



# Detective Drama **GEMS...**

Mid-1940s to the Late 1980s

Issue Zero April 2020

Your Editor & Curator is [Frank Gregorsky](#) and the purpose is to showcase...

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

It's 1951. President Harry Truman's undeclared war to preserve South Korea's independence is going badly. Gas is 20 cents a gallon; 90% of U.S. homes do not have a TV set; and a most distinctive detective appears on the radio...

He's more ironic than iconic. Speaks a lot slower than Philip Marlowe and Sergeant Joe Friday. He is also "sardonic." Hold on; what does THAT mean? "Disdainfully or skeptical humorous" (*Merriam-Webster* 2004, page 642).

In only one way — syllabic adornment — is this radio detective taking himself seriously. Instead of a private eye, he intends to be known as a Confidential Investigator. Nine syllables instead of just three. On the Mutual Network.

Given how little the publisher did to draw readers, it's odd how you found this prototype: "Issue Zero," the issue that comes before Issue One. The string of GEMS is just beginning. Quite a few clues are here, though. You'll be able to make your own deductions (with no deposit required). The audience for this publication's methods and exhibits is expected to reveal itself...slowly.

The formal first issue is in the works. Starting on 7/1/2020, use...

<http://www.exactingeditor.com/Detective-Gems-1.pdf>

Promoted to NBC Radio after its first few months, ***Confidential Investigator*** will be around 'til 1955. Theme music: Liltng, languid, and sooo laidback you couldn't even do a fox trot to it. At times, the lead character sounds drowsy. He even admits to taking naps. In his office. Just in case SOMEBODY might walk in and hire him.

Listeners are offered tutorials on investigative absurdities...

**You rent an office on the third floor of the Old Mercantile Building. You've got a City license that says you're a confidential investigator. So, most of your life, you sit around and wait. Some of the guys in the business hire blondes and call them "secretaries." Others confide in cab drivers, bend bartenders' ears, and even buy dictating machines.**

None of Johnny Dollar's gung-ho idealism there. The only time this fellow sounds intense or moralistic is during a fight or when flinging a provable accusation. As for breaking up the monotony's monopoly by chatting up the bartender...

**Maybe it helps them forget that they're the LONELIEST guys in the world — because nobody REALLY talks to you. The suspicious wives, the frightened parents, the desperate kids who walk into your office, never even SEE you. To them, you're a license, a pair of ears — and sometimes a gun. Nothing human. And, after a while, maybe you're not.**

Even while mapping various dark sides, this detective tries to remain "human." Some of the fatalistic barbs are a cover for his sensitivity. But the latter will win out during this publication's very first Gem. You will experience "Mister Craig" trying to help a victim of partial amnesia reclaim his identity, and his life.

An even odder twist: The detective's client is the amnesiac's *psychologist*.

Most episodes have this low-key detective encountering a newly dead person. The police have to be notified. Our non-hero prefers to head out before they show up.

On one occasion, Craig was required to stay put; that's because the person walked into his office just before dying. "The Homicide Squad arrived and went to work. I don't like watching the boys. They're too smooth. I start thinking of all the stiffes they PRACTICED on [and] I shut my eyes."

After a while, "Homicide wound up and went away. One nice thing about it — after they were through, the office no longer needed dusting." Serious sequences, for sure, but no philosophical interpretation (while the sly pun made its own space).

You've been hearing the character **Barrie Craig**. The quotes on this page come from one of the early episodes: "The Case of the Philanthropist Bride," web-dated as being broadcast on May 7, 1951, which was before the series shifted over to NBC.

"Bride" isn't the episode being spotlighted. For anyone under the age of 60, it can help to explain the SERIES ahead of the Gem example. Sticking with the character... In only one way is Barrie Craig an idealist. He accepts each assignment assuming that all of the rotten behavior will be found elsewhere. Here's the reasoning...

**An investigator's job is a funny one. Either you play it hard and believe nobody, which is fine — it's SAFE: You stay out of trouble and, maybe after 10 years, you're growing ulcers because nobody LIKES you. But an ulcer never killed anyone yet. Or else? You BELIEVE people. Then you've got trouble. You're NOT smart [by believing] — except maybe it's not a choice... Not a choice because it depends on the way you're built. The way I'm built, you stick your neck out.**

By "people," Craig means CLIENTS. "I always believe a client." Unusual?

Yes, but not devoid of logic. "Believe nobody" year after year and a hardening of the soul is your reward, UNLESS you've made efforts to lean the other way: Start each new assignment with trust. Craig does that. He'll keep it up for four years.

Trusting from the start means "I've been a sucker before." Why does he let that happen more than rarely? "I prefer it to being a wise guy." Not just a preference, either. "I ALWAYS believe my clients. Sometimes I'm suckered. Sometimes not. Because sometimes clients don't EXPECT to be believed."

Cynicism along with "fresh start" for each new client — this mix keeps Craig calm. Listeners who prefer intensity might be disappointed. The star of this series can come across as diffident or weary. It could take more than a few episodes to see how the Craig approach to human pressure can become valuable in real life.

On the radio, technical troubles intrude. From a lifelong audiophile, a gripe: The SOUND of Craig will bug anyone who values good microphones. His producers never gave him one. The man nearly always sounds MUFFLED — even when all the OTHER actors, during the very same episode, have good to very good vocal clarity.

Unlike Nero Wolfe or Phil Marlowe or Johnny Dollar, only one actor ever played "Barrie Craig." Real name's on the way. But it's better to start with a good picture. Rather than copy & paste some "owned" image, I refer you to...

[https://s.ecriater.com/stores/414826/5b6a8065e4acf\\_414826b.jpg](https://s.ecriater.com/stores/414826/5b6a8065e4acf_414826b.jpg)

Given the present-day addiction to screens of all sizes, why does the "Golden Age of Radio" still glisten? The standout reason: Radio drama excelled at spurring mental images without sensationalism or spastically fast visuals. From Edward R. Murrow to Fred Allen, the dialogue and the sound effects helped us "see."

In the case of *Detective Radio*, special effects rarely overwhelm the script. Sparkling dialogue was backstopped by nicely controlled background sounds. As for the blood & gore — we couldn't see it.

IN SUM: Barrie Craig managed to be detached without sounding smug or heartless. He poked too much fun at himself to be unlikable. He was presented to his audience as self-aware without being self-centered — a tremendous achievement for any character able to thrive during Radio Drama's finest half-hours.

### ### Gem Episodes Slated for Salute During 2020 ###

[“Snake Eyes”](#) — 2/4/77 — from *QUINCY, M.E.* (NBC)

[“The Guru”](#) — 12/31/68 — from *THE MOD SQUAD* (ABC)

### "[T]he Only Actor of His Time Who Had...Been a Private Detective"

"Barrie Craig" was [WILLIAM GARGAN](#) (1905-79). For most of its life, the series was produced and set in New York City. [RALPH BELL](#) (1915-98) portrayed his sometime collaborator, Lt. Travis Rogers. "Rogers" scorned Craig's willingness to believe his clients until evidence pushed him otherwise. In this case, one Wilma Lord...

ROGERS: Craig, the story's no good... The punk there, with the knife in his back, was on the Harry Otis payroll.

CRAIG: Oh?

ROGERS: Wilma Lord is [also] on the Otis payroll.

CRAIG: Must be a large payroll.

ROGERS: Among his varied and largely illegal activities, Otis also runs a supper club over on the East side: The Gilded Lily. You can have Wilma Lord for supper there, six nights a week, and twice on Sunday.

CRAIG: It's too early for supper...

ROGERS: Wilma Lord could've come to you because she planned to concertize with the Crime Commission and wanted protection [as it probes Harry Otis].

CRAIG: Why me?

ROGERS: You're big. You're good-natured. And uhh, well --

CRAIG: I'm stupid?

ROGERS: No no no. But you like to BELIEVE people when they give ya a CHANCE to...

CRAIG: I still believe Wilma Lord's story.

ROGERS: Why? Because she's young? Beautiful? Because she looked you straight in the eye when she told you all?

CRAIG: [Chuckling] No, Trav. Because she was nasty.

In Craig's world, being nasty, especially when scared, signals honesty. He's much more wary of someone who's trying to charm him or who sounds high-minded.

"Craig" was Gargan's second role as a radio sleuth. During 1947-48, he gave voice to [Martin Kane, Private Eye](#). But Gargan's ability to be authentic started even earlier. A [brief but lively biography](#) on "Old Radio World" dot-com reveals...

"His father was a bookmaker, so Gargan learned a lot about the gambling world and met a lot of interesting characters from across the spectrum of society." And "[t]he main reason why Gargan was so convincing as a detective [is] that he was probably the only actor of his time who had actually been a private detective."

No kidding? "He first worked as a credit investigator and collection agent for a clothing firm. Once Gargan was shot at when he attempted to get a deadbeat customer to pay his overdue account. Next, he worked for about a year as a private detective with a New York agency for '\$10.00 a day and expenses.' Gargan did many of the usual detective jobs: Guarding payrolls, tailing possible suspects, conducting stakeouts, and protecting clients with valuables. He was fired when he lost track of a diamond salesman he was supposed to be protecting."

Still tuned in? Will I ever get to the EPISODE? Making this publication work will require an attention span. Gems deserve thoroughness, and EVERY episode analyzed in this publication will claim at least 2,500 words. Not a good fit for anyone whose idea of mystery & adventure is a hundred text messages per day on a tiny screen.

Maybe you're already sold on the chief character and his ***Confidential Investigator*** radio persona. We're about to saunter into a sparkling episode. Otherwise, for anyone ready to dive in now, not a problem: You can play or download it using...

<https://www.OLDTIMERADIOLOADS.COM/crime/barrie-craig-confidential-investigator/fog-over-murder-1953-10-13>

## DD Gem #1 — "Fog Over Murder" — October 13, 1953

### From BARRIE CRAIG, CONFIDENTIAL INVESTIGATOR

NBC's Don Pardo pledges "another transcribed drama of mystery and adventure." Then comes that sedate theme music: Sleepy sax with gently plucked guitar, soon joined by somnolent horn section. A very relaxed Bill Gargan sets the evening's stage. He isn't deterred by NBC Radio's muffling mud-pie of a microphone.

Standard detective fare — murder, forgery, rackets, two-timing, blackmail — is being set aside tonight. Instead, Barrie Craig's client is a stereotypical mid-1950s "shrink." Horn-rimmed glasses, high forehead. Stressing the adjective, Craig calls the psychiatrist a MIND doctor.

Even while laying out his humanitarian purpose, Dr. Banner sounds detached and clinical. Craig is insistent and at ease at the same time. Banner and Craig have already acknowledged that their collaboration ... feels kind of odd.

The psychologist wants the detective to help a patient of six months. "Clark Smith" is cursed with a major memory loss that goes back years. He "cannot function as a social being," Craig hears from Banner, because he "resists his own true identity."

Such resistance only happens "for a pretty grim reason," Craig replies: Something traumatic or horrendous in the not too distant past.

What can the psychiatrist give the detective for starters? Banner uses the word "clues" and puts two on the table: [\*Midvale\*](#) and *Pomatawnie*. Each has bubbled up when Banner has gotten his troubled patient into something of a trance.

The first word is either a town or a school, Banner figures. The second word, Craig responds, reminds him of a river. If it is, "Smith" might be retreating to boyhood, when, to a young male, rivers represent isolation or escape.

Water has in fact been a draw: Smith (not his real name) is subsisting in a Long Island "beach shack" by selling raw fish. Craig goes to see him. Smith tells him to go into the shack, leave the money, and take a freshly caught fish.

Craig eyes the hulking fish-knife hanging from Smith's belt. Some tools make deadly weapons, yes? Better take pains to be reassuring. No, he tells Smith, he isn't here to purchase the evening fry. (Barrie could've said he has BIGGER fish to fry. In the other episode, he punned about "dusting" at the scene of a death. Or did he?)

During this first of their two beach encounters, the quality of this Gem's dialogue reaches a high note; and there it will stay, through a startling end.



With seagulls overhead and waves washing up, Craig is neither clinical nor suspicious. He's here at the suggestion of Dr. Banner, "to help you, Smith — help you get back to the life you belong to." Smith sounds disoriented, rattled: *What are you after with me?* "Dr. Banner and me — we're on your side, we're your friends."

Smith calms a bit. He admits to being afraid. He came to the seashore for peace and quiet. Being alone on a small fishing boat is where he belongs. When Craig brings out the two key words — MIDVALE and POMATAWNIE — Smith's blocking intensifies. He knows the words, but not what they mean. They rattle him.

"Okay, forget them. I'll try to find out another way." Craig says this as if he's at a Dairy Queen and they can't make his favorite sandwich so he'll try a hot dog. No fuss. Adapt. Be reassuring. And if he gets stuck, "I'll come back to you. We'll go over it again. We'll go out on a boat and fish — and talk."

At times like this, I realize that only two other radio detective shows had a star more mild-mannered than William Gargan: Father Brown, a Catholic priest, and Mister Keen, "tracer of lost persons." Steady Eddies, in the extreme.

Then again, how many FIGHTS could they handle?

## **His Pressure on Polly Reaches a Crescendo — by Stopping**

Craig leaves Long Island, heads back into the city, and consults a World Almanac.

The Pomatawnie River goes through Farrington, New Jersey. And under "industries" he finds the Midvale Bottling Works. Farrington is a "one-horse town," a delightful phrase still in use three decades after the automobile mobilized Middle America.

Craig somehow managed to sneak a photograph of Smith during their meeting near the beach shack. He shows it to Farrington's Sheriff. Kind of blurry.

The Sheriff has no comment on the photo. But he hands Craig the key fact: Only one man has vanished from Farrington during the Sheriff's tenure: Lloyd Beemer — seven or eight years ago! He owned and ran the Midvale Bottling Works. His wife Polly then took over as owner.

That'll do. Craig hits the Bottling Works. And overconfidence takes hold. He comes on too strong. Without having introduced himself, he demands a "warming smile" from the pretty Polly for "the great thing I'm about to do for you."

This is right after she muses about having him arrested. Why would she do that? After all, he's here to "reunite you with your husband." That's impossible, she

declares nervously. Really? The Sheriff told Craig that Lloyd Beemer disappeared, not that he was killed.

You look rather "green around the gills," Craig tells Polly insensitively. "Your remarks," she stammers — "I was utterly unprepared." She sounds even more jittery than Smith did on the beach. It's the first signal that this radio script will do what detective scripts HAVE to do: Scramble expectations, avoid linearity.

Seventy-five seconds after walking into her office, Craig says who he is. They go back and forth. "I was DESERTED, Mr. Craig, by a man with VIOLENT currents in his nature." She has "come to think of my husband as DEAD," which is why she uses "this person" — referring to the man Craig was hired to help — three times.

Her intensity undoes Craig's. A marvelous exchange. Detective Radio at its finest.

After apologizing for his boorishness, Craig brings up the two key words. "Some clues relate him to the town of Farrington, to these bottling works. Clues, but they may be incidental; you never know." Their exchange reaches a crescendo — by stopping. Why? Because Polly Beemer FAINTS — "the deadest faint I'd ever seen."

Craig has taken us from brashness, to sympathy, to fear: *Mrs. Beemer has no pulse.* "A heart attack from the shock of it all?" Listener engagement is total.

Mrs. Beemer revives. Craig is relieved. She apologizes for unnerving him. "We were never so much of a couple," she resumes. Besides, I've built a whole new LIFE for myself." Craig can't get her to name a current relationship.

He remains sympathetic to the troubled beach-dweller: "No welcome home. Rough on a guy, kind of: A return to identity, at long last, only to find himself on the scrap heap" — he calmly sketches it for the still struggling Polly Beemer.

Questions still need asking. From Joe Mannix to [Steve McGarrett](#) to Frank Ballinger, the coin of the realm is QUESTIONS. If you aspire to become a journalist, skip the stylebooks and absorb detective episodes. Shoot for at least 10 per week.

Why might Lloyd Beemer suffer a loss of memory? He "blanked out to escape BEING Lloyd Beemer," Craig was told by the doc — "IF my party IS the missing Lloyd Beemer... So what was he running from?" He offers Polly examples of situations that could trigger major long-term amnesia. Nothing like those, she replies.

The problem was different. "Lloyd was an eccentric — secretive — he never could quite fit into the group... He found marriage [pause] too commonplace."

"Oh, by the way — pictures. Got any around of your missing husband?" This re-



quest firms up Polly Beemer in a startling way, and it's another clue. No way and no how will she give Craig a photo of her missing husband. "I'll do NOTHING to ... to facilitate the return of this person you say MAY be Lloyd Beemer."

Their exchange is a roller coaster; it ends badly. At this point in the 27-minute radio broadcast, the listener is where he or she should be: Processing a tragic tapestry that's got a few holes. Gripped, but also grasping. Our lead character seems nowhere near the crystalline moment where the tapestry rips itself up.

But that's normal. At the two-thirds point of any radio "case," hardly anything we think is "it" will really be IT eight minutes later. In an hour-long TV episode, same genre, your "it" can be snatched away two or three times.

An additional character is about to be heard from. Afterwards, none other than Polly Beemer will turn up on the train Barrie Craig is riding back to New York!

Right here, a methodical listener could stop the tape — or pause the dot-mp3 — and cogitate. Tying together all these pieces would mean inferring one or two startling realities. Not impossible. Just hard. Want to try it to test your reasoning?

"Fog Over Murder," even though the ending is a shocker, is PLAUSIBLE. A motivated and perceptive listener could approach a Gem episode as a puzzle that provides enough — JUST enough — pieces. The write-ups in this publication will diagram this kind of compelling story line, and without spoiling the ending.

These two closing judgments shouldn't spoil anything: (1) Barrie Craig's client, as distinct from the person he tries to help, is a decent human being and part of no deception. And (2): Every exchange in "Fog Over Murder" is so well crafted one can overlook the bits of strained delivery.

Now you know about Barrie Craig. On Page 11 we move ahead 20 years and add color TV. As for what makes a Detective Drama GEM, a methodical definition isn't here — and not because anything is being hidden from you. Preparing this prototype, I simply didn't have a set of standards or a detailed way to evaluate.

Only one attribute was firm during the long creation of Issue Zero: PLAUSIBILITY.

Humdrum word, with a startling double meaning. **PLAUSIBLE means "worthy of applause." It also means "seemingly worthy of belief."** (Note the "seemingly," because good mystery depends on many things being other than how they first appear.) Consuming north of 2,000 episodes from 2013 to now, I discovered that fewer than one in 25 pass the test offered by the second definition.

## PLAUSIBILITY is the Factor that Confirms the SPARKLE

Bonus points should go to any detective episode that helps us believe each key part of it really COULD take place. Yet I didn't start the research with "plausibility" as a value or a standard; its occasional appearance made it valuable.

By contrast, a cop or detective episode where critical sequences *aren't* plausible — or are literally IMPOSSIBLE — signals that the scriptwriters fell back on shortcuts and wild leaps. Even a keenly participating viewer ends up shortchanged.

That framework needs a popular example: ***Mannix***, starring MIKE CONNORS from 1967 to '75. Connors was a marvelous actor and his character tough and likeable. Also outstanding: The [show's theme](#) and scene-specific music. Yet *Mannix* Gems are rare (two have been lined up). The scripts often let loose some fact, actor or factor LATE in the game that, while decisive, comes at us out of nowhere.

Those clinchers weren't "impossible" in the sci-fi sense. But how they were sprung on the viewer meant it was impossible for him or her to figure out the climax.

Forget how attentive they'd been to all characters and possible scenarios.

The next Gem is the opposite — a complex yet unified set of characters and events. Careful absorption leads to a sense of ***yeah, all of this could've really happened***. We watch BOTH the good guys and the bad guys maneuver against one another. Paying attention becomes worth the mental energy.

Each surprise has some relation to what you've so far observed or been told. We're shown a lot. Especially the movements and logic of each player. This gives the viewer a clean shot — a plausible chance — of working out the climax.

During the final 10 minutes of Detective Drama Gem #2, Steve McGarrett has four suspects. All four are in his office. An unusual weapon's imprint will prove guilt. Three of the four were in the vicinity of the killing (but not at the same time). We see each of those three tested, as the others watch. And all four have been so well defined — *in a 50-minute episode* — we could imagine other aspects of their lives.

Filling such a satisfying whole takes extreme depth and skill from scriptwriters, producers, and performers. When they use that, there's no need for gimmicks or fantasy. Text productions are similar: In relaying crime plots or high-stakes political intrigue, keep it believable, and give each major character a credible presence.

## DD Gem #2 — "Percentage" — February 20, 1973

### From the original [HAWAII FIVE-O](#) (CBS, 1968-80)

Counting both versions, HAWAII 5-O holds the record: Prime time, on CBS, with new episodes, for 22 of the past 52 years. This publication uses only the original.

For a dozen seasons beginning on Sept. 26, 1968, [JACK LORD](#) was Stephen J. McGarrett. He worked out of the Iolani Palace in Honolulu. His boss was "the Governor," whose full name will be heard only once during those 12 seasons.

The series was conceived by [LEONARD FREEMAN](#) (1920-74). Until his death during open-heart surgery, Freeman also served as Executive Producer. His exacting standards show in "Percentage," from near the end of that red-hot fifth season.

Unlike Barrie Craig, Steve McGarrett needs no introduction. Nor does his #2, [Dan Williams](#) (JAMES MacARTHUR). But several actors who gave this and other 5-O episodes a lasting resonance will be saluted. So will scriptwriter [NORMAN LESSING](#) and director [ROBERT BUTLER](#) for how they blended coherence and complexity.

"Percentage" is magic produced by method. If you read about it in 500 as opposed to 3,000 words, you might go watch it. But would you know what to LOOK for? Forty-seven years after it aired, this episode sparkles for at least three reasons:

- The central character — a relentless operator named Sam Green. He'll make you redefine "charisma." If you have an associate or relative who functions like Sam, watch him or her with awe, and do so from a safe distance.
- The murder weapon, and the setting, and how both are scoped out by "Doc" Bergman and Crime-Lab chief Che Fong.
- Those final 10 minutes in McGarrett's office: The way the murder weapon was wielded is the "tell." None of the suspects comes out ahead. And every pivot — from lost love, to bank info, to blood money — gets the floodlight.

With this publication, count on a few design factors: (1) The analyses won't spoil any endings; (2) they're not written for "fans," but for writers and editors — whether video, audio or just plain text — who seek to convey complexity in an absorbing way; and (3) the individual episode will always be front and center. Other elements — the actors, the series itself — are mentioned mostly to help illuminate that Gem.

## From Crime Lab to Gambling Junkets with Milton Selzer

In classic detective radio, the protagonist — Johnny Dollar, Philip Marlowe, Danny Clover, pick your favorite — HAD to be the star of each episode. Hour-long TV treatments, by contrast, are complex and expansive enough to let a guest actor become the driving character. In "Percentage," it's [MILTON SELZER](#) (1918-2006).

During the era covered by this publication, Mr. Selzer was all over stage, crime and comedy productions. He was never the hero, and often the fumbler or fall guy.

On the comedy side: During the opening season of *Get Smart* (1965-66), Selzer ran the Crime Lab. His character was [Professor Parker](#). On this unbelievably innovative spy spoof, almost anything — fire hydrants, cigarette lighters, wall clocks, a bottle of cologne — might work as a phone. Parker's latest shot? The Pistol Phone.

Milton Selzer also portrayed foreign-born wizards. In 1961, [THE ASPHALT JUNGLE](#) was a CBS-TV cop show that gave us just 13 episodes. The 9th episode is called "The Professor." Selzer is that lead villain. He plays "Doc" Stehlmeyer, mild-mannered mastermind of German lineage and accent (or maybe it's Austrian, ja?).

In "Percentage," Selzer is just as dazzling. Thriving on organized gambling before the U.S. made the mistake of legalizing it, his character facilitates fellow risk-takers. Again, he is THE driver; and again the cleverness becomes deadly. Each time the game plan is short-circuited, Selzer — as Sam Green — finagles and finesses. Two synonyms for the second word are *cunning* and *subtlety*...



Sam Green intuitively calculates risk versus reward. When the balance is too close, he finds a way to take out insurance against massive loss.

No insurance? Then let the hand pass.

His enterprise: Gambling junkets, as noted. And "percentage" is the watchword for this character to keep ahead of a wicked game. Barely ahead.

"Percentage" percolates as Green

hatches and plays out two very high-risk strategies. One works, the other doesn't. Since this publication does not spoil endings, let's appreciate the one that works. It works SO well that that 5-O and the District Attorney end up winners.

## "Would I Waste Your Time and Mine If I Didn't Have an Angle?"

One of several memorable scenes in "Percentage" has Herman Stein signaling his old friend Sam, who waits on a fishing pier. Herman has spent 20 years apportioning gambling districts for Yoshigo, a local hood whose first name we never know or see. Yoshigo is played by 5-O dark-sider KWAN HI LIM (later [Lieutenant Yoshi Tanaka](#) on *Magnum*). Stein is played by [LEONARD STONE](#) (1923-2011).

Sam Green might've been a great venture capitalist, a role that entails functioning as a con artist and dream-spinner. At this stage, the imperative is to (a) enlist old friend Herman in the (b) sidelining if not jailing of Yoshigo.

Yoshigo keeps two hoods on the books, under phony names. They recently killed Sam Green's business partner. Why? To induce Green to quit setting up gambling junkets in South Korea. Yoshigo had kept local gamblers happy in Hawaii, and never mind the anti-gambling laws. In Korea, by contrast, wealthy Hawaiians can dress to the nines and lose thousands without fearing arrest — thanks to Sam Green.

"How much are we down this month?," Yoshigo asks his bookkeeper. "Seventy thousand — same as last month." The Yoshigo outfit's books are kept by Herman Stein. During this same chat, Herman is told that his long-time expectation of a 25% share of the business is dead. "From now on, you're just the bookkeeper."

We see him about to crumble. As a compromised lieutenant with tangential knowledge of beatings and killings, Herman is ripe for the ever-finagling Sam.

What's the proposition? Sam wants Herman to help him rob the Yoshigo's office wall safe. If Sam can get those books, and give them to the D.A., a busted Yoshigo will be no threat to him or to Stein. Sam can then resume the overseas gambling junkets. Herman the desperate, and Sam the persuader...

The seaside back & forth is marvelous. Both characters are so well defined that a keen viewer might infer each one's highs and lows going back decades...

HERMAN: Sam, it's just too wild. He's BOUND to finger me...

SAM: Herman, this is SAM GREEN talking. Would I be wasting your time and mine if I didn't have an angle?? ... The idea is to play the percentages.

*You're never gonna find cash in Yoshigo's safe,* protests Herman.

SAM: I don't want cash, I only want his books...of COURSE for the D.A.... I can't make a move with Yoshigo on my back.

HERMAN: Sam, I'm listed in those books, too!

SAM: But under an assumed name, right?

HERMAN: Well, yeah but — suppose the cops put two and two together. Where does that leave me?

SAM: In the clear! All you have to do is turn state's evidence... The most that can happen is that you'll pay a fine.

Herman's face has been racked with anxiety. Now it shifts to mild shock: "Turn state's evidence?," he repeats in disorientation. It takes another minute and 20 seconds for Sam to close the sale: "The main thing [that] is Yoshigo will never be able to finger you for the safe-crack." He has chipped away at each block.

Milton Selzer as Sam Green persuades each person as the imperative shifts. That includes McGarrett, with whom he's on a first-name basis. He induces McGarrett to tell Dan Williams to offer police protection to someone who has not requested it.

Do you have an associate or (worse) a relative who functions like Sam? Watch him or her with awe; do so from a safe distance. Masterful cop-show sequences keep us from making our own fatally wrong turns, under the influence of creative "pals."

Sam and Herman pull off the robbery. Sam jauntily tells McGarrett that the stacks of evidence just "magically appeared on his doorstep" one morning. And Yoshigo assumes Herman Stein too spineless to betray him by being part of that robbery.

Right after Yoshigo goes into hiding, we see Herman Stein smile. Just this one time. He's the only surviving character who WON'T end up in McGarrett's office.

### **Because of a \$120,000 I-O-U Stuck in Sam Green's Shirt Pocket**

"Percentage" is about a murder probe; gambling is in this story for those glitzy scenes in South Korea, and to clarify Sam Green's "percentage" principle.

In Korea, a lout that Sam vouched for walked out of the hotel. His \$120,000 debt had just been jammed in Sam's shirt pocket by proprietor Kuang. Kuang turns out to be the ONLY person immune to Sam Green's persuasiveness. If the big loser doesn't pay off, Green tells McGarrett in a sweat, "I'm hit." On Kuang's orders.

A Korean national, and one of the two master villains in this episode, Kuang is played by [SETH SAKAI](#) (1932-2007). He's another 5-O standout. From 1971 to '80, he appeared in 23 episodes — as a professor, a general, four different physicians, various racketeers, a police captain, a beat cop, a print-shop lowlife, and a distraught father. (Leonard Freeman and Jack Lord favored solid Hawaiian actors and actresses. Most episodes boasted: "Filmed entirely on location in Hawaii.")



Two more characters complete the cast. Walter Sinclair and his wife Valerie are the very estranged couple who end up bitterly sorry Sam Green flew them to Korea.

Mrs. Sinclair is played by [CAROLE KAI](#). Walter is 20 years her senior. We see her recovering from an affair with the cocky but bankrupt murder victim who (more or less) caused his own death by sticking Sam Green with that \$120,000 I-O-U at the South Korea casino.

Up to this point, Walter Sinclair has been a gambler in an overseas setting. Now he undertakes a turn for the truly dark side: Withdrawing murder money, down to the dollar. The viewer never sees Sam Green enlist Sinclair; later we know it was one more catastrophically persuasive pitch.

Walter Sinclair is played by the unflappable [DOUGLAS KENNEDY](#) (1915-73). His mini-biographer at the IMDB site says Kennedy "appeared in many westerns and detective thrillers, often as a villain. World War Two interrupted his career, and he spent the war years as a Signal Corps officer and an operative in the OSS and U.S. Army Intelligence. After the war he returned to Hollywood, where he began playing supporting roles in larger films and an occasional lead in a lower-budget film."

### **Methodical Scripts with Believable Actors Don't Need Special Effects**

On Page 10, PLAUSIBILITY was named as a Gem requirement. A big factor in the push for Plausibility is Characters that are not Caricatures, stick figures, or shells. A master criminal is by definition Unusual. But they don't HAVE to be Impossible.

All of the main characters — of course the regulars, but also the villains and guest cops — should be so well defined you could infer each one's highs and lows going back decades. That's why this write-up stressed the scene featuring Sam Green and Herman Stein, near the pier, both fearful of death, and estimating the odds.

During the original HAWAII 5-O, two semi-regulars offered reliable back-up...

- ▶ In "Percentage" and dozens of other episodes, "Doc" Bergman is one more fellow with no first name: The gravel-voiced, jut-jawed Medical Examiner. In real life he was [AL EBEN](#).
- ▶ [HARRY ENDO](#) is Che Fong. For seven seasons, he gave us tutorials on Crime Lab breakthroughs. Highly informative (although devoid of the comic relief one found watching Maxwell Smart and Professor Parker).
- ▶ Walter Kennedy also did a lot for 5-O. Three appearances during the fifth season alone. Besides "Percentage," "Here Today, Gone Tomorrow," in

which he's a Big Business control-freak. In "Jury of One," he plays a jury foreman of stability and integrity; the same man who, 20 years prior, had withstood torture by North Korea's Reds rather than spill sensitive info.

IMDB's picture of Kennedy as "a tall, powerfully built man" was even more apt when it changed. In "Percentage" he's a semi-stoic. It means "not affected by passion or feeling" and "showing indifference to pain." Yet, because of his wife's affair with the high-rolling lout ([MITCH MITCHELL](#)), we watch the anger accumulating.

Facing a mix of pressure points and closing proofs in Steve McGarrett's office, Walter Sinclair's self-control crumbles. These final 10 minutes: Stunning.

Scriptwriters Lessing and Butler did not rely on some bizarre X factor for the final scenes. His wife scorning him, and the murder plot unraveled, Sinclair is a broken man. It's complete by the start of the 49th minute. (Leonard Freeman liked to put both the climax AND the closure into the final 30 to 90 seconds of an episode.)

Bottom line: Every character in "Percentage" is played superbly. I don't mean just that we're seeing "good acting." The point is that quality acting ***along with a great script*** — coherently connected scenes — absorbs the perceptive viewer: He or she becomes a participant. We process false leads as well as slam-dunks.

Convey plausibility and character depth, in a 50-minute cop show?? So many entanglements, so little time. After all, these scripts aren't sprawling novels!

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**Before unveiling the third Gem, some reassurance for the producers, owners and guardians of this historically rich video content...**

- ▶ All the people and enterprises behind the 12 years of the original CBS HAWAII 5-O should look kindly upon this no-charge Web publication. And those good folks will if, for starters, you [purchase Season Five](#) on DVD.

- ▶ Alternatively, you can use Amazon's display to get to one of the studio-owned sites and view the 49-minute Gem called "Percentage."

<https://www.amazon.com/Hawaii-Five-O-Classic-Season-5/dp/B005HFQR3M>

- ▶ You might also access "Percentage" via the *TV Guide* website — a venue I've yet to use, preferring DVDs instead. But here it is, Episode #21, for the patiently intrepid (including those who prefer to avoid Amazon)...

[www.tvguide.com/tvshows/hawaii-five-0/episode-21-season-5/percentage/100202/](http://www.tvguide.com/tvshows/hawaii-five-0/episode-21-season-5/percentage/100202/)

## DD Gem #3 — "Dead Or Alive" — October 21, 1976

### From THE STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO (ABC, 1972-77)

This series is historically important. But defining the value of STREETS would push this next segment to 4,500 words (the length of the first draft). So, let's settle for an exemplary episode from the final season. It's the work of [BURTON ARMUS](#) and [EDWARD HUME](#). A viewer will need just 15 minutes to conclude that their masterpiece — "Dead Or Alive" — is one more urban murder case. It isn't.

### A Landmark Portrayal of Greed, Flukes, and City-Wide Hysteria

TIME: Around 10:30 p.m. on a weeknight. As they play tennis on a well-lit city court, two young women are being watched from behind the fence. One sees the leerer, briefly; the TV viewer also sees him, but not clearly.

After 11, the two friends say farewell. One heads for home, and then the other's car won't start. She opens the trunk — why? (It won't contain a cell phone; we know that much.) After closing it, she is grabbed and prevented from screaming.

We see a struggle on the driver's side. Rapist and victim disappear behind the car. And that's all we see. Believe it or not, 1970s cop shows held back from close-ups of savage behavior. The result: Dialogue and stories were more mentally engaging.

The next morning, Mike Stone and Dan Robbins scour the scene. They're joined by Stone's soon-to-retire colleague Eddie Clark. Who committed this rape and murder? Does the miscreant even realize his brutality also killed her?

So begins another "police procedural." Clumsy term, and one with staying power. Goes back to Jack Webb's radio debut of *Dragnet* in 1949. Seventy-some years later, we find it on Wikipedia. No complaints here, because "police procedural" is more applicable — in a majority of cases — than the old shorthand "whodunit."

Even though we don't know the rapist's name, we have already seen his face — sort of — right before the assault. During his leering interlude, we glimpsed the "who," and quickly found out what was done.

As crime dramas left radio behind, "who" became less and less the question. TV cameras usually let us SEE the bad people, all the better to lock us in until the end. Nice to have an edge, right? We actually know more than the police. They'll have to figure what we have seen straight up. This is one of several ways TV altered the nature of radio scripts that didn't have the tool of images in motion.

Mike Stone is played by [KARL MALDEN](#), Dan Robbins by [RICHARD HATCH](#). Hatch is a solid #2, and the research carried out for this publication made me a Karl Malden admirer. Watching "Detective Lieutenant Mike Stone" drill down with questions is sheer delight. He's the rare TV detective who, face to face, is rarely threatening.

Assuming the source is not hostile, this man's intensity can even come across as enthusiastic, as opposed to desperate, accusatory, or some kind of power-trip.



Where are Mike and Dan likely to turn up a witness? If not to the assault, then to whomever lurked awaiting his chance. No guard was at the tennis court. All-night gas stations? What about coffee shops? Robbins is tasked to check, and...

Nothing but dry holes. But Stone's phone inquiries indicate that three different bus drivers work Route 83 and stop near the courts. Two have nothing to report. The third is "Tom Feranga" (played by [ROBERT DOQUI](#)).

Robbins and Stone approach him. He sees the latter's badge and says: "What'd I do?!?" "It's not what you did, it's what you might have seen that interests us."

Stone sounds good-natured; and Feranga is anything but defensive. "Ain't nobody gonna read me my rights or nothing? *Come on now...*" With laser-like intensity even as he keeps smiling, Stone replies: "You have no rights... you're a witness, not a suspect." (Think about THAT one for a moment.)

Feranga remains jovial. Let's go sit in the bus and chat, he says. Not necessary.

Yes, he sees a lot while driving Route 83, because he doubles up on his shifts — the point there is OVERTIME! "Hey, do you know what it costs to put braces on a kid's teeth these days?" Stone: "Listen, do you know by any chance what TIME you went by those tennis courts along that route? Was it between 9 and 11?"

The detectives need info, not banter. Feranga: "Yeah — twice. It's only an hour-and-50-minute route." Robbins: "Did you notice anyone hanging around the place? Someone that might not belong?" Feranga: "You mean girl-watchers? Well they always hang around a tennis court. You know, when I'm drivin' by, sometimes I slow down and take a little peek myself." He chuckles contentedly.

The dialogue shows the value of easing anyone who might have information into a grim topic. Indeed, both Stone and Robbins are still smiling. This exchange has to work. Feranga is the last of three drivers to be questioned. If something can't be coaxed out of him, there might be zero leads. They have to humor his humor.

Robbins: "Yeh, but LAST NIGHT." Feranga: "Yeah, well — there WAS a guy. But — look, what is this all about anyway?" Stone: "A girl was raped and killed. What about this man [you saw]?" Not a wasted word, but also no hostility. Rather, Stone radiates concern — more like a doctor than a cop.

Upon hearing "raped and killed," the bus driver comes to a full stop, draws a deep breath. Yeah, some bread-truck driver was watching the girls. He was parked in the zone reserved for busses, a fact that any Route 83 driver would notice.

"Parisian Bread" is the brand or company, he thinks. Now THAT's useful info.

## **"Do You Think You Could Pull a Blood Type On Him?"**

In this and dozens of other STREETS, Malden as Stone shows us how to probe, during a spontaneous interview, while moderating and sometimes inverting a cop's intensity. Malden is our instructor. He was made for this role.

"Give us a full description," he urges the driver. The gawker was wearing glasses, white, over 6 feet tall, and uniformed. What kind of eyewear? "Very thick horn-rimmed glasses." More bits and pieces follow.



Before Stone and Robbins have his name and photo, the viewer gets to experience the suspect. Doing what? Joking that his girlfriend, a waitress, doesn't look as good as the bikini-clad girls he is ogling, right there at her restaurant.

There's a small possibility he isn't the rapist/killer: Detective-series scriptwriters often show us someone who ISN'T the culprit. This isn't one of those scripts.

In fact, not a single aspect of this magnificent episode fits the "whodunit" term. Nor is there any doubt about the guy's motivation or core nature. Worth noting, although that absence of doubt isn't what makes this episode such a departure.

By Minute 13:37, back at the station, using "rape" as the search term, Robbins and Stone have the most probable suspect. It's Don Wilton — "four previous [arrests], two for rape — he beat both cases. Never did any time."

Gail Dobbs, the dead girl, wound up with blood under her fingernails. She clawed the assailant's neck, to such an extent that three of her nails were torn off. This means there's a chance to get the attacker's blood type.

Stone and Robbins also know about his eyesight, based on fragments from a lens at the murder scene. They aren't quite as sure as we are that Wilton is the man.

But Eddie Clark clarifies another key fact. On the glasses, "the guy is near-sighted; the best estimate is 40 over 60." Those numbers mean VERY near-sighted.

While at the crime scene, Clark had warned Stone: Gail's dad is Larry Dobbs. "He's a heavyweight — lots of money." Edmund "Eddie" Clark is played by [TOM BOSLEY](#) (1927-2010) — Richie's father on the '50s nostalgia sit-com *Happy Days*, which ran on the same network as did *STREETS*.

By Minute 15, we've also met Dobbs and his lawyer, George Driscoll, played by [PAUL STEVENS](#) (1921-86). Throughout the '70s, Stevens appeared as a low-key legalistic if not criminal character (and not the lead) in various detective stories. He's one of those sedate types who convey dignity in a cadaverous sort of way.

In a magma-boil episode, Stevens is the LEAST excitable actor and that's probably why he's here. As an advocate, though, he fails to penetrate: George Driscoll's client will be deaf to every single piece of advice the lawyer provides.

The client, Larry Dobbs, is played by an aging powerhouse: [HOWARD DUFF](#) (1913-90). Sadly, Duff is the only less than convincing actor in this episode. Apart from his grief at the morgue, Dobbs is all bombast and clichés. He delivers and emotes as if he'd been told to act like someone who has no acting skill.



Maybe that's the weirdest part of TV drama: We expect the best actors to impersonate real people, 99.9% of whom have never had an acting lesson. But a greater proportion of us have had to ACT, meaning take bold action. Dobbs will.

The viewer has seen Dobbs visit Stone, as well as make the bitter trip to the morgue. *Yes, that's my daughter.* Now he's a man alone. His wife isn't part of this saga. And Duff's character isn't the sort of man you'd invite to a barbecue or even play chess with. These sensations are taking hold well before the DVD's 15th minute.

At the top of Minute 15, as noted, this episode of STREETS still looks to be a Police Procedural. Then the entire structure and significance blow up by a factor too large to calculate. The eruption starts with the **clunk, clunk, clunk** of a machine...

Larry Dobbs is telling the print-shop manager: "I want five thousand, exactly like the proof copy — THAT picture, nice and clear... I want the whole town papered with these posters when the sun comes up... Just get it done."

Is he sure this is legal? "If anybody asks ya, just tell 'em you thought it was a practical JOKE." What's about to "paper" San Francisco? A poster. Somehow Dobbs has obtained the same mug shot — of DONALD WILTON — Stone found at Headquarters. The poster goes beyond asking for "information leading to the capture" etc. etc.

How did you get this, wonders Dobbs' lawyer. "I bought a file clerk. Are the facts correct?" "Well, it's an official record." Driscoll twice urges Dobbs to let Stone and the city cops handle the case. Hell, no. "They had this guy twice for rape, George, and he's never spent a day in jail. Not one!"

That's why Dobbs chose the poster's three magic words: DEAD OR ALIVE. Along with a big number. A cash reward (in 1976 dollars!) guaranteed to galvanize.

At this point — end of the second segment, Minute 15:38 — the stage is set for a 30-minute array of mishaps, group non-think, trigger-happy competition, mistaken identification, and career-incineration. They, not the original crime or the aboriginal perpetrator, are what make "Dead Or Alive" a Detective Drama Gem.

### **"If I Put Him in Your Hands, Will Ya Split the Money With Me?"**

Stone and Robbins have something Dobbs lacks: Don Wilton's address, and it's only a week old. Approaching his apartment, they find the superintendent in a chair, waiting for the tenant's return. In his lap is a shotgun. What have you got THAT for, he is asked. "A guy has to defend himself," replies the manager.

It's yet another moment in a cop show when the audience knows more about the

situation than the good guys do. Such scenes are among the "rewards" used by clever producers to maintain audience focus without exhausting us viewers.

Right before the superintendent shows them the poster financed by Dobbs, he says: "Why should I tell you guys anything when somebody's willing to pay a million bucks for it?" Stone and Robbins suddenly realize everything has changed...

The suspect-search protocol has just been scrambled. Wilton will try to disappear entirely, or take refuge with a relative. What else COULD a guy in his position do?

But that assumes Wilton himself knows what has been unleashed by the desperate father. From a distance, *he can't read even LARGE print*. One lens had been shattered overpowering Gail Dobbs; the other will end up broken during a fall inside an abandoned building. Wilton is *oblivious* to the gathering hysteria.

It comes at him while trying to dodge an old friend, a taxi-driver. After some false friendliness, he pulls a gun and tells Wilton to get in. Wilton easily overpowers the guy, manages to run two blocks — and finds himself staring, close-up, at one of the posters. The work of Larry Dobbs: A million bucks to find HIM, "dead or alive."

He now resolves to hide. Which will be next to impossible. Resting in an old building, Wilton has to escape from a watchman, who ends up wounded by his own gun.

In yet another shelter, the glass frames are broken. The murderer is doomed to be "hard of seeing." Yet anyone — ANY person in San Francisco — might see HIM.

This episode marvelously conveys the disorientation and panic of a figure we can have zero sympathy for. But is the suspect absolutely the assailant?

In case anyone missed Act One — and most of us would have — we later glimpse, at Minute 12:14, the right side of Wilton's neck; that's where Gail Dobbs frantically scratched him deeply with four fingers. We see the streak marks more clearly at 18 1/2, and VERY clearly at 21:46. This is Reiterative Imagery, for anyone not riveted, and also for those without a video recorder. (Still a novelty in '76.)

Yes, no doubt: This man IS the murderer. A big, clumsy, muscular, leering menace to society. A man-boy so shallow that — in a scene referenced top of Page 20 — he ribbed his girlfriend Rhoda for being past her prime. Even at that point, she was still willing to make a date with the jerk.

- Donald Wilton is played by [MAX GAIL](#). Nick-At-Nite alums are far more likely to remember him for some 170 appearances as Detective Sergeant Stanley Wojciehowicz on the long-running comedy *Barney Miller*.

- Reliable Rhoda is played by [ARLENE GOLANKA](#). Her enduring persona is "Millie" from *Mayberry RFD*. A decade later, she remains girlish. But she has seen the poster that would tempt even a neighbor of Andy Griffith.

Rhoda is rattled when Wilton approaches her in back of the restaurant. "Is it true — what they say?" She knew the guy was sleazy. And now?!? "No way, babe."

Wilton begs her for cash to get out of town. She agrees to get 30 bucks from her purse. We're up to Minute 21. And Rhoda tells her boss: "If I put him in your hands, will ya split the money with me?" Is she serious? *The killer is really out there?*

"Just answer me: Will ya split?" Sure, no problem. "He's in the back, in the alley." She'd be reaping an incredible reward for putting up with a boorish boyfriend for... well, no script can cover *every* detail.

Does the boss have a firearm? No. But he has a butcher's knife. He sets out to collect half the bounty. She reminds him: "Hey, look — remember, we split, huh?"

Wilton easily outruns the restaurant-manager. This episode *isn't even half over*.

Which brings up a design factor about some of those great [QUINN MARTIN](#) productions. By suspending the rule that each part of a 50-minute episode had to be equal in length, Mr. Martin and his writers could elongate the time-duration sensation felt by viewers. I've had this experience during many STREETS interludes.

Or is it just my imagination? In any case, Wiki says that Martin (1922-87) "had at least one television series running in prime time every year for 21 straight years."

## **"Half the City is Chasing the Other Half Around With GUNS"**

Stone and Robbins have pieced together Wilton's family situation. Father is dead; mother used to be a nurse. Wilton may go to her for relief. All along, the events pile up: Betrayals, mob scenes, crazed pursuers, lethal movements.

For crazed articulation, the episode's best moment results after another taxi driver triggers an assault on a man dressed like Wilton (a physical description has been overheard on police radio). Out of nowhere, in the space of 30 seconds, a merchant seaman, "just off the boat two hours ago," ends up needing an ambulance.

This is the first time we see Stone and Robbins in the midst of violent hysteria. They pull the cabbie and other assaulters off the seriously wounded sailor.

For a few seconds, the cabbie is deliriously happy. "I got him!" The sailor's identification card ends that sensation. And Stone replies to the cabbie: "You got yourself criminal charges and maybe even manslaughter, if the man dies."

Here's what he tells Stone back: "How many chances have you had to come up with a million bucks? How many!?! How many times in your LIFE — I'll tell ya how many, NONE! The same as with me..." Note how this vigilante is attempting to IDENTIFY with Stone — "the same as with me." Beyond the self-justification, he's also desperate to get back in the same ballpark with civil society.

Then the cab driver reverts to the dark side. Pride wipes out every shred of shame. **"So you give me the SMELL of THAT MUCH money — just the SMELL of it!! — and I'm gonna do whatever it takes."**

Stone is staring back. He's shaking his head slowly. Rather than showing anger or even disgust, Karl Malden as Lieutenant Stone conveys controlled astonishment.

At times like this — and most episodes of STREETS offer us several — one sees the genius of Malden. The look, the head-shaking, is a moment that not even Jack Lord in *Hawaii Five-O* or [Mike Connors](#) as Joe Mannix could've made this memorable or evocative. It's also a "moment" this script plays out to the max...

**And it's not just me, either. Every cabbie in this TOWN is looking for that guy — and every BUS driver, and every PEDESTRIAN! Every time a guy's looking out the window, he's looking for THAT KILLER! It's NOT just me. It's EVERYBODY.**

Stone replies: "Maybe [pause] — but it's you I'm gonna put in jail."

While Stone and Robbins are out trying to keep up with the greed-fueled manhunt (and find Don Wilton before he is killed), their colleagues back at the station are fielding useless calls. Some are from Wilton impersonators; others relay phony or phantasmal sightings; still other callers inquire about the legality of rewards.

Officer Eddie Clark ends up taking the call from the real Don Wilton. By now he is stumbling around on the outskirts, terrified enough to request being picked up by a police officer. Out of hundreds of calls, ONLY THIS ONE gives the cops a chance to end the chaos. So Clark applies the now standard test: *What happened to your glasses and what's their prescription?* Wilton aces both questions.

Mike Stone is the colleague to whom old friend Clark would logically shout: "Mike! It's really him!" Problem is, Stone just dashed out of the office.

And Wilton doesn't want Clark to "send a car." He takes Clark's name. "You come — just you." After a bit of hesitation, Clark agrees to come get Wilton personally.

But this 11th-hour rescue also blows up. Once again, the half-blind Wilton can't get to safety. He does reach his mom's house. Go to the police, she urges. *I did that,*

he screams back, *and they tried to kill me!* (That's not exactly what happened.)

[CLAUDIA BRYAR](#) portrays Wilton's mother — shattered, shaky — spectacularly. Wilton browbeats her into giving him all her spare cash and the car, too. "But I need the car for work." To hell with that, Wilson replies. Some triumph: As if his miserable eyesight is going to let him navigate more than three blocks.

## **First-Rate Episodes Benefit More than Editors and Writers**

Right to the end, Don Wilton is an overgrown weasel. As he did when confronted by Rhoda point-blank, he denies being the killer. And here he is, lying to his mother, the only person left who might have some pity on him. But you'll feel sad for her.

He YELLS at her: "Don't look at me like I'm some kind of BUG!" He could also be talking to — shouting at — most of us viewers. Commendably, not a single element in this dazzling 1970s script fastens Wilton's evil essence on anyone but him.

The Epilogue features Dobbs, his lawyer, Stone and Robbins. It's just right. Different morals can be drawn. You'll be thinking about 'em for a long time.

This publication won't offer one-dimensional judgments. I'm not much for lofty absolutes either. What great detective episodes do enhance is our appreciation for human nature — the light, dark, grayish, and murky/muddy sides of it. They expand one's toolkit for handling dangerous or confusing passages. I also think that people who carry out interviews will become better at teasing out facts and perceptions.

"Gem" story lines and characters are best absorbed slowly, using more than one viewing. Just like a physical gem, they'll sparkle on different sides; they reflect on various parts of our environment, as well as on the person examining them.

Still need a bottom line? Okay, a final point on Gem Episode #3: Most viewers are unlikely to find anything impossible, sloppy, or gimmicky in "Dead Or Alive."

When this Issue was checked for defunct links two years after the original upload, no YouTube version of "Dead Or Alive" existed. But TV Guide dot-com has that "where to watch" feature for budget-minded streamers who also have patience. Scroll down to Episode 3 (and remember it's Season 5).

<https://www.tvguide.com/tvshows/the-streets-of-san-francisco/episodes-season-5/1000208541>

Simpler? Buy [Season Five](#) (1976-77) or the [ENTIRE SERIES](#)

The URL for this experimental issue of *Detective Drama Gems* is  
[www.ExactingEditor.com/GEMS-Issue-Zero.pdf](http://www.ExactingEditor.com/GEMS-Issue-Zero.pdf)

**And these are some GEM finalists for the next several issues...**

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

["The Case of the Calculated Risk"](#) — January 19, 1951  
From THE NEW ADVENTURES OF NERO WOLFE (NBC Radio)

"Flight 307" — March 29, 1963  
From [77 SUNSET STRIP](#) (ABC-TV, 1958 to '64)

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

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

A pair of 1983 episodes — ["Midway to What?"](#) is the one you  
can call up — from [HILL STREET BLUES](#) (NBC-TV, 1981 to '87)

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

***Detective Drama Gems*** is a no-charge quarterly production. You can forward or otherwise distribute this pdf file in what manner you choose. And when you quote from it, please cite the editor/curator or the name of the publication.

Every GEMS analysis spotlights **characters**, **dialogue** and **scenes** from the episode's first half. Depending on your profession, the write-up clarifies what to look for and why it excels: You walk in prepared: To learn, and appreciate.

And the episode's second half — as each loose end gets clipped, tied, or fried — will STILL **surprise**. Because? Although devoting at least 3,000 words to every episode, a GEMS write-up doesn't spoil the ending.

— Frank Gregorsky, Editor and Curator