



Detective Drama GEMS...

Mid-1940s to the Mid-1990s

Issue #10 February 2023

Radio and TV Episodes Analyzed ... *for Writers and Editors*

DD Gem #31 — "The Cost of Doing Business" — from NIGHT HEAT: November 5, 1987 (CTV & CBS, 1985 to '89)

Near the start of each NIGHT HEAT episode — for this one, it's Minute 4:44 — we hear narration. With a twist: It's by a journalist, and he actually has second billing among the cop-show regulars: Played by [ALLAN ROYAL](#), Tom Kirkwood says...

You can hear it most nights in the Big City. The sound of sudden anger. Sudden fear. You're walking home, you hear a scream. Was it for real? Or just some kids fooling around. Was that a car backfiring? A firecracker? Don't give it another thought. Just mind your own business. Maybe you'll get home alright.

In certain episodes, Kirkwood probably faced serious danger. But his constant contribution is by speculation and prompts, to the police, that influence their logic and tactics. Another benefit: By responding to Police Radio alerts, Kirkwood the journalist is on hand to spotlight the conflict between "the public's right to know" and law-enforcers worried about confidentiality, timing, lawsuits or shoot-outs.

Kirkwood concludes this Intro: "The buildings tower above murders, stabbings, the usual outrages." Those structures can be, he says acidly, "as blind and deaf as monuments. As blind and deaf [slight pause] as the people inside."

The "monument" this time has 15 floors of apartments. In one of its elevators, at Minute 3:27, a man is blown away by someone using a sawed-off double-barreled shotgun. Shortening the barrel was the only way this manically focused killer could conceal it — awkwardly, under a trench-coat — as he stalked the victim.

A clumsy firearm, and LOUD to boot. He'd have to use it in some sort of enclosed space, which makes that elevator not quite as absurd a venue as you thought.

The man being stalked has no idea. Carrying two bags of groceries, he enters the elevator and pushes the button. The killer dashes in just before the elevator door closes. He does nothing with the controls; or, if he does, the script forgot to show it to us. He and his victim exchange words for less than a minute.

Even if the murderer is 90% believable, this scene is unreal. Given 15 floors, and a ride starting nearer the bottom than the top, anyone could be preparing to enter.

Is the elevator even moving? If so, the blast makes it seize up. Blood is spattered on the controls; and they're jammed. To make his intent look like a robbery, the killer grabs the victim's wallet. NOW what? He can't pry the door open with his hands and arms. And shouting for help is insane (even in THIS guy's world).

The only course of action left: Push open the ceiling hatch, climb into the space atop the elevator car, and try to open the access door, from behind, on the next-higher floor. It works. He dashes down that hallway, heading for a street exit...

Because of space constraints, we sailed right into the episode. But, if you never heard of this cop show, I'm also a latecomer (despite most of my relatives being Canadian).

For a *contemporary* profile of NIGHT HEAT, put BARRY BROWN from August 1987 <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1987-08-01-8702260303-story.html> in your browser window and *maybe* it'll work. At the time, Mr. Brown was a free-lancer covering entertainment in Toronto. Though the series was filmed there, the episodes never refer to an urban locale. Not in Canada, and not in the U.S.

While fleeing, the killer is seen, pretty clearly, by one resident; at least, he's the one we'll get to meet. Otherwise, the escape looks clean. No video monitors are inside this apartment building, or (remember, it's 1987) OUTSIDE the building.

Simply hearing a shotgun blast wouldn't make the hearer a "witness." But, on the floor where the murder took place, a 30-ish woman who DID hear it moves toward the phone, hesitantly. No one else is home. She'd been playing the piano softly.

She thinks about dialing (one assumes) the Police. Picks up the phone, Minute 4:28. Maybe someone else is already calling? Then she puts the phone back down.

Disruption, ambivalence, avoidance — that was the first of many trace-backs to Tom Kirkwood's Intro: *Don't give it another thought. Just mind your own business.* The woman DID give it *some* thought. She moved; then she pulled back.

Technical Note for viewers who are 30-ish today: In 1987 "phones" lacked screens with moving images; and, rather than being attached to your fingers, they were shaped for the human hand. You don't realize how sensible that was. (Still is.)

"All I Wanna Know is If You SAW or HEARD Anything Tonight"

Beat cops parse the crime scene. Detective Kevin "O.B." O'Brien ([SCOTT HYLANDS](#)) joins them. Robbery makes little sense as the motive: What kind of mugger uses a shotgun? As for the murder, why *this* individual? Who was he? Reporter Kirkwood is there, too, and curious. Can't tell you, O'Brien replies: "No wallet, no I.D."

More officers arrive. "Why don't you three check the first five floors," O'Brien tells them; "Frank and I will do the rest — see if we get lucky." "Frank" is Detective Frank Giambone ([JEFF WINCOTT](#)), a youthful 31 1/2 when this Gem first aired.

The next few minutes are vivid in a cold way. They sketch a cycle that must play out in urban areas every night — but TV drives it home by repetition masked by variation. The first resident to open his door presents it this way: "Look, I don't talk to cops, I never talk to cops, I haven't talked to a cop in 15 years..."

The officer's low-key request — "why not start now?" — brings a snorted insult.

Next is a female with a rat-a-tat non-response: **"Nope sorry didn't hear a thing."** The officer, also a female, tries a softer sell. Lots of words come forth in reply; none of 'em help. "I've got a report to prepare for tomorrow, and I probably won't even get the account; and even if I do, I'm at the edge of a nervous breakdown, and if YOU ask me one more question about this murder, *I'll scream.*"

The resident's eyes glare as if she means it. Or, she's one more urban white-collar striver who knows how to mix semi-scripted lines with (just) enough intensity.

Then we encounter Mr. Kroll — for the *second* time. Before we knew his name, we saw him cross paths with the escaping killer. It happened right after the latter got out of the stuck elevator through its hatch and onto the next-higher floor.

The description Kroll offers O'Brien is detailed, almost comically so: "His eyebrows — very thick, almost like ONE BIG eyebrow." Thank you so much, says O'Brien, and do let us know if you're going out of town. "Hey wait a minute," Kroll counters. "I can't TESTIFY to nothing. I can't be tied up in court for *two years.*"

O'Brien firmly but not belligerently reminds Mr. Kroll of a citizen's duty when the crime at issue is murder. Of the professionals featured in this episode, O'Brien is the one who comes closest to making this a civic principle and a moral mandate.

The search continues. Frank Giambone knocks on the door of a very attractive resident close to him in age: Sandra Lane. We saw her earlier, playing the piano, and then deciding not to call anyone.

GIAMBONE: Can I ask you a few questions?

SANDRA LANE: You mean about the shooting?

GIAMBONE: Yeah.

LANE: I'm sorry, I didn't see anything.

GIAMBONE: [After sighing] You wouldn't believe how many times I've heard that tonight. Guy gets himself shot right in the building and so far not one person seems to have noticed.

LANE: [A quicker, lighter sigh] Look, I didn't mean I'm not wanting to help. I did [slight pause] HEAR something.

GIAMBONE: Well what exactly didja hear?

LANE: Why don't you come in.

What she said there is one of those "questions without the inflection." Defined as: The words of a question, with the tone of a statement. So I left out the "?".

The script skips over some of their back and forth. Which makes her bringing out a spacious tray of tea and cookies seem abrupt. "I'm sure you need a break."

You say you teach piano? "Did you always wanna be a Detective?" Guess that must be tough, bringin' up a kid on your own. "You don't have any kids?" No — I mean, I'm not married. Frank and Sandra are attracted to each other.

Captain O'Brien knocks. Did he have to try a few other apartments first? Back in the hallway, he tells Giambone: "We got a corpse in the elevator, we got 200 possible witnesses, and I find you sipping *tea*." It's said with an edge, but no anger.

Their colleagues keep going door to door. A man with an Eastern European accent is telling Officer Colby Burns ([EUGENE CLARK](#)): "So, how do I know you're a Detective? Ya don't LOOK like a Detective..." Burns happens to be Black.

The guy won't even open his door. Peephole's showing enough for this resident.

What Giambone doesn't know — and Sandra Lane is about to find out — is that her daughter Lori saw something critical. Though not in building at the time, she has a way to identify the vehicle out of which the shotgun was taken.

Let's Go Back to the Episode's Opening Minute...

With a classmate, on the roof of a nearby high-rise, Lori Lane carries out some Astronomy homework. Her gaze finds the guy Kroll will later describe to O'Brien. She sees him *through a telescope*. Not his face, but the color of his trench-coat.

More importantly, she sees him take the shotgun from the trunk, put it under his coat, and head for her apartment building. Weird, she tells her friend. The friend takes a look — too late. When they're done, and Lori walks home, the police cars and residual commotion will confirm that something nasty just happened.

The actors, events and complications are gripping. Which makes it easy to sweep past the script's consistent theme: Avoiding personal costs by not getting involved.

Isn't that what narrator & journalist Kirkwood gave voice to as the episode got underway? Giambone, too — *guy gets himself shot right in the building and so far not one person seems to have noticed* — as he releases a bit of steam?

The only person not slowed down by the risk turns out to be...Lori Lane. And she wasn't even IN the building! She's the exception to the norm, and what she'll face becomes the best way to justify "the cost of doing business" as Gem #34's title.

When Sandra Lane hears what her daughter saw, she'll be adamant about both of them staying silent. Then, to placate this hard-charging teen, Mom will try to help the cops in another way. How she does it floodlights gaps, rather than closing them.

Later, with Kirkwood and his girlfriend, we'll hear the cops hash out the standoff...

KIRKWOOD: Not a lot of moral absolutes left in the world, Kevin.

O'BRIEN: I, I don't care about absolutes. If you witness a homicide, ya testify.

KIRKWOOD: No matter what the consequences?

O'BRIEN: Yeah! No matter what, and no matter who...

The lady observes: "If you had a kid of your own, you'd feel very differently, Kevin."

O'BRIEN: It is not a matter of what you feel. There are a thousand reasons not to do what you have GOT to do.

Does that suggest intensity or belligerence on the part of NIGHT HEAT's lead character O'Brien? Might be due to the late hour, but he sounds more like a cross between philosophical — big picture, impersonal, abstract — and describing a dutiful fact of life with calm realism. "If you witness a homicide, ya testify."

Not until the very end will this episode's title prove its power. "The cost of doing business" — it's a phrase not spoken. Most of the time, it functions more like a clue than a statement or a marker. It has weight, okay, but not really as a moral.

That word "cost" is what misled me, right from the start. The story's events have nothing to do with protection rackets, or bribes, or drug deals. Directly at least, they have nothing to do with financial matters. These "costs" are what ordinary citizens run up when they're suddenly needed in court by the Police. As they encourage those witnesses to participate, the cops also take on a psychic cost.

First 11 Minutes Laid Things Out Concisely and Compellingly

Talking about **Structure** here might seem odd. Then again, GEMS isn't aimed at fans. Fans have plenty of their own platforms, usually focused on one series.

As a veteran editor who struggled and often failed to get his audience to grasp complex realities and tensions, I see detective episodes structurally. It started in 2013; and the survey has so far covered at least 1,500 Radio and TV examples.

Scenes and dialogue can sizzle, and they let GEMS feature more extracts from each outstanding episode than found, in text form, anywhere on the Internet.

So let's zero in on pacing and the sequence of scenes. If you "write" at all, you know when it's time to examine a script, story, or analysis sequentially...

- First, two teens on an urban rooftop. They happen to have a telescope. We're up there with them for just about a minute. One makes such a positive impression that we look forward to seeing her again.
- Second, the killer cornering his confederate from a botched hold-up five years prior, then using a noisy weapon, in a cramped space both accessible *and* semi-muffled, to carry out vengeance.
- Third, a team of officers interact with who knows how many apartment dwellers. We get a mere sampling, including the one who DOES provide valuable info but soon decides his civic duty is all tapped out.
- Fourth, Frank Giambone encounters Sandra Lane — the ONLY time the tenseness of a relentless first half lets up. The producers do a good job of conveying their sedately intimate exchange amidst the outer chaos and pervasive anxiety of residents anxious to not be helpful.
- Right after Frank leaves Sandra's apartment with O'Brien, we see Lane's daughter Lori emerge from the elevator. This is the moment, and it comes

and goes fast, where we connect the opening scene — two schoolgirls on a city rooftop — with the piano-teacher mom who didn't make the phone call yet opted to bring out tea and a snack for the detective.

Lori Lane is played by LONDON JUNO, age 14 at the time "The Cost of Doing Business" first aired. No Wikipedia article, and [precious little about her on IMDB](#) dot-com. The mother — Sandra Lane — is rendered convincingly by [LORI HALLIER](#). Don't get confused by the actress who plays the mother having the same first name in real life as the character presented as her daughter in the script. What matters more than anything is that the casting of this duo is perfect. Each conveys her part marvelously. They even *look* like Mother and Daughter.

Frank Giambone returns to his colleagues. At this point, the cops have no idea that being OUT of the building is what let ONE of the residents see something major. Nor can they know that this same witness is back IN the building, having safely returned to an apartment that the detectives already visited.

The ribbing of Giambone goes on — comic relief to offset the mix of dead ends and fog around the evening's murder. Fog: The killer did not live in these apartments. They aren't even sure the victim did; maybe he was *delivering* groceries. Mom's reverie ends abruptly when Lori gets back home. "I saw this guy," she tells her mother excitedly. "He was carrying a shotgun [and] I copied down the license plate." Sandra Lane is disoriented. *Honey, what are you talking about?* "A MAN, through my telescope, I saw him ... and we better call the cops."

No, says the mother. "We don't need to get involved." She is firm but not fierce. "You're gonna have to trust me on this one." Painful strains already afflict both.

It's only Minute 13, and viewers have a preview of the biggest hurdle awaiting the cops. Unless, that is, a better and/or less at-risk witness materializes.

What's hard to guess is what will happen to the just-started interaction between the Detective and the Piano Teacher, thanks to the schoolgirl with a telescope, and the presence of mind to write down a license-plate number. In fact, you'll still be doing some guessing at the very end. Why?

Because this 1980s cop series reveals a striking design factor. NIGHT HEAT bent detective-drama rules by leaving certain big things unresolved — as if a Part Two is being set up but with no likelihood of it being served. I'll have more to say about that aspect of this series next time one of its episodes appears as a Gem.

The Difference Between Vital Clues and Courtroom Evidence

Sandra Lane does not know that difference. But she decides that she owes her daughter...something. She phones Headquarters and invites Giambone back for a second exchange. He takes the call in front of four colleagues. The ribbing about "Sandra" resumes. Before the 15th Minute starts, he is back in her apartment...

We hear the same restful, vaguely solemn, piano tune. This time it's on the record player (which no one in 1987 called a "device"). More on the melody later — I figure it must've had real resonance for several people who contributed to this episode.

Giambone is excited two times over. Sandra is quite a woman, and only the second resident to offer the Police something workable: "Okay, you overheard these two men talking in their stairwell," he says. "One of them said he saw a guy with a shotgun get out of a car parked a block away. License plate AJI-314. Right?"

This is how Sandra Lane means to satisfy a fired-up daughter: *I know a policeman and I can tell him the one critical thing you found out.* Giambone naturally keeps pressing. Yes, she imagines her two (made-up) figures live in this building. No, because they were one or two floors below on the stairs, no faces to describe.

"I don't understand," she tells him. "Isn't the license plate enough to go on?" "We can work with it," he replies, "but — we really need the guy who actually saw the plate. How did he sound?" One well-meaning assist now leads to misleading fabrication. Lane makes up a response; the man's accent was English, or maybe Irish.

What she's saying will cause two of Giambone's colleagues to waste more time on these hush-hush floors. Sandra's fuzziness is followed by impatience. But not mainly on the part of the detective, because something else is going on here...

On the way out, stalling for time as he prepares to ask for a date, Giambone asks about the music. "Oh, Satie," she says, relieved to have the subject shift from made-up witnesses. "I'm trying to relearn that piece. It's not as easy as it sounds."

She is vaguely girlish now. As an actress, four months away from turning 28 at the time this episode first aired, LORI HALLIER excels: She is telegraphing her jumble of parental authority, truth-shading, and romantic sensations superbly.

Giambone is almost out the door. Then he pivots, comes back just in time, and says: "Listen — I don't usually do this, but: I'd like to see ya again. Not just business." "Fine," she smiles gently. "SOON," she adds. As Sandra Lane rechains the door, she looks both relieved and happy. She thinks she has kept (enough) faith with her daughter while protecting the plucky teenager's identity.

We'll hear the music a third time. "Erik Satie" [Suh-TEE] will jangle the chords of memory for anyone who grew up with or near the LP [*Blood, Sweat & Tears*](#) — by a jazz-oriented group of the same name. They put the composer's name in the title of both the opening and the closing tracks. This 1969 LP was Top 10 for years.

NIGHT HEAT from 11/5/87: "[The Cost of Doing Business](#)"

[https://www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inO2lKObeXI), then put **watch?v=inO2lKObeXI** in SEARCH box

You can't acquire the NIGHT HEAT series on studio-issued DVDs. But a respectable public-domain set is available from the FILM COLLECTORS SOCIETY OF AMERICA. This is a valuable enterprise and its chief (Stefan H.) has never disappointed me. Start at <https://www.thefilmcsa.com>

Not Done Yet. Checking in With the Sources of Tension...

Tensions, whether violent or subtle, sharp or underlying, are what keep viewers mentally engaged and emotionally rolling. This NIGHT HEAT offers as many as a single episode can convey without becoming incoherent. Here are a few more...

1. Of the people in the 15-story building — and the episode offers us only two — with vital information, it's the license-plate number passed along by Sandra Lane that helps the cops locate, and arrest, the man described by Mr. Kroll.
2. Pulled in to verify the suspect in a line-up, Kroll has been pushed over the edge. He feigns ignorance. And he calls the cops "gorillas" for bringing him in. As Minute 23 opens, he's telling them "I've done all I can to help you guys out."
3. Yet the suspect — a wild-eyed Mr. Hoover we saw in the elevator — is part of Court records. Henry Pace is the guy he killed. Hoover, Pace and a third man — John Edwards — were part of a liquor-store holdup. But only Hoover served jail time. The cops figure that, now freed, he'll attempt a second revenge killing.
4. Senior Cop O'Brien's superior referees a clash between him and Elaine Jeffers ([DEBORAH GROVER](#)). After conceding, halfway into the 24th Minute, that "Yeah, he's guilty," Jeffers adds: "And you give me one witness — an EYE-witness that can put the car on the scene, and we'll hold him. Otherwise, forget it. HEARSAY will not make it in a courtroom. Cut him loose." So insists the Public Prosecutor. PPs didn't like to lose cases in the 1980s, and they like it even less now.
5. O'Brien and his officers put a tail on Stan Hoover. But the wiser course is to find

and warn John Edwards (played with striking realism by [JOHN PYPER-FERGUSON](#)). When they do locate him, he is twice scared: His wife knows nothing of his past.

The [scriptwriter](#) and producers handle all of this action with precision and, as far as I can detect, no gimmicks and no implausible leaps. But the biggest surprise is one of the two most startling moments (if we don't count the shotgun blast)...

As Minute 27 opens, we hear Lori herself reporting the license number of Stan Hoover's rental car. She uses the phone in her room. Asked where she lives, Lori simply repeats the license number: "You got that?" Sure do. The call is taped.

Giambone returns to headquarters. It's a long night. His associates found no one with an Irish or English accent. But other news is good: "Frank, Kevin, come here. Uhhh, I got a call a little while ago from some kid, 13-14 years old; she knew the license number of the car..." Unfortunately, the caller wouldn't give her name.

O'Brien and Giambone hear the tape: "This guy got out. Got a shotgun from the trunk, and we saw it for a second, before he hid it under this long coat." What color was the coat? "It was a beige — a trench-coat." That clinches the teen's credibility. Another part of the tape is also vital: *Someone is playing Erik Satie*.

Giambone's slow surprise at that background melody is another memorable moment: His new romantic interest is the mother of the teen who took civic obligation into her own hands...while trying to obey her mom's insistence on anonymity. For the third time, Giambone heads for that musical apartment.

When he and O'Brien arrive, Frank tells Kevin that he'd "like to handle this one on my own." Kevin replies: "I think WE'RE gonna handle it." Because, had Giambone focused on being a detective, and/or Lori's mother played it straight, the Police wouldn't need to be bailed out by a principled teen and her mother's piano.

So many parts of this NIGHT HEAT excel. All the competing forces take shape and claim their space. It's a work of cop-show art complex as well as coherent. And you haven't even heard much about the second half, or who Lori Lane's father is.

Time for a break, you say? Or at least a change of topics? If you write or play music, don't miss Notable Quotes from French-born wit Eric Satie (1866-1925)...

A few samples: "Everybody offers to buy one a drink; but nobody ever dreams of buying one a *sandwich*." "Experience is a form of paralysis." And: "Why attack God? He may be as miserable as we are."

<https://quotes.thefamouspeople.com/erik-satie-308.php>

DD Gem #32 — "The Arnold Bennett Arson Fraud"

February 20-24, 1956 (and CBS Radio, 1949 to '62)

From [YOURS TRULY, JOHNNY DOLLAR](#)

Andrew Cord is with the Four-State Fire Insurance Corp. in Hartford, Connecticut. He is seeking help from Johnny Dollar, a free-lance insurance investigator.

Every Dollar episode opens with a ringing phone and a financial mess, or at least a Dollar-denominated mystery. This one is underway in San Francisco, way back when the city wasn't a sociological, ideological and environmental disaster zone.

"We've written a lot of insurance for an independent contractor out there, a man named Arnold Bennett," Cord tells Dollar. "Last night his latest project went up in *smoke* — an office building he completed a month ago... I talked with the Arson Inspector for National Fire-Underwriters [and] he said the fire looked phony."

Dollar has just one question — "How much is the policy worth?" — before agreeing to team up with Cord. Some slice of that large amount would be his commission.

Yet the only sums you'll ever get from "Dollar" and DOLLAR have to do with each case's reimbursable *expenses*. It's a running gag of this radio series: "The man with the action-packed expense account..." Useful for students of inflation — sort of.

It's hard to poll on such matters, but the late, great Ed Walker of WAMU FM-88 in D.C. spoke of a consensus that [BOB BAILEY](#) (1913-83) was the best of the *seven* actors who made "Dollar" valuable during its exceptionally long run. And that was an exceptionally long sentence. By my standards, anyway. Elongation...is Bad.

Another outstanding five-part Dollar episode — "The Lorcoe Diamonds Matter" — led the [July 2020 issue](#) of GEMS. That write-up said Bob Bailey as Johnny Dollar...

was in unequal parts respectful and demanding; analytical and visceral; skeptical and judgmental. He was also able to narrate his fist-fights retroactively while the listeners heard him slugging out each one in real time.

A credit to the 1955-59 DOLLAR episodes is how Bailey moves from narrator to protagonist — in and out, over and around. Few series show a lead character doing that more helpfully. Radio sagas (to check off the obvious) had zero images. Vital settings therefore had to be described by someone; otherwise, the episodes could not convey a complex case without becoming vague, goofy, or jagged.

As for what makes THIS episode a Gem? The listener is treated to...

(1) a tutorial on how U.S. arson jobs took place, and were investigated, 70 years ago; (2) Dollar testifying at a trial during which he lays out his police and military background — rare info; (3) an engrossing performance by a young woman who lost her husband due to the central character's connivance, along with (4) a chilling though mostly indirect sense of this man Bennett's malignant brooding.

"The Bennett Matter" is one of the 10 best DOLLAR episodes. It's also one of the most limply named. I couldn't resist changing the title — at least for the headline. Looks more inviting as **"The Arnold Bennett Arson Fraud."** Also has a nice cadence; try saying it a few times. Words don't need music to have rhythm.

Afterwards — yes, I know — use the original blah title: "The Bennett Matter." Then again, we hear Dollar himself say "my investigation of the Bennett Arson Fraud."

The 1955-56 DOLLAR Adventures Spanned Five Nights

On the plane from New York City to San Francisco, Andy Cord describes Arnold Bennett as a business titan as agile as he is durable...

He's made TIME and LIFE, a couple of times each... When I met him I said to myself: Andy, look WELL on this man, he may be the last of his kind... He's been everything in his lifetime: Sailor, soldier, lawyer, financier, bootlegger, gun-runner [and] Lord knows what all.

We can hear Dollar paying silent attention. When Cord says "I didn't *like* him, Johnny," Dollar perks up: *Well, go on, go on...* "Maybe I was jealous of his aggressiveness or [pause] maybe I've just heard stories of how he ran roughshod over big and little..." And lately Bennett is in BIG financial trouble, continues Cord, especially with the IRS. The burned-out building has to be seen in that light.

As in: "The fire was an Out." Five insurance companies are on the hook for \$100,000 apiece in claims; three of those firms will have operatives in San Francisco. This includes locally-based expert Bill Underwood — "one of the best arson men in the business," affirms Dollar. The struggle is being defined for the listener. Then it's boiled down: "It's gonna take all of us to get Bennett, Johnny."

After checking in at [The Fairmont](#) — "classic ambiance with modern amenities" along with "impressive views of the City and Bay" — Cord and Dollar confer with Underwood at the fire scene. He "had been there all day." And he lays it out...

A watchman at Bennett's structure noticed a loiterer. Three other witnesses recall the same figure. "Male, Caucasian, 25 to 30, medium build, approximately 170, dark hair and dark-complexioned..." Eight cops have been gathering these basics.

Tossed cigarette left burning right before the last man left? Faulty wiring in some hidden box? No way, Underwood says: "The place burnt too well and too fast to be anything BUT professional... The fire got hot and going before anybody even SPOTTED it." He'll find the proof — "somewhere. In these ashes."

Then comes what sounds like an authentic (yes, I know it's fiction) "skull session" between three professionals with a daunting case. Dollar warned us listeners that Underwood is "something of a pedant" but also efficiently helpful. For example:

Ya see, an amateur'll mess it up, generally. It'll smoke a lot and somebody'll *spot* it. Now a *bug* — ya know, a NUT — he'll do as good a job as a professional... But he'll stick around [in order to] watch it burn. Stand a good chance of gettin' caught. He might even *call up* somebody and tell him how happy he is. But, eh, this bird — the one the newsboy saw gettin' outta here fast — well, he sounds like he knows his *business*. Um-hmm — it's business with him.

Dollar defines his part: "To connect 'this bird' and Bennett, somehow." Adequate, out of the gate. But Parts Two through Five will completely rewrite that mission.

Right up to the climax, Arnold Bennett — mover and shaker, builder and breaker, mauler and hauler — is a palpable presence. But the listener HEARS Bennett just one time. Other characters and events, including bad things NOT his doing, do their part to maintain the suspense and suspicion.

"Nobody's ever beat him," Cord had nervously told Dollar on the plane.

The raspy Underwood is even more agitated. Bennett already confronted him. It occurred at the fire wreckage. "He learned to SWEAR somewhere along the line." (A reference lively enough for a '50s national radio drama.) "Watch your step with Bennett," Underwood tells Dollar. "He doesn't care about *anybody*."

During 1955-56, DOLLAR adventures rolled out on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evenings. All five together came to around 70 minutes. Five evenings gave the writers and producers more space to flesh out characters. It also created challenges for a medium that had no Save button or Rewind feature.

Because 1956 radio listeners had to be far more accommodating, the DOLLAR producers respected their attention spans: It took clever writing to refresh a radio audience, from one night to the next, without wasting valuable air time. These five-part scripts made good use of Dollar recapping the main story as new characters (or suspects) entered each night. *Any* writer can learn from how they managed that.

The producer/director of the five-part serials was JACK JOHNSTONE. One more extract from the July 2020 issue of GEMS...

Understanding Johnstone's genius as a producer starts with his credits (although no extensive web bio exists). [That list](#) of credits also offers live links to near all the Johnstone DOLLAR serials. Voices, sound effects, musical cues for scene and mood shifts — it was a mix that allowed a typical DOLLAR saga to excel. "Saga"? Always liked that word! A terse definition: "Narrative of heroic deeds."

The result? Either despite or because of the segmentation, one of the most absorbingly thorough detective radio shows ever. Very little is gimmicky, implausible or "cheap" in these five-part mid-'50s DOLLAR productions.

"Get Tony Midas, and You've Got Your Man"

Dollar, Cord and Underwood were together for over two hours, much of it in the "ruins of the 10-story office building that had been gutted the day before." Later that night they "sat with the three witnesses [at] the Hall of Justice." In what sounds like a multi-stage line-up, even in the '50s, "sixty-odd suspects were paraded out." That many?!? To test three witnesses? Sensory Overload, and no identifications.

The next morning, Dollar enters Bennett's real-estate office near the Presidio. The receptionist and executive assistant is the titan's niece. On the intercom, Bennett calls "Liz" an "idiot" for interrupting his war games.

But she persists, and a minor grace note shows the softer side of Dollar. He says "Thanks, Elizabeth," which gives her a mild start. You hear Dollar reply with a smile: "That's your name, isn't it?" "Yes — I'm Elizabeth Bennett. Go straight ahead."

Arnold Bennett is vocalized perfectly. During a 74-second exchange, he is a snarling SOB. "I'm not going to ask you to sit down. I know why you're here. You have 'Insurance Investigator' written all over your FACE." And he gets the jump on Dollar in two substantive, as opposed to belligerent, ways. First, Bennett insists the fire was deliberate. "What?!" Then he tells Dollar who did it: Tony Midas.

Midas is an ex-employee prosecuted by Bennett for stealing company funds. The result was a five-year jail sentence. At some point (Bennett isn't clear when) Midas swore that he'd get revenge. Dollar asks for a description. "I hardly ever remember *faces*," replies Bennett. But "he's the kind of screwy punk to carry out" the threat.

Bennett's line is that Midas immediately became an arsonist, or — also hard to believe for a guy just out of the slammer — teamed up with a pro. But...

The Midas touch can't be dismissed: A note in the newspaper the prior week — yep, he was just released. Dollar follows up. "A review of the trial and proceedings in which Tony Midas had been convicted of grand theft," Dollar tells us, "substantiated Bennett's information." Including "his threats at the time of his trial."

That didn't surprise me. What DID surprise me was that one of the three witnesses identified Tony Midas's mug picture as the man seen in the vicinity of the building the night of the fire... The San Francisco Police began to turn the town upside down looking for him. By 5:00 in the afternoon, the other two witnesses had made up their minds that *he was the man they had seen after all.*

Looks like Bennett is well ahead of the insurance guys, doesn't it? He has skipped the risk and pain of claiming the fire was unintentional. He can even see the Police Dept. as his private search firm. But what if Midas has left San Francisco? And was someone else part of this skillful incineration project?

Guilty or innocent, the Mastermind has breathing space. For now, anyway.

Except for two additional surprises, that's almost the end of Part One. Each of those story lines was laid out for a national radio audience on Monday night, February 20th, 1956. ***And it took only 15 minutes.*** Without anything to read, and without a single picture or image. Writers and editors, of most any type, can learn a hell of a lot, from this and other sparkling detective radio scripts, about compelling characters and tension. You can do that even if "cops and robbers" isn't among your favorite types of content...

The Characters You'll Meet in the Second and Third Parts

Bill Underwood is having no trouble proving that the fire "is of incendiary origin." (A marvelous phrase, adaptable to other workaday emotional triggers...)

And the related evidence makes Andrew Cord doubt that a convicted embezzler — Tony Midas — could've been the key figure in the Bennett Inferno. How does an embezzler, especially one serving time, become a skilled "torch man"?

One of the police inspectors tells Dollar that, while in San Quentin, Midas shared a cell with "a man named Hanley — a professional burner. Well," Dollar muses to Cord, "Hanley could've taught Midas a few tricks of the trade."

But Cord relays an explosive fact that goes way back to when Midas was still a free man: *Tony Midas is married to Bennett's niece Elizabeth*. Dollar is astounded. So are we. "Yeah," says Cord, "she married him a month before he was convicted."

Elizabeth wanted to meet with Dollar. She phoned him at the end of Part One. He got pulled away by a major event that night. She'll have to wait. The next morning, Dollar calls on a Mr. Engle. Engle defended Tony Midas. Dollar got his name from the trial notes. Their exchange goes from routine, to hostile, to collaborative...

"Tony Midas was a nice kid who got in a little trouble. Everything was against him at the trial. Bennett *poured* it on. He didn't have to, but he did; he coulda let him off..." How much was allegedly taken from Bennett's company? Ten grand. Engle says Midas "didn't have a prayer, with all the evidence against him..."

Did Engle ask Bennett to back off? Engle would snort, but he's low on energy. "Nobody talks Arnold Bennett into anything." Given that reality, Engle advised Midas to make a guilty plea and rest on the mercy of the court; it was his first offense. But "Tony never would admit taking the funds; he said he was framed."

The voice of Engle, here and later, is that of a lawyer who is intellectually honest, including about his own deficiencies. He rises and recedes, but can't quite ignite.

Dollar sounds ready to depart, but not before he gets Engle to admit that the missing Midas and Bennett's niece are man and wife. "A wife can't testify against her husband," Engle confirms, and then adds: "Everyone else in Bennett's office testified against him. She didn't."

The lawyer, being pushed, manages to maintain a tone of objectivity. Not easy at all. His replies to Dollar sound weary without being defensive.

DOLLAR: Was it *spite* that sent Tony Midas to prison, because of him and Elizabeth Bennett?

ENGLE: Noo, no, they proved him a thief.

DOLLAR: I'll throw one more thing at ya, Engle. Bennett wasn't always too good about paying his TAXES —

ENGLE: [Stirring a little] Now look here —

DOLLAR: Our Accounting man has him *pegged* — pegged him for exactly what he is: An opportunist, a dodger. A man out to get what he can, for as little as he can, no matter what. Yeah, we cover everything in a case like this.

ENGLE: You'll never GET Arnold Bennett. He's too *good* for you, Dollar. Too good for your insurance company, your fire investigators, *everybody*. No man stronger ever lived...

DOLLAR: We've already got evidence that proves the building was *fired*. I'm here to get all the story and I think you're the man who can TELL it.

ENGLE: Why me?

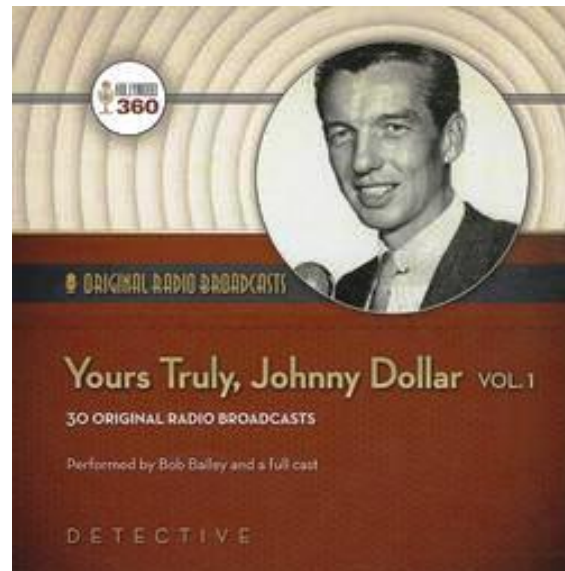
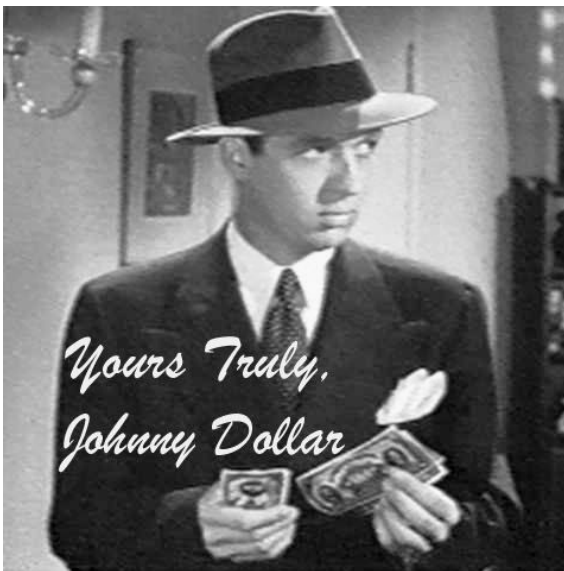
DOLLAR: Because you WORKED for him.

ENGLE: I *never* worked for him. NEVER.

DOLLAR: [Exhaling rapidly] All right, we'll let that go for now. But you can tell me this: Was Tony Midas the kind of man who'd START that fire? You can [also] tell me if he really was an *embezzler*...

ENGLE: I can't tell you anything for a FACT, Dollar, all I have is my own personal opinion...

Okay, already, that's all Dollar is seeking. He drops the high-powered mode.



Left image found on Pinterest 12/22 ... Right looks secure on [Books-A-Million](https://www.books-a-million.com)

The tension is dissipating. Engle is a mix of exhaustion and conviction. He finally tells Dollar: "Midas was a green kid hired into the Company by Bennett. He might have been hired to be framed on a phony embezzling charge that'd GIVE Bennett a good excuse on his taxes for awhile; I've — I've been fooled a lotta times..."

Engle will return later, to make a real contribution. And this first session ends with the lawyer showing some passion: "I WISH I coulda gotten him off. I TRIED, Dollar,

believe me, I tried to get him off... Tony was a nice boy, Dollar. But now his whole life's gone, and for WHAT? ... I hope nobody EVER finds him."

But they do find him, that same night. Toward the end of the second installment of "The Bennett Matter," Cord is on hand to welcome Dollar. At the County Hospital.

"Funny thing, Johnny. There's been an alarm out on this guy for 36 hours. Everybody's been looking everywhere for him and he turns up right here. Only he's dead." From what? Tuberculosis: "TB. He had it awful bad in San Quentin. Was in the SICK Ward his last two years [and] when his time was up last week, he made them release him. But he wound up here, and died in this hospital."

Tony Midas married Elizabeth Bennett during his trial. She has remained employed by "Uncle Arnold" ever since. Accounts in this publication focus on characters, dialogue, and structure, while never spoiling the ending. And so...

Leave it this way: For darn good reasons, Elizabeth Bennett — Mrs. Tony Midas — has disappeared. And Mr. Midas never got a chance to say anything. Not to Dollar, or his colleagues, or us. That's a two-sided anomaly worth a suspenseful interlude in any detective script, regardless of decade. I used enough words to show why.

Another pivotal character becomes just as memorable: George Foley.

"IF You Happen to Want a Building Burnt Down"

Midway into the second installment, Underwood the pedantic prober is ecstatic. He had already concluded that the arsonist "used celluloid and a wick made out of paraffin — I can prove it." That day, or maybe it's the next, the cops discover that George Foley is in town. A big deal? Very big: Underwood describes Foley as one of the best "paraffin and wick men" in the country.

Having located Midas too late, the San Francisco Police do better on George Foley. No action there until the end of Part Two. When Underwood and Dollar arrive at that address, Cord is already on the scene. An Officer tells them: "The way we see it, Foley's still trying to get part of his money for burning the building. He took a chance coming to the HOSPITAL tonight to see Bennett!"

"No kidding" is Dollar's semi-bewildered response. This time, rather than Dollar, it's a police officer, familiar with the case, who has all the energy...

He'll probably make another try. Now you boys have more at stake here than anybody. If you want to talk to him [and] try to make a deal with him to TURN on Bennett, now's the time.

Dollar senses too many unknowns. Cord says nothing. Underwood is gung-ho, because Foley's arsonist m.o. fits the evidence from the Bennett building's ruins. "Go ahead," the cop tells them, and "we'll be covering the back and front."

It's a vintage passage of radio suspense. We hear Dollar and Underwood walking up the steps to the second level. Knock on the door (seven raps). No answer (this time, nine raps). Underwood wants to break in. Dollar tries one more knock.

Suddenly the door opens. Not clear who opened it. Three shots. A struggle.

We hear not a word from Foley. Apparently, he's overpowered but not wounded. Neither is anyone else. Are specifics being left out here? Yes. Not by me in this case, but in the original radio production. Bad? Not necessarily. Whenever the script is very good, fuzziness on details — which might or might not matter in the end — contributes to the keen listener's imagination and participation.

As for one *spectacular* detail, this write-up can't leave it out entirely. Recall the references to Arnold Bennett also being hospitalized: WHY is Arnold Bennett in the hospital?? Because someone came close to killing him. And, from what you have read so far, the one with the gun couldn't have been George Foley.

Quite a threesome. We never heard from Tony Midas. Elizabeth Midas will make a sorrowful appearance in Part Four. And Foley will be around right to the end...

By admitting he worked for Bennett, Foley creates optimism for Dollar & Company. But he scrambles or jumbles every detail of his interaction with the wounded (and so far unconscious) Bennett. What happened — or didn't happen — on the way to the actual crime? What the hell's going on with their only workable witness?

An undercurrent of many five-part Dollar serials is the way certain guest characters interact with the legal system. And Foley is among the cagiest: This veteran firebug turns out to be more than a decent operator at saving his own skin.

The Wikipedia profile of Bob Bailey, linked back on Page 11, doesn't say much about the actor's personal life. Only in 2011, writing for [Radio Recall](#), did JOHN ABBOTT fill some of those gaps. The original breakthrough, back in 1982, was managing to arrange an interview of Bailey's daughter Roberta...

Check out Mr. Abbott's piece entitled "Calling Johnny Collar" — www.mwotrc.com/rr2011_10/dollar.htm

During 1955-56, as noted, each Johnny Dollar saga was given five adjacent week-

nights. One — "The Phantom Chase Matter" — consumed a full NINE, one evening short of two weeks. Looks to have been a tough grind, because the series shifted to a standard 28 minutes per story in 1957. This format would last all the way to September 1962, well after Bob Bailey stopped playing the lead character.

Circa 2015, it was rare to find DOLLAR cases in a single long mp3 file. Eight years later, up come 107-minute YouTube versions of "Bennett." Although downloading is impossible, they let the listener move forward and back in one Web visit....

[https://www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63yfbKn1mdo), then put **watch?v=63yfbKn1mdo** in the SEARCH box

Audio clarity is better than adequate. Given how much of the stage-setting you've gotten here, you could start at around Minute 15 without risk of disorientation.

DD Gem #33 — "The Greenhouse Jungle" — October 15, 1972 From COLUMBO (NBC-TV, 1971 to '78)

Three individuals are decisive. Three other guest actors also matter. All six handle their roles well: Worthy associates for PETER FALK, who embodied Lieutenant Columbo on two different networks in episodes and specials spanning 32 years.

These write-ups avoid the word "plot." Why? Because it masks the elements and muddies the Gem. I also dislike "executive summaries" because, if an analyst expects his evaluations to be accepted, they'll need reinforcing with examples and extracts. Gem write-ups therefore run between 2,800 and 4,500 words each.

For this episode, though, it seems okay to insert something close to a checklist. For starters, **what stands out about this 1972 selection?**

- ▶ Emotional reactions and sudden thoughts captured in rapid facial shots (and lots of 'em). NBC's camera crew, and especially the video editors, worked wonders conveying the two most important characters at many key points. For one spectacular revelation, they did the same with minor guest actor [WILLIAM SMITH](#) (playing **Ken Nichols**).
- The number of "Goofs." At the IMDB site, they are part of the critique. And [this link](#) shows the precision of COLUMBO devotees. One example: Conflicting cigar lengths during what editors turned into a tight two-minute scene. That's not the type of defect I would mark as a Gem "flaw." Yet, for "Greenhouse Jungle," a few overlaps do arise. As in: "Goofs" that could also be considered "flaws." We'll get to those.

- The music. More modulated, less moody, than during the typical Columbo case, and not strained or eerie. Provided by [Oliver Nelson](#) and associates.
 - An unusually innovative compliment Columbo finds for a possible co-conspirator. It's uttered in the 53rd Minute. He has had to deal with a woman who shows him consistent coldness along with bursts of contempt. Yet he pays tribute to her in a way that's sincere as well as disarming. You might try it sometime. See the shaded box on page 27.
 - BOB DISHY's role as **Detective Sergeant Frederick Wilson**. Fresh from the Advanced Police School in Berkeley, he is solicitous of Columbo even as the Lieutenant's intuitive lunges lead to unease. Enthusiastic and rule-conscious Newbie playing up to Seasoned Cop? Not really...
-



When this episode first ran, Bob Dishy, playing Sergeant Wilson, wasn't far from his 39th birthday. Peter Falk had just turned 45. Not so large of a gap. Didn't matter. In and out of his hearing, Columbo calls Wilson "Freddy."

Dishy's character introduces the Lieutenant to (a) using a metal detector to search a spacious house for a firearm, and (b) the **camera-mounted starlight scope**. Did the latter exist in 1972? Not with that nifty name.

Let's call the starlight scope an *extreme* example of Fred Wilson's resourcefulness. Okay, he likes gadgets. But he's no kid.

From the "Turner Classic Movies" website: "Presentable without being conventionally handsome, smart and experienced without being urbane ... **Bob Dishy** has excelled at playing the 'Jewish Everyman' whether the character be a working-class stiff or a mid-level businessman coping with a nagging wife, unruly children and a bad day at the office... [H]e has amassed an impressive resume over some four decades, encompassing everything from Broadway musicals to independent features."

"Our Kidnapper, Whoever He is, is Certainly No PIKER"

Unlike most COLUMBO episodes, this one doesn't begin with a murder. "The boys on the new shift," Fred Wilson tells Columbo early on, "they keep asking me why a HOMICIDE Lieutenant has requested to stay on the KIDNAPPING thing."

We never do hear an answer to that. But we know from the start that the crime isn't a real kidnapping. It's being made to look like one in order to facilitate extortion.

Not so unusual, but this part is: The entire fraud is being carried out by just two individuals: Tony Goodland, whose job is to appear to be the victim; and his resentful uncle, Jarvis Goodland. We see Goodland for 10 seconds during Minute 2, sounding like Tony's nonexistent kidnapper, making a muffled call to his wife.

With only two conspirators, there should be no leaks (true) and no miscommunication (wrong). Tony remains unaware of the third part of Jarvis's three-phase plan. But both men are able to convince Tony's wife that the whole thing is real.

In that terse phone call to her, Jarvis Goodland used a fake accent. "Fake" in that he tried to sound like a thuggish American. In reality, the actor playing him grew up in the U.K. (His name and a link to the bio are being saved for later.)

Jarvis Goodland's background is left to the viewer's imagination. Mostly we watch him being Imperious. He disdains Cathy Goodland and is willing to use Tony in the most malicious way possible. For now, though, uncle and nephew are a team...

Jarvis and Tony push the latter's yellow Jaguar over a cliff. Along with a Missing Person alert — prompted by honest worry from Tony's wife — the stage is set.

Columbo first meets Sergeant Wilson at the scene of the phony car wreck. His next stop will be the Goodland Estate, where this exchange is underway...

JARVIS GOODLAND: Well, I must say, Catherine: Our kidnapper, whoever he is, is certainly no PIKER. To demand a ransom of three HUNDRED thousand DOLLARS — well, I'll wager there are weeks here and there where even YOU don't spend that sort of money.

CATHY GOODLAND: [Exasperated] Don't you EVER stop, Jarvis?

JARVIS: However, leaving our personal affection aside, you must realize that my situation is such that even *I* couldn't pore even the smallest DROP into such a huge bucket. Even though I'm not a weakling with a spendthrift wife...

CATHY: Oh, SHUT UP, Jarvis.

Guest actors in high-quality scripts sometimes take the same position, even though they've got radically different objectives. Cathy and Jarvis concur on one big thing: This emergency requires "breaking open" Tony's trust fund to cover the ransom. It's a shared stance that lets them dial back the two-way revulsion.

Unaware of Jarvis's role, Cathy needs his help: He is co-administrator (with bank officials) of the Tony Goodland Trust; it was set up by his late father, about whom we know nothing. Playing a victim under duress, Tony spelled out the \$300,000 demand in his own hand; and Jarvis surreptitiously got the letter to Cathy.

Both of those events took place before the Police discovered the wrecked Jaguar.

Columbo arrives. Mrs. Goodland prefers he not enter. "I've already told your people EVERYTHING I know, Lieutenant, in triplicate. Now if you'll excuse me, I have company..." Colombo is politely persistent. He finally gets into the house.

We are halfway through the 17th Minute, and this next exchange is priceless...

Agree to Certain Limits, but Insist On the Right to Monitor

A senior law-enforcement official is here to deliver alarming information, yet neither of the Goodlands will register curiosity about it...

We found your husband's car about an hour ago. It was in a CANYON off Middle Cross Road.

Two seconds of non-reactive stare-back by Mrs. Goodland.

Uh, smashed up pretty badly, I'm afraid — uh, kind of a long drop off that particular spot.

Now it's three seconds of waiting for Mrs. Goodland to reply...with anything.

Uh, even worse: We found a *bullet* hole in the window on the driver's side.

Again, *no reaction*. The camera gives us three quick looks at Jarvis watching the non-exchange. He's probably a bit anxious about Cathy buying the crash story.

Her steady blankness is *really* baffling the Lieutenant. "You already heard this?"

After four seconds, she replies: "Uh *No*." The "no" is uttered with a half-smile.

Columbo gently conveys incredulity. "If somebody POPPED in and told my wife that they found my car at the bottom of a canyon with a bullet hole in it..."

Having received his ransom note, Cathy believes Tony is safe — or at least he wasn't killed by his car going down some slope. Still, she doesn't want to talk.

Jarvis, of course, knows about the car. What he can't know is how relentless a foe this man Columbo will become. Mostly his need is to keep things moving.

So, at Minute 17:16, he further irritates Cathy: "You're quite right, Lieutenant. We DO know much of what you're telling us." This forces Cathy to admit the arrival of a ransom letter. But she doesn't want to share what it says — "aside from the fact that it specifically says NOT to give the Police any information..."

Columbo then makes a two-part declaration: "I will do NOTHING to endanger the safety of your husband. But this is a CRIME [and therefore it's] a POLICE matter." He is accepting certain limits while at the same time guaranteeing that he (and Wilson) have room to maneuver. They'll be able to monitor events.

The three discuss the \$300,000 ransom demand, and the letter (which the bank will soon verify as written by Tony). Jarvis also mentions Tony's trust. Columbo asks for details. He calls it "a lucky thing" that the trust fund can be tapped for "emergencies." Jarvis commits to work with the bank (Golden West, a respected west-coast outfit prior to 2008) and leaves before Columbo does. Sound of door closing.

That sound is a false all-clear. Someone who heard everything comes out to comfort Cathy. It's love interest Ken Nichols. Columbo sees them embrace. Having eyes only for her, Nichols didn't notice that one of her two visitors remains.

Even taller than Jarvis, Nichols is the kind of velvet-voiced muscleman who'll be thrown off just once during this episode. That awkward situation isn't now.

"I heard the front door close," he says to Cathy, "and I thought you were alone." Cool as ever, he says to Columbo: "Uh, who are you? Another cop?"

Nichols calls himself "a friend of the family's." He's very friendly with (just) one member of this family. Jarvis can't stand him, but Jarvis just left. "You go on back upstairs," Nichols tells Cathy, "and get some rest. You let me be the watchdog — fix him [Columbo] a drink, or whatever." Her reply: "No, he *was just leaving*."

We're into the 22nd Minute. Prolonged awkwardness has turns the lady's irritation to fury. Ushering Columbo out, she delivers a completely polarized message: "Lieutenant ... I'm *scared* about Tony — and I'll do anything on Earth to see him safe." All the same, "We lead *separate* lives and I *don't really CARE* what you might be thinking right now. Good day!"

She shuts the front door loudly, though it's not quite a slam. Viewers have seen the posture, and heard the mode, preferred by Mrs. Goodland. It's going to hold right up to the final two minutes of "The Greenhouse Jungle."

"He's a Wife-Ridden Weakling Whom I've *Despised* for Years"

Jarvis Goodland parks, walks up his front steps, and turns back toward the front yard. His visual sweep signals satisfaction. Or at least a break from the stress.

If Jarvis Goodland has a maid or a butler, we get no hint of either. And this is a big house. How does he afford it? Why is he orchestrating a phony kidnapping to get \$300,000? Either because he needs it to keep living opulently, or because he has no use for his remaining family. Or both. The dire straits are merely implied.

"Rest assured, we will do NOTHING to interfere" — that was Columbo's pledge to him, back at the Goodlands'. Alone, back in his own lair, with only a groundskeeper we never meet, Jarvis no doubt regains breathing space. Inside the greenhouse, he sighs. And it's no compact backyard structure, either. This one opens right into the billiard room. Jarvis is ready to commune with his orchids...

"EXCUSE me. I hope I didn't *startle* you, Sir. One of your men — I *believe* it was the gardener — he said it was all right if I *waited* here and..." Columbo pivots into his laudatory mode and marvels "at so many beautiful flowers."

Helping Cathy mollify Columbo was one thing. But a home invasion brings new dangers for The Plan. At the start, Jarvis handles him much better than Cathy did. He admits to a passion for orchids and suggests Columbo is here "with something else on your mind." Naturally. "I came here to see how you made out at the Bank."



"And to see THIS, I suppose..." Out comes the ransom letter. Jarvis is happy to turn it over to the authorities. Why not? It really is Tony's writing, although not with a gun aimed at him. A colleague sent to the Bank by Columbo found Tony's fingerprints and no one else's. The conspirators tended to *these* details well.

Jarvis further reports that the Goodland Trust will cover the ransom demand. But this is the last time Columbo and Jarvis Goodland will be on the same side of any pending matter. Without an obvious trigger, cordiality disappears.

Jarvis declares that "the fact of your being here jeopardizes my nephew's *life*. Now *supposing* we were WATCHED." Good point, Columbo replies. "I better run along." He can always come back. He always DOES come back. And, before exiting, he'll try to pick up one or two more fragments, by focusing on odd behavior...

Columbo knows Jarvis "didn't go straight to the Bank" after their prior exchange. This knowledge becomes part of a compliment: "It just hit me how much you must LOVE these flowers." What? Despite the mortal danger facing Tony, he observes, "they told me you took the time to stop off at the Nursery and..."

THEY?? "You mean I'm being *followed*, ALREADY?" No denying the enhanced risk now. What to do? "*I'm gonna call up your superiors*," he barks. No need, Columbo replies. "They've made it very clear. I'm to stay in touch but, until your nephew is released, BELIEVE me, we're *way back*. Way back. Nothing to worry about."

That's the same pledge he gave to Cathy Goodland. But Jarvis Goodland has to worry about police monitoring for entirely different reasons.

Cathy at least told Columbo she is committed to Tony's survival. Jarvis, on the other hand, goes beyond rudeness. Something compels him to make this blunder. And, rather than shouting, the sound is more like an elongated sneer...

In that case, I don't mind revealing that my nephew isn't worth a sack of peat moss. He's a wife-ridden weakling whom I've *despised* for years. If it wasn't for the fact that he's my ONLY relative, I'd call up his captors and tell 'em that they're *welcome* to him.

"In that case" makes this declaration of hate, somehow, a response to Columbo saying "nothing to worry about" because the cops will stay "way back." Jarvis Goodland should've kept his guard up, while thanking Columbo for the space.

Instead, at the start of Minute 27, he went the opposite way: Emotional intensity leading to self-incrimination: *He despises his "kidnapped" nephew*. And how does Columbo respond? Speechless astonishment, followed by awkward exit.

Jarvis, up to now an authoritative if malignant plotter, suddenly displays mortification. Self-control has just deserted him. It's the one time you'll see this man display rapid awareness of a non-recoverable error and a needless one.

About that Delightful and Disarming Columbo Compliment...

For all he knew early on, Cathy Goodland's odd behaviors might signal her part in something dastardly. But he never treated her abruptly or showed disapproval of the romance with Ken Nichols. And, regardless of her evasions and contempt, he has to keep dealing with her. What kind of "nice thing" — a compliment both accurate and sincere — might placate a person like Cathy Goodland? Out it comes during the 53rd Minute: **"Ya know something, Mrs. Goodland — [three-second pause] — you're a very unusual person: You're not a hypocrite."** Try offering *that* plaudit to someone who has been treating you like unordered fill dirt. In this instance, it will enable the Lieutenant's questioning to continue.

IN CASE YOU MISSED these methodical tributes from 2022...

Issue #7 showcased Gems from Lee Marvin's M SQUAD, MAGNUM, P.I., and THE NEW ADVENTURES OF NERO WOLFE
<http://www.ExactingEditor.com/Detective-Gems-7.pdf>

Issue #8 offered a second look at BROADWAY IS MY BEAT while initiating coverage of COLUMBO and BURKE'S LAW (*original versions*)
<http://www.ExactingEditor.com/Detective-Gems-8.pdf>

Dillman, Smith, and Milland (not a law firm)

"Greenhouse Jungle" portrays people corroded by inherited money. If it wasn't easy wealth that steered them off the rails, then try this: All three might have entered adulthood with various destructive tendencies — and the money came along to make things (even) worse...

[BRADFORD DILLMAN](#) is **Tony Goodland**, Jarvis's son-in-law. He is shallow, and salutes his uncle's wily extortion scheme. But whiffs of youthful romanticism remain, despite coming of age preparing for wealth without the educational

opportunities of holding down a job. The viewer receives no hint of what Tony "does" beyond (1) wanting the Trust Fund to be rationed less stringently while (2) — the idealistic part — believing his marriage can be saved. Later we'll hear that he made some kind of overture to induce Ken Nichols to disappear.

[SANDRA SMITH](#) is **Catherine Goodland**. She is presented as having married Tony for his long-range supply of dollars; Jarvis says that four times. Up to the very end, when Columbo saves her from a murder rap, she'll be handling the Lieutenant icily without, as noted, any risk of being called a hypocrite.

And RAY MILLAND (1907-86) is **Jarvis Goodland**. His personality conveys without subtlety, apart from the fog over what he did on the way to becoming a haughtily decisive 65-year-old who loves orchids. Or maybe just managing them. By the hundreds. Is he a merchant? In any case, he quotes prices to Columbo that signal his orchids are, at the very least, a high-end hobby.

Jarvis's precision extends to editing the visiting policeman. They aren't standing in a greenhouse, Columbo is told; it's a SOLARIUM. Meaning? "A room exposed to the sun" (*Merriam Webster*, 2004, page 683). A greenhouse (same source, different page) is "a glass structure for the growing of tender plants."

A Few Plausibility Demerits and a Sixth Guest Actor

When Frederick Wilson said "I don't know what I'm supposed to say," he wanted Columbo's take on why a Homicide cop jumped into a kidnapping probe near its the beginning. Columbo did not answer because, right then, a telephone tap on Cathy Goodland's line alerts him and Wilson to pick up the headphones.

We also don't hear that Mrs. Goodland approved the tap, although it would be hard for her to refuse, given that the cops are pledged to "stay way back" while gathering evidence about criminal events. But "way back" becomes relative...

Colombo, Wilson and two others tail Jarvis as he goes to deliver the ransom. The location: An isolated hilltop. Since Jarvis and Tony are the whole conspiracy, Jarvis will be handing Tony a suitcase with \$300,000. Tony is disguised just well enough to avoid later recognition by Colombo, despite enlarged pictures of the exchange made possible by Sergeant Wilson's long-distance night camera.

Elements of the ransom drop and immediate aftermath do seem a little off. Same with the telephone tap and the tailing of Jarvis. Corners seem to have been cut to keep this script rolling along. Check that "Goofs" section at IMBD if you prefer a fine-grained critique. In any case, it's a rare Gem that's totally flawless.

One other actress deserves a mention: [ARLENE MARTEL](#) (1936-2014) is a minor factor in the very opening, and a major one later. Her character — **Gloria West** — is accused by Mrs. Goodland in a phone call during the first few minutes. West was Tony's "receptionist" in an office or career we're given no info about.



When Columbo goes to see West, he declines to treat her as the dumb and probably lying blonde we met in those opening minutes. She seems a mix of greed, sympathy, and candor. With Columbo, though, it's 80% fragility.

Her attempts to end the questioning, combined with anguish about Tony's plight, impel Columbo to declare: "I believe everything you tell me." After hearing more, he adds: "I think you're a very honest person." Rare tributes, in this case not overly manipulative.

In the next scene, to spawn doubts in Cathy Goodland's mind, Columbo cites West regarding — you guessed it — Ken Nichols. The perpetually tanned Nichols is with them, on her boat. "You know, this is gonna sound kinda silly, I guess. Take it for what it's worth..."

The big thing Columbo learned about Tony, from Gloria, is relayed as a barely relevant fragment. He doesn't even need to ask Cathy Goodland a question...

Ya see, somebody tried to convince me that you had a LOVER, Mrs. Goodland. Not only that, this person, Gloria West — young girl, that was her name: Gloria West — anyway, she said that, uh, this mysterious lover of yours — some guy with deep suntan — that he'd, uh, go away and [pause] get out of your life forever if your husband gave him \$50,000. I'm sure it's just malicious gossip. Probably shouldn't have mentioned it. However — for what it's worth.

Nichols is, of course, the "mysterious lover." And we finally have a specific as to why Tony sought money from his own ransom. Yet Columbo sounded no more incendiary than if he were offering a bland tip about a specialty restaurant.

The juicy tip, as we saw, came from Gloria; and her name has to keep Catherine Goodland simmering. The facial reactions — first from her, then from Sun-Tan Man as she processes his readiness to take \$50K to leave town — are classic.

Buy Season Two of *Columbo* from Barnes & Noble...

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/dvd-columbo-season-two/26441080>

"Greenhouse Jungle" script: Jonathan Latimer (1906-83) [IMDB profile](#)

From the same source, "The Greenhouse Jungle" Cast & Crew

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0068401/fullcredits>

In many exchanges, Ray Milland as Jarvis Goodland is looking at the other individual from a semi-sideways angle and also down, as befits his commanding height.

But this actor's career shows a flexibility that would never have survived old-age arrogance. If, like me, you are in the 7th decade of life, take this candid coaching from Milland as either a blast of cold water, or inspiration — or both: Let the splash lead to renewed resolve to, in whatever the field, extend your run...

Do what you can with what you've got. I know actors from my generation who sit at home and cry, "Why don't they send me any scripts?" I tell them: "Because you still think of yourself as a leading man. You're 68, not 28. Face it."

That get-real sparkler comes from a Wiki footnote about "Milland explaining his philosophy on becoming a character actor towards the end of his career." You can see the rest via https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ray_Milland#cite_note-obit-4

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