

# WHY PRIDE PULLED THE TRIGGER

A buried trauma from his past has been eating away at the *NCIS: New Orleans* hero. How bad will it get before the shocking truth comes out?

BY KATE HAHN

**BANG!** IN DECEMBER'S midseason finale of *NCIS: New Orleans*, head honcho Dwayne Pride (Scott Bakula) shot and killed a murderous cult leader—maybe in cold blood. A proverbial nasty piece of work, the man was kneeling, hands up, gun tucked into his waistband. He had also recently taken the life of beloved *NCIS* agent Christopher Lasalle (Lucas Black) and was hinting Pride's daughter and his girlfriend could be next. But this death occurred off-camera, with no witnesses. "He could have been reaching for his weapon," Bakula asserts, parroting his character's explanation to his colleagues.



"Pride is all about trying to keep his team together and keep everybody safe," Bakula says

Why Pride pulled the trigger—and the bigger question of why he goes to such great lengths to protect the people he loves—will be answered over the next four episodes. When the drama returns on its new night, Sunday, the Big Easy lawman dives deep into his own history and subconscious to explore those unsettling hallucinations about a man in a red suit, which began after kidnapers drugged him with LSD last season.

Flashbacks tell the surprising backstory: "That experience triggered this deep-seated trauma from his past. These are childhood memories having to do with his

mother [Mena] and father [Cassius, now deceased]," hints exec producer Jan Nash.

"What Pride is dealing with is psychological, which almost makes it scarier," chimes in fellow executive producer Christopher Silber. "If there's a bad guy after him, he knows how to take that. But this is coming from the inside." And it's coming when he really needs to be on his game. In the drama's February 16 return, *NCIS* agent Sebastian Lund (Rob Kerkovich) infiltrates a group of plotting white supremacists—a big step forward in fieldwork for the forensics nerd—with support from polyglot Hannah Khoury

(Necar Zadegan) and tough talker Tammy Gregorio (Vanessa Ferlito). Even then, Pride grabs a spare moment to start teasing out the identity of "Red," enlisting computer ace Patton Plame (Daryl "Chill Mitchell") to create a composite sketch.

At first Pride's road to self-discovery goes nowhere, but over time, the clues he finds make him nervous about what else he might uncover. When a female assassin comes to town, Plame, who becomes what Bakula calls "a little bit of a dog with a bone" in terms of Pride's recovery, offers some insight during a long stakeout. "Patton reminds him he's

## COVER STORY

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not someone who runs away from things that are scary," Nash says.

The boss man has more reasons to push on. "Dwayne's stress and lack of sleep and focus catch up to him—and not in a good way," Bakula says. "He realizes the distraction is putting other people at risk."

Pride eventually returns to Dr. Beth Tanaka (Angel Desai)—first recommended by his confidante, coroner Dr. Loretta Wade (CCH Pounder)—who prescribes a cutting-edge treatment known as psychedelic-assisted therapy. "We decided to do something very topical right now, which is to treat trauma with a micro-dose of LSD. We go back to the thing that caused [the visions] and use it to unlock the mystery," Nash says.

It all comes to a head in the trippy March 8 episode, when Pride goes on a journey into his mind to figure out what the man in the red suit is trying to tell him. "It's a visual. The story called for specific visuals and sound design but also a unique emotional touch," says episode

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—Executive producer Christopher Silber

Michael Davis (see sidebar), aka charming, confident, even justifiably cocky Quentin Carter, who transfers to the New Orleans office at Pride's request.

Of course, Pride does ultimately learn why he's been seeing Red. The revelation is "powerful and devastating," Bakula says, and "shakes Pride to his core. How does he pick up the pieces and put himself back together again and not curl up in a corner?"

Silber has an answer to that: "Dwayne Pride at his core cannot help but be a savior figure. That is how he's made," he says. "Pride is like, this is who I am; I need to accept that [and] make peace with it." ■

### The New Guy!



Davis' recent credits: *Chicago P.D.*, *The Originals* and *Younger*

"He's good at his job, competitive, and he likes to stand on his own," says Charles Michael Davis of high-achieving agent Quentin Carter, who joins the NOLA team on the March 8 episode. An ex-Marine from a military family, Carter fills the slot left by dear, departed Christopher Lasalle (Lucas Black). "We knew we needed someone exciting who could challenge the team—and Pride," says exec producer Christopher Silber. "Quentin has this history of moving from post to post, doing great things, but then passing someone off and getting moved again." On his first case, he takes over! —RH