



**A hidden Latina history, pop music fantasies, sex, war & child snatching —
True tales of a precocious tween and his mondo-beyondo family in 1970s Texas.**

Jeff Aghassi | Aghassi Literary Management
jeffaghasi@mac.com | (310) 838-1471

THE SECRET WORLD OF DANNY LOPEZ

HALF-HOUR COMEDY/DRAMA SERIES created by SAMUEL GARZA BERNSTEIN | BASED ON TRUE STORIES

It's 1974. DANNY RIZIK is a gender-bending 10-year-old with an active fantasy life who seeks his place in the world. It just never occurs to him to accomplish it by fitting in. Instead, he wants to make the world conform to his imagination. Sometimes it does. Like when the shifting identities of his inner life become a real thing—and he learns he does have another identity: DANNY LÓPEZ DE LA PEÑA.

¡Yo soy una estrella en cada escena de mi vida! I am a star in every scene of my life!

In the pilot, Danny and his family are moving to Texas from Cairo, where his Jewish dad, IVAN, sold arms to the Palestinians during the Arab-Israeli War. Ivan calls it an act of conscience. He is volatile, magnetic, dangerous, and probably bi-polar. Hippy stepmom, AMY, is barely 20 and sports braces and pigtails. Two older brothers, JEFF and JAKE, vie for Ivan's approval.

We meet Danny in the first-class lounge of a 747, happily alone, reading "Valley of the Dolls" and sipping a rum and Coke. (Just like writer/creator Samuel Garza Bernstein did when he was a tween.) Danny is excited about going back to Texas. He hasn't seen his breathlessly glamorous mom, LINDA, in over a year. He fantasizes about her, pretending to be her in a pop music production number.

Meanwhile, in San Antonio, Ivan's wealthy, disapproving parents, HELEN and LENNY wait at airport arrivals. They are appalled that Ivan would take three Jewish boys to Egypt in the middle of a war. He may be their son, but they think those kids should be with Linda. Ivan doesn't seem to care that Linda has custody. *Or does she...?*

After the family's tempestuous arrival in Texas, Danny is finally reunited with his mother. He is initially tongue-tied. Rather than the movie queen of his fantasies, she's tough and earthy. And there's a reason she couldn't fight Ivan to keep him. In a wild turn of events, Danny learns she is Mexican, and was brought over undocumented as a kid and abandoned. Her name and birth certificate are fake, courtesy of Ivan. His mom's real name is VERONICA LIN LÓPEZ DE LA PEÑA.

Finding out he's Latino is only one surprise. Danny also learns that his mom isn't the birth mom of his older brothers, Jeff and Jake. She never had custody of them—because they have another mother, a secret mother. *Who lives in a mental hospital!* Danny has always wished his mom could belong to him alone. *Now she does!* The world conforms to his imagination again.

He resolves to get away from Ivan and live with his mother. By any means necessary.

But will they stay in Texas long enough for him to figure out a plan? You never know with Ivan. Tomorrow they could be in Jamaica, or Thailand, or Phoenix. Danny could never guess that after a few days with his grandparents, they will be living on a 300-acre ranch in the middle of nowhere. Or that his adventures will include sixth grade with "normal" children—a new and exotic experience.

The Secret World of Danny Lopez explores the wild intersections of the way we live now. It takes place in the '70s, but everything about it feels modern, as comedy and drama crash into one another.

Broadly speaking, Danny is an abused child, yet we never perceive him as forlorn. The threat of Ivan turning violent may lurk at the edges, but most of what Danny experiences is funny and weird and hopeful. His curiosity and sense of fun keeps the show firmly out of self-pity and soap opera.

And after all, if a 10-year-old can laugh at the chaos and carnage around him and find transformation, we can too. Though it may give one pause afterward. *Did I just laugh at child abuse?* Maybe...