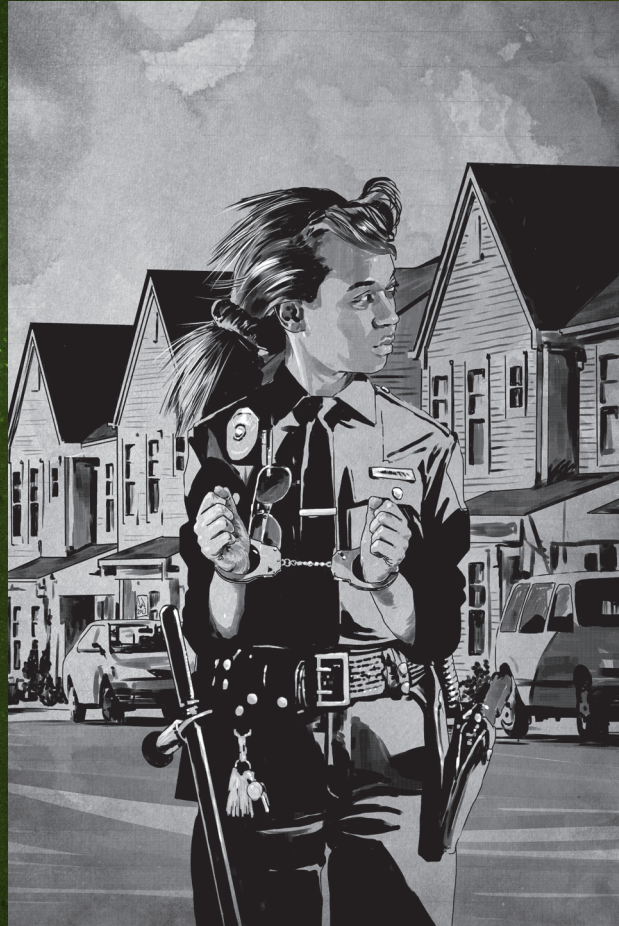


JÉRÔME LARRÉ

# Sheep's Clothing

SERIES PITCH OF THE MONTH





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# Sheep's Clothing

—Jérôme Larré

## Nutshell

An Internal Affairs bust looms over a safe bedroom community heavily populated by police officers and their families.

*“Corrupt doesn’t mean guilty.”*

*“Sure. And innocent never meant bulletproof.”*

## Characters

The main cast includes citizens of a sweet little town that revolves around a Big City Police Department. Whether cops, relatives of cops, or close associates of cops, they know that BCPD’s Internal Affairs have uncovered a widespread corruption scandal and is hours away from making a sweeping set of coordinated raids. Warrants have been sworn out for more than fifty targets, but no one knows which names appear on the list.

The main cast might include:

- corrupted officers synchronizing their stories or trying to protect themselves by leaning on witnesses
- a soccer mom having an affair with a corrupt-but-not-on-the-list officer while trying to save her accused-but-innocent husband
- a doctor who spent years not asking questions, even when they came late at night with bullet wounds, now scared he’ll lose his medical license
- an innocent officer willing to take the rap for a guilty party
- an idealist cop with things to prove. His father is knee deep into politics and his grandfather one of the department’s living legends.
- an Internal Affairs officer who inadvertently caused the leak. Frozen out

of the case because he lives next to its targets, doesn’t know who’s on the list, but nobody believes him.

- a jealous neighbor who made false accusations about his spouse’s lover and now regrets it
- a local sheriff’s deputy, despised by these fancy police from Big City and finally getting her revenge
- a loyal but ostracized cop whose partner died due to another officer’s illegal dealings
- a mobster whose childhood friend might be on the list
- a spiritual counselor who doesn’t want to let some of his favorite lambs go to jail. He doesn’t mind violating the secrecy of confession in the process.
- an unloved younger brother now learning his sibling is not as perfect as he pretended to be. He doesn’t want to break his sick old dad’s heart.

(Feel free to flip the genders of these suggested characters.)

## Setting

Little Town is the safe haven BCPD police officers created for themselves so their kids could grow up far from Big City’s mean streets. For years, people have been living happily there, protected from criminality, violence, and everything but boredom.

***Where is Big City? It is a real city like New York, New Orleans, or Los Angeles? What is Little Town’s actual name?***

Being one of the safest neighborhoods in the country doesn’t mean there is no crime. Don’t expect shootouts or cold blooded murders here. Locals prefer quiet and tedious corruption, little



arrangements and big secret deals. They are so used to looking away that they see themselves as nice people with family values. Not criminal. Just decent folks.

***What is the most violent crime perpetrated in Little Town? What happened? What secret about it does the community harbor?***

Big City lies an hour's commute away from Little Town. Though a bedroom community of a larger city, the town has its own municipal government and mayor, a retired BCPD chief. Whatever his influence on paper, the real power rests in the hands of various cliques and informal groups, each with their own leaders, runner-ups, and pariahs. Notable among them:

- homicide division detectives
- vice squad and narcotics officers, who have ample opportunity to get themselves dirty
- the BCPD wives association, who run the place during the daytime
- Emerald Pride, an interrelated group of Irish-American cops. The older generation used to run the BCPD; now they're in eclipse as other ethnicities swell the ranks of the force.

***What cliques are the characters involved with? As members? As adversaries?***

In the secrecy of these in-groups, a few men manage a widespread corruption network hand in hand with Big City mob bosses. These people are the true kings of Little Town. Whatever badge they carry, they make people die, pull their strings and are nothing like the nice family guys they look like.

***Who are these rotten-to-the-core criminals? What is their relationship with the characters? Both in BCPD and Little Town? Where do they congregate?***

Now that they are aware that BCPD Internal Affairs are about to show up, these men are on the edge and ready to do almost anything to preserve their lifestyle. They want to know what happened, who betrayed them, and how they can avoid being arrested.

Most people in Little Town are not like them. Some are plainly blameless. Others went along to go along, taking part in petty corruption because that's the way the game has always been played. Both the relatively innocent and the spectacularly guilty fear Internal Affairs. They're well-known

for finding skeletons in any closet and for ruining lifetimes of work after one tiny little mistake.

Panic makes you do stupid things.

## Themes

The first episode introduces the characters leading their normal existences in sweet Little Town before they learn about the investigation and the downward spiral begins. The theme of this GM-called episode is **Losing Control**.

At the top of the session, suggest that they pace the first arc of the series into a tightly compressed thirty-six hour timespan. Call lots of flashbacks establishing the ensemble's pasts, years on duty, and the defining choices where they stayed righteous or walked their first steps on the road to corruption.

Later themes might include:

- **Condemned to Freedom:** nobody knows who is on the list. While on vacation, a character gets a message from his superior officer and is requested to go to work anyway the day after tomorrow. Obviously something big is cooking and he's not on the list. He's the only one to know he has nothing to fear. Will that make him a pariah?
- **Cui Bono:** what really drives this huge corruption case? Sure, the entire department crawls with dirty cops. What about the ulterior motives of the District Attorney prosecuting the case? Doesn't he harbor political ambitions?
- **Changing Times:** not so long ago, being a cop was more about getting the bad guys than dealing with stupid administrative regulations that give criminals a fairer shake than the victims. What they call corruption today used to be basic good police work.
- **Old Memories:** [if set in the New York City area] On 9/11, many guys on the force died doing much more than their jobs. The very same day, in the middle of the confusion, a few people made the worst decision of their lives. Some of them were desperate. Some of them were just plain assholes. The cast has to understand what happened that day to understand



what's happening now.

- **Reliance:** in a town where everybody can be corrupt or send you or the one you love to jail for years, who can you really depend on? Are the people you trusted with your life and livelihood really who you think they are? They came to your house and dandled your children on their knees, but what happens when it's their ass or yours?
- **Responsibility:** what happens when corruption is the only way for a cop to pay for medical care for his old parents while preserving his brother's political rise? Who's he protecting and serving?
- **Beyond the Pale:** To protect your brothers in blue, you put personal loyalty above the law. What happens when you learn of their involvement in a crime too despicable to forgive?

Subsequent arcs/seasons:

- **Perp Walk:** The raid goes down. Who gets busted? Which innocent cop gets the cuffs slapped on him? Which dirty one escapes arrest?
- **Role Reversal:** You'll soon get bail and return to Little Town under the cloud of prosecution. But for the next few days you have to survive as cops in jail.
- **Care:** What happens to your loved ones when you get arrested? Should your children pay the price for your mistakes? Can you hide enough dirty money to pay for their college funds?

## Tightening the Screws

Little Town and its inhabitants are boiling. Here are some more ingredients to throw in:

- A group of retired cops are ashamed and angry that BCPD's name is going to be soiled by those who served after them. They guess who's on the list and head out to prove they're not too old to deliver a righteous beatdown.
- Officers are not the only ones who stand to go down over this. A Big City mob boss learns about the upcoming arrest and hires a hitman to silence the squad room bagman who delivers his bribes and can

tie him to the conspiracy. This cop is truly a bad egg and the source of many of your problems. What happens when you arrive in the middle of the murder attempt?

- A panicking cop is convinced that some other member of the community notified Internal Affairs and is the reason behind this huge investigation. He gathers up his buddies to exact punishment on the falsely accused rat and his family. Even innocent cops join the collective hysteria.
- In the middle of the night, a woman loads her car after a fight with her detective husband. Neighbors try to block her from leaving, afraid that she knows too much and can be more easily pressured to spill if she escapes the community and the pressure it exerts.
- The local sheriff's office has been tipped off about the raids. Though the Big City cops who live here have always looked down on them, they're nonetheless torn between their official duties and a broader sense of comradeship with neighbors and fellow cops. Whose side do they finally come down on?
- Witnesses discover the body of a shooting victim on the border between BCPD and sheriff's office's jurisdictions. Who is the victim, and how does the jurisdictional dispute play into the corruption scandal?
- A well-known journalist whose stories kicked off the Internal Affairs investigation shows up in town, as if waiting for a story to break. He must know something, too. Do you risk talking to him to find out what's going on, or to try to spin the story in your favor? Or do you find a way to hurt him, the way he's hurt the town?
- A desperate officer loses it and takes hostages. Can the situation be taken care of before anyone from the outside finds out about it? Once you straighten it out, can you keep it covered up?
- While more and more secrets are uncovered, a character learns that another character's present spouse might have killed his previous one.

Subsequent arcs/seasons, after the raid:

- The district attorney offers a dirty PC a plea bargain if he agrees to testify against the others.
- While you're distracted by the details of your prosecution, your irresponsible teenager takes the opportunity to run wild.
- Your union normally takes care of legal fees and hires lawyers when members face prosecution. But with so many officers facing charges, union coffers only stretch so far. Not only that, but better positioned defendants have snapped up the services of all the Big City's best lawyers with experience in this sort of case. Do you settle for a punk kid defender fresh out of law school? Or do you raise money you don't have to hire an expensive out-of-state attorney? If so, what lengths will you go to in order to raise the cash?
- Your day in court finally comes, but only the very worst cops get more than a slap on the wrist. Juries still give cops the benefit of the doubt. How do you rebuild your lives? Does the force want you back?

## Names

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Brian Allen  
 Claire Acero  
 Daniel Berglund  
 Elen Caine  
 Eugene Woods  
 Ezio Dunwall  
 Felicity Hanson  
 Gloria O'Keefe  
 Jeff Corrazzini  
 Kaitlin Forbes  
 Kevin Maher  
 Klaus Burke  
 Laurie Martineau

Maggie Chase  
 Mark Kozinsky  
 Neil Spencer  
 Patrick Bribe  
 Quan Lin Chen  
 Rob Hamm  
 Robin Ford  
 Sally Maher  
 Samantha Flaherty  
 Suzanne Fabiano  
 Titus Brenner  
 Vincent Stark