



Detective Drama **GEMS...**

Mid-1940s to the Mid-1990s

Issue #7 May 2022

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

DD Gem #22 — "The Velvet Stakeout" — March 8, 1960 **From M SQUAD** (NBC-TV, 1957 to '60)

"My name is Frank Ballinger, Detective Lieutenant, M Squad, a special detail of the Chicago Police..." Viewers who let this man into their living room would soon learn not to hit the fridge for a cold drink. Too risky. They might miss something big.

It became a landmark series: 117 episodes, most of them okay to good on image-clarity. **LEE MARVIN** portraying Lieutenant Ballinger was admirable in the extreme.

DVD-collection issuer [Timeless Media Group](#) adds: "The excellent high-contrast cinematography brings Chicago to life, with all of its easily recognizable landmarks, swanky penthouses on Lake Michigan, and the seedy darker side of the city."

M SQUAD combined complexity and starkness in a modulated manner. The viewer could see and feel the knife-edge of things. Finer points about the series appear on Page 9. By now you're aware: Most of any GEMS write-up is about **The Episode...**

In just 24 televised minutes (representing several days of events), the viewer is invited to navigate three realms of tension. And "who did it" isn't one of them.

Even before the theme music, "Vic" is seen murdering a long-time confederate who is more control freak than friend. Ballinger's narration is predictably tight...

The news that Conrad Brenner had killed himself had made the headlines. As a lawyer, he had defended big-shot racketeers. He'd been disbarred three

years ago, but rumor had it that he was still connected with the Underworld. He had just returned from Washington where he refused to answer questions put to him by a Senate Committee...

"Killed himself"? This is a rare TV murder where we saw the killer place the gun in the hand of the victim. "Vic" carefully wipes off his own prints; he then imprints the handle of the gun with the fingers of Brenner.

Next day, Ballinger's gruff boss says: "It's supposed to be a suicide. If the guy shot himself, he'd have to squeeze the gun and there'd be prints" on the trigger, right? None. "Looks like a nice little homicide to me," concludes the Captain.

Captain Grey — was he ever allowed a first name? — is played by [PAUL NEWLIN](#) (1903-73). He and Ballinger go to the dead man's mansion. They find that Brenner had assembled a controllable family of sorts: Individuals he shielded from jail and kept around. One (the murderer) is a neighbor. Two others dwell in the house...

- **Whitey Stone** had been a top baseball pitcher 25 years ago. He looks vaguely familiar to Ballinger. After confirming his former career, Stone updates his life: "I'm the houseman/butler." And where was he when Brenner got killed? At his sister's playing poker, Stone says woodenly.
- **Peg Mallinson** is played by [WHITNEY BLAKE](#) (1926-2002). Her framed photo, dedicated "to Connie," attracts Ballinger's eye. "What's a good-lookin' girl like this doin' with Brenner?," he says to Stone. "You'll have to ask her." Mallinson's status is suspenseful on the way to decisive.

As for the three sources of tension: Her predicament is one. Another is a missing diary that none of the three Brenner intimates knew about when he was alive. Because of Ballinger, all three will soon know that it's...somewhere in this house.

And the third is Ballinger and Mallinson, a de facto duo, figuring out what to make of each other. Their interaction goes way beyond a cop and a crime-plot suspect.

"Really, Officer, You Sound Like a Detective in a Dime Novel"

Pauses add seasoning, but sharp exchanges are the core of M SQUAD: Delightfully short sentences from characters who'd never make it in an Ayn Rand novel.

BALLINGER: I'm Lieutenant Ballinger. We've been looking for you...

MALLINSON: [Slight pause] About last night?? Really, Officer, that wasn't important enough to invade my bedroom...

BALLINGER: What ABOUT last night?

MALLINSON: Well I told the man I was INSURED. Now look, be a good fellow and run along, will you, I want to BATHE. I'll fill out a report tomorrow IF YOU —

She stops mid-sentence. Turning to a clunky bedside intercom, she asks Whitey where Connie is. If Peg Mallinson is hiding knowledge of Brenner's demise, it's a convincing performance. Blake's mission as an actress is to convey irritation at Ballinger, rather than any emotional link to this dominant figure newly killed...

BALLINGER: Whitey's down at headquarters; Connie was murdered last night.

MALLINSON: [Subdued] Connie's dead?

BALLINGER: 'Twas on the radio, and all the newspapers.

MALLINSON: I didn't KNOW. Who did it?

BALLINGER: Let's get back to last night.

MALLINSON: I went for a DRIVE about 6.

BALLINGER: Where'd you go?

MALLINSON: No place in particular.

BALLINGER: Who was with you?

MALLINSON: No one.

BALLINGER: Anyone see you?

Just the truck driver, she tells Ballinger — the other party in the fender-bender.

BALLINGER: Where was that?

MALLINSON: [Becoming irritated] About 20 miles the other side of Winnetka.

BALLINGER: At what time?

MALLINSON: Somewhere around Midnight.

BALLINGER: His name and address?

MALLINSON: I don't know, I didn't think to ask.

BALLINGER: All right, Miss Mallinson, let's go down to headquarters.

MALLINSON: Do you mind if I CHANGE, Officer ... or do you think I'll try to escape through the window.

BALLINGER: [Sarcastically] Ohhh I guess I can *take a chance*.

Turns out the trucker had turned in a report — Mallinson's "alibi was good." And

ex-baseballer Stone "had five witnesses" to his night of poker.

Which means: Neither of his housemates could have killed the unsavory defense lawyer. And Ballinger is stymied: "We couldn't even get a line on Brenner's recent business associates. He'd cleaned out his office before he left for Washington and burned EVERYTHING in his files." This murder probe needs a big break.

It comes at Minute 5:29. Ethel Jensen, "Brenner's secretary for 17 years," reveals the existence of a personal diary. "She didn't know where the diary was." But Jensen (shown without audio) does tell Grey and Ballinger that it was NOT part of the sizeable stack she and her boss "had burned the week before."

Screen shots from "The Velvet Stakeout" are on the *Starlet Showcase* website. The best one is below. The page is far more about actress Whitney Blake than it is about M SQUAD or any other series. But, since viewing this episode requires buying the 16-DVD set from NBC Universal, or waiting for someone to put it on YouTube, this link will add keen imagery to the Gems #22 write-up...

<https://starletshowcase.blogspot.com/2010/06/wonderful-whitney-blake.html>



The second Ballinger-Mallinson joust takes place at Headquarters. She says she never knew about any diary; what she'll do later that afternoon verifies the lack of knowledge. "You can go," Grey tells her. But "don't move anything, huh? We'll probably search the place again." Ballinger half-slams the door after she leaves.

CAPTAIN GREY: You were a little rough on her, weren't ya?

BALLINGER: Are you kidding? She lived in that house for three years. She knows a LOT more than she's saying.

GREY: You know, it COULD be the murderer didn't FIND that book. Maybe she and Whitey know where it is.

BALLINGER: You mean keep them under surveillance?

GREY: Oh I don't mean a TAIL. What I want you to do is move INTO the house. Stay there and see what you can find.

BALLINGER: [Surprised] With ME there, they might not make a move.

GREY: With YOU there, they'll be FORCED to.

BALLINGER: [Sighing]

GREY: What's the matter, Frank, don't you WANT the assignment? You know, no matter what you say about that Mallinson girl — she's real class.

BALLINGER: *Expensive* — and there's a difference.

The lady's life saga is more sad than sinister, and Grey is right: She's no tramp. As for Whitey Stone, he never knew about the Brenner diary either. After returning to the house, Mallinson tells Whitey about it. Naturally, they begin searching.



Arriving soon after, Ballinger tells Mallinson: "Oh by the way, I'm moving in." She is startled but processes the news quickly and tells Whitey to "put the Officer's luggage in the maid's room."

The cop favors sarcasm; the lady votes for scorn; and Whitey Stone is a spent shell able to get energized by an explosive diary. Three scorpions, one of whom has a weak stinger, are in a very big bottle.

"Feel free to come and go as you wish," Ballinger tells Mallinson.

Lee Marvin's Career: A compelling and also CONCISE account, with just the right amount of film shots, is at <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Lee-Marvin>. The editors call his three-year Frank Ballinger embodiment "tough but good-hearted."

"We'd Have BOTH Gone to Prison" If Brenner Had Cracked

When Ballinger leaves the Brenner mansion each afternoon to report to Grey, his relief man takes over. Ballinger comes back in the evening. And Vic? His role remains unknown to the cops, and the existence of the diary is unknown to him.

But he lives on the same street if not right next door. He enters the Brenner mansion and buzzes Mallinson. Again we see this massive metal intercom, 50% larger than an old-time desktop landline phone. Vic says they've got to talk, in person.

She calls him "mad." Doesn't he realize "there's a POLICEMAN in the house"? His typically reckless logic: *I know but he's asleep*. "I'm in the Play Room," he whispers into the machine. Peg did not know ahead of time why Vic arranged to get her out of the house on the night of the murder. In the Play Room, it's all clear.

At Minute 10:16, Vic tells Peg: "I killed Connie for you, too." This is not romance, it's an ever more deadly overlap: Both Vic and Peg detested being controlled by Conrad Brenner. It isn't clear that Brenner and Peg had ever been lovers. But, for years now, he had used his influence to hide her actions in a hit & run death.

And Vic? He feared Brenner might tell the U.S. Senate or a Grand Jury everything, including his own collaboration with Brenner to "defraud the government."

That's a *fourth* source of tension. By volume it's the biggest, except that THIS tension is suddenly *in the past*. Now we watch Brenner's survivors — including the partly inert ex-pitcher Whitey, his career ruined by gambling offenses — show what a quiet Hell it must've been to be "shielded" by the egotistical Brenner.

Their years of fretful resentment are over. Phew. But a **DIARY** is ... somewhere.

VIC: It wasn't in his luggage.

PEG: [Her voice lowering to a whisper] *It's somewhere in this house*. That's why that detective's LIVING here.

VIC: Then YOU'VE got to find it before HE does.

PEG: Suppose *I can't*.

VIC: You know what that means? Prison.

The prospect terrifies her. "We'd have BOTH gone to prison" if he hadn't killed Connie, Vic insists. "We can STILL make it if you find that book. Whitey'll help you."

PEG: But that detective LIVING here?

VIC: *Connn* him. Play him along. You know how to do it!

He grabs her to make the point. Pulling away, her elbow knocks a large container of ice onto the floor. The noise awakens Ballinger. Vic scrams. In 30 seconds, Peg's nervousness *and* her resentment vanish. Ballinger swings open the door. "Lieutenant! You couldn't sleep either, hmm? Well, come on in. Have a DRINK with me."

Three days and nights follow. Ballinger is "supervising the search" for the missing diary. One assumes Peg and Whitey search too, surreptitiously, when Ballinger is asleep and no other police operatives are in the house.

Ballinger and Mallinson begin using first names and being cordial. Are they both playing for time? "Surprisingly, my enforced visit with Peg Mallinson [pause] was becoming quite pleasant," Ballinger tells the viewer. And right here is where the entire episode slows down. Subtleties move into what had been a rapid relay.

"You Could See the Girl If You Wanted To"

"Modulation" was an opening compliment for M SQUAD. The word goes back to the *original* Radio Days: "To vary the amplitude or frequency of a carrier wave for the transmission of information." In detective drama, the imperative is to ACQUIRE information. So, a tweaked definition: "To vary the amplitude or frequency of questions and observations so as to elicit the *transfer* of information."

Recalling a girlhood game, Mallinson mentions her father. "He was quite a man," replies Ballinger, admitting that he "took the liberty of checking on your family." Does Ballinger intend to elicit? "Your mother is a Boston blueblood, your father was an athlete, a philanthropist, a bank president — "

MALLINSON: And a thief.

BALLINGER: I wasn't gonna say that.

MALLINSON: Well, it's true. It's a matter of record. Jack Mallinson stole a million dollars in stock, held in Trust for widows *and orphans* — to cover his own gambling losses.

This revelation shattered her. At a young age, "you find out that all those stories about wonderful, golden people [are] so much drivel." Visiting her father in prison, a month before he died, created a lifelong dread. She leaves the room abruptly — "Good night, Officer" — seemingly more out of grief than anger.

Unlike Vic, Whitey can interact with Peg. They both live there. Movements are easier to coordinate. But neither has found the diary. And what Peg says to Whitey is the first signal that she's deviating from Vic's mandate. "That policeman's a decent man, Whitey. I'd FORGOTTEN there were decent men."

Quit kidding yourself, comes the response. "If he finds out about you, he's gonna lock you up." She's not quite ready to tell Ballinger about the hit & run cover-up. During the 15th Minute, the Ballinger-Grey collaboration also develops strain. It's an exaggeration to label it the *fifth* source of tension engaging the viewer. Still, this kind of exchange is unusual for an M SQUAD episode...

BALLINGER: You know we could be wrong about a couple of other things BESIDES that diary being in the house.

GREY: Yeah, like what?

BALLINGER: Peg Mallinson.

GREY: What do you mean?

BALLINGER: Well I don't know, she seemed like a straightforward girl to me.

GREY: [Without a trace of humor] You fallin' for that girl, Frank?

BALLINGER: [A bit too intensely] Noo, I don't think so.

GREY: You know she could be using you.

BALLINGER: Using me for WHAT?

GREY: *WHO KNOWS*. You know if you DO find that diary, there might be something in there that would incriminate her, and she might prevail on you to, uh, "lose it" again?

"Velvet Stakeout" is the only time I've seen Captain Grey appear to question Frank Ballinger's honesty. Just as surprisingly, Ballinger does not take offense.

Instead, to get away from the vexing particulars, he makes a global statement: "Is that what happens to us after we spend too many years in the Department, huh? Anybody that seems straight is trying to *work a crooked angle on us*?"

Not letting the decibel level rise, Grey tries another tack: "How about if I take you off the case?" In a perfectly neutral voice, he adds: "You could see the girl if you wanted to." Ballinger's exasperation remains. "All I want to do is to find the diary."

Unusually, Ballinger is showing inner turmoil. And Peg Mallinson has dropped her own hard-nosed pose. She mused to Ballinger about whether and how to confess to what Brenner had on her. Might she get any credit for owning up?

And Vic? Still around. He has the most to lose if the diary turns up, yet he can't possibly take part in any search. Meanwhile, we still have no indication that the cops know that he — Brenner's real killer — exists.

If M SQUAD episodes had 49 minutes as opposed to 24, you could imagine a half-dozen ways to keep events plausible yet surprise the viewers during the second half. But, as we leave Ballinger and his boss, the "Velvet" scriptwriters are past their own midway point with none of the various tensions letting up.

GEMS write-ups don't spoil endings. They do help editors, authors and scriptwriters grasp what an intricate first half can set the stage for. If you think along these lines, try a skill-development exercise here: Stop the DVD and sketch three or four ways all the tensions we've seen can be resolved or at least superseded.

Minute 16 is the best place to hit Pause. With only a third of the episode left, almost everything remains in the air. NOTE: More than one plausible ending would involve the diary not materializing — at all, for anyone. And the one inconceivable ending — safely rule this one out — is that "Vic" ends up paying no price.

Final Points on "Velvet," the DVDs, and Lee Marvin's Life

(1) CREDIT for the SCRIPT. Most of it is attributed to [MAXWELL SHANE](#) (1905-83). Wikipedia says he was a "movie and television director, screenwriter, and producer." Interesting career start: "Shane studied law at USC and UCLA law schools. He later became a journalist and...Hollywood publicist." Films he contributed to: "*Hell's Island*, *Fear in the Night* and the remake *Nightmare*. Shane scripted *City Across the River*...and directed 1955's [The Naked Street](#)..."

Wikipedia marks the Shane article "incomplete." It says little about TV scripts after M SQUAD. And Shane shares credit for "The Velvet Stakeout" with [STUART JEROME](#) (1918-83), responsible for "story and teleplay," according to IMDB dot-com.

(2) [LEE MARVIN: POINT BLANK](#) by Dwayne Epstein. I haven't read either Marvin biography but Mr. Epstein's — 344 pages, January 2013, from Schaffner Press Inc. — is affirmed as the valuable one. Here's a portion from an especially informative "review" on the Good Reads website. "Joel" is both positive and methodical...

Things I learned from this book. Lee was dyslexic and got kicked out of 10-15 schools. He was in some of the hardest battles of World War Two, and he most likely suffered from PTSD, which led to some of his problems later in life, and his war experience influenced how he portrayed death scenes. He drank very hard, and was inebriated during many of his performances, but he always remembered his lines... I found his perspective on violence in movies to be interesting — basically, he felt that violence when portrayed realistically was a deterrent to violence in real life. It was violence that was not portrayed realistically that was more likely to influence someone to commit acts of violence in real life.

(3) The Only Way to Own the Whole Series. NBC Universal worked with Timeless Media Group and in 2008 we 1950s television devotees were treated to...

www.shoutfactory.com/product/m-squad-the-complete-series-special-edition

Used versions are out there; I got one for \$35. This collection is neither cheap (if acquired new) nor perfect. Especially from the 1957-58 season, top-quality episodes — meaning SOUND and IMAGE quality — are a hit-or-miss venture.

All the original episodes are here, though, with titles, in the order first broadcast.

A striking bonus is DVD #16: M SQUAD music, mostly by [STANLEY WILSON](#). The titles are nicely vintage: "The Cha-Cha Club," "Phantom Raiders," "The Mugger."

All tracks seem to be [from the LP released](#) when M SQUAD was prime-time.

DD Gem #23 — "Blood and Honor" — December 5, 1985 **From MAGNUM, P.I. (CBS-TV, 1980 to '88)**

This one is a Cold War drama. It aired nine months after a reform-minded honcho took over "the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," a/k/a The Soviet Union.

[MIKHAIL GORBACHEV](#) made encouraging statements and his first summit with U.S. President Ronald Reagan (Geneva, November 1985) confirmed a major thaw. But few experts expected the profound changes that, within six years, would mean the replacement of the "USSR" with a smaller and weaker Russia. Which means...

This episode enters media history as a Gem from near an Era's End that few of us assumed to be The End. It makes good use of security lapses, incoherent betrayals, a turf battle, and blind luck for the good guys. The Soviets are not mentioned, and in prime-time U.S. espionage scripts they didn't need to be.

- We see a tall ship, docked. Close by are hordes of bicyclists. They are preparing for the third annual "Kaneohe" race. A voice over the PA system bids them welcome; the crowd is a vaguely mass murmur. During these opening 2 1/2 minutes, we'll hear no words between individuals.
- At Minute 2:22, we shift from the bicyclists to a woman dressed in a white hat, white heels, and a low-slung white hat. Her face isn't shown.
- The music also shifts: From bright (like the weather) to subdued, though still stately. All this time, the credits are rolling out slowly.
- At Minute 2:37, a man gets out of a car. The music turns slightly sinister.

- At 3:02, the woman opens her brown satchel and pulls out a camera. Thirty years ago, a camera was a serious, and seriously bulky, instrument. She focuses it. In the viewfinder: The face of the man who has left his car and is moving through the crowd.
- Having walked up some stairs to board the ship, she has the higher elevation. He has noticed her. Maybe because of the camera's aim, or because of the all-white outfit, or they've got some kind of routine.
- Led by their teacher, schoolchildren briefly block the stairway and they crowd the woman. As a precaution, the white-jacketed arm picks up her satchel and lifts it from the deck to the ship's rail. The teacher snaps a picture and the kids go on to explore the ship.
- Minute 3:49: The man and the woman are standing next to one another. He places his own satchel near his feet. Both satchels look alike — hers on the railing, his on the deck. Each party has the same model of camera.
- But the man does not use his; he just holds it briefly. They stand next to one another for a mere 10 seconds: Only the time needed for the woman to put her camera into his satchel and lift it up. She departs first.

He carries a firearm. How do we know? When the starting gun for the bicycle race goes off, he instinctively grabs for his own weapon. We've seen lots of HIS face, but no part of the lady's. He puts his camera in her satchel — the one lifted up to the ship's rail — and that's the end of the tall-ship crowd-plus-cameras scene

A vivid, if not overly imaginative, opening. Then comes ... **juvenile weirdness.**

From 4:08 to the start of the 7th minute, Higgins is the star. Who is Higgins? The #2 actor in this very popular detective series. The substantive justification for his being in it, at all, is his vast knowledge of crime and detective literature.

Otherwise, the MAGNUM viewer has to (a) learn to tolerate Comrade Higgins, or (b) brace for the waste of valuable air time. The offset here: He isn't given much.

JOHN HILLERMAN is Higgins. And he is furious when a wheel falls off the bed being test-raced — not bike, BED. Save that escapade for later. For now, lead character Thomas Magnum is weary of the "fun." He's about to be offered an escape.

At Minute 6:02, seriousness returns to the story. A U.S. Navy van drives up to Magnum, Higgins, and their cohorts. The driver says: "I have orders to ask you to come back with me." The need is urgent; the purpose is classified.

Ever Been Asked for Big-Time Help by a Long-Ago Ally?

MAGNUM made time for movement, visuals, transport, signs, signals. Those opening 2 1/2 minutes are a superb example. In so doing, this series stayed true to a tradition carved out during the 1950s: Staging and sequencing needing little or no dialogue.

But we do have Magnum's "narration." Low-key inserts mix speculation and tutoring with confiding in the viewer. These inserts come as we're watching movement that otherwise would be wordless. First example, during his ride in the van...

There are all kinds of disadvantages to working for yourself: The pay isn't steady, you can't count on vacations, and you almost never get a raise. But the ADVANTAGE is you hardly EVER get the feeling you're trapped doing a job you don't wanna DO. But the minute I stepped into that van, I began to have an uneasy feeling that someone somewhere was about to pull some heavy-duty strings.

The van pulls up to a paved and fenced overlook. Another Navy vehicle — sedan, not van — is already there. Its back windows are darkened. Magnum is told to walk over by the rail. He's wearing jeans, a short-sleeved shirt, and a baseball cap. The man who emerges from the darkened windows is in uniform.

ADMIRAL HAWKES: [Smiling warmly] Hello, Thomas.

MAGNUM: Admiral Hawkes! [with similar delight, though still disoriented]

In neither the episode nor the credits does this senior military figure have a first name. He is played by TV drama veteran [PAUL BURKE](#) (1926-2009). Burke is remembered respectfully for *Naked City* and *12 O'Clock High* during the 1960s.

When this episode first aired, Burke as Hawkes was 59 1/2. His meeting with former subordinate Magnum will not be lengthy. Their pleasantries are properly minimal. The vista is for the viewers rather than the principals.

Hawkes apologizes for "all the cloak and dagger." He was too security-conscious to make a phone call. What's all this about?

HAWKES: Just for a moment suppose you're me, and you discover you have a security leak at Pearl [Harbor]. Lately you've been losing bits of coded data. It's serious but not critical. So you go about the normal procedure of QUIETLY trying to ferret out the mole...

Now you learn that, in three days' time, you're going to receive the encoding MANUALS of a top-secret nuclear-sub communication system... But you can't trust your own Security section — because any one of them could be the mole. Well, what do you do?

MAGNUM: [Distractedly, and looking away] Call the FBI.

HAWKES: No you wouldn't. Because the leak could be there too. Thomas? Welcome back to the Navy. You've just been recalled.

MAGNUM: [Incredulous] What?

The Admiral hands him some papers. The papers don't reduce the incredulity.

HAWKES: It's a little matter of six months' TIME you still owe me. I "lost" those six months for you when you wanted to get out early, remember? NOW I'm taking them back.

MAGNUM: You can't make this stick, and you know it. [He says it with force but not anger.]

HAWKES: Well, I'm sure going to try... I need your help. What can I do?

MAGNUM: You could ASK me, for starters.

HAWKES: All right, I'm asking. As a favor, *will you help me?*

MAGNUM: [Not sure how to respond]

HAWKES: You have the papers, Thomas. You do what you think is right.

The Admiral walks back to his car and driver. His pitch, delivery, entrance *and exit* have been marvelous. If you've ever gotten a big favor from a well-placed ally, and he or she turns up — a decade or two later — asking for something similar, you'll sense the power of this brief exchange. Even without the perfect staging.

OF COURSE — Thomas Magnum opts to help his old military superior. This means dropping out of contact with his friends as they prep for that "bed race." If he went back home to pack some personal items, he couldn't tell the housemates why.

He implicitly assumes HIS part of this assignment could end in as soon as three days. (The way events pile up, it feels more like five or six days.) In any case, Magnum shows no worry that this emergency assignment might be open-ended.

The Admiral's "three days" remark also signals the viewer that several hits, and a couple of big misses, are in store before disaster can be averted.

Issue #6 magnified Gem episodes from *The Name of the Game*, *Broadway Is My Beat*, and the 1990-91 season of *Law & Order*

— <http://www.ExactingEditor.com/Detective-Gems-6.pdf>

Not Distracted, and Not Aided, by the Other Three Regulars

I never watched MAGNUM during its eight-year run. At the time, I had little use for TV. Four decades later, after one season's worth of episodes, I'll need to stretch the term "detective drama" to make it fit MAGNUM, P.I.

This series is closer to its 1970s predecessor McMILLAN AND WIFE and — from another decade before that — 77 SUNSET STRIP. All three starred either cops or detectives. They therefore dealt with every serious crime situation imaginable.

But the creators of MAGNUM, P.I. — just like McMILLAN and STRIP — took pains to avoid being "too" serious. Side bets were made on whimsy, humor, escapism, parody and (now and then) preposterous plots. STRIP got away with it, in my view, because all five regulars were likeable and, in their way, believable. This was the case even when they played out story lines meant to be absolved by the absurd.

MAGNUM, on the other hand, at least during Season Six, consistently devotes valuable time to frivolities, mostly thanks to (you guessed it) "Higgins."

"Blood and Honor" stands apart. That's because series star [TOM SELLECK](#) is neither distracted nor aided by his three associates. Except at the start and the end, they aren't part of this episode; and that's a *good thing*.

Who wrote it? [PHIL COMBEST](#). He originated one other Season Six script and served as editor for 17 additional MAGNUM episodes during this mid-'80s period.

The executive producer of this and scores of other episodes was [DONALD P. BELLISARIO](#). During 1980-88, Bellasario served as Creator, Director, Writer and/or Producer. Add this part: "He served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1955 to 1959, and attained the rank of Sergeant." Given Mr. Bellasario's bio and for other reasons, Wikipedia reports, "Tom Selleck's character [was] a United States Naval Academy graduate, former Naval Intelligence officer, and Vietnam veteran..."

Okay, we'll get back to the episode — right after three quick points. They do not relate to one another but were causing headaches when I tried to place them — individually — anywhere else. Here goes...

- 1) The Hawkes/Magnum scene is the type of dramatic exchange a writer would start having most of the language for. Then, as part of setting it up for TV, realize that an even more enticing scene — one needing no words — would work well BEFORE it. For example, a "drop" made at an extremely crowded event, carried out by two people whose short-term purpose is to make viewers wonder who, what, and why. This zero-

dialogue box was checked off before the Navy van pulled up.

- 2) Though the character of Magnum is represented as having seen combat in Southeast Asia alongside friend and series regular [Theodore Calvin — "TC"](#) — Tom Selleck did not serve in that way. "Upon receiving a draft notice during the Vietnam War," according to Wikipedia, "Selleck joined the California National Guard. He served in the 160th Infantry Regiment of the California Army National Guard from 1967 to 1973."
- 3) Selleck was nearly 41 when "Blood and Honor" appeared. The viewer won't hear what rationale Hawkes gives his associates for the sudden arrival of a middle-aged man carrying the title of "Commander." The military being the military, no one will ask the Admiral, and his subordinates will speculate quietly. And, if a "mole" really is inside the Hawkes operation, he or she might just create a diversion for intruder Magnum.

Remember Magnum's initial advice: "Call the FBI." Somebody at Pearl did. Except it wasn't the Admiral. Which means that Admiral Hawkes remains unaware of an FBI operative ferreting out — on his turf, for months now — the very same security leak that Hawkes is managing as a "just a few days left" emergency.

Which further suggests that Hawkes himself was never beyond suspicion...

But the FBI is a second-half factor, and this publication avoids detailing a Gem's second half. Instead, what has to be heard and shown during a Gem's FIRST half?

From Minute 12 to the halfway mark, the stress factors are between and among four people: Admiral Hawkes, his son Andy, Andy's fiancée Alex McPort, and Thomas Magnum. Magnum will also have to escape a trap set for him by the subversives (never clear how many) that are deep at work on and around the base.

Main Suspect: A Contractor, on the Base for Six Months

Magnum shows up, in uniform, at the Pearl Harbor installation. He arrives after Hawkes, his son and Alex have finished lunch but are still in the cafeteria.

The Admiral has just given Andy a watch first awarded by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1901; it has been handed down ever since. A proud moment: Andy represents the fourth generation of Hawkes to serve in the U.S. Navy.

His father introduces him and his fiancée to Magnum. "Lieutenant Andy Hawkes, USN" is played by [JEFF YAGHER](#). Alex McPort is played by [SIMONE GRIFFITH](#). McPort grew up in "North Forsaken, Montana" and became a civilian contractor.

In real life, the age difference is a whopping 10 3/4 years. It doesn't look QUITE that big during this episode.

Alex takes a picture of the Admiral and his son assuming ownership of the military heirloom. Because Hawkes wants a photo of him and his son with Alex, Magnum takes the camera from her. "It's just a little complicated," she warns.

He checks the settings. "Are you sure you're using 400 ASA?" (That's the best film.) The question appears to baffle Alex. Her reaction feeds a growing suspicion.

As soon as Hawkes and Magnum are alone, Magnum says: "Pretty girl. She work around here?" "Yes, she's a civilian contractor, to the Navy: Weather Operations. Only been here about six months. It's been a whirlwind romance, but — [Andy] feels she's the gal for him."

Admiral Hawkes is more worried about his OWN relationship with his son. At their next meeting, he'll tell Magnum that Andy's being in the Navy has "driven a wedge between us." He's "trapped in the Inspector General's office, yet he won't accept my HELP in getting him a transfer. He INSISTS on doing everything the hard way."

Hawkes conveys an intensity borne of sadness. The only time we see him be proactive rather than reactive or disoriented is when he re-enlisted Magnum. In any case, Magnum isn't on base to process father-son difficulties.

At the lunch table, Hawkes turns over a list of suspects — potential leakers to, or otherwise enablers of, the foreign operatives. Do they discuss people on that list? We don't hear it, and Magnum implicitly excuses himself pretty rapidly.

This is one of those episodes that leaves certain critical steps to the imagination. Because Magnum IS the story as well as the story-teller, air time and mobility are used — as opposed to animated dialogue — to show him assembling the puzzle.

It works, more or less. At Minute 14:23, he begins tailing someone by car...

I know what you're thinking, and you're RIGHT: If Admiral Hawkes had a list of suspects, why wasn't I tracking them down instead of waiting to tail his soon-to-be daughter-in-law [pause]. I didn't have an answer to that. But my little voice was telling me that Alex wasn't quite what she appeared to be. I couldn't put my finger on it, but there was something about her being a few years older than Andy; her whirlwind romance with him; and the fact that she carried around a complicated camera but didn't appear to know an [F-Stop](#) from a Bus Stop.

Background music conveys anxiety and progression, yet isn't hyped. And the narration has a different feel from Frank Ballinger's or Johnny Dollar's:

All of that led me to wonder what she was DOING here. And, as I followed her in her VERY expensive CAR, I began to wonder how she managed to stretch a Civil Servant's salary so far.

It isn't hard for the viewer to guess what Magnum will observe: Another camera swap, using a pair of brown satchels. Same guy. This time we also see the face of the woman in white.

The Detective's First Report Takes Place Off-Site

MAGNUM: I witnessed a drop.

HAWKES: And?

MAGNUM: [Another pause] How well do you know Andy's fiancée?

HAWKES: Alex? No. It couldn't be. [The Admiral is speaking very quietly.] How could she possibly get her hands on classified material?

MAGNUM: That's what I need to find out — I have to get close to her.

Hawkes doesn't dither. "She's in the Communications Building. Department of Meteorology. Thomas — report to me tonight, 2200 hours."

Alex is startled when he pops into her work area. She fingers her pen with some agitation. What can she do for the Commander? "I'm kinda STUCK here — between orders, you know. I was getting a little bored. Well, *lonely* if you wanna know the truth; and I just uh, THOUGHT that uh, if YOU were stuck here working LATE, that uh [pause] maybe you'd like a little company."

It doesn't work. She was "JUST about to close up shop for the day."

He then starts clicking on a keyboard, mentions a Navy buddy in Guam, and asks: "Can I use this computer to access into his?" Possibly, she replies, "if you have the right Security Clearance." Does he have one? Noo, he replies, keeping up the boyish tone — "I was hoping you would."

She is "just a Weather lady," Alex McPort replies. "No need for Security."

He keeps trying. After making it plain that she's engaged, Alex agrees to go out for coffee. She has warmed up. She also has "no one to talk to" (other than Andy). They share bits and pieces of background. He slips back into story-teller mode:

Playing on people's emotions to get information is one part of Intelligence work I never liked. The fact that Alex McPort was so likeable, and at the same time engaged to my good friend's son, made it that much tougher...

At some point, Andy intercepts them. He insists she leave with him. And he tells Magnum: "I don't wish to start anything, Commander. But get your own girl."

Magnum and his old boss — and current client, or rough equivalent — are now severely polarized. Hawkes chews him out: "You take that girl out in the public where anybody can see you?"

MAGNUM: If you're talking about ANDY, he obviously FOLLOWED her.

HAWKES: Are you telling me that my son just sits in his car, waiting to spy on his fiancée?

MAGNUM: I don't know what Andy's doing, it's Alex I'm worried about. Now I don't think we can give it any more time; I think we have to pick her up.

HAWKES: On what GROUNDS?

MAGNUM: *I witnessed a drop.*

HAWKES: Did you see any papers?

MAGNUM: No.

HAWKES: Do you have any hard evidence of a security breach?

MAGNUM: You KNOW what I saw.

HAWKES: You "saw" one camera case being exchanged for another.

MAGNUM: Under very suspicious circumstances.

HAWKES: Suspicious — but not conclusive.

MAGNUM: But REASONABLE — for QUESTIONING.

HAWKES: Thomas — if I pull her in now, she's gonna deny everything. And we're going to LOSE her, AND her contacts. No. We have to wait.

MAGNUM: [Yelling and whispering at the same time] For WHAT??

HAWKES: For the manuals to arrive. And then if SOMEONE goes AFTER them, and tries to DELIVER them —

MAGNUM: NOT "someone," Alex.

He'll lose the argument, after being compelled to ask Admiral Hawkes if he's running these risks "because she's your son's fiancée?" NO, Hawkes replies.

It's easy to see why Selleck attracted so many admirers. He could apply boyish

charm, and a bit later push a mentor to the wall. Very quietly, after a sigh: "Admiral — do you really want her contacts? Or are you just protecting Andy?"

HAWKES: And what if we're wrong about her?

MAGNUM: What if we're NOT?

HAWKES: The manuals arrive tomorrow morning. We wait.

By the 18th minute of "Blood and Honor," the viewer has become enmeshed — and it didn't take that much dialogue — in messes micro and macro.

- Thomas Magnum is more than halfway accusing his superior officer's future daughter-in-law of treason, even as...
- The Admiral already has an estranged son (a stress-point subtly shown to the viewer before Magnum heard it detailed), along with...
- The overarching tension of **time running out** to prevent something treacherous from happening, while — giving Hawkes the valid point here — doing so in a way that nabs more than just a few players.

Before the start of the 35th Minute, two additional stressors will be added...

- Top-secret materials will be placed in Magnum's staff car by a low-level operative. A tip will cause Magnum to be arrested — *as the security leak*. Hawkes can clear him but this distraction will cost them precious time.
- Finally, what of the FBI agent investigating the spy ring for months, completely unknown to Hawkes? When Magnum uncovers this operative, "Blood and Honor" has the FIFTH element of tension: A Turf Battle.

Other Points About this Episode and the MAGNUM Regulars

The second half of any detective episode can deliver clarity while exploiting the suspense ONLY if the first half has set everything up: The sources of tension, the basic driver for each character, whatever pressures are added by time or turf, and the conflicts that make perfect sense, yet are far from resolution.

Big surprises — *no surprise* — await you in the second half. On the other hand, by being so ambitious, this episode ends up with a few shortcomings.

"Blood and Honor" is a Gem with minor flaws. What if 70 DVD minutes (88 with prime-time commercials) had been available instead of 48? Some awkward leaps could have been dealt with. Without spoiling the ending, here are three...

- Why does this espionage project feel like something carried out by a cut-rate crew? Had the Soviets by 1985 gutted their spying budget? So-so local operatives are suddenly considered a worthwhile bet?
- Along those same lines, how could a Pearl Harbor Naval installation be penetrated as if it were a big-city bank? (At least the FBI is where it needed to be, and for several months before Magnum showed up.)
- How did Magnum manage to return to his patron's office the very next day — or was it the SAME day — after pulling off a stunning escape from the same installation during which he beat up (in self-defense) one of his Navy colleagues? How did he either get past that false arrest, or get back to Admiral Hawkes, himself temporarily under suspicion?

If Hawkes had recruited Magnum SEVEN days ahead of the manuals arriving, rather than three, those events and choices would have time for us to believe them.

No matter the decade, one dilemma faced crime-show producers when the topic was international in scope: Scriptwriters could never be sure how much was "real" in the operations they built the story around. They took liberties with plausibility, less due to sloppiness than to the shortage of reliable research and direct experience.

Back to MAGNUM's regulars. If you include the one we got to know a decade earlier in HAWAII FIVE-O, there were four, not three. Of the four, the likeable ones are [KWAN HI LIM](#) (1922-2008) and [ROGER E. MOSLEY](#).

- As Selleck's comrade from Southeast Asia days, Mosley as Theodore "TC" Calvin owns the helicopter that turns up more often than taxis or buses. He has the LEAD role in a Season Six episode — "[Round and Round](#)" — and that one's a Gem. Likely to be featured before 2025.
- And Kwan Hi-Lim, though not in the typical episode, is [Inspector Yoshi Tanaka](#). The *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* updated his career on January 29, 2005, three years before his death at the age of 85...

He's now living in a four-story apartment building he owns in Makiki. Lim was a Family Court per-diem judge for several years after MAGNUM ended, and he retired from the practice of law 12 years ago. There were a lot of "double-takes" from those who appeared before him, Lim said. "It was a very strange situation." Lim appeared as Tanaka in more than 25 MAGNUM episodes from 1982 to 1987. He described Tanaka as an Asian Lt. Colombo, the bumbling but astute detective made famous by Peter Falk. Before that, he played "all different kinds of bad guys" in 32 episodes of HAWAII 5-O."



Versatile Korean American actor **Kwan Hi-Lim** was in almost as many episodes of *MAGNUM, P.I.*, as he was in the original *HAWAII 5-0*.

Now for the lesser *MAGNUM* co-stars: The pompously articulate [JOHN HILLERMAN](#) — "Higgins" — and the callow but agile in a crunch [LARRY MANETTI](#) ("Rick").

MAGNUM admirers apparently found a treasure trove in Larry Manetti's memoir: *Aloha Magnum: Larry Manetti's Magnum P.I. Memories*. Written with Chip Silverman, it came out in 1999: Renaissance Books, ISBN 1-58063-052-9.

And Hillerman, who died in 2017, was much easier to take seriously as Norman Thompson in "[Search for a Dead Man](#)" — the next-to-last episode of *MANNIX*. Thompson was a mild-mannered (and frivolity-avoiding) hired killer.

As noted, Manetti and Hillerman have throw-away roles in "Blood and Honor." Except: How does this script link the "bed race" to an espionage and undercover saga? Because Magnum knows where the race will take place, he picks up a reference that baffles his FBI rival as they decipher a hotel notepad's indents.

During the final minute, Thomas Magnum — mission complete, but still in Navy uniform — replaces Higgins on the bed-racing team. And they win.

A bedraggled Higgins is the last image we see. From start to finish, he'd been the

Bed-Race Coach — *wearing a suit, tie, and vest*. You'll never see a 5-O, M SQUAD or MANNIX episode sign off like this one. But, if you prefer your detective drama with comic interludes and sub-plots — be my binge-watching guest.

These follow-ups close the book on, or open your schedule to, Gem #23...

- If you'd like to review the ENTIRE cast and crew for "Blood and Honor," the best display is <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0639632/fullcredits>
- The episode can be [accessed on The Roku Channel](#). Not a Roku member, but I assume CBS Inc. knows where its copyrighted TV shows appear.
- No charge to view the episode on "Uncle Earl's Classic Television" — UECT — a site I never heard about until last October. Here goes whatever... https://www.solie.org/alibrary/MagnumPI_609BloodandHonor.html
- And those who don't stream, and also aren't ready to hand Amazon one more nickel, have the official (and low-cost) DVD option... <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/dvd-magnum-pi-season-six/27559583>

Issue #5 magnified Gems from *Hill Street Blues*, *Johnny Staccato* and *87th Precinct* — <http://www.ExactingEditor.com/Detective-Gems-5.pdf>

DD Gem #24 — “The Case of the Tell-Tale Ribbon”

From THE NEW ADVENTURES OF NERO WOLFE (March 30, 1951)

A rattled messenger telephones Wolfe's office. The caller says that he's over an hour late getting there "because she was killed." He has an important message for Wolfe. It has nothing to do with the killing. The caller gives his name as Jenkins.

Come right over, says Wolfe's chief aide Archie Goodwin. Then, theme music — for an NBC Radio production that lasted just six months and one week. Too bad. The series had several plusses. Because the lead actor and character were discussed in 2020 while covering Gem #7, this write-up moves directly into a second example.

"Mister Jenkins" arrives. He has an envelope for Wolfe. Wolfe and Goodwin are more concerned about what they take to be a murder. They ask. Jenkins tells them that "Bessie," age 9, has just been killed while they were "crossing the turnpike."

Wolfe and Goodwin assume the visitor's nine-year-old DAUGHTER was the one slaughtered. No, Bessie was his HORSE. The police needed time to write it all up, which is what delayed this messenger's arrival. A zany way to introduce a deadly serious episode, agreed. But don't be deflected. For 1951, Jenkins is authentic.

The real news is "this here letter I was bringin' to ya." Where is the dispatch from? Jenkins tells them he knows who produced the letter "but I'm supposed to say I don't. See? That's my job. I'm supposed to say I don't..."

A terrible night's work for Jenkins is complete. They get nothing more from him. He leaves just as abruptly as he entered. "Well! Get him," says Goodwin: "A pixie."

Nobody's joking, though. The envelope contains five \$100 bills. The typed letter says: "Mr. Wolfe, your services are desperately needed. Come up this weekend as my guest." The signature reads "E. Mallott." Wolfe, a voracious reader, takes this to be Edward Mallott, the wealthy manufacturer.

He has no intention of visiting anyone and sends Archie Goodwin in his place. That will do for now. But this is one of the rare Wolfe radio episodes where the rotund, beer-loving and hobby-obsessed Master Detective leaves his home office.

From [Page 1 of the October 2020 issue](#) of this publication...

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? Might've been 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 needled him back). Thirty years later, veteran radio and TV actor WILLIAM CONRAD offered [a slightly softened Wolfe](#), and the series failed. Greenstreet's version had a similarly short run.

Scripts that Don't Baffle, Bore or Insult the Audience

Goodwin is slowed down by wind and rain. He arrives at an estate that sprawls. "Something is certainly PHONY about this," he says after knocking. "There's no party going on HERE tonight." The maid is polite but ice cold. Goodwin informs her that "Mister Mallott invited me down for the weekend." She notifies the boss.

Mallott emerges. He has no idea what's going on. Granted, the invitation is on his stationery. But "I'm in the habit of signing my name with a PEN, not with a typewriter." Archie says the boss sent him. Mallott is aware of Wolfe's reputation.

But — inviting Wolfe, or anyone representing him, down for the weekend?!?

Dorothy Davis is Mallott's private secretary. So private that she has space in the residence, not just the formal office, of this "wealthy manufacturer." (Why else would she be at his house on a Friday evening?) She, too, does not know what's going on with any letter to Nero Wolfe. "I certainly didn't write it."

Miss Davis has an alluring voice. We imagine more. Archie starts flirting with her. Mallott remains all-business. Eva Mallott, his ailing wife, is lured downstairs by the commotion. She ALSO has nothing to say about the developing weirdness.

While amplifying the confusion, this script is sketching (sketchily) each character. Apart from reinforcing a vague sense of foreboding, the maid is the least of them. As yet, no danger. Just shared confusion. As for Jenkins? His resume comes later.

Next to materialize in the front parlor is Larry Mallott. Although polite during his entrance, this young man has less self-control than anyone. If HE knew about the letter and payment, he'd blurt it out. Still, nobody knows anything.

It's useful to appreciate how steady Archie Goodwin is in the midst of a scene that would exasperate if not unravel most of us. Listening to him brings back a 1970s maxim valid for more than detective work: The more invasive or presumptuous your content, the more laid-back your voice and demeanor should be. It's not good to have the other party be triggered by your emotions or nerves. Staying low-key helps him or her stick to the subject matter and "hear" each inquiry.

Goodwin's temperament also helps him avoid being triggered by THEIR intensity. (There'll be plenty of that before Wolfe makes his grand appearance.)

Mallott says that SOMEBODY has accessed his personal stationery. Why? Goodwin names the only person who admitted to handling the invitation: "Who's Jenkins?" Never heard of him, says Mallott. "A little dried-up old man, he delivered it to us."

Dorothy and Larry are also blank on Jenkins, the jittery old-timer who opened this episode worrying about a death on the turnpike. So far, it's the senior Mallott who seems decisive. We'll soon see him as the Picture of Obliviousness.

Goodwin muses: "Maybe it didn't even COME from this house." It couldn't have, Mallott declares. Then Goodwin asks to see whatever typewriter Mallott and his

secretary use for business purposes. The fog starts to lift, sort of. Maybe the letter can be confirmed to come from inside this residence.

As lady of the house, Eva Mallott takes pity on Goodwin. She says he shouldn't have to drive back to Manhattan on this "dreadful night." Her husband agrees, "and it is rather late." *LATE?*, Goodwin replies. "It's only 7:30!"

Larry, still calm, says "why not stay here for the night?" Mostly because of the nasty weather, Goodwin agrees. Mallott Senior then bids him goodnight.

"You mean you're all going to RETIRE now?" Goodwin gripes that he hasn't even had dinner — ironically, lack of food is the ONE subject that riles him during this bizarre evening. No problem. Jeffries the butler (the one character we'll never hear, and that's also no problem) "will prepare anything you want."

A wonderful set-up! In just seven minutes and 45 seconds. Not even one-third of the total air time (if we exclude commercials) for "Tell-Tale Ribbon."

Everyone has been heard from, and nothing is clear. If FRANZ KAFKA has lived long enough to try his hand at radio scripts, something like this one would've fit the bill.

As a novelist, Kafka had hundreds of pages to diagram and populate literary mazes. In contrast, a detective radio script needed to make every word count.



"Tell-Tale" returns after this Retro Movie Promo...

Although short-lived, the "New Adventures" radio version of Wolfe helped shape a tradition. As noted, the characters of Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin were invented by novelist REX STOUT in 1934; dozens of novels and short stories followed.

But cinematic legitimacy, if we can call it that, was the work of [EDWARD ARNOLD](#) (1890-1956) in a film that hit U.S. theaters in July 1936: [Meet Nero Wolfe](#).

The more or less unbelievable Wolfe has plenty of admirers all these decades later (and everyone who embodied him had to be overweight). Like Sherlock Holmes, he is a multi-generational icon. Very unlike Holmes, Wolfe hated to leave his office. If Holmes was a manic-depressive, Wolfe was a brainiac-recluse. Nearly all the energy he deployed was mental.

If you are an unrepentant Sound Hound, you've read enough about Wolfe and "Tell-Tale Ribbon" to proceed straight to a clean Web audio file...

<https://www.oldtimeradiodownloads.com/crime/the-adventures-of-nero-wolfe/the-tell-tale-ribbon-1951-03-30>

Otherwise — for writers and editors — there's more to write about. This publication digs into what makes radio and TV episodes sparkle. The analytical method makes it more useful to producers (content-organizers) than to consumers (fans).

Plausibility is Requirement #1. Getting there needs help from evocative exchanges by characters that look and sound authentic. A GEM episode rolls out conflicts and choices — the dead ends alternating with the discoveries — without baffling, boring or insulting its audience. "The Tell-Tale Ribbon" meets all of these specs.

"I Wrote You That Note. I Sent For You"

Even if the off-stage butler served him a tasty meal, Archie Goodwin is stuck in the guest room of an estate in the suburbs of New York City; it isn't even 9 p.m.; and his only clarities are negatives. Time to telephone Wolfe.

Goodwin reports that Eva Mallott "looks very sick" and he suspects that she might want to tell him something in private. He's also bothered, in a not easy to define way, by Dorothy the Secretary.

"How unusual," Wolfe responds drolly, "especially if she's pretty."

Wolfe isn't jazzed by anything he hears. Archie might as well return to the office. "Give them their money back." No, we can keep the \$500, Goodwin says — because "they don't want me here" and no one knows anything about the letter.

That part of the report transforms the diffident Wolfe. "Interesting, INDEED." The explanation that Archie is in the wrong house is discarded. So much "nothing" in the right place has to be a cover for ... something.

"The circumstances would indicate that you should STAY there," Wolfe tells his chief aide, "and wait for it to happen." Wait for WHAT to happen? "For whatever it is the fates have conspired to have happen there while your shining little ego is in the MIDST of it. Goodbye," says Archie's boss loftily but not rudely.

Before anything can "happen," someone needs to own the original communication. Halfway through the 10th minute, the person who sent the payment and letter tells Archie Goodwin the why and the WHO of the delivery...

Old Man Jenkins is a scissor-and-knife sharpener who happens along every month or so. They wouldn't know him. I put five one-hundred-dollar bills in the envelope [and sought Mr. Wolfe's assistance because] my life is in danger. I've been threatened. I received THREE NOTES through the mail. They were all postmarked in New York City... Here they are.

Typewritten. Each contains a tersely hostile warning. Goodwin's comment to Wolfe is being validated. Who's doing this for him? A rattled Eva Mallott.

Does she believe these cryptic missives are "an inside job"? Yes, and it's a recent conclusion. She tells Goodwin about "severe spells." They have always come with "cold perspiration" and left her "horribly weak."

When she adds extreme "thirst," Goodwin, calm as ever, says: "You feel you're being poisoned." YES. This is why she dreads "every bite of food or drink." She can't even shut her eyes without "these yellow sleeping capsules."

No more bafflement for Goodwin. Eva Mallott's fear is palpable. She also tells him that Dorothy and her husband are in love. "The idea never occurred to me until last week." If anyone wants to get rid of Eva, it's one or both of them.

So it's not a residence filled with bored game-players. In their next phone chat, Wolfe will tell his chief aide: "Be careful, Archie; use your head this time."

Goodwin tries to trap Larry — Eva's stepson — by making unprovable statements about the Remington typewriter in his father's office. Larry takes the bait and contends that Dorothy Davis is "making a fool" of his dad. Young Larry is going to stay in hair-trigger mode for the rest of the episode.

On the phone, Wolfe tells Goodwin that Eva Mallott "could be right" about a plot to poison. When it comes to Larry's blustery demand that Goodwin quit the estate — "tonight, and the sooner the better" — what does Wolfe recommend? "Do nothing. The trouble will come to you. Bye."

Soon, Wolfe will have to come to the trouble. He has a driver, of course, who doubles as a cook.

At the Moment of Mutual Mortification, Dorothy Davis Enters

Who is Goodwin's #1 suspect? Dorothy. The way he tries to flush her out exemplifies soft-spoken bluntness. Right before that exchange, he tries the same method with Edward Mallott.

Goodwin is using the library to search for material on poisons. Mallott walks in.

Though surprised, Goodwin instantly changes the focus to his secretary: "Did it ever occur to you that she might be — well, infatuated [or] in love with you?" Startled, on the way to defensive, Mallott says no way to that.

That's after accusing Goodwin of getting a hold of his stationery to create the phony invitation. "Mr. Goodwin, there is nothing going on here that requires the services of a detective..." If Dorothy has overheard Goodwin, she'll have to barge in and break up this dialogue. That's what she does.

Her entrance makes this moment one of mutual mortification. Mr. Mallott is no longer in charge. Give him a hook to exit? Solicitous of her boss's need for rest — busy day tomorrow, etc. — she can then converse with Goodwin at the bar...

DAVIS: I'll fix you a nice, soothing drink.

GOODWIN: That'll be nice.

DAVIS: Well — now, what would you like, Mr. Goodwin?

GOODWIN: In the way of drinks? Oh well, some 7-Up.

DAVIS: Really? [Chuckling in a patronizing way] Just sit down over there.

GOODWIN: Okay, what do you want to talk about?

DAVIS: Well — where'd you get the idea that I was in love with Mr. Mallott?

GOODWIN: First, suppose you tell me if you ARE in love with him.

DAVIS: [To the sound of liquid entering a glass] Yes, I am. But until you [said it to him] a few minutes ago, he wasn't even aware of it [pause]. I worship him — and his work. I never wanted him to know because he's MARRIED; it would've caused trouble and I'd have had to LEAVE here. And now he knows it's true [said with an edge].

GOODWIN: Well, now that he knows, what will happen?

DAVIS: Oh, I'm going to leave tonight — NOW.

GOODWIN: I see.

Goodwin remains unflappable (a great word we don't hear much anymore).

A listener wonders: Is Dorothy eager to escape from something beyond the setback of her boss's lack of perception and, worse, his possible lack of interest in her as a woman? And will her next gambit entrap Archie Goodwin?

DAVIS: And since I don't own a car, Mr. Goodwin, I'm going to ask you to

do me a very great favor. Will you run me into New York? I want to leave without a word. If I wait till morning, I'll have to explain to Mr. Mallott and — well, that would be most embarrassing, Archie.

GOODWIN: Ohh, now it's "Archie."

DAVIS: You — you don't really MIND, do you?

GOODWIN: Mmm, no, I guess I don't. I should maybe, but uh —

DAVIS: Don't you like your drink?

GOODWIN: What'd you put IN this drink?

DAVIS: [A slight laugh and/or smirk] What do you mean?

GOODWIN: What'd you dope it with?

DAVIS: [A firmer chuckle conveys the smile] Archie, why would I do that?

GOODWIN: Might be SEVERAL reasons.

DAVIS: There's nothing in that drink.

GOODWIN: No? Then suppose you drink it.

DAVIS: Why? [She just restored the edge]

GOODWIN: [Low-key laugh]

DAVIS: Give it to me, I'll throw it out. If you want another drink, fix it yourself. I'll have my things ready in five minutes. Are you going to take me?

GOODWIN: Sure. CERTAINLY I'm going to take you. But are you sure you have to go tonight?

DAVIS: I MUST go tonight — NOW.

GOODWIN: Wish I knew why. Mr. Wolfe's always so right.

DAVIS: What?

GOODWIN: Just talking to myself.

That's when Larry shouts: "Dorothy. Larry. Jeffries. Come upstairs! Call Dr. Hauser. Something TERRIBLE has happened to Eva!" It's Minute 16:49. The Web radio file you saw the link to runs a little over 29 minutes. Here it is [a second time](#).

Two-thirds of this Gem is over. Imagine what the creators had to work out to get this far, this fast, without losing the audience. To even hint at what comes next would go against this publication's design. But the coverage is...

Not Complete Yet. Remembering HARRY BARTELL (1913-2004)

- Bartell is listed as a "radio and film actor," but his professional life began in Houston as an announcer in 1933. As the announcer, he was heard on [*The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*](#) for several years. Besides pitching the wine-company sponsor, he interviewed Doctor Watson (played by Nigel Bruce) at the start and finish of every Holmes-case recap.
- As one of four #2 characters who tried to help Sydney Greenstreet make the 1950-51 NERO WOLFE series click, Harry Bartell was thoughtful in each sense of the word — even when asking an accusatory question.

This publication isn't going to write about westerns. But the most durable western of all time (on TV as well as radio) is cited by Wikipedia to show how versatile Mr. Bartell could be as part of a single production company...

- "[A] leading member of the *Gunsmoke* repertory company...from the first broadcast on April 26, 1952, until the last show on June 18, 1961. His roles ranged from friendly townspeople to victims to heavies, from the occasional role of Dodge City printer Mr. Hightower to famed gunslinger Doc Holliday in a 1952 episode... With fellow actor Vic Perrin, he also co-wrote two episodes near the end of the radio run, and appeared many times on the TV version of *Gunsmoke*, sometimes reprising his radio roles."
- [YOURS TRULY, JOHNNY DOLLAR](#) is a great place to find Detective Drama GEMS. Mr. Bartell found his voice there, too, "playing characters on both sides of the law, as well as the recurring role of jittery insurance adjuster Harry Branson (and his equally fussy twin brother Peter Branson)."
- On the original [Get Smart](#), Bartell played a KAOS agent who had infiltrated a congressional investigating committee; and a master at billiards. In the latter role, as Willie Marconi, he's tasked by The Chief of CONTROL to train Maxwell Smart for an undercover role. Bartell's thumb is smashed by Max on a premature break; then his forehead is bruised by a flying cue stick.

Bartell was the rare Golden-Age radio master staying active into the Internet Age. In his eighties, "he was a frequent presence at old-time radio conventions and recreations. He wrote online articles about the medium and his experiences, and even participated in radio-themed chat rooms." Quite a guy.

SOURCE — https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Bartell

If you are a writer, a performer, or an editor (of any type!), this publication will help you navigate each episode and grasp its relevance beyond the story lines. Every GEMS analysis spotlights **characters**, **dialogue** and **scenes** from the episode's first half. The write-up clarifies what to look for and why it excels: You can walk in, prepared to see the thing whole. And the episode's second half — as every loose end gets clipped, tied, or fried — will STILL **surprise**. Because? Even with at least 3,000 words detailing each episode, the endings will not be spoiled.

The URL for this **May 2022** issue of ***Detective Drama Gems*** is www.ExactingEditor.com/Detective-Gems-7.pdf

And the link to the NEXT one, dated **August 2022** and uploaded two months early, is <http://www.exactingeditor.com/Detective-Gems-8.pdf>

If the plan holds, Issue #8 will showcase these three episodes...

Gem #25 — "[The Broken Badge](#)" — September 26, 1966
From THE FELONY SQUAD (ABC-TV, 1966 to '69)

Gem #26 — "[The Harold Clark Murder Case](#)" — October 27, 1950
From BROADWAY IS MY BEAT (CBS Radio)

Gem #27 — "[Target in the Mirror](#)" (**video link**) — October 3, 1973
From CANNON (CBS-TV, 1971 to '76)

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