedy bastard, and half the reward for the recovery is more than you'll make in a month of selling imitation watches.

HOCKNEY
Our merchandise is certified genuine.

TRENT
Certified by whom?

HOCKNEY
Skid certifies everything.

SKID
It's true. I do.

TRENT
What do you make of this?

He slides the necklace rendering through the cage window. Skid shifts to look over Hockney's shoulder.

HOCKNEY
Look, Lively. You know I'm not a fence. If I was, I couldn't possibly handle a piece like this. Even if I knew where it was, which I'm not saying I do.

SKID
If we knew, we might tell you.

TRENT
On what condition?

SKID

On the condition you was bleeding to death on the floor. You was always a real hardass, Lively, but you ain't no cop and we don't got to talk to you.

TRENT

You in agreement, Hockney?

HOCKNEY

I'd probably be more diplomatic about the way I said it.

TRENT

A wise choice.

Trent's arm shoots through the window. CRASH! Pulls Skid over Hockney's desk, wraps around his neck, squeezes him against the bars. Skid turns blue, eyes bulge out. Hockney calmly draws a scatter gun from beneath his desk.

HOCKNEY

That may not be the best way to get him to talk.

TRENT

I just yearned for old times.

Skid struggles. Hockney in no hurry to help him.

HOCKNEY

You say there's a recovery fee?

TRENT

There's always a recovery fee.

HOCKNEY

And you propose a 50-50 split?

TRENT

If your juice turns out to be any good.

HOCKNEY

What do you think, Skid?

Skid's losing strength fast. Breathlessly, he nods.

HOCKNEY (CONT'D)

I never saw that piece.

TRENT

Then why are you playing me?

HOCKNEY

Look, this kid came in a couple of days ago. Asked how much he could get for merch that sounded just like that piece. He really didn't look like the kind of person who'd have something like that in his possession... legally.

TRENT

Why would you say that?

HOCKNEY

The guy looked scruffy. Said he was doing a favor for a lady friend of his. His description really didn't do this necklace justice. It's exquisite.

TRENT

Expensive?

HOCKNEY

Nobody cuts a stone like this anymore. A rock like this gets processed into smaller, more refined pieces. It's probably worth millions.

TRENT

So what'd you tell the kid?

HOCKNEY

I told him he was in the wrong place.

TRENT

You remember his name, Skid?

Skid GASPS.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Sorry. This better?

He relaxes his arm just enough for Skid to catch a breath.

SKID

Buka. Katsu Buka. Called himself Catman.

TRENT

Does this Catman have an address?

SKID

I can get it for you.

TRENT

So can Hockney. I'm not letting go of you until I'm ready to leave. Otherwise, your boss might forget his manners and get a little careless with that shotgun.

Amused, Hockney LAUGHS.

HOCKNEY

Things really haven't been the same
since you left the department, Lively.

TRENT

I'm touched. Where do I find Buka?

HOCKNEY

I'll check. Say, Lively, could I make a
copy of that design? I know women who'd
kill for a costume piece like this. I'd
owe you big time.

TRENT

Who am I to stand in the way of a
killing?

EXT. BUKA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Total dump. The town car pulls to the curb. Trent gets out.

TRENT

This shouldn't take long.

If Jurgens heard, you'd never know. Trent heads up the front steps. Checks the directory. Masking tape next to 3-B: Buka.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Why aren't they ever on the ground floor?

He pushes the bell. RING-RING. No answer. Tries the door. Open. He goes in.

INT. BUKA'S BUILDING, HALLWAY - DAY

Trent reaches the top of the stairs, finds the door for 3-B. KNOCK-KNOCK. No answer.

TRENT

Candygram.

Not a sound. Tries the door handle. It swings open.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Oh, that's not good.

Pushes the door carefully. Looks in.

TRENT (CONT'D)

Anybody home?