



**A hidden Latina history, pop music fantasies, sex, war, & child snatching... True tales of a precocious *TWEEN* in 1970s Texas**

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# THE SECRET WORLD OF DANNY LOPEZ

comedy/drama series created by Samuel Garza Bernstein

DANNY is a 10-year-old kid moving back to Texas after a year in Egypt. But is Rizik even his right name? By the end of the pilot he realizes it would be more accurate to call himself DANNY LÓPEZ DE LA PEÑA (or just Lopez). How he gets to that knowledge is a wild ride in and of itself.

In events that take us through the pilot, Danny discovers that his supposedly white mother, LINDA, is an illegal alien with a fake name and a fake birth certificate. Her parents brought her over when she was seven and then abandoned her. She was raised by a white family as their servant and took their name. But her real name is VERONICA LIN LÓPEZ DE LA PEÑA.

Danny's father IVAN comes from a Jewish family in San Antonio. Ivan's father got wealthy selling black market cheese during WW II. Ivan is magnetic, sexy, volatile, and probably bipolar. After his split with Linda (Veronica) Ivan took Danny and his two older brothers JEFF and JAKE to Cairo, along with their new teenaged stepmother, MEG. A Jewish man in Egypt, Ivan chooses to sell arms to the Palestinians.

The pilot of *Danny López de la Peña* begins as the family returns to Texas from Egypt. During that time, Ivan refused to allow Danny or his brothers to see their mother, Linda. Danny fantasizes about her all the time. He pretends to *be* her. Which is where the pop music fantasies and lots of gender play come in. But finding out he is half Latino is only the first surprise. Danny also learns that his mother Linda isn't the birth mother of his two older brothers. They have another mother, a *secret* mother. Ever since Danny can remember, he has wished his mom would belong just to him. *And now she does.*

We also meet Danny's grandparents on Ivan's side, HELEN and LENNY. In the pilot as she yells at him about his mistress. *I don't know what the hell you do with her since you're bleeding from your goddamned penis!* Meg, the teenaged stepmom with braces, is quite loving and kind. She knows how much Danny wants to be with his mom, and she tells him she thinks he should be. But she never says so to Ivan. She loves him. They have sex a lot. Sometimes he beats her up. Like he did with Linda. He also hits his kids sometimes. Not often. But enough so they were always afraid it might happen again—and the show goes there very, very rarely.

Most people think Danny and his brothers are very lucky children to have such an exciting life. And it *is* exciting. In the first scene of the pilot, Danny sits in the first-class lounge of a 747. He reads *Valley of the Dolls* and sips a rum and Coke. Just like writer/creator Samuel Garza Bernstein did when he was a kid.

*The Secret World of Danny López de la Peña* is not intended to follow *The Big Bang Theory* on CBS. It couldn't have been made until this precise moment in the television marketplace. It's set in the 1970s but everything about it is modern and geared to what audiences are watching right now.

It explores the wild intersections of modern life where comedy and drama crash right into one another. And yes, Danny is an abused child. But so much of what he experiences is funny and weird and hopeful. His childlike sense of fun keeps the show firmly out of the world of self-pity and soap opera. After all, if a 10-year-old can laugh at the chaos, you can too. Though it may give you pause afterwards. *Did I just laugh at child abuse?* A little bit...