



**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.**

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THE SECRET WORLD OF DANNY LOPEZ

comedy/drama series created by Samuel Garza Bernstein

DANNY RIZIK is a 10-year-old kid with an active fantasy life. But is Rizik even his right name? By the end of the pilot he learns it might be more accurate to call himself DANNY LÓPEZ DE LA PEÑA, since his supposedly white mother, LINDA, turns out to be 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 RIZIK is from a Jewish family in San Antonio. Ivan's father got wealthy selling black market cheese during WW II dairy rationing. Ivan is magnetic, sexy, volatile, and probably bipolar. After Ivan's split with Linda (*Veronica Lin*) he took Danny and his two older brothers JEFF and JAKE to Cairo, along with their new teenaged stepmother, AMY. Ivan, a Jewish man in Egypt, sells arms to the Palestinians.

The pilot opens as the family returns to Texas from Egypt. During that time, Ivan refused to allow Danny or his brothers to see their mother. 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.

Finding out he is half Latino is only one 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. As they wait at the airport for Ivan and the family to arrive, Helen queries Lenny about his mistress, demanding to know, 'what the hell you do with her since you're bleeding from your goddamned penis'.

Amy, 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. When we meet 10-year-old Danny he is alone in the first-class lounge of a 747, reading *Valley of the Dolls* and sipping a rum and Coke. Just like writer/creator Samuel Garza Bernstein did when he was a kid.

The Secret World of Danny Lopez is not intended for a mainstream broadcaster. 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, broadly speaking, 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...*