



Detective Drama **GEMS...**

Mid-1940s to the Mid-1980s

Issue #2 October 2020

Exhibits from Radio and TV (sorry, no books or movies)

DD Gem #7 — “The Case of the Calculated Risk” — from THE NEW ADVENTURES OF NERO WOLFE (January 19, 1951)

A detective with no redeeming social qualities — beyond his brilliance and cranky sense of integrity: This was the final role for [SYDNEY GREENSTREET](#) (1879-1954).

At age 71, on NBC Radio, film veteran Greenstreet gave voice to Nero Wolfe. And the voice was raspy. Not a factor while the character's creator [REX STOUT](#) authored all those Wolfe novels. When it came to a *radio* series? Something of a problem.

Living and working out of a "luxurious" New York City brownstone, Wolfe was rude, lazy, and overweight. He demeaned his chief aide (who sometimes needed him back). Thirty years later, veteran TV actor WILLIAM CONRAD offered [a slightly softer Wolfe](#), and the series failed. Greenstreet's version had a similarly short run.

Wolfe preferred tending his orchids to meeting new clients; his enterprise was always in debt. A full-time fussbudget, Wolfe was a much older soulmate of Lucy Van Pelt in the *Peanuts* comic strip launched one year earlier. As a finicky glutton, he should've been a wine man. But no, it was always beer that lubricated a case.

His #2 always called him “Mister Wolfe,” and this Mister couldn't even give mid-century American women credit for good looks, let alone brains. Further exasperating his boss, that #2 — "Archie Goodwin" — was always on the make.

In a radio series that lasted six months and one week, several actors were "Archie."

GERALD MOHR (1914-68) was the best. Despite an early death, he "appeared in more than 500 radio plays, 73 films, and over 100 television shows" (according to [Wikipedia](#)). Mohr was studying to become a doctor when appendicitis placed him in a hospital room next to a radio pro — and there went the medical dream.

Sadly, Mohr was part of Less. Did a WOLFE that played musical chairs with the #2 character work against longevity? With a voice not reliable, the person of Archie Goodwin was not quite knowable. Meanwhile, his boss was reliably annoying.

Banking on brilliance, while lacking charm and familiarity, this series had a crying need for radio scripts that could work around an abrupt and sedentary figure — one who was all brain plus a glutton for hobbies. Though rarely leaving his abode, Wolfe used Pure Thought to solve puzzles that took Sherlock Holmes days of legwork.

"The Case of the Calculated Risk" aired at the midpoint of this short-lived series. Writer and director [J. DONALD WILSON](#) and producer [EDWIN FADIMAN](#) brought to life four different situations and rolled them out superbly...

First part: A bullheaded client arrives. He is rattled yet super-confident. This mix lets him dominate the imperious Wolfe (RARE). The visitor will relate a betrayal roughly 20 years old. We listeners will hear it re-enacted in three-part disharmony.

But that old story isn't his opening grabber, this is: "Tomorrow morning, Mr. Wolfe, I'm gonna kill a man — I'm gonna KILL a man, with these two hands," says the client.

This fellow is his own event; his reprise of a long-ago situation also brings chills. We listeners are thereby treated to TWO gripping scenes during a single office visit. The second one, from decades back, is re-told with the aid of superimposed voices.

The third situation will stretch out for days: How are Archie and his boss going to locate the man their client, on that strange night, told Wolfe he was going to kill?

The fourth and final situation is a hair-trigger situation in Wolfe's office: Improbable, Unforgettable, and PLAUSIBLE. Plausibility is the #1 standard for a Gem. And it's met here, because something like the climax of "The Calculated Risk" COULD happen.

To stand out as a Detective Drama Gem, no episode should expect us to believe the Impossible. Not when a sparkling script and cast can master exciting Improbables.

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For the February 2021 issue, use www.ExactingEditor.com/Detective-Gems-3.pdf

"If He Gets Me First, I Want You to See that Justice is Done"

The brash intruder spells out a drastic game plan; he says he'll pay \$500 — but not till later. Wolfe doesn't agree to take the case; and he can't endorse the plan.

All right, forget the word "client." This is a rare Wolfe "case" that has no client.

The intruder has a husky voice and a Southern accent. He refers to himself as Dave Caffrey (which can't be assumed to be his real name). After this agitated visitor says he will kill someone tomorrow, Wolfe replies dryly: "This is the first time a murderer has confided his intention to me in ADVANCE. This man you speak of..."

Caffrey keeps control: "I'm not telling you his name. I'm not telling you where I'm gonna meet him. This session tomorrow is gonna be private and personal. But if anything happens to me between now and then, I want you to take over." Wolfe is incredulous, but — as always — neither rattled nor ruffled. The visitor goes on...

"If I slip up — if he gets me first — I want you to see that justice is done... [T]his guy DESERVES to die. Let me tell you why..." And "the names I use will be phony. I won't give you anything you can check back on." Archie Goodwin takes notes regardless.

Because the audience hears it recreated, I'll use present tense. "Years ago down south," probably during the Depression, three men — "Carl, Mitch, and me" — are trying to collect on a business debt 40 miles from their office. Their cash flow is dire — \$6,240 on hand (Mitch just counted it) as against a \$38,000 pile of debts.

Three partners can't live off a business in this bad a shape. They've been drinking in a shared hotel room. Carl proposes they cut cards to let one of the three off the hook: He'll have no access to the \$6,240, along with no responsibility for his one-third of the debt. Mitch goes along. Dave is more like dragged along.

The cards are cut. Supposedly it's a new deck. Mitch is the odd man out. Though taken aback by the speed of events, he spies a marked ace. Mitch moves to thrash Carl for a despicable set-up. Suddenly Carl pulls out a knife. (Note how he appears to have been prepared for something even worse than being nailed as a card cheat.)

Mitch is stabbed and loses consciousness. In this dramatized retelling, we assume neither of the survivors can, or does, offer him any help. Since it was a knifing, no gunshot has alerted guests or staff. As Dave recounts it all these years later, Carl pivots ruthlessly: "I've cut him for keeps," he tells Dave. "What do we do now?"

Who the devil is WE, Dave retorts. Carl tells him they will both be blamed for Mitch's death. But, since they didn't use their real names in registering at the

hotel, and no one heard anything, they can escape from the scene RIGHT NOW.

But Dave has no cash! *Fine, we'll split the cash Mitch counted.* Somehow, an envelope containing "half" materializes in Carl's hand. He then tells Dave to hop a freight train heading one way; and he'll grab one going the other way. Dave is panicked into his part of this escape. Mitch is a goner. How will the police put it all together? So ends the re-created dialogue from this long-ago murder.

"When I thought to look in that envelope he gave me," Dave Caffrey tells Wolfe, "I found 40 dollars and a few folds of WRAPPING paper in it!" Yet he couldn't risk going back anywhere near the scene of the crime, and Nero Wolfe knows why...

The next day's local paper talked "all about the murder of your friend Mitch, with a statement that Carl had accused you of the crime — and that the police believed HIM in view of YOUR escape!" Right. "And you spent the intervening years hunting down the man 'Carl,' am I correct?" Right again.

"And yesterday I located him. He's a big wheel these days up on that 37th floor of his." Archie Goodwin pipes up: Does this Caffrey, or whoever he is, expect Wolfe to facilitate a revenge killing? Hell no. "I don't want him to help me. I'll help myself. But if I slip up, I know Wolfe's reputation well enough to know that he'll never rest 'til this, this rotten chiselin' murderer is sittin' in the chair."

Many stressed-out persons come to Wolfe for help. But this situation is unique. The producers are outdoing themselves; they're maximizing the radio medium.

In the delightful event you have fail-safe trust in this publication, you might want to leap-frog the scene-by-scene and move straight to the exhibit. If so, here you go — <https://www.olderadiodownloads.com/crime/the-adventures-of-nero-wolfe/the-calculated-risk-1951-01-19>

Otherwise, keep reading. Your interest in Detective Drama indicates you're the possessor of an Attention Span. (I capitalize the term because, in this era of anti-social media and 24/7/365 reactivity, "spans" are being dynamited every day.)

Each issue of GEMS is long for a reason. The episode write-ups here are in fact longer than any you will find anywhere. They are also longer than nearly all movie reviews. And why is that? Because this publication is more for PRODUCERS, including editors of all types, than it is for consumers (i.e., viewers and listeners).

My purpose is to show why and how a script makes its characters and their dialogue sparkle. I can get there — celebrate each episode — without spoiling the ending.

"Wallet Gone, Pockets Cleaned Out, No Envelope"

Caffrey pulls out an envelope. He tells Wolfe and Goodwin it contains \$500, along with "the full details on that knifing." Actual names and dates — "the PROOF you'll need in case I don't finish it up." The envelope is addressed to Nero Wolfe at his brownstone and says "deliver to him in case of my death."

One supposes Archie, hearing this latest twist, could've tackled Caffrey. But the safer course was to assume their visitor capable of anything needed to keep his grand scheme on track. Wolfe and Goodwin are being carried right along.

Caffrey says he'll give that envelope to the manager of the hotel where he's staying, and then exact his revenge upon Mitch at Noon, "right after his secretary goes to lunch. If I'm not back in my hotel at one o'clock tomorrow afternoon, the hotel manager will deliver this envelope [to you]; is that clear?"

"Perfectly," says Wolfe, and now — nope, too late. No more talk. "Dave Caffrey" lams out of there in 15 seconds. "And don't have Goodwin follow me. I'd lose him in two blocks. Good night!" Door slams.

Now Wolfe can reassert control. He has processed everything. He tells Archie not to chase Caffrey. "Instead, get Inspector Cramer on the phone at once."

"Inspector Cramer" is head of the New York Police Department's Homicide Division. In the Wikipedia rundown of supporting characters in Rex Stout's books and stories, Cramer is aptly described as "Wolfe's main foil." For this 1950-51 radio adaptation, the Inspector is played energetically by [BILL JOHNSTONE](#) (1908-96).

Wolfe makes it plain: "I want the police to help us head off this murder."

If that set-up wasn't gripping enough for the first 8 minutes and 15 seconds, we quickly hear Archie telephoning his boss: "I'm calling from the morgue." And? "They found Caffrey's body in a subway washroom — mugged and stabbed. Wallet gone, pockets cleaned out, no envelope."

Just two hours earlier, Wolfe observes to Archie, the dead man had been in their office. Which means the killer — "Carl" — KNEW that Caffrey had been enlisting or otherwise dealing with Wolfe. And, by stealing the envelope, the contents of which will never get to Wolfe, Carl can assume he still has room to maneuver.

After all, what do Wolfe and Goodwin have to go on? At first glance, very little. The stage is set for an arduous "needle in a haystack" process.

Given that it has just 24 minutes to work with (excluding two commercials plus opening and closing announcements), "Calculated Risk" is ingenious. This episode never lets the adrenaline flag, nor does it bewilder or hype the listener.

Each twist and turn, though startling, *does not end up disorienting*. From Dave Caffrey's quest for revenge to "this man" Carl's equally long fearing it some day, the two-man trek from that 1930s betrayal to this 1951 showdown is...logical.

Details aside, thousands of long-play betrayal-plus-revenge psychodramas likely simmer in the U.S. right now. Except for the factor that REALLY stands out: Nero Wolfe's drive to find the murderer, in America's biggest city, using the bits they have, bolstered by what they can deduce or (with the Inspector's help) discover.

And what DO they request from Cramer? He should "start queries throughout the South on the original killing...starting from, say, EIGHT years ago and working back to the middle '20s." Archie Goodwin is choking.

"It's our best chance of getting a description of the man called Carl, the original killing AND the partnership," counters Wolfe. "Tell him to concentrate on towns with railway lines..." More tasks follow. Archie remains skeptical. "We are going to find Carl, Archie," says his boss, "if it takes from now till Doomsday."

And, in this kind of rapid-fire audio-only drama, what about the time element?

Up to now, the story has made the listener anxious. Then Archie pulls out the hay-stack metaphor. The pace changes. Time slows down. You can sense it...

"Carl" will never know what the two detectives found out DESPITE not having the critical letter Caffrey meant for Wolfe. Only if Goodwin, with a lot of luck, gets close to identifying Carl will this double murderer see the need for an entirely different plan of escape or diversion. Laying low and keeping cool likely are no guarantee.

The search itself needs LOTS of time. Caffrey's killer can assume a certain amount.

This matter of time is both decisive and vague. How "impossible" is a daunting search when the deadline isn't firm? If "Carl" is a high-ranking exec somewhere in New York City, he can't just take off for Brazil. What he CAN do is derive some relief from the same time stretch-out that has depressed Wolfe's chief aide.

Searching for a Tall Man "With an Unexplained Gap in His Past"

Three days go by. All they've clarified is the hotel where Dave Caffrey stayed. He made no traceable phone calls; no witnesses to his killing have turned up; and Inspector Cramer has gotten nowhere dredging below the Mason-Dixon Line.

What do you expect? asks Wolfe. "We are asking [for] a check on the unsolved killings of a dozen states over a 20-year period." While this plays out, Archie will have to take the elevator to the "37th floor of many office buildings" (based on the one hard piece of info their visitor let slip). "You keep trudging till we FIND him."

Gotta be HUNDREDS of structures that tall in New York! Wrong. Wolfe found out from the "Municipal Reference Library" that only 34 buildings in Manhattan have 37 or more floors. Of those 34, they can rule out the United Nations building and the hotels. Archie is beginning to sense a way out of the miasma.

Then again, how many OFFICES are on each 37th floor? Forty? Fifty? "Call it 30 [offices] times 40 [floors] and you still got — umhhh, twelve hundred to start with." Back and forth they go. Archie, daunted by this hardship duty, is at least working with the boss to winnow, narrow, rule out, and exploit each clue given or implied.

Careful listening by Wolfe to Caffrey the other night proved Carl is Archie's height or taller — anyone else would've missed that. But forget looking for a Southern accent. "Carl has had MANY years to lose ANY accent he might have had."

They keep narrowing: "A man almost surely tall," sums up Wolfe. "A man not using the name he was born with. A man with an unexplained gap in his past."

Archie again wilts. "It's still a pretty big haystack." Wolfe proceeds to "trim it some more." These exchanges, relentlessly sharpening the focus, are a lesson for anyone who thinks the only way to solve a mystery is by keyboarding the Web.

Lots of pertinent info is not on the Internet in 2020; in 1951 nothing was. But I have to concede: A Wolfe-style Net-user today could expect much quicker search results *once he or she fashioned enough exacting inquiries* ahead of testing them on-line.

As the trudging starts, Wolfe tells his chief aide: "Since you'll probably be operating through secretaries, you're looking for a murderer named Carl, not for a new set of TELEPHONE numbers to brighten your winter." (Archie prefers blondes.)

What happens next? We hear Archie going in and out of offices, and chatting up the gals. No indication of how many days this consumes. But that doesn't ruin the plausibility of his actions. As for the maestro conducting the haystack probe...

Could a character like Nero Wolfe ever exist in real life? If you want to define him (as opposed to this story) as next to impossible, go ahead. Just stick to fiction...

Any other insightful, relentless and/or heroic detective we could cite — Joe Mannix, Philip Marlowe, [Michael Shayne](#), Mike Haines, [Mike Hammer](#), Mike Stone, Mike

Waring (so many Mikes), Stu Bailey, Sherlock Homes, take your choice — had to go out and DO things. We've heard or seen these characters commit mistakes, be assaulted, charm or threaten their sources, dodge the police, exhaust themselves and, especially, *sit there struggling to reason the case out*.

None of that from Nero Wolfe as rendered by Sydney Greenstreet — [see LP image](#) (colorized to the point of absurdity). What we have instead is an all-seeing and mostly housebound INTUITOR. This makes "Mister Wolfe" a model detective for brainiacs. A powerful word in the '50s, although it's not in my 2004 dictionary.

Perhaps Rex Stout's novels say how he got to be that way. In this radio series, most of which is on-line 70 years later, you just have to take him as a given: A fictional detective who is (even) stranger than the fictional cases we agree to consume.

"Holy Sweet Susan, It Worked, It Worked"

Four situations were cited on Page 2. Of those four, the most minutes are given over to the winnowing process needed to find Carl. Though it's the least exciting, it's the most methodical, and therefore educational. (Some detective-drama admirers actually pick up tactics, if not traits, from great episodes.)

Wolfe and his #2 eventually come down to three candidates. This takes up five minutes of radio time that might've represented a week or two in real life. And, as they go about these labors, it's easy — especially for listeners — to not imagine the mindset of the individual being hunted. What might HE be up to?

Though he killed Caffrey and stole the documentation intended for Wolfe, can "Carl" really rest? He knows that Wolfe has been told...*something*. If Wolfe thinks that means danger, this episode does not reveal it. With tragic consequences: Absorbed by the final winnowing, Wolfe and Goodwin will make a nearly fatal error, right after Goodwin allows a mostly innocent secretary to be strangled.

The climax — Scene Four — is a confrontation. Yet it plays out so grippingly that time seems, once again, to stretch out.

Of course the good guys win. That's never the issue, or the payoff, in a first-rate detective episode. What keeps us paying attention, eager for the next event or chunk of dialogue, is how all the large matters and loose ends will be clarified.

That fourth and final scene? All I can do is call it a drawn-out sequence with death-defying improvisation by Nero Wolfe. The man who, as in most episodes, never left 601 West 35th Street, or neglected his plants, or ignored the fridge.

DD Gem #8 — “The Guru” — December 31, 1968

From THE MOD SQUAD (ABC, 1968 to '73)

Opening Scene: A twenty-something typist is startled. First by a cat leaping on her, and then by a six-foot-two male standing behind the image of a skull. The second scare is her boss — also her lover — engaging in one more stunt.

He's Rick Potter, editor-in-chief of *The Guru*. She's Daphne. (No last name on the show or in the credits.) He shows her text for the next edition: "Sticks and stones and bigots' threats won't keep *The Guru* from printing it like it is. Keep the Faith."

Rick and Daphne are the last ones to leave. As they get in his car, a bomb goes off, blowing out one of the newspaper office's windows. We can't see how much damage took place inside. We do know that no one was hurt by the blast.

Next Scene: Captain Adam Greer is defensive. His three young recruits report that business interests are fed up with this radical enterprise causing street gatherings and reducing property values. Is *The Guru* now supposed to put up with attacks?

"We give them the SAME protection we give everybody else!," Greer declares.

Greer is played solidly, and often endearingly, by [TIGE ANDREWS](#) (1920-2007). During 1959-62, Andrews was "Johnny Russo," a harder-boiled police officer on THE DETECTIVES. He also had a wide array of character roles on TV from 1951 to '91.

The relationship between Greer and his three idealists, each of whom carries youthful scars (but no weapon) is highly resilient, even during an intense disagreement. Apparently it was just as strong in real life as it conveys on the screen.

The show's pounding theme music separates the opening scene — at the newspaper — from Greer's burst of snappishness. Except for some updated images, the music will stay the same for all five seasons; and MOD SQUAD will always be on the ABC Network, and always on Tuesday. Dependable container, adventurous content.

Call it the luck of the production rotation or a signal, but: "The Guru" entered U.S. living rooms on December 31st of the year Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. were killed. (Luck, you say? Maybe that timing guaranteed a low audience.)

And yet "The Guru" contains not one mention of any contemporary figure, or of Vietnam, or feminism, or any other "cause" that would date it. VERY fortunate. Ignore the psychedelic posters on the newspaper's walls, and you'll be able to focus on a drama whose basic elements and divisions replicate decades later.

"GURU BOMBED. Staff Escapes Death. Police Indifferent"

Of Captain Greer's young recruits, two of the three are not so young. In real life "Lincoln Hayes," played by [CLARENCE WILLIAMS III](#), turned 29 the month before THE MOD SQUAD launched. But all three are new — fresh — to police work, and for them the roles will almost always be undercover.

Throughout this analysis, the episode title — "The Guru" — is distinguished from the fictional newspaper *The Guru*. And, breaking the tension, Greer startles the three by revealing that he READS this underground sheet for its "healthy attitude" and the fact that "it SAYS something." Really? The Captain gets points for that.

Still — the bombing — what might happen next? Greer pauses, smiles, and says: "Okay, you're cops. Since you're so worried about the newspaper's lack of protection, *why don't you get JOBS on The Guru* — and give them some?"

Slowly, Pete replies to Greer: "We don't like the idea of having to spy on an underground newspaper." But they have already lost the argument. *The Guru* will get to report on its own heightened risk level; and, if GENUINE spies or saboteurs are in fact on the inside, Greer's gambit is the way to expose them.

"Pete Cochran" is played by [MICHAEL COLE](#), 28 1/2 at the time of this episode. Cochran is reflective and deliberate — except when (a) all hell is breaking loose, or (b) process stands in the way of a right result.

PEGGY LIPTON (1946-2019) is "Julie Barnes" and she's by far the youngest of the trio. In [his write-up](#) for the indispensable IMDB site, I.S. Mowis tells us:

Peggy Lipton was born into a well-to-do upper middle-class family of Russian-Jewish ancestry. Her father was a corporate lawyer, her mother an artist. Her upbringing was strict, her childhood lonely... With her dad's assistance she obtained her first job as a model for the Eileen Ford agency in New York. Her mother then prompted her to take drama classes with Uta Hagen at the Herbert Berghof studio in Greenwich Village, Manhattan. At age 19, Lipton got her first gigs on TV...

Here's something I never knew: "In between acting, Lipton enjoyed a brief, but moderately successful, singing career. Three of her singles made it to the Billboard charts." From Billboard to police work and now *The Guru*...

At Minute 4:30, Pete, Linc and Julie enter the newspaper office. The layout is too sprawling for one bomb to stop the presses. And these are real presses (as opposed to anonymous malcontents relying on incendiary tweets). Staff and volunteers are everywhere; so are research files and valuable gear.

Elliot, Roarke and Julien (it's not a law firm)

Three of the paper's full-timers make "The Guru" sparkle: Rick Potter, Jack Dawson, and Daphne. For radical late-'60s engagement, it's hard to find a better cast...

- Daphne, the secretary about to be promoted, is played by [JANE ELLIOT](#), in real life just shy of 22. She appears warm-hearted, hapless and perhaps a tragic figure — 100% reactive — yet she'll rally in the episode's climax.
- Rick Potter is played by [ADAM ROARKE](#) (1937-96, birth name Richard Jordan Gerler). He's a strapping embodiment of the left-wing organizer of 50 years ago. Not much in common with 2020's texting, tweeting, swarmers seeking "safe spaces." Except for the male chauvinism, his individualism and articulation would come in handy for anyone who sees the world the way his character did in 1968. As Editor of *The Guru*, Potter is forcing events big and small.
- Assistant Editor Dawson is played by [MAX JULIEN](#). Not quite 24 in real life at the time of this episode, he's my favorite. Though nearly as reactive as his colleague Daphne, Jack Dawson has journalistic integrity. His standards are *ingrained* enough that they impel him to *reground* himself each time he lets Rick *redefine* reality — a regular occurrence.

Jack stuns the three job-seekers by bursting out of his office and declaring: ***There IS such a thing called understatement — something I'm SURE you never understood.*** His point is about NEWS coverage; and it's aimed at Rick, who follows him out. The two continue shouting; their divide is critical to this 1968 Gem. Here is Rick Potter in FM — Ferocity Mode — as Linc, Julie and Pete hang back for their orientation...

This episode is "The Guru," the newspaper is *The Guru*, and Rick Potter is the Guru — but without relying on mysticism. Instead, he has the field marshal's ability to direct if not control the emotions of close associates. Jack wants to keep the coverage factual; Rick favors venom. Rick is white and Jack is black. Jack is turf-conscious and systematic. Rick is intuitive and devious. They are BOTH loud. The clash of these two personalities is vital to this GEM episode.



To get Jack off his high horse, Rick says: "You haven't forgotten how to hate, have you? Have things gotten THAT good for ya?" Sound nasty? Only in print. In fact,

Rick's tone is suddenly soft, *almost pleading*. He is a master volume-adjuster.

And Jack is quickly *won over*. "Okay, coach — I'll write it the way you see it: From the heart." All smiles, Rick replies: "Not from the heart. From the SPLEEN." They hug. It's a superb exchange. Rebellion quashed. Rick Potter's mix of demand and charm works again and again, and not just with Jack.

Pete had told Rick that he, Julie and Linc worked on a San Francisco paper and are new to L.A. Rick pointed to the crowded office and said there are no openings. With the shouting over, they try again: *How about selling papers on the street?* He rattles off terms: *Okay, you buy each copy from me for 10 cents, and sell it for 12.*

But Rick spares Julie from street-selling. "Can you type?" Yes. He tells Daphne she will move up to Editorial, and be replaced as his assistant by Julie. Daphne is mortified. She looks at Julie as if a female axe-murderer has just materialized.

In an episode a mere 7 1/2 minutes old, two zones of tension have been clarified. Daphne is threatened by Julie; Jack is rebellious but also susceptible to Rick; and — during the 9th minute — we'll see Jack yelling at Linc to get out of his office while he's struggling to write copy. Jack's tone is both demeaning and threatening. Linc just looks at him, unblinkingly; he isn't going to take the bait.

It'll take a while to work him into the script, but here's another stress fracture — Daphne happens to be living with a capitalist. Played by [DABNEY COLEMAN](#), her brother "John" owns or at least manages properties near *The Guru*.

With Captain Greer handling the senior-cop role neutrally, one guesses that Coleman is in the cast to represent conservative sentiments. He has contempt for Daphne's associates; but, as a peace-seeker, she struggles to be an understanding sister.

Looking back in a 2005 taping, Peggy Lipton will describe her character, during the five years of MOD SQUAD, as "vulnerable." But Daphne is just plain fragile. "Every time there's a pretty girl," she will later sob to Pete, and not finish the sentence. (She has even staked out Rick's "pad" to confirm these jealous fears.)

Guilt about having doubted Rick then takes hold: "It's not Rick's fault. It's mine, for EXPECTING him to act like everybody else..."

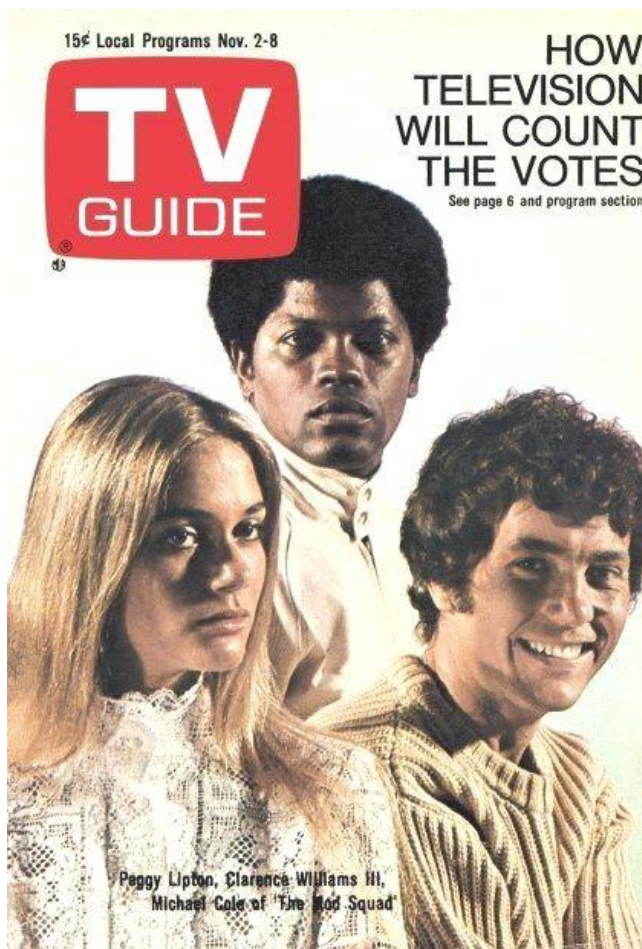
Pete, Linc and especially Julie are "penetrating" this enterprise quickly. Might one more avenue be open? Julie has an idea, and it's almost as clever as the way Greer got them into this endeavor: If she has to feign openness to Rick, can Pete ask out Daphne? Linc smiles at this. "I mean," Julie explains, "then I wouldn't feel so guilty. You know how she feels about Rick." Well now — *pause*.

Okay, Pete says, he'll get to know Daphne. Linc sums it up for Pete: "You get a girl. She gets a guy. And I get Jack." Jack and Linc are the only blacks in the cast. And it could take a while for Jack to shut off his power-tripping.

Patience isn't enough when you're undercover. So Linc pulls a cable from Jack's jalopy and then offers him a ride home. After they share stories of alienated youth, Linc says Jack could do a better job of "hiding his fangs." The joke works, and Linc drives off — but then Jack grabs a cab back to the newspaper.

Lincoln Hayes was never Jack Dawson's problem. Neither is Julie or Pete. With or without them, a schism — Jack versus Rick — would haunt this paper. Their divide showcases the vortex of radical politics and the allure of righteous fame.

Watch Strategy and Ambition Get the Better of Ethics



THE MOD SQUAD has plenty of web-savvy admirers. Since this publication analyzes and celebrates outstanding EPISODES, it is in no position to compete with fans of any one series.

All the same, the first time each classic series is credited with a GEM, an attempt will be made to put that series into historical context.

Page 411 of the 1979 Guide to *Prime-Time Network TV Shows* says: "THE MOD SQUAD was probably the ultimate example of the Establishment co-opting the youth movement of the late 1960s."

One might watch "The Guru" and concur. It's only the 12th episode in what will be a half-decade run.

And, in this story, the destruction and power-lust do not come from the police....

Hmmm, hold it. How many under-40s know what "co-opting" means? The 2004 *Merriam-Webster* offers three synonyms: ABSORB, ASSIMILATE, TAKE OVER. Not

good for Pete, Linc and Julie. Is Captain Adam Greer an Absorber? Does he even represent the Establishment? (Yeah, he does. Reading *The Guru* isn't enough to make him a rebel. The reading was probably more like Opposition Research.)

I still take issue with the "co-opting" quote on the prior page. As this series worked its way to 1973, neither Adam Greer nor law-enforcement generally were going to "assimilate" or "take over" the youth movement.

Instead, THE MOD SQUAD's creators intended to present relevant crime dramas while shrinking the generation gap. That was a far more realistic goal. And the best, and maybe the only, way to get there was to let "co-option" run both ways — up and down the age ladder. How do you achieve that, in script after script?

In most episodes, the viewer who has an ideological, racial or age-based view of right versus wrong will find themselves surprised. Not invalidated, just surprised — by who does what. That's why a lot of these episodes "work" 50 years later.

A little after the start of the 19th minute, Rick quietly opens the door to Jack's office. Jack is reviewing text; he doesn't notice. Rick screams *YESSS/RRRRR!!!* and flings the latest local papers at Jack. Rick Potter can't keep his impulses or his ideas on a leash. Neither can Jack. The difference is that Jack spends time trying.

Rick is a natural dramatist, and his antics bug Jack. Tonight Jack is doing his best to keep cool and not be drawn into the wackiness. So begins an astonishing scene.

"But It's a LIE, Rick. What You're Doing is a LIE!"

DAWSON: You're late.

POTTER: So?

DAWSON: Whaddya mean "so"? When you tell me to clear the office and meet you here in the middle of the night, you come on time.

POTTER: You seen the city papers? We're front-page news.

DAWSON: We came here to write a thank-you note to the editor.

POTTER: Don't you understand? [He kicks aside the wastebasket that has been holding up Jack's foot.] We've DONE it. We've found our voice. An audience as large as EVERY CITY DAILY, and we're gonna stay front-page news.

DAWSON: [Dryly] You're hoping that somebody will bomb us again?

POTTER: Nope. "Hoping" isn't enough.

They've been conversing for only a minute. In his third gesture of power and sweep, Rick knocks a stack of papers off the top of a file cabinet.

DAWSON: [Now it's time for irritation] Rick, have you gone crazy? It'll take us all week to sort this stuff out.

POTTER: And the world will watch, man, paper by paper.

At this point he tips over a four-story file cabinet. Furious now, Jack leaps over his desk, intending to tackle Rick. But Rick the overgrown kid and seasoned radical dashes out of Rick's office and into the communal area of the paper. More room to maneuver. While fending off Jack, he keeps defining the script: "First they plant a bomb. *Then they wreck the office.* But WE survive to tell the truth!"

Ahhhh, so that's the pitch: Attack #2 will be *self-inflicted* — and who's to know? The way Rick has planned it, there won't be any "outside forces" for the cops to find, no matter how hard they try. *The Guru* can choreograph its ongoing persecution.

For all his hierarchical tendencies, and a chip on his shoulder big as an anvil, Jack Dawson has integrity. For the moment. He finally grabs Rick, after Rick tips over another work table. But Rick throws him off. (In any kind of wrestling match or battle of intellectual wits, Jack Dawson is going to lose to Rick Potter.)

POTTER: Hey, millions of people are LISTENING. Don't you have anything to say? No stirring words to help humanity climb out of its own STINKING grave? Don't you CARE any more?

DAWSON: [Showing rage] But it's a LIE, Rick. What you're doing is a LIE!

POTTER: It's a half-truth! When they first bombed the paper and started this thing, THAT was true. Now there's a purpose. They've given us a PLATFORM, man. Don't blow your chance to be heard.

Rick the wrecker has abruptly changed back into the pleading idealist. *This is what can bring Jack around.* You can see Jack's face soften in sync with Rick's voice. It's a marvelous scene, with implications that go way beyond the late 1960s.

"We can tell the truth about everything," Rick says, now with an evangelistic lilt. "About corruption. About brutality in the *name of the law.*"

We're up to Minute 19:40. Rick's decibel lever is heading back up, yet his tone has shifted. Now he looks happy, as opposed to crazed. He topples a massive table of sensitive typesetting tools. Then he stops. The shouting match is turning into a recruitment pitch — a process that needs another half-minute.

Jack picks up a typewriter. Rick smiles his enthusiasm and approval.

DAWSON: About the piled-up garbage of POVERTY — that never disappears!

Following his own cue, Jack throws the typewriter through a window (and it's an INSIDE window, otherwise the cops MIGHT be alerted to show up and stop the destruction, encountering the "wrong" culprits).

POTTER: About getting roused in the middle of the night. YEAHHHHH, Wheeeeeee!

DAWSON: About separate and unequal rights!

POTTER: About humiliation — and BIGOTRY.

Hurling a trash can, swinging a 4-by-4, more table-toppling — further acts of wreckage occur in between the shouted slogans. As Minute 21 nears, the scene ends with heartfelt hugging and leaping. All in a night's work?

The Clocks Leaps Ahead to Daylight (probably late morning)

Dozens of the paper's loyalists are outside. A police car is being adorned with 2nd-grader spray-painted colors. The natural assumption is that the cops are LETTING this violence happen. "Blew it again," Potter taunts Captain Greer. "You're gonna leave your men on around the clock again, huh? Just like last time?"

Before and after his needling of Greer, Rick whispers what look like instructions to Daphne. Her smile vanishes. And Greer discovers that partisans of *The Guru* have set up a gauntlet on each side of the paved walkway leading to their vehicle.

In the midst of this crush, Daphne falls. She begins to scream. A photographer emerges. He doesn't look like someone from the Associated Press or the *Los Angeles Times*. After Greer and his officers depart, Pete suspects a ruse.

Back in the office, he tells Daphne: "Well — you sure gave Rick a good story, didn't ya?" She starts to crumble, says she is "scared," and flees the office. Like a good soldier, she has followed instructions from the commander.

"Did she admit it?," Linc asks Pete. "No, but there's really not much doubt about it. The FALL was a fake, man, and so was everything else." Julie says: "If I hadn't SEEN it, I — I wouldn't have believed it."

All three undercover agents undertook this assignment feeling uneasy. They sympathized with the radical newspaper. Even Greer had said, before their mission started, that he read the paper and liked its fresh spirit.

We have reached Minute 25 — the halfway point of this detective-drama Gem.

Jack Dawson can't remain in the mode of co-destroyer. He's the only high-level operative at *The Guru* who realizes that a movement better not turn the principal figure into a cult leader. Every actor and actress in this episode does their job well, but the standout is Max Julien as Jack Dawson. He knows that every political activist needs first to reinforce his or her own foundation with reality.

Rather than "co-opting" young radicals, this episode actually works to warn those (regardless of ideology) who let their ideas warp their operating principles. Along with other MOD SQUAD sagas, "The Guru" shows that self-aggrandizement, fake news, and "big lies" come in all age ranges and exist among all political partisans.

Second Half of "The Guru," and Another Exacting Exchange

How fast are these events playing out in real life? Four days max. Has Rick Potter made too many decisions too fast? He is rattled. Unusually, he has been blindsided.

What happened? At Minute 27, he happened to see Linc getting into Greer's car. "They're plants; they gotta be cops," he later tells Jack. "How STUPID can I be? They'll find out everything, man — what you and I did the other night."

By watching Jack Dawson lag and then leap, a curious 25-year-old today could learn much about journalism AND politics. Jack now defends what at first horrified him. Suddenly HE is trying to reassure Rick!

DAWSON: So what?!? I mean, so we threw some ink on the walls. So, so we broke up some equipment. But we OWN it. It's our PROPERTY.

POTTER: What about that first bombing?

DAWSON: So what's that got to do with us?

POTTER: Well Jack, as a famous lover of truth, man, I'm about to trip you out. Just who do you think planted that bomb?

Six seconds of silence. The look on Dawson's face is worth a few instant replays (which you couldn't do in '68 because living-room video recorders cost a mint).

DAWSON: You — you ARE putting me on.

POTTER: You didn't know? Not even deep down?

We watch Jack withstand another whipsaw enlightenment. He lunges at Rick and attempts to choke him. Dawson is agile, but Potter is tall as well as fit. He fends off Jack. In what we are shown, he doesn't want to hit Jack. Rick also makes it a

practice (as he told Linc, that first day) not to reciprocate Jack's bursts of rage.

Rick simply **will not play** on the emotional OR ethical field that his opponent has mapped. His thinking dominates his tone, rather than the other way around...

POTTER: And you are so STINKIN' noble. You went along for one lie, didn't you, but not two. Either you're in all the way, or you're out. Or maybe you don't have the GUTS.

DAWSON: I got the guts to break your jaw.

Jack makes a good start at it. Lands a hard right on Rick and bloodies his lip.

POTTER: You're ready to fight me, huh? But not for something you believe in.

DAWSON: [Shouting] WHAT am I supposed to believe in; you LIED to me, man!

POTTER: That lie got the paper off the floor and you off your tail. And it got me a lot of people who wanna read what we STAND for.

DAWSON: So WHAT do we stand for? EASY virtue? The end that justifies the means? Is THAT what you believe in? Well, SO did Hitler!

POTTER: *I believe in whatever gets us the power and the strength we need.*

DAWSON: Ohhh, ohhhhh [signaling pain as he moans]. So THAT's where it's at. You sold out! All for the SMELL of a little power, you SOLD OUT. The paper, the public, and me — right along with the rest of the sheep, hmmh?

Jack's voice dropped abruptly after uttering "sold out" the second time. From pure anger he has turned to quiet quivering. We see honest rage, dulled by pain.

There's "safe" in shepherds, my friend — and I don't dig wolf. Rick — I'm gonna kill me a shepherd. I don't know how — but I'm gonna kill you.

He leaves. Daphne comes in: "What's wrong with Jack?" Rick makes a joke to her about Jack having writer's cramp — "and the guts — I hope it's not contagious."

Daphne says Rick appears in need of "peace, and a little loving care." She'd like to cook him dinner. He says he has some work to do. "Can I help?" The work is "with Julie at my apartment." Which does NOT mean what a stricken Daphne takes it to mean. "Work with Julie at his apartment" has nothing to do with physical attraction. And it provides one more evocative scene in this Gem of an episode.

Seeking Truth and Closing Notes: "The Guru"

For all his ethical blind spots, Rick Potter is the only one in this story who under-

stands strategy. His enterprise has been penetrated by the police. Potter needs to do something really clever to turn the tables. Not violent, but hugely shrewd.

One other scene deserves quoting. Knowing nothing about Rick's intent to trap Julie or that she is a cop, Daphne feels spurned one more time. Her idealism is as quiet as Jack Dawson's is righteous.

The problem, for both, is that they're too heavily invested in Rick Potter.

This entire script has the world REACTING to and — in one manner or another — FACILITATING Rick. A master of both logic and feeling, he built *The Guru* without letting ethics thwart gutsy activism. In the past week, though, Rick has weaved a dangerous web around himself. Risks are coming from at least three places.

Meanwhile, Daphne is being comforted by Pete. Sobbing, she wonders: "Pete, why can't men, with great ideas, be great men?" "I don't know," he responds. I guess you can't have everything." Pete Cochran is no guru, and his approach to philosophy is down to earth. One could say it's ANTI late-'60s. How? By avoiding certitude.

He tells Daphne: "I understand that the people you travel with are a lot more important than where you go." During this series, spooling its way into the 1970s, Cochran will be open to "truth" while knowing one can't proclaim it during most sad situations. Except maybe in a tentative way that fends off defeatism.

"The Guru" was written by [LEIGH CHAPMAN](#) (1939-2014), and developed for TV by Tony Barrett, Harve Bennett and Sammy Hess. The Director was [RICHARD RUSH](#).

To buy MOD SQUAD, first season, one package, start with eBay...

<https://www.ebay.com/p/1275068191>

Barnes & Noble recently removed First Season MOD SQUAD. Same for Best Buy, and I'm not sure that Target ever offered it for sale. Of course, there's always Amazon.

Or, as a no-cost alternative, try this slapdash YouTube upload... **WHOOPS** – *the owner associated with this video has deleted his account*. In a way, that's good. Classic TV series on DVDs, from the big studios, are reasonably priced; and there's so much unauthorized (pirated) video out there it resembles a plague of locusts.

Anything else that comes under the heading of follow-up? You could spend a few minutes on this *TV Guide* [profile of Clarence Williams III in 1970](#). Looks like he withstood '60s chaos (and therefore '70s letdown) by adhering to his professional training. Devoted to acting and the stage, he stayed out of politics.

<<<< Coming Attractions >>>>

The following episodes are **strong candidates** for a GEMS salute. Here (and nowhere else), they are displayed chronologically...

“The [Dion Hartley](#) Murder Case” (you’ll **scroll down to Episode 26**)
From BROADWAY IS MY BEAT — February 17, 1950 (CBS Radio)

“Molly Keller” — July 17, 1950 — from
[NIGHT BEAT](#) (NBC Radio, 1950 to '52)

“The Fifth Stair” — March 6, 1959
From [77 SUNSET STRIP](#) (ABC-TV, 1958 to '64)

“Solomon” — February 11, 1960
From [JOHNNY STACCATO](#) (NBC, then ABC, 1959-60)

“[Girl In The Case](#)” — April 30, 1962
From 87th PRECINCT (NBC-TV, 1961-62)

“The Perfect Image” — November 7, 1969
From [THE NAME OF THE GAME](#) (NBC-TV, 1968 to '71)

“[The One With the Gun](#)” — January 28, 1970
From [HAWAII FIVE-O](#) (CBS-TV, 1968 to '80)

“With Intent to Kill” — January 23, 1971
From [MANNIX](#) (CBS-TV, 1967 to '75)

“[Let’s Pretend We’re Strangers](#)” — May 19, 1977
From THE STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO (ABC, 1972 to '77)

A pair of late-1983 episodes (TWO are needed for one Gem)
from Season Four of [HILL STREET BLUES](#) (NBC, 1981 to '87)

“Bought and Paid For” — November 29, 1985
From [MIAMI VICE](#) (NBC-TV, 1984 to '90)

DD Gem #9 — “Snake Eyes” — February 4, 1977

From QUINCY, M.E. (NBC, 1976 to '83)

Does the name of this series look odd to you? It still does to ME — because that's how it scans. Had to flag it here at the start. "M.E." stands for *Medical Examiner*.

For the key character, let Wikipedia begin the briefing...

JACK KLUGMAN [is] Dr. Quincy, a strong-willed, very principled Medical Examiner for the Los Angeles County Coroner's Office... His colleagues, friends and wife all address him by his surname or the shortened "Quince." The character's first name was never fully given, although in the third-season episode "Accomplice to Murder" his name is shown on a business card as "R. Quincy" and in early episodes the name "Dr R. Quincy" appears on his door.

In a seven-season run, "Snake Eyes" rolled quite early. Outstanding plot, combined with just enough memorable dialogue. And, as with GEM #8, there are long-ago dramatizations that resonate eerily during 2020 and likely will during 2022.

LESS than Impressive: The guest actors. On average, they are so-so. The setting — a Las Vegas resort hotel called The NOMAD — is ideal for aging performers and garden-variety finaglers. In a way, that earns "Snake Eyes" points for realism. We would expect to encounter normal people — believable but not outstanding — rather than distinguished ones. In this episode, you see lots of ordinary extremes.

Panic-driven crowd scenes are where the especially evocative "acting" takes place — and nearly all of these people are extras, vital to the saga only *en masse*.

"Legion Fever" as the Extension of a Real-Life Mystery

The story is by series regular LOU SHAW; he's also Supervising Producer. The teleplay is by JOEL OLIANSKY and MICHAEL SLOAN. Oliansky also served as "Snake Eyes" Director. During the first 25 minutes, they nail down most of the markers...

- The Lounge scene kicks off with entertainer Angie Coy singing Carole King's 1971 hit "I Feel the Earth Move." At Minute 3:00, she breaks off. "It just hit me out there," she tells assistant manager Leo Burke. "It's hard to breathe." (Burke is played by MILT KAMEN, who'll receive a very belated salute on the second to last page.)
- Burke tells a hugely irritating '60s comic holdover, played by BUDDY HACKETT, to fill in for Angie, right away. How to improvise? "Nobody EATS when I work!," he yells at the crowd for an opener. Then he moves down from the stage, to pick up plates. *Are you finished with that? You are NOW, pal.* Hackett's speech impediment somehow seemed endearing 50 years ago. (I deride, you decide.)

- At Minute 4:35, a man's wife escorts him from the main ballroom. "I can't breathe." A nurse is on duty, in the resort's sick room; and a local doctor is "on call."
- At 5:40 Hackett spotlights the convention just ending. What fine group has been meeting? ***Fo-REN-sic Pa-THOL-o-gists***. He handles the words as if with ice tongs. The term means CORONERS. Any in the room? Silence. *Wonder what they're doin'.*
- They're simply being procedural: Doctor Quincy is [wrapping up the convention](#) — looks to be its final session — by joking about how to not lose your shirt at Blackjack.
- At Minute 6:39, Burke tells his boss: "I just sent the customer down to the Infirmary. Looked a lot like Angie. You know, shakes, and sweatin' like a hog." By 7:00, Angie is using a breathing tube. At 7:30, the [chief security guard](#) sees two colleagues walking as they prop up a weak man: "Another one?!?" *And two more on the way down.* Wheelchairs and stretches are being fished out of wherever they are stored.
- By Minute 9:21, 17 guests and staff are in the Infirmary, "and the switchboard is going crazy" (despite no mobile phones available to the general public in 1977).
- The on-call physician arrives. Dr. Larry Pines tells the nurse: "Skin rashes, swollen tongues, discolored gums." During the 12th minute, we see Pines and owner Al Ringerman arguing about outside help: "The symptoms are flying at me from 10 different directions." Ringerman fears a panic will cause most guests to flee.
- Ringerman implores Pines to "be a friend" and do something BEFORE alerting the County authorities. Hmmm, let's see; they could try to get some instant support and analysis from a few of the attending pathologists. Leo Burke nervously importunes Quincy and soon two of the latter's friends agree to stick around for the siege.
- At Minute 19:13 comes the first death; it's the husband of the woman who brought him in right after Angie Coy. All four docs tried drastic methods to keep the man alive.
- Back at Minute 16 we saw Quincy and Pines trying to parse the symptoms: "We're gonna have another Philadelphia, all over again," Pines mused. In the 20th minute, all four physicians begin an autopsy. By Minute 24:14, nothing is any clearer.

What is going on here? Theories are flying. Quincy asks colleagues Walter and Ernie: "What about the obvious?" They're not ready to make that leap. Quincy says it, quietly: "Legion Fever." The term is a twist on the original and real-life LEGIONAIRE'S DISEASE, unknown in the U.S. before September 1976. (That's when it struck a Philadelphia hotel during an American Legion convention.)

If you like medical history, [one quote from the Wikipedia article](#) is enough for this episode: "The disease is particularly associated with hotels, fountains, cruise ships, and hospitals with complex potable water systems and cooling systems." Months after Philadelphia, its workings were still being mapped.

And "Snake Eyes" makes the most of the related medical alarmism. In this episode, from February 1977, what Quincy says is drama plus reality: "Half the country's been working on what happened at that hotel in Philadelphia. I don't know how many have died [and] they're still arguing about what it is."

What else have we been shown during the first 25 minutes?

Two members of the Mob. The older, fatter, perspiring one has commenced a massive losing streak at the card table. At Minute 21:46, his younger associate is aghast: "That money was supposed to buy us a HOTEL, Rawley." Will a medical panic help them scoop up this property at fire-sale prices?

Even without their slice of the action, "Snake Eyes" would earn a viewing today. Why? Because it showcases sudden deaths from a fast-spreading ailment in a confined space. (The big difference is that COVID-19 arrived with a name.)

This write-up will draw on the hotel-owner's interactions with Quincy, who as usual is fearless, relentless, and arrogant. These battles are relevant to current conflicts between medical authorities and business leaders of all types and at many levels.

Many Sources of Tension in a 134-minute Episode

All writers and editors should remember — especially those of us who produce NON-fiction — that tension and conflict are what keep readers and viewers tuned in. Who is pitted against whom? Or is it a race against time? How do private dilemmas and TURF battles skew decisions? Actors can be loved or hated, while Factors need detached analysis. *One has to pay attention.* Tension, conflict, resolution.

"Snake Eyes" as a saga wins SIX stars there. It does so by managing to keep half a dozen sources of tension going pretty much at the same time.

First, the fight of Doctor Quincy and other authority figures — after the symptoms are reported by a TV station — to control the panic. They need to keep the staff, the remaining guests, and themselves, focused on productive activities.

Second, the frantic search for what is causing these sudden deaths. This quest is the closest thing to a detective-mode procedure in a mostly medical drama.

Third, the extent of Mob machinations. Quincy's club-owning sidekick Danny Tavo — played by [VAL BISOGLIO](#) — makes inquiries to see whether Rawley Dinehart and his associate are behind The NOMAD's dire health events. Danny isn't even sure whether Dinehart is the real target...or part of the group sabotaging the hotel.

Fourth, tension BETWEEN those two crime operatives. Did the older one figure out he was marked and "get even" with his associates by *gambling away their money*? Just before he finally quits, Dinehart — played gruffly and with resigned cynicism by [VAL AVERY](#) — looks at the female croupier whose dealing has eliminated his wad. He grins sheepishly — and also knowingly — at her. This brief moment is the subtlest and most artful signal to the viewer in all of "Snake Eyes."

Fifth, hotel-owner [Ringerman](#), working with, and around, the crusading Quincy.

And sixth, the resident physician at the resort: Can he handle a four-alarm medical crisis? Is it lack of skill? Or weak self-confidence? How much does this bug his wife?

[FRANK CONVERSE](#) is Dr. Larry Pines. His wife Valerie is played by [JO ANN PFLUG](#). She runs a thriving boutique that's part of the resort. Her role in the first two-thirds of "Snake Eyes" is that of a bystander neither agitated nor satisfied, but in any case not part of the chaos playing out back at The NOMAD.

Pines had to be prodded to "go inside," i.e. lead the autopsy of the first deceased patient. As noted, what they found resolves little. But Quincy is impressed by Pines' steady hand. Later, when they aren't treating patients in the clinic, Quincy upbraids Pines for betraying his world-class teachers and mentors...

You know what you did for four years at Harvard, three years at Rhode Island General? You took up space. You wasted Hoagland's time, you wasted Lasswell's time... Do they know what kind of a practice you have?... Are you happy treating tennis elbow? Gambler's Stomach? Playing 18 holes every day once the office is closed? A chorus girl with a chest cold every now and then to put SPICE into your life?

Quincy is good at courtroom oratory in a medical setting that needs the certitude of a detective. But this is the one time the insecure Pines stands up for himself...

Fifty percent of Medicine is politics. Hoagland or no Hoagland, there were a DOZEN bureaucratic INCOMPETENTS between me and a meaningful job in surgery, or pathology. I had better things to do than spend five of those next nine years sucking up to one Chief Resident or another, wheedling my way on staff at a good enough hospital, with a BIG [slamming the table] enough budget so that this TALENT you keep bellowing about would have DECENT EQUIPMENT to work with.

In February 1977, the actor playing Doctor Larry Pines is three months shy of his 39th birthday. Jack Klugman (1922-2012) is most of the way through his 54th year.

Quincy says nothing while Pines cools off: "As life goes, this is a good one. It's good enough for me, and it's given my wife a chance to fulfill HERself. Now what's wrong

with THAT? Or wouldn't you know? Now, if you think you've scolded the child sufficiently, may he please be excused." (He leaves out the question inflection.)

After a nine-second pause, Quincy replies, halfway between a declaration and a sullen mutter: "I didn't realize I was bellowing. I only do that when I think something's important. It's my mistake." Even when restrained, or subdued, Doctor Quincy has the last word. His apologies are, in part, restated judgments.

Ringerman and Quincy Foreshadow the Strains of 2020-22

The Quincy/Pines relationship is continually interesting. It would be the "second" plot line absent the Mob maneuverings. Among the guest actors, though, for embodying his role, the standout is "Special Guest Star" [VAN JOHNSON](#) (1916-2008). As NOMAD-owner Al Ringerman, he represents the honest businessman. Honest, though in no way naïve, and perhaps not moral in the traditional sense.

Business operatives show up in various detective dramas — sometimes as victim, occasionally as hero, other times as sap. Al Ringerman — burly, serious but not solemn — is none of those. He mostly comes off as both responsible and resilient; he confronts each part of the Crisis as it comes at him.

Ever worked with anyone named "Al"? I've known two or three. They each kept going, were mostly upbeat, and did their job. Having been pressed by shady elements earlier in his career, Al Ringerman at age 61 means to stay clean in Las Vegas. For my DVD money, he's the most compelling character in "Snake Eyes."

But Ringerman never counted on the soaring certitude of the medical expert during a phase of expanding danger and panic. The initial showdown between him and Quincy is worth the price of the DVD set. Imperiously, the Doctor has given the Hotel-Owner 60 seconds to make his views plain. Here's part of what Al says:

Look, I don't want anybody to die. But I don't want this place to die either... The junkets are starting to fly in here. Big-name acts are playing the place. We're turning a corner... The Gaming Commission checked us out for six months. We're spotless. No tie-ins [to organized crime]. There's a future here... YOU put this place in the news [and] you know what will be left? The ANIMALS would be left.

Quincy radiates zero sympathy. He DOES hear enough of the stress to come up with a couple of finesses. *Yes, we can take steps to keep this out of the news.* Then? It's back to Mr. Avenger. He feels compelled to piss on the businessman's world...

The bedrock here is that I'm a DOCTOR. Now I don't give a damn about your hotel, OR your license, OR the gangsters you're trying to keep outta here. I want a lid on

this for MY reasons, not yours: If the guests find out what's going on, they'll be racing outta here for every CORNER of the country! And if WE let that happen, we could have an epidemic EVERYWHERE. Now we have 24 hours — MAYBE — to find out what we've got here and whether we can contain it. No guest leaves this hotel without a medical examination...

Klugman's character COULD have said: "Look, Mr. Ringerman, I understand that your back is up against a wall here" — start by sounding open to a compromise, even though what they'll do really isn't. He didn't. Fulminating righteousness is part of the *Quincy* medical bag, at least during its opening seasons.

So why do I salute this episode? Because every part of it is plausible.

EVERY part? Well, I can't evaluate the medical specifics that shape the second half. This isn't that sort of publication. I assume the scriptwriters took a few liberties.

By "plausible" I mean... the crowd scenes; the two mobsters; Pines interacting with both his distracted wife and a crusading Quincy; Van Johnson as Ringerman facing the collapse of his life's work; the swirling Las Vegas mix of the ordinary and the extreme (but without anything outstanding); and — especially — the latitude medical authorities can be granted, or run away with, during a Crisis.

Doctor Quincy at the hotel is facing a spread far more localized than COVID-19 but also undefined. These pressures preview the much vaster strains of U.S.A. 2020.

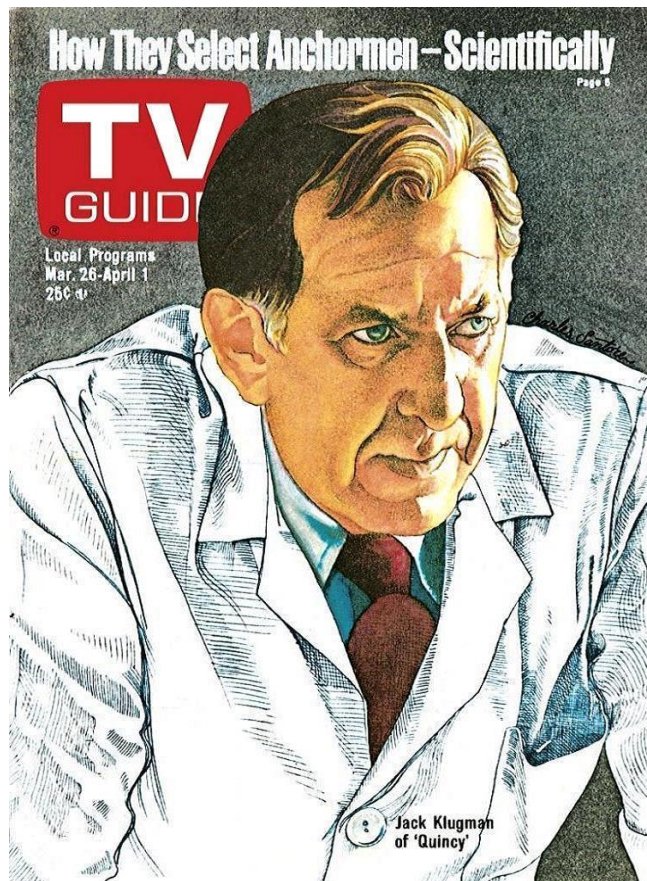
In 1977 and 2020, resilient businesspeople are to move to the back of the bus. They are shamed by medical authorities — some political leaders, too — ready to risk enterprises and lock down economies because only they truly care about humankind. Doctor Quincy personifies these tendencies. And we don't have to admire a character to see him or her living out both a megatrend and an archetype. Too fancy of a word? Okay, let's just call him a Type. But what a Type.

In the 20 episodes I've watched (only a small share of the total), Quincy has the moral high ground. In "Snake Eyes" he controls it more sweepingly than we ever see a police-type detective able to. The Doctor presides, and you'll decide.

Younger viewers more likely know Jack Klugman from his role as Oscar Madison, one-half of [*The Odd Couple*](#). "Madison" was a sloppy sportswriter. His combustibility was offset by a sense of humor. He showed drive on many things, but never functioned as humanity's prosecuting attorney.

The Odd Couple left prime-time in July 1975; the debut of *QUINCY, M.E.*, took place on October 3rd, 1976. By May 1983, Klugman & Company had given us [148](#)

[episodes](#). A very good run. Plus Jack Klugman had succeeded at embodying strikingly different popular figures in two totally unrelated TV roles.



The best quote, for purposes of this publication, is uttered when Quincy's hunt hits a brick wall. How can he find the missing IT — or maybe it's a HE?

This is right after a 12-year-old girl dies. Her death afflicts Larry Pines the most, and he has disappeared. Quincy muses to the other two docs...

"It's isn't right. That child's body should be telling me something — it should be telling me *why that young life ended*. But there's nothing. Now you guys know that nature NEVER brings you to a dead end. She always leaves loose ends. Only man brings you to a dead end. I can't help feeling that man's HAND is here somewhere."

His medical colleague asks: "You're not talking about murder?" Quincy: "I'm not?"

Like doctors, the best detectives, scientists, and journalists — of course tailored to their specific lines of work — NEED that kind of unvarnished questing for the truth.

More About Converse...and Don't Neglect Kamen

I suspect you've wondered about a matter beyond the plot, beyond the character of R. Quincy, and beyond epidemiology. Namely, how does an "M.E." figure in a publication about cops and detectives? Years of trusty usage take me back to the 1979 Guide to *Prime-Time Network TV Shows*. On Page 513 is the answer:

[Dr. Quincy's] understanding of forensic medicine led him to conclude that many of the supposed "normal" deaths that he was assigned to investigate were actually murders. Whenever this happened, Quincy tended to resemble a detective more than a pathologist....

No episode I've seen has him carrying a firearm. Yet he's even more intense than the typical detective. It's always and only his character who knows what to do next.

But the scriptwriters had the big brainstorm: For this timeless episode, a historical curtain call — from Legionnaire's Disease. A real-life mystery had set the stage for "Snake Eyes" to become a TV classic (despite my so-so rating of the acting).

After several deaths, all Quincy can report to Ringerman is: "We don't know what we're looking at, and we won't know until we start doing some TESTING. Now if you want some GOOD news: It doesn't look like diphtheria, or smallpox, or the Bubonic Plague." To write any more might spoil the resolution. Can't do that here.

Which leaves — what else? — a few gap-fillers, along with the video housekeeping.

Twenty days after "Snake Eyes" was broadcast, the most sympathetic of its actors died of a heart attack. As assistant manager at Ringerman's resort, "Leo Burke" juggled endlessly while smiling nervously. Credited as MILT KAMEN...

MILTON KAIMAN (March 5, 1921 – February 24, 1977) [was] an American stand-up comic and actor with numerous television credits... He frequently performed his comedy routines on shows hosted by Ed Sullivan, Steve Allen, Perry Como, Merv Griffin, Mike Douglas, and Johnny Carson... As an actor, Kamen appeared in *Route 66*, *Naked City*, *Ben Casey*, *McMillan & Wife*, *Love American Style*, *The Partridge Family*, *Mannix*, *The Streets of San Francisco*, and *Quincy M.E.*, among others.

"Before beginning his comedy career, Kamen was a Juilliard-trained French Horn player, occupying a chair in the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra." Always interesting how the world of film, TV and stage can change a person's life course, no?

The above extract comes from Wikipedia. Over at the IMDB site, you'll find FRANK CONVERSE lauded for versatility and persistence...

A brawny, firm-jawed, sandy-haired player of '60s and '70s prime-time TV, Frank Converse seemed to be one of those handsome tough-guy action figures that could go by the wayside after the demise of their famous series. Instead, this stage-trained actor persevered as a well-respected, all-purpose character actor in a career that has now passed its fourth decade...

In the 1960s he built up his Shakespearean resume [and in '67] earned surprise stardom in his first TV vehicle *Coronet Blue*... [Then came two years on] the police drama *N.Y.P.D.*...alongside co-stars Jack Warden and Robert Hooks as three plain-clothes detectives tracking down the city's most virulent; this show lasted until 1969. His third and last major series co-starred burly trucker Claude Akins in the big-rig action-adventure *Movin' On* (1974). In all three series, Converse owned a quiet, reserved, somewhat detached quality that invited "mystery man" appeal.

IMDB contributor [Gary Brumburgh takes Converse's career](#) through the rest of the

20th century, including soap-opera roles.

Now what? Having persevered all the way through another GEMS issue, you know what to do. There are two ways to access Messrs. Klugman, Converse, Johnson and Kaiman in "Snake Eyes." You can gauge its resonance during this time of COVID-19, medical groping, and economic punishments worsened by campaign tactics.

Buy the *Quincy* Season-1 DVDs from [Barnes & Noble](#) — or, if you insist, from [the insatiable monster](#) Amazon

You can also adjourn to YouTube and see, for no charge, all of "Snake Eyes" — *or maybe not*. Twice in September I saved a URL, for right here, to open up a poor upload of "Snake Eyes." And days later the same URL brought up nothing but ads.

So much (or so little) for YouTube. Seriously — it's very hard to refer anyone to a website that has no quality-control. Doing so can ruin an associate's whole week.

If you're determined to save your dollars, do the web search — using "Snake Eyes" + QUINCY + 1977 + whatever — and best of luck finding an adequate version.

That's it for GEMS Issue #2. Thank you for having an Attention Span and, if it enabled you to spot the three typos I missed in 29 pages, drop me a line. ***Detective Drama Gems*** is a no-charge quarterly publication. You can forward or otherwise circulate this dot-pdf file however you like. If and when you quote from it, please mention the Editor & Curator — [Frank Gregorsky](#) — or name this publication as your source.

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