



# Detective Drama GEMS...

Mid-1940s to the Mid-1990s

Issue #13 February 2024

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

## Gem #40 — "[Point Of Law](#)" — March 7, 1976 From **McMILLAN & WIFE** (NBC-TV, 1971 to '76)

In 2011, Seattle author **J. Kingston Pierce** saluted this series. The occasion was the 40th anniversary of its launch on NBC. His [Web analysis is rigorous as well as sentimental](#). Just as good: It spares THIS write-up from being at least 600 words longer.

You can read Mr. Pierce's analysis now, or as part of the Page 8 links. But don't miss it. He nails all the essentials about this series and its regulars. Thanks to him, we can jump right into the *final* episode that starred SUSAN SAINT JAMES as Sally McMillan, wife of the San Francisco Police Commissioner played by ROCK HUDSON.

"Point of Law" is unlike all other McMILLAN & WIFE episodes. How so?

(1) It's dominated by courtroom scenes; and (2) it's one of just a few that don't have McMillan in San Francisco being the hands-on Commissioner; (3) It lacks the ambitious, not to say ridiculous, chase scene favored by the show's producers. And (4) a gunshot will be heard just once, at the end, to help the viewer IMAGINE what happened in a sequence we missed part of at the episode's start.

Finally (5) — though, for this publication, it's #1 — "Point of Law" is the only McMILLAN episode where everything in it...could really have taken place.

This series influenced me as much as it did Mr. Pierce, and his analysis flags the tendencies that left it not quite "serious" as a cops & robbers exhibit. "Although some of its episodes were penned by [Edward D. Hoch](#), [Steven Bochco](#), [Steve](#)

[Fisher](#), and *Columbo's* Levinson and Link," he writes, "this show's story lines could be pretty outrageous at times." No question about it. "But then complete credibility never seemed of paramount importance in *McMillan & Wife*."

Later episodes had a whopping 137 minutes (or 2 1/2 hours, counting commercials) to mix escapist doings and dialogue into the crime's story line. Sergeant Charles Enright ([JOHN SCHUCK](#)) sometimes helped with this lighter side. But he always called his boss "Sir" and never made jokes at the Big Guy's expense.

Not so Mildred, the McMillans' smart-alecky housekeeper. Was NANCY WALKER's character ever given a last name? Yes, but only on the sitcom *Rhoda*, which ran for some of the same years (on another network) as McMILLAN & WIFE did.



Mrs. McMillan is Mildred's real boss. And when the latter keeps using the term "Commissioner," Sally has a reminder about Title: "COMMANDER, Mildred; he's been on active duty since this morning."

She is unimpressed: "Ohh yeah, well — if the United States can take it for two weeks, I suppose I can." McMillan can get into his uniform at the age of 50. Sort of. Mildred also jokes about tightness in the seat.

McMILLAN: Well, Sally — this is it.

SALLY: I'm gonna miss you.

MILDRED: Yeahhh, it's a rough war; ya won't see him 'til tonight.

SALLY: That's the idea of it, Mildred; it's a whole strange new world.

MILDRED: I know. Thirty minutes away! And he does it two weeks out of every year.

SALLY: [Firmly] This is *active duty*, a NAVAL Base.

MILDRED: All right! He sits in an office, behind a *desk*, as opposed to the OTHER 50 weeks of the year, where he sits in an office *behind the desk*.

McMILLAN: There's no glamour in your soul, Mildred. NOT an OUNCE.

Captain Robert Stiles (ANDREW DUGGAN) welcomes "Mac" back. This won't be a Reservist's standard two weeks, he goes on. "I want you to handle Defense Counsel: 2nd-Degree Murder." Mac politely demurs: "I haven't been in front of a jury for 12 years." Besides, "there's not one JAG Officer available?"

Not that he's the best legal mind on the Base, Stiles replies, but "you're the best man I've GOT." (McMillan was a defense attorney before ascending to the rank of Commissioner.) Others at Stiles' disposal are "too green" to handle defense in this murder case; either that, or they were too close to the deceased.

Before relinking with Stiles, Mac makes a courtesy call on an officer a lot shorter than him, and not just height-wise. WILLIAM DANIELS is [Commander Campbell](#) (no first name). He is punctilious, supercilious and invidious — but not insidious. Why not? Personalities like Campbell's generate their own antitoxins. He says: "This must be something like hard duty for you, Commissioner, leaving your Police Empire behind." As Campbell keeps scribbling, Mac deflects rather than retorts.

The phone rings, and Campbell tells the caller: "You're dealing with a 37-day UA! Now get your 601-6R and throw him in front of a summary *Court Martial*." After throwing down the receiver, he tries what in those days was called a pop quiz: "You do remember [pause] some of our Naval terminology, Commander — UA? (And Campbell's *still* scribbling.) "Unauthorized Absence," replies Mac dryly.

## "You DO Have the Right to Hire a Civilian Attorney"

In this script by [HOWARD BERK](#), the more interesting guest actors are (1) [SUSAN ANSPACH](#) as Navy Lieutenant Catherine "**Kit**" **Boone**, confessing to a homicide. And (2) [ALAN FUDGE](#) as Navy Lieutenant **Jack Porter**. Admirers of the 1970s HAWAII FIVE-O will remember Mr. Fudge in roles ranging from FBI hard-liner to stealer of nuclear elements for sale to revolutionaries. Films? See Wikipedia...

Fudge appeared in many television movies based on popular series, such as... *Columbo Goes to the Guillotine* [and] *Columbo Goes to College*, *Matlock: The Witness Killings*, and *Murder, She Wrote: A Story to Die For*... Films in which he appeared include [Airport 1975](#) (1974), *Bug* (1975), *Capricorn One* (1978), *Chapter Two* (1979), [The Border](#) (1982), *Brainstorm* (1983), *The Natural* (1984), *My Demon Lover* (1987) and *Edward Scissorhands* (1990). Fudge's stage work included performing at the Charles Playhouse in Boston. For three years, he acted with the APA-Phoenix Theatre. He appeared on Broadway, including being part of the original cast of *War and Peace* at the Lyceum Theatre in 1967.

In "Point Of Law," his role is to resolve complications that become unbearable. They start with Boone and her date. Both are Navy Lieutenants. Like her, Don Corbett ([STEPHEN YOUNG](#)) worked in Supply. So did her estranged husband Harleigh, from whom she had separated three months earlier.

Boone and Corbett drove back to her quarters. She agreed to coffee but that would

be it. On the living-room couch, Corbett put the make on her. In a cordial way, she indicated repeatedly that the date was over and he needed to leave. The little we saw of him was more suggestive rascal than tripwire psycho.

One thing led to another — or did it? The *clearest* part the viewer saw is a call coming in to Base Security to get over there right away. They arrived at Boone's place to find Corbett on the floor, dead, from a single gunshot. Boone said, then and there, that she had to shoot him, to avoid a beating and/or rape.

The gaps are filled in when Lieutenant Boone meets with McMillan. He'll have to be accepted as counsel by the defendant. In a shaky voice, she tells him...

[Corbett] wouldn't go. He became [pause] *mean*, and vicious. I couldn't believe it was the same person... He said I'd been teasing him all night [and now he would] TAKE what he wanted. He started, ahhh, hitting me and [pause] *tearing* at my CLOTHES... Then he slammed me back against the desk... I must've reached in a drawer, because — suddenly the gun [exhaling] was in my *hand*; I didn't wanna shoot him, I just wanted to FRIGHTEN him, but he, he kept coming toward me...

When someone confesses to a killing, and there's any doubt, police will test the recollection for faulty details, sequencing, etc. That doesn't seem necessary here. Rather than dissect the crime scene, Mac tries to get a read on Kit Boone; on the dead man's actions and other details of their evening; and his own legal duties.

Was Donald Corbett "usually physically aggressive"?

BOONE: In a way, he was — he kept touching me and I kept pushing his hand away, but — you didn't take Don [slight laugh] very seriously.

McMILLAN: Well, yes Lieutenant; but, at the risk of sounding [pause] *callous*, we can't build a case on Lieutenant Corbett's good nature.

He then outlines Boone's legal options, and she replies: "Captain Stiles explained that to me" and she told him she wanted to meet this Stewart McMillan first. She is relieved by his mildness of manner. "Well," says Mac with a slight awkward chuckle, "it looks like we're stuck with each other."

Before any courtroom action, Campbell turns up. Signaling phony sympathy in a tone of chilly calm, he pitches Mac as a fellow survivalist, he says: "Welll, you've got quite a *mess* on your hands [pause]. Why go through with it? ... You've got a weak case. The lady invited seduction. So where's the self-defense?"

McMILLAN: That's propaganda. Your talkin' about a plea bargain?

CAMPBELL: No no. The *defense* looks for the deal. All I try to do is, uh, SELL it to the convening authority. But if you wanted your Murder charge knocked down to Manslaughter — I might be willing to cooperate. All you have to do is plead Guilty... The lady gets five years, and a Dismissal. And you're off the hook.

Campbell says he's "dealing from strength." McMillan counters that it's mostly "an excess of self-esteem." Sell out your client, and save yourself some headaches.

## Marriage, Divorce, and Female Expectations During the 1970s

Regardless of Campbell's obnoxious tactics, McMillan agrees to relay his rival's proposition to Kit Boone. "If she takes my advice, the answer is No."

But why is the defendant refusing to speak with her husband? On this point, Mac can't budge her. (The scriptwriters know everything, of course; but it's their job to delay certain parts of it, and most times they should be thanked for doing so.)

Played by SCOTT THOMAS, [Harleigh Boone](#) has been worried sick about his wife. His testimony will cast her in sterling terms. "I don't know anyone [who] had a bad word to say about Kit. She was, and is, an honest, decent person."

McMILLAN: Would you describe your wife as a fun-loving person? Like to go out at night, dining, dancing — parties?

COMMANDER BOONE: Just the opposite. Kit liked her home. She liked to BE home.

McMILLAN: Would she be inclined to drink a lot?

BOONE: Seldom drank at *all*. Had to be an *occasion* for Kit to take more than one or two drinks.

A quiet home-life had been Harleigh Boone's goal all along. Mr. and Mrs. Boone had struggled for half a decade to find compatible versions of "happiness"...

CAMPBELL: Why did you and your wife separate, Commander?

BOONE: We weren't getting along... She wanted to work, to stay in the Navy. I wanted her at home.

CAMPBELL: Was this a conflict of recent development, Commander?

BOONE: No [pause]. We discussed it from the time we were first married.

From start to finish, this script puts all the pieces in the right place. More than a

handy backdrop, they bolster all the primary sources of tension. The divorce rate was soaring and women across sectors and professions were insisting on full-time situations, including inside the U.S. Military.

As for the "jury"? We don't hear why the Navy has control of this type of case. At any rate, it's a five-person military panel: Two women and three men. None will be heard. But the cameras make excellent use of their reactions to things said by various witnesses. Especially another character without a first name (in real life, JOHN FINNEGAN), and visibly a member of the World War Two generation...

COMMANDER CAMPBELL: You had dinner at the Officers' Club on the night of Lieutenant Corbett's death, is that correct?

CAPTAIN EMERSON: It is...

CAMPBELL: Would you describe Lieutenant's Boone behavior that evening?

EMERSON: *Indiscreet* would be a kind word.

CAMPBELL: In your opinion, then, would you say that Lieutenant Boone exhibited a LOOSE pattern of behavior?

EMERSON: I would. Her conduct was UNBECOMING a Naval Officer.

Campbell has other witnesses to that part of the Boone/Corbett date. He'll bring them forth and his questions don't really have to be "leading." Each time McMillan will try to make these witnesses sound like sensationalizers, which is fine. But it still leaves the question of how much of an aggressor Don Corbett was.

McMILLAN: You condemned Lieutenant's behavior that night, yet you failed to mention Lieutenant *Corbett*. Now, doesn't it still take two to tango?

EMERSON: A man responds to a woman's signals, Commander.

McMILLAN: You mean [pause] it couldn't be the other way around.

EMERSON: A Naval Officer would not behave that way in PUBLIC unless he was INCITED, Commander.

Looks as if meticulous preparer Campbell skipped some coaching here...

McMILLAN: Sir — uh, Lieutenant *Boone* is a Navy Officer.

EMERSON: But she's a WOMAN.

McMILLAN: [Pausing for seven seconds, and then softly]: Oh, I see what



you mean: She couldn't help being a woman first, and an Officer second.

EMERSON: [Slightly surprised] You wanna say it that way, yes.

McMILLAN: Thank you, Sir.

EMERSON: [Quickly] Is that it?

McMILLAN: [With satisfaction] Oh yes, that's it.

Howard Berk's script preserves what women faced a half-century ago in cases of rape, self-defense, and who prompted whom, using what words or signals, that in turn facilitated which misreads, and so on.

## "Friendly?! They Were a Lot More than *Friendly*"

A surprise witness has been flown in: The mild-mannered Joanne Nelson ([ANDREA HOWARD](#)). But Campbell harangues her to tears, to where Mac can't cross-examine without worsening his case. Another Campbell pick will be tougher than Emerson to slam-dunk. [CASSIE YATES](#) playing Terry Farrell sounds relaxed while being candid...

CAMPBELL: While you were serving drinks, Miss Farrell, did you overhear any of their conversation?

FARRELL: Yesss, I did... At one point I heard Lieutenant Corbett lean over and say: "Let's get *outta* here and go get a room and *lock* ourself up for a coupla days."

CAMPBELL: Did you hear Lieutenant Bone's reaction?

FARRELL: [Mellifluously] I *sure did*. She said: "Why waste the money, Don? Why don't ya just move into my place?"

Though not obviously a southerner, Farrell draws out her language similarly.

As noted, this is the rare McMILLAN episode that doesn't have Mac downtown handling Police matters. Doesn't matter. Sally and Mildred are always ready to improvise, to the point of getting themselves arrested in a small town. Along with Sergeant Enright, they're trying to locate Jack Porter and his girlfriend.

They succeed, and those two become part of the trial. For good reason: Porter and his female companion were actually PART of that fatal date night. Kit Boone and Don Corbett stopped by their place before driving back to hers...

CAMPBELL: Wouldn't you say the nights get pretty chilly this time of year?

COMMANDER JACK PORTER: Yes, I would say that.

CAMPBELL: And yet your guests took a late-night dip in your pool. Did they bring their ice skates?

PORTER: [Mildly but firmly] I keep my pool heated.

That's the only courtroom chuckle that "Point of Law" treats us to.



But Jack Porter is part of a situation much more complex than this one deadly evening among Navy personnel. And traditional military secrecy (more enforced in 1976 than it seems to be today) will hamper McMillan's ability to defend Kit Boone...

GEMS write-ups never say much about the second half; that's because you deserve to be surprised. Also, it requires a very good *first* half for a viewer to be able to process the ruptures and resolutions that come later. Knowing the "build" of a great episode's first half, you — writer, editor, dramatist, or anyone aiming to hold an audience in a mentally engaging way — will be better equipped to appreciate the second.

And, if these two YouTube files survive, you'll soon have that satisfaction. Each one runs not quite 48 minutes...

Part 1 — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITUxzvzDsLk>

Part 2 — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPY3MGiOG9E>

Again, the definitive RAP SHEET *McMillan* profile by J. Kingston Pierce: <http://therapsheet.blogspot.com/2011/11/nbcs-mystery-movie-turns-40-mcmillan.html>

And/or Seasons 5 and 6 of McMILLAN & WIFE on conventional DVD... <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/dvd-mcmillan-and-wife-seasons-5-and-6/32543798>



## Gem #41 — "Meeting on Tenth Street" — February 25, 1948 From [THE WHISTLER](#) (CBS Radio Network: Pacific)

This series was short on both gunplay and conspiracies. Instead, malevolence made its mark within and around one person — each week, a different one. Moody foreboding, rather than "action" or physical struggle, became the default setting.

And "an ironic ending, often grim, was a key feature of each episode" — which is probably the best sentence from Wikipedia. (We'll need a few more.)

The only predictable character is the Narrator. "I am the Whistler, and...I know many strange tales, many secrets hidden in the hearts of men and women who have stepped into the shadows." A weird but interesting resume, yes. Though probably not for this particular episode...

[BILL FORMAN](#), a veteran radio announcer, had the title role of the Whistler for the longest period of time... Cast members included [Betty Lou Gerson](#), [Hans Conried](#), [Joseph Kearns](#), [Cathy Lewis](#), [Elliott Lewis](#), [Gerald Mohr](#), [Lurene Tuttle](#) and [Jack Webb](#).

Gerald Mohr is a favorite of this publication, and Jack Webb was not even 28 when he played the role of Steven North in the episode about to be analyzed.

But, as we resurrect this forgotten favorite — a series that lasted 13 years — you are probably wondering: What was the significance of *whistling*?

A young person today couldn't grasp how common it was decades ago — from fathers whistling cheerful tunes, to riffs put into a hit song, to young males doing "wolf whistles." Whistling let individuals, overwhelmingly males in my experience, signal moods, melodies and reactions without uttering words. One of the triggering moods was nervousness, hence the old phrase "whistling past the graveyard."

As for Genre: THE WHISTLER is sometimes miscast as a "mystery" series. The better term is "suspense." It's an art and media form that deserves study by any present-day writer — novelist or analyst, schlocker or dry-talker — especially if they are frosted by handheld media's obliteration of the national Attention Span.

During the 1940s and '50s, "Suspense" shows were big. By the middle 1960s, even more than westerns, they were fading. Each episode was a stand-alone and rarely were law-enforcers the key character. Often NO good guys (or gals) took center-stage. In that sense, "suspense" stood apart from westerns as well as cop shows.

In a typical Suspense offering, whether on radio or TV, the Hero-versus-Villain

model was absent — suspended — and yet the episodes avoided nihilism. The complexity of human situations came across, but without rationalizing evil.

Cops and detectives were rare. So were Organized-Crime figures. Instead, more or less ordinary individuals are being caught up in roles or schemes that go sour, slowly, and in a chilling manner. Melodrama, but without sensationalism.

The stories were also more plausible than you'd find in a Hitchcock movie or *Twilight Zone* episode from the same era. Physics did not need to be violated.

Referring to a standout exhibit, the 1979 *Complete Directory [of] Prime-Time Network TV Shows* said [The KRAFT SUSPENSE THEATER](#) "employed top-name talent, with Lee Marvin, Gig Young, and Lloyd Bridges headlining during the first month the series was on the air." Sixty episodes from October '63 to September '65; and many are available informally today, in color to boot. "Most of the plots concerned murder, psychological terror, or other stories of danger and mystery."

Much the same could be said for the *Kraft Mystery Theater*, which predated the "Suspense" version on the same network (NBC). Sponsored by a small set of large companies (Alcoa, Kodak, U.S. Steel, General Electric), the Kraft works and similar shows reflected a serious, powerful and perceptive entertainment sector using a new mass medium. Couldn't last, of course; 1970s TV would wander elsewhere.

In any case, for THE WHISTLER (and its foreshadowing radio show THE SHADOW), "suspense" is a better term than "mystery." These scripts did not need police or detectives trying to flush out (or flesh out) perpetrators. The plan, its warped pursuer, and the logic, were NOT a mystery. The narrator was inside his or her mind.

Bring back this sort of thing today, and it could sound fresh by being startling as well as innovative. Then again, the video guys would ruin the structure by relying on garish events and images. Radio was better for the mind.

## "They SHOT North. Put Him in the Hospital this Afternoon"

The one thing both intense and consistent in THE WHISTLER...is the host and narrator. "He often commented directly upon the action in the manner of a [Greek chorus](#), taunting the characters, guilty or innocent, from an omniscient perspective," adds the main Wiki article we started with. The listener is taken beyond events and decisions, and into the emotional vise of excruciating dilemmas.

The Bill Forman web profile superbly characterizes the sole regular character:

**The unseen Whistler didn't kill anyone (that we know of), but he certainly loved watching murders take place, narrating them for us, and chuckling at**

**the suffering of others instead of doing anything to stop it... He kept walking the streets every week for 13 long years, whistling his ominous 13 notes and telling us another tale of bizarre fate. Perhaps Fate is who the Whistler really was? He never provided any surname, and the killer was usually punished by some twist of fate that only the Whistler seemed to expect.**

Out of 42 Gems so far, "Meeting on Tenth Street" is the third Gem where the key figure isn't a cop or a detective. Those other two times, he was a Medical Examiner (Jack Klugman being QUINCY) or a Chicago columnist ("Randy Stone" in NIGHT BEAT). Those practitioners function like detectives but they don't carry a gun.

In THIS Gem, the "investigator" is a journalist (reporter, not columnist). But Steven North is only heard from at the beginning and at the end. And, unlike Randy Stone seeking human-interest stories among his fellow night owls, reporter North will MIS-perceive the *entirety* of what the episode conveys to the listener.

North works for *The Daily Bulletin*, and "Tenth Street" opens with him on the front page twice. Mainly, he is saluting the District Attorney for having struck a huge blow against "Gangdom's most vicious killers." Below that fold, a lesser note from North, labeled "Retraction." It was the first one in his 25-year career.

He was apologizing for condemning, in print, a citizen he took to be cowardly. We don't get the significance, but it's needed as a marker. The action then shifts rapidly to a drug store. Yes, it's on Tenth Street. But the "meeting" is more like a chance encounter. We hear the lead employee telling Sam, his associate, that "if I was a reporter like this guy North, I'd LAY OFF this Murder Incorporated ring."

On-the-Fly Footnote: "Murder Incorporated" was 1940s slang for the Syndicate and its subsidiaries. Killings could be commissioned and covered up, inside and outside the world of professional criminals. [Read about the network here](#), but only if you are an academic and under the age of 45. For most, "Meeting on Tenth Street" communicates enough — this episode, all by itself — about Murder Inc.

"They're too tough!," the unnamed character tells his associate. In retaliation for a series of exposes, North the crusading journalist got a "couple of slugs in his leg." Might've been a nasty warning, or a botched assassination attempt.

Simply by walking into this drug store, Gerald Wright picks up some of this employee chatter. And he'll end up visiting Steven North in the hospital. Twice.

Who knew? Not Gerald Wright, not at this point. Having endured three days of despair and self-torture, he can't process anyone else's pain. The woman he loves is going to marry another man. That's what the all-knowing Narrator tells us.

All Wright asks for is a bottle of soda pop. His voice is brittle. He needs something to wash down some medicine. No problem, sir. Then he asks for the location of the nearest movie theater. After Wright walks out, alarm belatedly grips the proprietor. "I don't like it, Sam. Look out the door and see if ya can see which way he went. I got an idea that guy's gonna commit SUICIDE."

A great spot for the episode's first commercial? Signal Oil agreed...

"Beautiful, dark-eyed Denise," resumes Mr. Omniscient, "the cause of it all. The girl for whom you'd live — or DIE." The great thing about having a supremely confident guide to an episode is that it's *really* hard to swerve into a ditch.

Denise is going to marry Bob. She felt sympathy for Gerald. Why couldn't they remain friends? Yeh, right. The ultimate invalidation for a jilted lover.

Unlike a mainstream cop or detective show, there is zero mystery in this opening. Wright, the Narrator, and Sam's associate at the drug store — everyone's perception is in good working order. From the Narrator, we even get a preview of Denise.

Gerald's funk is deep. But is he really going to try suicide? Knowing how detective scripts work, you'd be sure: No way, no how. Suspense scripts leave a bit more doubt, but not much. Instead, the troubled Wright has to go somewhere, learn something, be handed a new direction...

## Here to Express Admiration, on Behalf of the General Public

This is 1948, when no one could get video entertainment on TV past Midnight. That's assuming they had a TV at all (only 5% of U.S. living rooms did). But Wright can go to a theater that runs films all night. And two characters draw him out of his depths. Not the guys in the drug store, but a darker duo in the movie...

They are murder-for-hire collaborators. A fellow named Alan paid to have a rival killed. "They found him three miles out of town, in a ditch," reports the man who did the deed. "You must love her," this Mike observes, "putting out five grand like that to get the Number-One Boy out of the way?" Get lost, Alan replies.

Alan goes to Ruby, offering crocodile tears for the shocking demise of her love. "Oh Alan," she sobs, "I don't know what to do."

Then comes a really clever audio sequence: *Ruby becomes Denise*. And Alan turns into Gerald, who is comforting Denise after she learns that BOB has mysteriously died. *He just got mixed up in the wrong company, don't ya see?* "The police say it was a GANGSTER murder," she sobs; "I still can't *believe* it." "I'm going to *stand* by you, Darling." She is grateful.

Aided by his own imagination, as well as skilled audio editors 75 years ago, Gerald Wright has a new attitude. He leaves the theater.

First Step: Check the news story he heard about at the drug store. Steven North has been exposing a local murder-for-hire outfit. "I wonder if he really knows who these people are," Wright thinks — "these men who, who murder *for hire*."

The news account says North is at St. Michael's Hospital. Wright grabs a taxi. He lies about being a friend of North's, gets past the Desk Nurse, and then apologizes. "It's all right," North replies brusquely. "What's on your mind, Mr. Wright?"

His answer doesn't sound rehearsed. Wright tells North he came here to express admiration, on behalf of the wider public, while also conveying incredulity. The "hard to believe" part is genuine, and the rest grossly misleading. Wright has no idea what the public doesn't believe; HE is the one who needs to be convinced.

It's a tape North has played over and over. Yes, these killers have a factory-style set-up. The structure is there in his stories. And no making up or inflating details. "Now come on," he tells Wright: "Why don't ya tell me why ya REALLY came here?"

He wants to help! Someone they wouldn't suspect, posing as a "buyer," could flush out hard evidence. North is naturally suspicious. Is this guy a plant? Or some loner just looking for excitement? Wright's twisted sincerity is anything but smooth.

Bitter about his wounds, and lately doubting his purely journalistic approach, North sways back and forth. He does recall seeing Wright, in or near the bookstore where the guy confirms he works. That's a minor plus. Still, someone this shaky could be more trouble than he's worth. People have shown up to "help" here and there, and North has yet to turn "recruitment" into any kind of process.

Steven North is played by JACK WEBB, just 18 months away from launching DRAG-NET. His voice is flat and somewhat flabby; but it's stronger than any of the other characters in "Tenth Street." He tests Wright's understanding of risk...

"Anyone see you come here tonight?" No. "Good." Then don't come back here, says North, thinking of his volunteer's safety. "If you wanna contact me, use the phone." Wright perks up. Then North *will* accept his help? "You're asking for it, I'm *giving* it to you." A bookstore job, and his jitters, got Wright past the skepticism.

The Elite Barber Shop. Nice front — at least two steps removed from the delivery part of this kill-for-hire business. Wright is to go there tomorrow. "The barber in the back chair's name is Ralston. Be sure you *get that* chair."

The rest of the instructions are relayed or implied. The listener figures that North is

also going to do some prep to unblock his shaky volunteer's path.

Similar to how he struck North, Wright's jitters and palpable lack of smoothness just might make him come across as both credible and malleable at the same time. He IS credible: He'd really like to have Denise's fiancé killed.

## "He'll Be in Town Wednesday Visiting a Miss Denise Evans"

The actors, Jack Webb included, are not memorable. The voices mostly need to convey feelings and facts. Which means the script itself has to do the heavy lifting. Language, sequencing, each key decision or fluke: Briskness that avoids chaos.

So let's "roll" just one of this episode's five dialogues. Armed with North's info, Wright has to carry out the reporter's command to "open up gradually."

As a customer at Elite, he ruminates resentfully about despising a man causing him trouble. And that's it: Casual grumbling while receiving a service that requires maybe 20 minutes of sitting in the chair. He pays for the haircut and leaves.

Turns out that "open up gradually" includes Wright's own odd twist. He walks back into Elite *the next day*. After all, he's in a hurry, but not for a daily trim.

"If you don't mind my saying so, Mr. Wright, thisss seems kinda silly... I just cut your hair yesterday afternoon." The voice of "Ralston" is low-key but it's better than a mumble. "O'course, I can use the *business*..." Wright is back in the special chair.

"I just wanted to talk to ya some more," he says, jittery as always. It's about "that [pause] that fella I told ya about yesterday."

RALSTON: [Finally telegraphing some worry]: Why ya telling me?

WRIGHT: I...thought you might be able to — to do something about it.

RALSTON: So a fella's been gettin' in your hair [and] you naturally figure the place to come to is a barber shop, HUH?

WRIGHT: It's not that AT ALL.

RALSTON: [Firmly though not loudly] Well then *forget* it.

We hear the scissors going all this time. Wright fears getting knocked off track. Stammering has way down to a whisper, he utters the next signal he got from North: "Tommy Royce sent me here." Royce has left town, comes the rejoinder.

WRIGHT: I talked to him before he left.

RALSTON: Is that so?



WRIGHT: Look, if you wanna check on it —

RALSTON: I did. After you left yesterday. Your name is Gerald Wright, 1270 Atlantic Place. You work at the Aegis Bookstore [and you came to town] in '43.

WRIGHT: [Thrown but no longer stammering] How'd you know all that?

RALSTON: I just said I *checked* ya.

WRIGHT: Well? Are you satisfied?

RALSTON: [Three-second pause] Maybe. There's a Pawn Shop, Mr. Wright — 28 Waldorf Street. Other side of town. Why don't ya drop in it one of these days? ... The fella that runs it specializes in antique guns. Tell him you're [slight pause] a collector. That you're after a rare one: A dueling pistol called a Bronco Luigi. Remember that. He'll know what you mean.

The exchange at 28 Waldorf is in the same vein. The murder will cost the customer \$1,000 to place the order, and "another thousand on delivery." When will delivery be? "That's a date we never give out, my friend. So many uncertainties."

Wright is told to mail the money to Post Office Box 228.

Because Wright clutches on sending the money, we finally get to hear Denise. He implores her not to go ahead with the marriage. She is self-assured, mature, and contains her exasperation by telling him: "I'm in love with Bob; now don't spoil what's left" of a friendship. She and Bob will be married next weekend.

Okay, Gerald, you tried. And she didn't flinch. Which means he can't either. But he just picked up some vital information about timing. We hear him go into the front hall and make a call. Dial phones are a delightful function of vintage radio dramas. In this case, it's only a SIX-digit number.

**I'm sending the money. The name of the man who is to receive  
[pause] the order is Sinclair. Bob Sinclair. He'll be in town  
Wednesday visiting a Miss Denise Evans.**

And he gives the Pawn Shop operative her address.

**"Gerald?!? Ohhh – oh, Thank Heaven You're Home..."**

I said the actors in this series are not its strong point. But *someone* has to outperform, and not just because a person she loves dies suddenly. Someone has to convey power and drama, here and there, without yelling, and without ANYTHING that sounds diffident or distracted. Who'll do that? You guessed it: The Narrator.

THE WHISTLER: "Twenty minutes later you drop the picture and the money into the mailbox, and hurry on to the Hospital to see Steven North. You aren't prepared for his burst of anger when you tell him you're quitting."

North dismisses Wright as a coward. So much for eagerness to break up the local Murder Inc. "You're not the first volunteer assistant to check out on me." Wright, stammering as usual, apologizes. "Don't worry about being yellow," North replies. "You got PLENTY of company." Yet another painful conversation is over.

And the Whistler is always there to navigate scene-transition and mental-resets:

**You're relieved as you leave the Hospital, aren't you, Gerald. And certain that Steven North will forget all about you. The waiting for Bob's "accident" isn't pleasant. But there isn't much that can be done about it.**

At least a bookstore job is a good cover for someone now distracted to extremes. That's it — the "Tenth Avenue" set-up. You have absorbed — using text as a preview, the key events — right up to Minute 22. Soon comes the resolution, along with mental images: Sights you can (only) imagine, helped by okay sound effects.

<https://www.relicradio.com/otr/2021/10/meeting-on-tenth-street-by-the-whistler>

If, like me, you prefer to store radio episodes stored on a hard drive, you can obtain "Tenth" via <https://www.oldtimeradiodownloads.com/thriller/the-whistler/meeting-on-tenth-street-1948-02-25>. As for sound quality? MUFFLED.

For *on-line* listening, the larger-print link is a far better sonic specimen.

NOTE: If you have a lot of self-discipline, as whatever kind of a writer or essayist, save either of these audio options for later. Instead, try coming up with two different ways to end "Meeting on Tenth Street." You've got the whole set-up.

### **Every Radio or TV Episode Began as a Script**

Actors and actresses can't carry out a part without text. It also works in reverse: If you want your written products to be easily understood, try writing each one as RADIO text. That was great advice (from 20th-Century marketing greats **Al Ries** and **Jack Trout**). Then, as part of editorial refinement, *read the drafts aloud*. Stand up and make like you've got an audience. "Act" like the text matters.

## Gem #42 — "Target in the Mirror" — October 3, 1973

### From [CANNON](#) (CBS-TV, 1971 to '76)

In the early 1970s, two TV detectives broke the mold and got away with it. Both character names started with a "C." COLUMBO starred Peter Falk (so far, three Gems) and CANNON starred William Conrad. One extract from Wikipedia, about the series rather than its star, gives us the core of Conrad's best-known role...

**Cannon was portrayed in the series as a veteran of the Korean War and a former member of the Los Angeles Police Department. He was street-smart but also appeared to have an unusually high level of education outside the law-enforcement field. Besides his familiarity with several languages, he showed extensive knowledge of such diverse subjects as science, art and history. Cannon was a widower, having lost his wife and son in a bomb attack while he was on the police force, as revealed in the two-hour pilot.**

As for the actor? At the age of 25, during World War Two, Bill Conrad rose to the rank of Captain in the U.S. Army Air Forces (before the Air Force became its own branch). His talents let him thrive in both the Golden Age of Radio and the TV roles that replaced it. In my audio/video scrapbook, though, his most startling credit is... being the rapidly intense NARRATOR of [Rocky & Bullwinkle](#).

How did Conrad as Frank Cannon break the detective mold? By (a) being seriously overweight and (b) by having no secretary, no colleagues, and no trusty stand-ins. Even Lieutenant Columbo, the ultimate self-contained lone-wolf crime-solver, had a Chief to report to now and then, and he also got stuck with trainees.

CANNON left us 122 episodes over six seasons. Operational implausibilities pile up. In at least eight episodes out of roughly 30 watched, goofy things occur in the final two minutes. The criminal's logic and mistakes are being clarified. Nothing wrong with filling in those blanks. But what about Cannon's options?

His gun not available, Cannon propels a wastebasket, farm implement (long and not too thick), ash tray or some other non-lethal object at the person preparing to kill him. In one case, tossing a simple stack of papers is enough to disorient the foe that has his finger on the trigger of a gun. The gun was pointing right at Cannon.

You would think a gun-wielder's surprise, at any of these objects, coming toward his face, would trigger the finger. Most of the time, nothing. Not even a *stray* shot.

Sometimes Cannon's hands are up in the air. But this fellow's agile *foot* can put awkward objects in motion. Flipping the FARM implement? Good thing the climax took

place in a barn... Final-moments gimmickry as a series habit — this was an 11th-hour flaw and periodic draw for various CANNON scriptwriters.

When a detective drama is technologically or situationally impossible, or otherwise ridiculous, it's not a Gem. Might be fun to watch, or be well-acted, or have a worthy moral. But it shouldn't become Gem material.

As CANNON rolled on, I also bumped up against these design factors...

- Doing everything with no help. All of the tasks, large and small, that Joe Mannix got Peggy Fair to follow-up on, or that Bailey and Spencer left with Kookie or Roscoe, get handled without our seeing who or how.
- Frank Cannon doesn't even have a desk or a calculator; yet somehow the invoices go out. He also obtains info without passing out 20s and 50s.
- The only way he can function in disguise is on the phone. And his CAR phone is more reliable than most of the cellular phones that civilians will be using 15 years AFTER this episode first aired.

I'm hearing a voice: *Stop griping and admit that you FOUND a Gem.* Right, will do.

## "Not Only the Syndicate" but "the Boys Downtown"

"[Target in the Mirror](#)" is from the third season. Each major actor is impressive. Start with the Mob figure being sought by his former associates and two different sets of police (one straight, the other crooked). Played by [ALEX ROCCO](#), **Walter Koether** looks alternatively confident, scared witless, and contemptuous.

But it's Koether's love interest, **Lisa Stefan**, who opens the episode. She needs Cannon's services. He has been *incommunicado* for a day or two.

Driving back into town very late, and hearing that she had left 11 phone messages, he drives straight to her house. Later he'll tell a cop that their friendship goes back five years. But nothing in this script explains how Frank Cannon grew close to a woman who, a few decades earlier, might've been called a Gun Moll.

She greets him warmly. Kiss and hug. It's the middle of the night. What is so urgent? Walter Koether "wants to make a deal with the authorities" and, acting as his agent, Stefan is recruiting Cannon to be the broker. More weary than angry, and with a pro-forma apology, Cannon replies: "I'm not your boy."

She pulls out \$2,000. That's for openers. Then, a thousand a day until everyone is happy. Everyone, that is, except Koether's associates offering \$50,000 to the hit man who can find and kill him. "Look, you're asking me to work a side of the

street I hated when I was in the Department. I hate it even more now. I'm sorry, Darling." And he gets up to go.

She tried something besides leave messages and dangle money. She mailed him a tape. "Listen to it. Promise me that much." She is almost as subdued as he is. "It *might* change your mind." Even while calling her "darling," like some sort of younger sister, the only thing Cannon agrees to do is listen to the tape.

We assume it arrives in the next day or two. By that time, Lisa Stefan is dead. A newspaper headline describes her as Walter Koether's "mistress." On the tape:

**They keep saying you're out of town, so I'd thought I'd try putting it on tape... It's about Walter. He's in big trouble, Frank. The Grand Jury's meeting [and] he's uh, caught in the middle. Both sides are after him, because Walter [slight pause] knows where the bodies are buried, who the contacts are: Not only the Syndicate but the boys [meaning corrupt cops] downtown. He's been the Payoff Man. He figures that gives him some LEVERAGE to bargain with — only you can't bargain if you're dead [pause]. That's where YOU come in, Frank. I'll tell you more when I see you.**

Some kind of Crime & Corruption Commission is turning up the heat on high-level operatives. Koether has the substance to bargain. Frank Cannon was supposed to be bodyguard, consultant (to both sides), and de facto broker. And Lisa Stefan was murdered less than 10 minutes after he drove away from her house.

The police will pick up Cannon's fingerprints and give him a call. This results in some officious harassment from a youngish sergeant at Headquarters.

### **"I ASSURE You She Was Alive [When I Left] At About 3:15"**

Each GEMS account is both clinical and celebratory. The method is: Take enough space and time to understand how a great episode's first half allows the *second* half to do its job well. Get ready to bore into the first half, without being bored...

THREE individuals came to Lisa Stefan's house between 3 and 5 that cursed early morning. Frank Cannon was the first. The second was dressed in a second-story suit with deranged cut-outs for sight and breathing; it was this man who killed her, though he probably didn't mean to. After all, she could not have identified him.

The third was an addict/sneak-thief. HE will end up being arrested for the murder.

Video monitors outside homes were rare in 1973; connecting them to recorders 24/7 would be a cash-burner. So the observations offered to Police come from two teenagers, making out in a nearby car. Of Lisa's three visitors, only Cannon had an

invitation. Had he not been out of town, and missed that flood of messages, he never would've come by in the middle of that strange night.

Why did Lisa Stefan die? Because of a struggle with the *second* man. This looming figure wearing a head-mask with cut-aways wanted The Book. Its pages document people in law enforcement getting payoffs from the Mob. The author (who had to be his own editor) is Payoff Chronicler Walter Koether.

Lisa told him the Book wasn't in the house. Her denials were rejected fiercely.

While trying to enlist Frank, Lisa had been gentle and refined. But now it was time to function like a gangster's girl. She tried twice to break free, the second time using a kitchen knife, suddenly within grasp after he shoved her down upon a table. Six foot four, he reversed her thrust of that knife. She died instantly.

And it happened with no gunshot. This gave him time to search the premises; and he definitely knew *how* to search a house. Every single book in the living room was dislodged. To make this frantic search easier, the killer removed the head covering. Here at Minute 7:35, we got a quick look at the face.

Upon exiting, this Visitor #2 left the side door open; he figured that Mob action would be blamed for Lisa's death. For this unintentional killer, it was sheer luck that a petty thief became the third visitor during this two-hour stretch. On the other hand, no book was found. "Luck"? Now he's a murderer, not just a corrupt cop.

The next day Cannon visits Police Headquarters. Same building he used to work in. He greets Officer Jill Chenowith (played by [LAURA CAMPBELL](#)). She routes nuggets of Departmental info to Cannon when he needs them. That part's very plausible; at least this loner has ONE trusty source in a sprawling L.A. law-enforcement maze.

Chenowith's current boss is Lieutenant **William Blaine**. Blaine and Cannon were rookies together; that had to be late 1940s. In real life, the actor playing Blaine is 47 1/2 at the time of this episode and Cannon (Conrad) has just turned 53.

We're at Minute 8:49. And the viewer who noticed it not two minutes earlier is startled to see the same face. It belongs to "Big Bill" Blaine, a very senior cop. He wanted The Book as much as the Syndicate did. This long-time Cannon intimate and colleague is the same man who ended up killing his friend Lisa Stefan.

Until well into the episode's second half, Cannon doesn't know any of the above. But, before the 9th Minute is complete, the viewer knows what Blaine did and why. With or without this write-up, you'd see Blaine, as both accidental killer and quietly agitated bad cop. And the viewer has to bet that Lieutenant Blaine will be found out, if not also killed in some kind of desperate confrontation.



The Gems rule for episodes is: Don't spoil the ending. And...I just didn't. Anyone can assume that Blaine is doomed. Okay, then **why bother with this write-up?** It's a rhetorical question: A set-up that lets me confirm your depth and persistence...

If you're this far into any issue of GEMS, you must not be the prototypical fan, but rather a scriptwriter, a Director, or a novelist who thinks in terms of **Production**. Because the great Radio and TV episodes are works that some group had to produce, they deserve a methodical appreciation. This publication offers it.

## Awkward Exchanges Between Blaine and Cannon

Cannon hasn't yet heard Lisa's tape. He has made a statement about what he did the night she was killed. And sneak-their Eric Fanning is arrested on suspicion of murder.

BLAINE: What'd you talk to your client about — Walter Koether? Is Koether a client of yours too? If he is, you're REALLY gonna have quite a florist bill this week. Unless WE can get to him before the Hit boys do...

CANNON: Maybe he'll come walking into the building here. I'd feel a lot SAFER here than if I were Koether looking over my shoulder for some PUNK who's out to make a reputation.

BLAINE: Koether wanna make a deal? Is that IT? Wants to cop a plea? Tell him he's got it. Tell him to come to me, I'll meet him anywhere. I don't blame him if he wants it in his own territory. Tell him to bring all his papers, all his books, and we'll talk turkey.

CANNON: [Subdued in a serious way] He's not my client, Bill.

BLAINE: But you [pause] — you could get word to him, couldn't ya?

CANNON: [Leaning forward] You know something that suddenly occurs to me: You wouldn't care if Lisa's murderer ever got caught if you could somehow NAIL Koether, is that right?

BLAINE: That's right, I really couldn't care. But that's one cop talkin' to another cop; I won't ADMIT that to a civilian.

CANNON: Well, Lisa's the one I care about. You know she was asking me for help and I turned her down — I walked out on her. Maybe if I'd said "okay" she'd — she'd still be alive.

BLAINE: [Smiling] Frank Cannon, sentimental??

Cannon does not buy into the joke. He stands up, walks a few steps, and signals a resolve to obtain Departmental info in finding who murdered Lisa. Seems not quite

right how un-curious his old friend Blaine is about how Lisa was murdered...

CANNON: When did the Coroner indicate time of death?

BLAINE: Two a.m. to four a.m. 'Bout the time you were there.

CANNON: No no, it was after 3:15, I guarantee you she was ALIVE, at 3:15. I LEFT her alive.

BLAINE: Nobody said you didn't. You're not gonna leave town, are ya? You're not heading back to Carmel anytime soon.

CANNON: [Firmly] Not me. I find things a lot more [pause] interesting, around here.

Frank Cannon could have served as go-between and semi-broker between the cops and Walter Koether. In so doing, he might have saved the life of Lisa Stefan while securing valuable evidence for the Crime Commission. Apart from the risk level, it would've meant taking money from and reporting to a mobster.

Now, however, he'll be interacting with Chief Blaine on behalf of a dead woman who was his friend, but NOT his client.

Blaine wants to close the case and indict Fanning. "Look, Frank, I'm satisfied what happened. Don't rock the boat. It lets YOU off the hook." Cannon's immediate response: "Can I *talk* to this Fanning?" Blaine agrees to set it up. He knows Cannon too well to show any reluctance at letting Cannon have access to Fanning.

Cannon heads out. He plans to drop in regularly. Blaine will be cordial. He needs to monitor Cannon's quest to find Lisa Stefan's assailant. And Cannon wants to know, from Officer Chenowith (Blaine's direct report), if not from Blaine itself, anything that might emerge through standard police channels.

Those "channels," of course, are mangled by Blaine purporting to solve a killing he committed. But even that's not enough entanglement for a great script. Another serious protagonist, with his own power base and suppositions, is on this case.

## **Warned About Spivak While the Latter is in His Car**

Cannon is back in his apartment. We're halfway into the 14th Minute. He listens to the tape. The tape doesn't offer much that Lisa didn't convey during their meeting. But a listener, just outside the door, is picking up enough to make his planned confrontation even more worthwhile. *Knock, knock, knock...*

J.I. SPIVAK: Cannon?

FRANK CANNON: I see people by appointment only.

He moves to shut the door. The very tall man prevents the closing. "I don't need an appointment." Shows his I.D. We also see it.

CANNON: You're NEW in the D.A.'s office, huh Mr. Spivak?

SPIVAK: I came down from Nevada in '72. But that's enough small talk. Now let's go inside where you can talk, huh?

Cannon doesn't let him in. Instead he briskly steps out into the hall and shuts the door. Spivak pauses while he considers whether physical force is worth the effort.

CANNON: Talk about what?

SPIVAK: Lisa Stefan... I assume that was her voice I was listening to...

CANNON: You were listening to a tape.

SPIVAK: I'd like to hear it again. There's some NAMES on it I MISSED.

CANNON: No [and] whose name are you interested in in particular, Walter Koether's or J.I. Spivak's?

Spivak is acclimated to being the "disrupter." For a second, he's the one who looks startled: Cannon just implied Spivak is a corrupt cop. His Nevada reference — yeah, Las Vegas is Koether's home base... Or maybe "whose name?" is just an irritable cheap shot, spurred by Cannon's sudden sensation that Spivak is shadowing him.

In any case, Spivak recovers his nerve in no time at all...

SPIVAK: You know, for a man who needs a LICENSE to stay in business, you have no idea who your FRIENDS are.

CANNON: For a man who goes before a Review Board, you act like you don't know what "harassment" is. Now, IF your boss wants to ask Lieutenant Blaine for a *transcript* of this tape, he can *try*.

SPIVAK: You're turning it over to Blaine??

CANNON: Well, he's ENTITLED. At this point, he and I are the only ones who are.

SPIVAK: I'll be back.

A day or two later, Assistant D.A. Spivak parks himself in Cannon's Lincoln. When the owner arrives, he hears: "Why don't ya just drive around a bit so we can chat?"

Spivak says Cannon is hard to figure out. "One minute you're snuggling up to Walter Koether's girlfriend. The next, you're popping in and out of Headquarters like ya still WORK there." Cannon keeps calm while retorting with a few zingers.

In fact, Spivak suspects *both Blaine and Cannon*. Those two are long-time friends; and Spivak is too new to have his own friends inside Blaine's shop. In the car, all he says is: "You come on pretty strong for man who buddies up with guys like Koether." Right then, Cannon's car phone rings. It's *his* inside source, Officer Chenowith, with some mild dope on...yes, the invasive passenger Spivak. Cannon listens to her terse summary, says thanks, and the ride with Spivak ends abruptly.



- Lieutenant Bill Blaine (left) is played by [CLAUDE AKINS](#). And Assistant District Attorney J.I. Spivak (right) is played by [FRANK MARTH](#). Marth was a long-time natural for character roles in cop and crime shows.
- ALEX ROCCO, as mentioned, is Walter Koether. And the actress who plays Lisa Stefan, in two early scenes, is [JULIE GREGG](#). She has been lauded in this publication before, for roles in both MANNIX and HAWAII FIVE-O.
- A marvelous performance from [HANNA LANDY](#) comes later. She's the MOTHER of Lisa: Elizabeth Stephanova. She chose, or was encouraged by Lisa, to remain in the shadows. The last name is a hint; but the way Cannon confirms her identity is another delicious detail in this Gem.

Ready to look at "Target in the Mirror"? As of mid-2023, this URL was no-charge: <https://youtu.be/2V49OBON6-k>. Six months later, I found that Paramount had blocked it as a copyright violation. Can I complain? Not hardly. Prices for Official DVD collections are reasonable. Here's one way to get CANNON's third season...

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/dvd-cannon-season-3/29899277>

Understanding the trails and tensions within a sparking episode can show editors and writers the most about holding an audience's attention without being sloppy, gimmicky or relying on sensationalism. Enjoy and Learn.

The URL for this document (**Issue 13, February 2024**) is  
**[www.ExactingEditor.com/Detective-Gems-13.pdf](http://www.ExactingEditor.com/Detective-Gems-13.pdf)**

Next one: [www.ExactingEditor.com/Detective-Gems-14.pdf](http://www.ExactingEditor.com/Detective-Gems-14.pdf)

But...why not stay for one more section? That's the cue for this publication's favorite musical group: **The Sources of Tension**. They don't offer music, just lyrics. Without multiple tensions, audience participation either dries up or never starts.

### **Blaine versus Spivak versus Cannon versus Koether versus the Mob**

The piece on Chief William Blaine's desk is a gift from his wife. She saluted him as "Supercop." Those were the days, and Cannon remembers them. Now Blaine is under a survivalist's strain. He can make specific assignments, and is EXPECTED to use official manpower to track down Koether. But the way he'd prefer that to happen, unlike his subordinates, is with Koether getting killed...

- ✓ At a minimum, Blaine needs to collect the detailed record of payoffs, which neither he (as the masked invader) nor his people, later that day, could find when they searched Lisa Stefan's apartment.
- ✓ J.I. Spivak, with the Los Angeles D.A.'s office for roughly a year, wants to prove himself. Even on his off days, he's a Type-A bulldog. He shares the doubts of one or more of his associates about Blaine.
- ✓ Both sets of good guys — honest cops and zealous prosecutors — want Walter Koether and/or whatever "proofs" he has. Both teams are receiving pressure from the Crime Commission and, in a different way (based on dwindling time and a soulless rivalry) from the Mob.
- ✓ The Mob, of course, is its own shadowy empire. No by-laws and no Unions. More like the Roman Empire 2nd Century A.D. But we see no one from that realm except Koether, and *he's* angling for safe passage.
- ✓ Koether wants to be found, but not as a fugitive, and not as a corpse. And he needs some promises ahead of time. Attributing his girlfriend's death to the Mob, rather than some punk petty thief, he still needs a go-between with excellent credentials and no uniform...

And so? He sends an emissary to *abduct* Cannon. This part of the episode seems to come out of nowhere. But I didn't find it implausible, in light of the cauldron of conflicting forces and options among all these characters.

Koether's henchman was told to make disorientation part of the prep. Koether's hideout is so high-end that Cannon, still blindfolded after the car ride, is forced to climb a ladder to reach the lushly decorated billiard room. They spar during the info-exchange. Koether moves way beyond the sums Lisa had offered...

This time, the detective and ex-cop can have "*twenty thousand bucks* — under the table, tax-free, **anyway you want it** — I'm **TALKING** to you." "No dice," Cannon says quietly, still looking away. Koether seethes; the decibel level dives.

Various CANNON sagas have him face to face with, and 100% vulnerable, to high-level mobsters or other ruthless players. Sometimes Cannon's defiance is believable and other times it seems reckless if not ridiculous. This time? In-between.

Two Definitions of TENSION: "A state of mental unrest often with signs of bodily stress" and "a state of latent hostility or opposition." CONFLICT would mean deleting the "latent." And the list of conflicting tensions isn't complete. Frank Cannon is plagued by conscience about "walking out on Lisa." We'll actually see him visit her grave and apologize — a gesture of striking sentiment and decency.

Business is business, though, and the daily pressure on Cannon has everything to do with these two — the corrupt Lieutenant, and the pugnacious Assistant D.A.

## Cannon Meets the Young Man Blaine Hopes to Convict

Eric Fanning, played by [LARRY JUSTIN](#), picked Lisa Stefan's place to rob. From a jail cell, separated by wire divider, he tells Cannon the woman's side door was open — odd? — and how startled he was by the front of the house...

FANNING: Everywhere I looked — a *shambles*. Torn apart, everything. Pillows, drawers. Books on the floor — *every book*. Then I [stammering] saw her. She was [pause] gray. *Frozen* gray. I had to get outta there.

CANNON: What else did you see?

FANNING: I didn't stop to look... I was inside [pause] two minutes total.

This young man is still undergoing drug-withdrawal. Rattled and hopeless.

FANNING: What's the point of talkin'? [Pause] *Nobody* believes me. Why *should* they?

CANNON: [Quietly] Maybe because I think you're telling the truth.



One of many powerful moments in "Target." And Blaine *had* to set up this session — after feeling rescued that Fanning chose THAT house on THAT night, right AFTER Blaine ended up killing Lisa. Fanning's rotten timing has become Blaine's escape hatch. "Look, Frank, I'm satisfied what happened. Don't rock the boat."

You already saw the link to the episode. If you stuck with this write-up rather than adjourning to the Web, my thanks. If you returned to this write-up *having viewed* the episode (or bought some DVDs), a similar end note of appreciation.

Issue #10 turned up NIGHT HEAT ("[The Cost of Doing Business](#)") and went back to [Johnny Dollar](#) for "The Arnold Bennett Arson Fraud"

Issue #9 trained the magnifying glass on Gems from ROCKY JORDAN, THE FELONY SQUAD, and THE STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO  
<http://www.ExactingEditor.com/Detective-Gems-9.pdf>

Issue #8 offered another Gem from BROADWAY IS MY BEAT and initiated coverage of COLUMBO and BURKE'S LAW (*the original versions*)  
<http://www.ExactingEditor.com/Detective-Gems-8.pdf>

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>

No matter how "vintage" a radio or TV series appears today, this publication exists to spotlight **episodes**. And, despite the "retro" setting of the majority of Gems, most elements of the human drama are timeless. GEMS write-ups are therefore instructive for **writers and editors** dealing in specifics — **characters, dialogue, plausibility** — as they convey complexity and tension, and without being chaotic or goofy. Meanwhile, **academics** think more widely. Unlike the typical fan, they have little problem spanning the decades. So I'd love to meet at least one Professor who can use this publication in his or her Fine Arts, 20th-Century Culture, or Media History lesson plan / study guide. Contact founder & curator **Frank Gregorsky** using [ExactingEditor@ProtonMail.com](mailto:ExactingEditor@ProtonMail.com).