

## DRAMA PITCH OUTLINE

**THE TEASER** – Pitch out a tease that grabs your audience, that is visual, gives a sense of the world, tone and set up of our show.

**THE WORLD** – After you have grabbed our listener, tell us what the world is and why you want to do a show about it.

**THE CHARACTERS** – Outline our characters in order of importance, allowing what makes each one distinct to shine through (quirks, traits, backstory). Also discuss character dynamics, how each character relates to each other and what their point of views are about each other. Tell us about triangles, rivals, love interests, etc.

**THE PILOT** – Broad stroke the rest of the pilot. Do not go beat by beat or act by act. This should really just be broad strokes and any key plot points which helps establish character and set up. Also your pilot needs to serve as an example of what a typical episode would look like (i.e. an example of a closed ended story and examples of character conflicts.)

**THE SERIES** – Discuss what an episode of your show looks like, where you want to go in series, potential storylines and character arcs and entanglements.

**THE TONE** – You want to make sure you have clearly established the tone of your show and may want to hit it again in the wrap up at the end. It is often helpful to use shows that people are familiar with.

## THE MENTALIST

REVISED Pitch pages

Written by Bruno Heller

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I've always wanted to take a crack at doing a classic detective mystery show, but hip and real and alive and up to date. So this is it....

IF SHERLOCK HOLMES AND ANGELINA JOLIE MADE LOVE, and the child they produced grew up watching Dallas, The X-Files, and House M.D., this is the detective show that the child would make. If he managed to avoid drug addiction and lunacy.

It's about a big juicy funny sexy edgy modern Sherlock Holmes called Daniel Jane.

There's a strong origin story goes with the character, and that might be the better pilot, but for the purposes of illuminating the series, I'll pitch a teaser for a typical episode....

WE'RE in Hidden Hills, outside a big mansion. A murder's been committed. There's crime scene tape, CSI setting up, and a SULLEN TEENAGE BOY, CUFFED, led from the house next door by cops, put in back of a squad car.

Cops, TV crews, and volunteer searchers listen to the POLICE CHIEF confirm that a missing teenage girl's body has been found and a suspect is in custody.

We find DANIEL JANE. He's wearing a photo ID tag, which identifies him as a 'Contractor' with the CALIFORNIA BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, but he's clearly not a regular cop.

Late thirties, early forties, disheveled Savile Row suit, flip flops, longish hair, romantic slightly battered good looks. He carries himself with a showman's grace. A rich but eccentric poet maybe. Next to him is a female CBI agent - TERESA LISBON. She keeps a wary eye on Jane - like he might run off.

THE PARENTS OF THE MURDERED GIRL emerge from the mansion, holding hands. He's a billionaire lawyer. She's a charity maven - Treat Williams and Diane Keaton. Good solid serious people. She's far too distraught to speak, but he stoically addresses the crowd, thanking everyone for their help.

WE WATCH FROM JANE'S POV. He's got a quick, probing, inquisitive gaze and the CAMERA moves likewise, studying the parents with intensity.

The father's slightly too big signet ring. The crispness of his rolled up shirtsleeves. The tiny run in the mother's stockings.

As he speaks, Treat lets go of his wife's hand to smooth his hair. When he reaches out to take her hand again, we notice that her hand FLINCHES AWAY very slightly, as if from something dirty. A millimeter of repulsion, then she lets him take her hand.

The people at the press conference see a loving couple, united in grief; but we're already beginning to look at things like Jane does. There's something amiss between husband and wife.

Jane slips away and enters the mansion, wanders casually round the house, ends up in the kitchen, and takes a good look around while he makes himself a cheese and ham sandwich - THE SKI HOLIDAY PHOTOS ON THE FRIDGE, WITH MUM'S TIGHT SMILE AND DAD'S ARMS AROUND HIS FAMILY IN EVERY SHOT; THE TYPE OF FOOD IN THE CUPBOARDS; ALOT OF TEA AND VITAMINS AND HEALTH SUPPLEMENTS.

He puts the kettle on to boil, and finds a baseball game on the little kitchen TV. Eats his sandwich, drinks a bottle of beer.

Jane's just finishing the sandwich when the grieving mother enters, in frantic but quiet despair. Who the hell are you? He speaks softly, relaxed, friendly, soothing, hypnotic, like a horse whisperer.

He's here to help her. Would she like a cup of tea? The kettle's just boiled. She would, that's exactly what she wants. Camomile? Yes. Why don't you sit down? She sits down. He gives her the tea, keeps her engaged with a softly rhythmic Q and A. Questions she can answer yes or no to. He's putting her under very light hypnosis.

Meanwhile, her husband's in the Library, conferring with the Attorney General and other heavy duty guys. He wonders where his wife has gone to.

In the kitchen, Jane and Mum are chatting easily. He tells her that before he started working for the bureau, he was a psychic. Not a real one, a pretend one. He spoke to the dead, read minds, all that stuff.

A pretend psychic?

To demonstrate, he lobs a couple of accurate facts at her. Facts he couldn't possibly know - She only pretends to like ski-ing. Her best friend gained weight this last year, about ten pounds. She laughs in amazement. Totally caught up. He is psychic.

No. Just paying attention.

We know he's telling the truth, because we were looking around with him. We know he deduced these revelations from a few clues and good guesswork.

WE FLATTER OURSELVES THAT WE'RE PRETTY GOOD AT IT TOO. BUT THEN HE SHOWS US HIS A GAME.

With uncanny accuracy, Jane describes her husband and their relationship....  
...His generosity, his warmth; his jealousy, his possessiveness, and need for control.  
Her insecurities and secret longings.....

It's a shrewdly imagined portrait; enough accurate detail to seem entirely personal, but actually telling a universal tale of marriage to a vain and powerful man. It works. She recognizes herself and her husband in every word. She's amazed, spooked, fascinated. Suspicious.

Why did he stop? Why would a psychic become a cop?

He flinches just a little. 'Something bad happened.'

What?

'Doesn't matter. The point is, I'm only telling you all this so that you'll tell me the truth. So you'll know there's no point lying to me when I ask you - why do you think your husband killed your daughter?'

She can't lie. She opens up, revealing all the reasons she suspects her husband. THE WEIRD FRICTION BETWEEN FATHER AND DAUGHTER LATELY. HIS STRANGE BEHAVIOUR AFTER GRACE'S DISAPPEARANCE. JUST A BAD FEELING.

'Have you asked him?'

'What would he say? He'd say no'

'Can't you tell when he's lying?'

'Well... Yes'.

'So ask him.'

Right then, her husband walks in. 'Ah says Jane, 'speak of the devil'...

Jane shakes him by the hand, and doesn't let go...

'Daniel Jane. CBI. I'm wondering, did you kill your daughter?'

The man angrily wrenches free from Jane's grip.

'No I didn't. Kill my daughter! And you better get the fuck out of my house right now!'

Jane looks to his wife - She's white as a sheet, horrified. That's all Jane needs to know.

Husband's rattled. 'What's the matter with you? Don't look at me like that...'  
He points at Jane.

'You just lost your job. You are dead meat'. He stalks out.

Jane calmly follows him, deliberately winding the guy up - 'I can't help thinking an innocent man would have hit me.'

The dad loses it, turns and goes at Jane like a maniac. It turns into a knockdown fight.

Lisbon comes running in from outside, and all the big shots come running out of the library to find Jane beating crap out of the grieving dad. Beating him with an angry vengeance like it's personal.

They drag Jane off. He tells them that their friend abused and killed his own daughter.

Outrage and Pandemonium. Lisbon has to protect Jane from the angry machers.

But then the grieving mom appears. With A SHOTGUN. She points it at her husband and curses him to hell for a filthy pervert.

The dad breaks down, weeping., 'I'm sorry... I'm sorry... I didn't mean for her to----'

BOOM! - He gets both barrels. Brains on the wall.

They're taking the poor mum away and covering the body. Jane pours himself a stiff drink.

How did you know? asks the Attorney General. How the hell did you know he did it?

'Oh I didn't.' says Jane with a blithe smile - 'Lucky guess'.

BANG into the CREDITS...

So - It's a modern bigger than life take on the classic detective mystery. Every week Daniel Jane will use his unusual methods to help Lisbon and the California Bureau of Investigation solve a dramatic murder.

I've been wanting to do something about mentalism for a while now because apart from being fun and spooky and baffling, WHAT MENTALISTS DO, HOW THEY DO WHAT THEY DO TO US, SAYS A LOT ABOUT WHO WE ARE AS HUMAN BEINGS. SAYS A LOT ABOUT WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON INSIDE OUR HEADS.

Mentalism is a set of skills that when artfully combined, produce the illusion of paranormal mental powers – Some mentalists become psychics and clairvoyants, some go into show biz magic, some become con-men, or genius salesmen, some just use it to pick up girls.

How do they do it? Here's the basic techniques, all employed by our detective...

The bread and butter skill is COLD READING - the art of sizing people up with speed and accuracy. Then, pumping them for information so subtly that when you reframe what they told you and repeat it back to them, it seems to them like you read their mind.

Cold reading is reading a complete stranger; as opposed to a HOT READING, in which info about the person has been obtained beforehand. Even an address is useful. 'Picture walking out your front door...'

Then you've got;

HYPNOSIS, both open and covert – a good mentalist could hypnotise someone right here without them knowing it.

CONTACT MIND READING - That's a method by which I could take your hand and have you lead me, without a word, to something you didn't want me to find.

AUTOSUGGESTION Imagine someone dropping this covert pattern into their pitch - 'Respect' is a song that I LOVE. THIS STORY is about faith and hope....

STRAIGHT CONJURING. Sleight of hand. Making things appear and disappear. 'Forcing' choices. Picking pockets. MISDIRECTION – Very important. An art in itself. If I hand you a water bottle, while asking you to give me the gold watch you have in your hand, you'll likely give it to me.

BALD MORAL COURAGE it takes to be a damn liar for a living.

PEOPLE MUST LIKE YOU. Ergo, you must like people. If only in the way that a wolf likes sheep.

The skills in themselves are simple and transparent, but when combined artfully, with timing and precision and grace, they can be incredibly powerful.

We all tend to think that we're pretty much in control of our own self. We believe we're that our thought and actions spring from our own conscious rational will.

BUT IN TRUTH, MUCH MORE THAN WE CARE TO ACKNOWLEDGE, WE'RE DRIVEN BY THE NEEDS AND IMPULSES OF OUR SUB-CONSCIOUS.

As Jane would tell us, our conscious mind is like a monkey on horseback. The monkey thinks it's in charge. But if you got sugar for the horse, you can ignore the monkey.

MENTALISTS LIVE OFF THOSE BASIC URGES IN THE HUMAN SOUL

OUR NEED TO CONNECT. OUR DESIRE TO BELIEVE.

AND THAT'S WHAT THIS SHOW IS ABOUT ---THAT STRUGGLE BETWEEN BELIEF AND SKEPTICISM.

Me, I don't believe in anything much. I don't say God doesn't exist, but I doubt it. A sceptic from a long line of skeptics from a skeptical country. One of the most striking things about coming to America was the strength of belief here, the strength of faith, and a general absence of cynicism.

In England I barely knew any one who believed in God or psychics and all that stuff. Here I barely know anyone who doesn't believe.

And I've come round to seeing that in spiritual faith, there's sources of strength and grace that are just not available to skeptics like me. I envy believers. I'd like to believe. But I can't. And that's why I want to write this show.

The Mentalist is about that struggle in all of us, and in the world at large, between belief and skepticism.

The show itself will stay right on the edge of the fence. We never take a final position on the reality of the spirit world and psychics. Jane isn't psychic, but then again, is he? There's people around him who believe he's lying or in denial, that he has genuine ESP.

But the thing is, AND THIS IS ANOTHER PILLAR of the show -

OUR ACTUAL ORDINARY HUMAN SENSES, the powers that you or I have, taken to their limits, are incredible enough. You don't need to believe in magic to feel that there's a spark of something cosmic in all of us.

What Jane does, we can do. We might all be blind to our unconscious selves, but we can still see other people clear as day. WE'RE ALL A LITTLE BIT PSYCHIC.

JANE DOESN'T PRETEND to have paranormal powers, or catch people by trickery. He has all these cool mentalist skills to call upon, but those are kind of like the stuff in Batman's utility belt. They're tools. They don't define him.

He solves crimes like any great detective does - by intelligent observation, sharp deduction, dynamic people skills, and a nose for the truth. And plain guesswork. Though unlike most detectives, he'll take a pure guess and run with it like it's the gospel truth.

It's not about forensics and legal process. IT'S NOT ABOUT THE SCIENCE OF DETECTION. IT'S ABOUT THE ART OF DETECTION. The art of understanding people, not by their DNA

and fingerprints, but by their heart and soul. That's what Jane's good at. That's what makes him a formidable detective.

So let me give you a little backstory on Jane.

A few years before we first met him, Jane was working as a psychic. Very successfully. His natural warmth and charisma combined with brilliant mentalism to create an illusion of genuine mystery and power.

THINK JOAQUIN PHOENIX AS JOHNNY CASH, BUT WITH ESP.

He had a sell-out theater act, TV shows, a book deal. Lived in a vast Malibu mansion with his wife and kid. Riding high.

OCCASIONALLY, To generate publicity and boost book sales, Jane would consult with the police on high profile murder or abduction cases.

During one such gig, he psychically 'sees' the personality and appearance of an elusive serial killer known as RED JOHN, and appears on TV describing the killer in great detail, portraying him as a pathetic and unattractive loner. Of course, Jane doesn't 'see' anything of the sort, but it's a good guess, and it's not like it harms the investigation.

BUT THEN ONE NIGHT he comes home and finds an envelope pinned to his front door. It's an aggrieved note from Red John. He doesn't like to be mischaracterized in the media. Especially by fraudulent psychics hustling for TV coverage. IF JANE REALLY IS A PSYCHIC HE DOESN'T NEED TO BE TOLD THAT HIS WIFE AND CHILD ARE LYING DEAD IN AN UPSTAIRS BEDROOM.

The only people he ever truly loved, the only people that gave his life meaning and warmth, were his wife and child. And now they're gone, he has nothing. Nothing but guilt and loneliness and an implacable lust for vengeance.

Red John is a CBI case, and that's how Jane first becomes involved with them; as a victim. At that point, without hatred for Red John to drive him on, Jane would simply have killed himself. He latched on to the CBI investigation as a lifeline. The CBI really didn't have any choice in the matter.

In all the intensity and drama of the investigation, Jane and the CBI agents grew close. But Red John proved maddeningly elusive. Jane is never ever going to give up looking. And he just kind of never quite left the CBI, eventually becoming a quasi-formal agent of the bureau... At first the CBI team adopted the broken man as a rehab project. And then - very grudgingly - they begin to realize that Jane's skills and personality make him A DEEPLY STRANGE BUT BRILLIANT DETECTIVE.

BY THE TIME WE meet him in the teaser, it's been a few years since the tragedy, and Jane has regained equilibrium, just about. But he's not the man he once was. He's still



arrogant and egotistical, a man of big appetites. But the complacent pride, the false compassion, the hubris, are all gone.

Replaced by brutal honesty, fierce energy, and a reckless disregard for social and personal norms of any kind. No sentiment, no pity, no mercy, no bullshit.

At the same time he's proud of his ability to conceal himself. So all of that roiling anger and pain and guilt and tumult is clothed in a graceful persona of charm and wit.

He'd tell you that his work as a detective is a way to pass the time, to keep him from drink and idleness. But it's much more than that. It's a struggle for redemption, a battle for his soul; a long road leading back to hope and love and all the things that make us human. Without it, he's lost.

For the bureau, he's a powerful but unpredictable weapon. The bosses use him as one might a flamethrower – for jobs requiring a sudden, fearsome, unorthodox assault. His case clearance stats are stupendous, and so far that's outweighed any awkwardness or upset he might cause. He just needs to be kept under control. And he has been. Until now.

Charged with keeping Jane under control is LEAD AGENT TERESA LISBON, who we met in the teaser. New England Portuguese - mid to late thirties, with a warm angelic beauty that belies her character - tough as nails, driven, smart. A woman of iron integrity and deep faith. She carries herself with calm self-possession – cool, equable, sunny; but we sense that this persona is an act of will. That she's concealing a darker, wilder, more sensual nature. Monica Belluci with a badge and a gun.

She could stand to loosen up a little. In fact, she'd be a pain in the ass if not for her dry as dust cop's humour, and a certain dancer's grace in action that makes her pleasing to watch.

In Lisbon's book, there's no-one much lower than a man who exploits other people's most profound beliefs for money and fame. She tolerates Jane because, above all, he closes cases. God works in mysterious ways, and if she has to put up with Jane's craziness as the price of justice done, it's okay. Jane is her sackcloth and ashes.

In Jane's book on the other hand, there's nothing more tiresome than righteous piety and intolerance.

By rights, they should despise each other. That's certainly how they play it. But deep deep down they are both captivated, drawn toward one another as if by some slow but immensely powerful magnet. She sees a kind of freedom and wildness in him that she envies; a darkness that both scares and fascinates.

In her he sees faith, and certainty, a spiritual anchor; all that he has lost in his own life.

Their relationship embodies the themes of the show. Faith versus cynicism. Hope versus despair. He's not sure, but suspects we're just animals on a giant rock spinning through endless empty space. She knows better, knows that we're children of God, capable of great nobility; duty bound to do good and love another. It's not an argument that either side can win conclusively, but while Jane seems to score points more often, Lisbon tends to win the big battles. Yes, there's darkness and evil in the world. But there is also hope. There is redemption.

Lisbon's under huge pressure from her boss, SUPERVISING AGENT J.T. APPLEBAUM - Sun Tzu in a bolo tie - who is enthusiastically engaged in almost constant inter-office warfare. He needs big numbers from all his people, else his unit will be the one to get shafted in the upcoming state budget cuts. He's a macho Paul Giamatti, deeply out for #1. An unapologetic Darwinian. He has grown accustomed to using and abusing Lisbon's deep respect for authority to his best advantage. Lisbon is senior agent in a team of four - her colleagues are RANDY CHO, KEN BUCKLE, and MELODY VAN PELT,

Van Pelt is a valedictorian and barrel racing champion from rural Idaho. Mensa IQ. Kittens on her screen saver. WWJD bracelet. NRA bumper stickers. Engaged to be married to her high school sweetheart when he finishes law school. She's a perky blonde Conservative. Elizabeth Hasselbeck on the View. Like her. Hers is a simple old fashioned uncomplicated faith. She believes in ghosts and spirits and such and comes to believe that Jane might really be psychic, despite his protestations that he isn't. Tempting prey for Jane - a ruthless and expert seducer.

Cho and Buckle move as one. Frat boys, with all the vices and virtues of that tribe: narrow minded but loyal; unsubtle but brave; crass but funny; with their tribe's typical pragmatic indifference to matters of the soul. You're born, you eat drink and fuck as much as possible, then you die.

It's a cast of funny, flawed, real people; each with their own trajectory, each playing off Jane in their own way. A family, in other words.

## THE SERIES

The metaphysical arc of the series is Jane's long road to redemption.

The concrete arc is his search for Red John.

Once or twice a season he and the CBI will come tantalizingly close to catching him, only to find a fresh layer of mystery, a fresh twist. By first season's end, Jane will discover that Red John is not one lone killer, but a conspiracy of killers. Maybe. I'm vamping here.

THE SERIES IS SET IN CONTEMPORARY CALIFORNIA, but a dream California, Freudian California. A glamorous promised land of beauty and abundance, still more rural than

urban, more innocent than knowing. Hollywood is far away, the O.C even further. It's a world of friendly small towns and wicked cities, of ranches and vineyards and the ocean; of railroad tracks with a wrong side to them; of deep blue lakes and cigar smoke and martinis and forests, seaplanes and gorgeous people with dark souls. A world where Ronald and Nancy Reagan will always be governor and first lady; where appearances still matter deeply, and the shameful sordid secrets that fester behind the glamorous facades are worth dying for, worth killing for.

THE TONE OF THE SHOW is funny, sardonic, vivid, highly visual. The landscape and the people in it are sensual, lush, hyper-real, like a picture book.

THE CAMERA, like our hero, is watchful, dynamic, observant. Jane solves crimes by looking closer and listening better than anyone else does. HE PAYS ATTENTION, and that's what we do.

EACH INDIVIDUAL EPISODE cold opens in classic fashion with the discovery of a body, and ends with the unmasking of the murderer. The CBI functions statewide, so the crimes are always the special ones, the big cases that the local boys can't handle. Abductions, prominent victims or suspects, political hot potatoes.

The typical antagonists are men and women of power and public virtue - intelligent killers, committing lurid, operatic crimes. Big crimes, and big villains, to match Jane's big personality. The mentalist is a man who deeply understands the human soul, like a priest or a shrink does, only without their scruples.

So the focus is not so much on finding physical evidence. It's about finding the motive, the passion, the story behind the murder.

THE TRUTH IS NOT OUT THERE, IT'S IN HERE (I'm tapping my head).

That's the show I want to make.