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COLUMBO

SHOOTING SCRIPT

by

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and  
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COLUMBO  
SHOOTING SCRIPT

CAST

LIEUTENANT COLUMBO

QUENTIN LEE  
LYNNE LORING  
DWAYNE DOWNS  
CHAPMAN  
SPIELBERG  
BROOKS  
TINY TIM  
CAROL ROBINSON  
CONVICT  
HERNANDEZ  
FERRIS  
A.D..  
REV. BILLY GARLAND  
BERT  
CLAIRE  
BUTLER

SETS

INTERIOR:

DEATH ROW  
QUENTIN LEE'S APARTMENT  
CORRIDOR  
LIVING ROOM  
STUDY  
LIBRARY  
BATHROOM  
MASTER BEDROOM  
ACTORS' ART STUDIO  
BERT'S DINER  
LORING'S CAR  
TV STUDIO  
ELECTRONIC'S STORE

EXTERIOR:

SAN QUENTIN  
SUNSET CHALET APARTMENTS  
APARTMENT BALCONY  
TV STUDIO  
PARKING LOT

COLUMBO

SHOOTING SCRIPT

(X)

1 INT. QUENTIN LEE'S STUDY - NIGHT 1

The room is pitch black. We hear Quentin Lee's voice. It has wisps of a southern accent. It is not really effeminate, just oddly pitched, as if the speaker is perennially bemused.

LEE

Now then...the diary of a perfect crime. I hope that doesn't sound too presumptuous. But it will be, you know. Perfect. Because I am committing it. Quentin Lee. Me. By my own hands. I have a little preface prepared here, something from 'Crime and Punishment.' Let me see... 'Of what is man most afraid? Is it taking an untried step? Can I do that? That might be amusing. Murder? Maybe a fantasy thing. Yet something to satisfy a curiosity, not serious at all.' Very good. A little lugubrious maybe. But pertinent. Dostoyevsky, however, just restricted himself to fiction.

CUT TO

2 CLOSE SHOT - TELEVISION SCREEN 2

We hear the sound of Quentin Lee switching on a videotape recorder. Over shots of San Quentin ending with a slow track down the cells on Death Row are the following documentary credits.

3 EXT. SAN QUENTIN - DAY 3

The deserted yard. Superimposed credit: CONVERSATIONS ON DEATH ROW

CUT TO

4 INT. DEATH ROW - DAY 4

Superimposed title: WITH QUENTIN LEE

LEE

I got the inspiration for this appropriately enough on Death Row.

CUT TO

5 INT. DEATH ROW - DAY

5

Slow tracing shot past the caged men. Their faces some sullen and arrogant, others broken or bored, fill the screen. We hear Quentin Lee reading a poem over the sound of echoing footsteps.

LEE (v.o.)

'Death, I hear your approaching steps  
down the hall,  
But your noise and laughter don't  
pertrub me at all.  
We've barely missed meetings -- many  
times before;  
This may surprise you, but I deem  
you not as my foe!  
No, Death! I fear you not,  
For you'll deliver me from a hell  
of a spot.'  
This poem was written two days be-  
fore Frank Mathis' execution.

(X)

We hear Quentin Lee switching the videotape recorder to fast forward.

6 CLOSE SHOT ON TELEVISION SCREEN - NIGHT

6

A jumble of blurred, fast action videotape images. We hear Quentin Lee's voice.

LEE (v.o.)

Such a ponderous prelude. Let's  
skip ahead...I believe it's right  
about here.

(X)

7 FREEZE FRAME - CLOSEUP - CONVICT'S FACE - DAY

7

We hear Quentin Lee switch to stop.

LEE (v.o.)

There he is.

8 CLOSE SHOT - MATHIS - DAY

8

We hear Quentin Lee switch to forward.

(X)

MATHIS

So what about it?

(X)

CONTINUED

LEE (v.o.)

Well, I mean, don't you think that's not terribly bright -- throwing the murder weapon into a vacant lot next door to your apartment building.

MATHIS

All right, so it was a mistake.

LEE

Obviously -- since you're now serving a sentence of 99 years with no hope of parole.

MATHIS

Let's drop it, okay -- the interview is over.

LEE

Don't be so testy, Mr. Mathis -- You don't seem to understand -- I have nothing but admiration for the execution of the crime -- it was a nearly perfect murder -- except for one horrendous and obvious blunder.

MATHIS

Who are you to judge me ---

LEE

I wasn't judging you ---

MATHIS

Yes, you were --

(moves close  
to camera)

Well, I've had it with you -- just who do you think you are, anyway. Lecturing everyone about crime -- what do you really know about it -- about that moment when you look at him and he's alive -- and then when you look at him and he's dead -- after you pull the trigger.

(beat)

You don't know what it's like -- and you never will -- because you've never killed anyone.

LEE

Well, I've never actually....

CONTINUED

Mathis moves very close to the camera, menacingly. He's now in an extreme closeup, his face somewhat distorted.

MATHIS

That's right, you haven't. So you just don't know --

(beat)

-- when you're actually going to kill somebody -- and you do it -- and it all happens in flashes -- and all those plans go out the window -- and you can't help it -- you get scared.

(beat)

You -- so smug -- maybe you think you could do it better.

(sneers)

I doubt it. But go ahead and try ---

He puts his hand up to black out the lens.

LEE (v.o.)

He was right of course. One writes, after all, only from what one knows.

CUT TO

Quentin Lee's profile is silhouetted over a wrestling match on the television screen.

LEE (v.o.)

The perfect crime is the motiveless crime, but then again there is no such thing as a motiveless crime. Even a maniacal urge to kill indiscriminately is a motive ...But subtlety of motive -- that always confounds the police, who have no subtlety at all. The police also have no taste, whereas my taste is exquisite...Thus I decide that taste will be my motive -- and the most distasteful thing in this distasteful world to me is this cult of pseudo-celebrities. I shall kill a television star. Without style, or grace. Creatures of the media. This chic apartment building, where I live, is full of these public zircons. I shall kill one of them.

CONTINUED

9 CONTINUED

9

The silhouette of Lee's hand moves away from the TV screen and toward camera.

LEE (v.o.)

Let me show you how I select my victim.

Camera pans his hand down to a table on which is a double-barreled antique derringer pistol with two hammers that are fired simultaneously by one trigger. Next to it is a dart. Lee's hand picks up the dart.

LEE (v.o.)

I beg your indulgence for the rather uneven technical quality. I am videotaping and sound recording all of this myself. Content, I'm sure, will win out over style. Besides standing as a work of art in its own right, this film will be proof positive that I am indeed both author and protagonist of my greatest work. The film will, of course, be a posthumous release. Otherwise, I would be subject to inconvenient legal reprisals.

His camera pans over to where we see a typed tenant list has been attached to a bulletin board.

LEE (v.o.)

Now then, my victim. From the list of tenants of the building.

Lee's o.s. hand throws a dart. It hits the board. The camera moves to the board. We see that it has pinned the name of Duane Downs.

LEE (v.o.)

Marvelous! Duane Downs.

DIRECT CUT TO

9-A INT. QUENTIN LEE'S STUDY - NIGHT - ON TV SET

9-A

We see Duane Downs, famous talk-show host, at his desk, flanked by typical idolizing guests. He holds up his hand 'modestly'

CONTINUED

to quell the laughter and applause -- then reaches under his desk for a can of dog food to obviously begin a commercial. In our f.g., Quentin Lee's hand comes into scene with the channel selector pointed at the TV set, almost like a pistol, and his finger clicks the sound-off button so that we continue to see but not hear Duane Downs as he does his commercial -- thus enabling us to hear Lee's voice as he continues:

LEE (v.o.)

It is now a few hours later...and here is my victim...Duane Downs! The only time his show has ever been viewable is when I have been his guest. Killing him will be both a delight and a public service -- and how very conveniently kind Fate has selected him.

His finger presses the levelled remote selector off-button, snuffing the image of Duane Downs on the TV set to black.

DIRECT CUT TO

10 EXT. SUNSET CHALET APARTMENTS - NIGHT

10

canopied. A doorman. A valet parking attendant who takes Duane Downs' car as he drives up, enters the building with a lovely young thing on his arm.

LEE (v.o.)

I include this shot of Duane Downs coming home at night, photographed by me from the balcony-patio of my suite, because I want to leave a complete picture of this imaginative homicide for posterity. Every step of it.

(beat)

He usually comes home at this hour, after taping his show. Unfortunately, Duane rarely comes home alone. Which poses certain obvious problems of accessibility.

11 INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT - VIDEOTAPE CAMERA POINT OF VIEW

11

On the pair of closed elevator doors. They open, Duane Downs enters, accompanied by another lovely young thing. They both look at the lens, somewhat surprised.

DOWNS

Quentin ---

LEE

Surprise, surprise.

DOWNS

Ms. Carlyn, this is Quentin Lee ---

MS. CARLYN

Oh -- hello -- I've read all your books ---

LEE

How good for you ---

DOWNS

Why the candid camera ---

LEE

You're not aware of it, but I've been getting a lot of candid shots of you ---

DOWNS

Not too candid, I hope ---

LEE

Nothing like that, Duane. I thought it would be fun if I showed them on your program.

DOWNS

That's a good idea -- we can play it like I'm caught off guard by the idea -- I'll get some good ad libs ready ---

The elevator doors open, the girl steps out, leaving them temporarily alone.

LEE

I'd like to show you some of the footage I've shot so far ---

DOWNS

How about tomorrow night ---

CONTINUED

11 CONTINUED

11

LEE  
(confidential)  
Will you be alone -- I don't want  
to do any starlet interviews.

DOWNS  
I'll call you when I get in.

The elevator doors close, giving us a curtain for the scene.

12 INT. BUILDING BASEMENT - NIGHT - CLOSE ON DOOR

Lee's hand as he takes a screwdriver and makes a lot of scratches  
on the door.

LEE (v.o.)  
It is now what will soon be known  
as the night of the murder.  
(beat)  
These marks I am making will lead  
the police to think that someone  
jimmied the door to get access to  
this building, since there are  
security personnel at the lobby  
entrance.

12-A INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

12-

The camera moving along, hand-held by Lee.

LEE (v.o.)  
I have taken the service elevator  
to the floor of Duane Downs' apart-  
ment.

The camera moves to a position so that Lee is standing behind  
a corner in the hallway -- and we see the door to Downs' apartment

LEE (v.o.)  
And here comes the blandly un-  
suspecting victim now....

We see Downs approaching. Suddenly, a man comes from behind  
a stairwell (or whatever hiding place works for us) -- and  
stops Downs.

CONTINUED

LORING

Duane Downs! What a marvelous coincidence.

Loring walks alongside a startled Duane Downs.

LORING

I was just leaving a party at your neighbors here....

DOWNS

It must have been a small party -- My neighbors have been in the Bahamas since January.

LORING

(hardly missing a beat)

I'm Lynn Loring, as I'm sure you know....

DOWNS

No, I don't.

LORING

...and I...you don't?

DOWNS

No.

LORING

(posturing)

Why, I've acted for twenty years. Broadway, regional theater. television, films.

DOWNS

(weary)

Look, I've got an office. Send me stills and a resume.

LORING

I do a one-man show -- Shakespeare. O'Neill. Chekov. I'm famous for my Treplev.

DOWNS

Your what?

CONTINUED

LORING

Constantine Treplev from 'The Seagull,' by Chekov.

DOWNS

Whatever you're famous for, put it down in writing, send it to my secretary, she'll get you an appointment.

LORING

I've already spoken to her. Several times. Each time I had to reintroduce myself.

DOWNS

Lookit, Mr....

Downs arrives at the door to his apartment.

LORING

Loring.

DOWNS

...right...It's been a rough day all around, I just wanna go home and take it easy. Just tell my secretary you talked to me and I said to give you an interview.

LORING

I will. I certainly will. Here are a few 8x10 glossies. My credits are on the back.

He hands Downs the pictures.

13 INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

13

Closer on the door. Lee has obviously come forward after a brief time lapse. His hand knocks on the door, and Downs opens it angrily.

DOWNS

Now listen, Mr. Loring ---

He breaks off abruptly.

CONTINUED

13 CONTINUED

13

DOWNS

Oh, sorry, Quentin -- thought it was somebody else. You don't give up on that camera, do you?

(X)

LEE (v.o.)

I must confess it's addictive.

(X)

DOWNS

Join me in a nightcap?

(X)

LEE (v.o.)

Thanks. Don't mind if I do.

The camera enters the room following Downs to the bar. During this, Downs tosses the 8x10 glossies of Loring aside. We make little of this, for our own purposes, but the photos go onto the mantelpiece. (X)

DOWNS

Would you believe that some creep of an actor named Lynne Loring just snuck in from my balcony looking for a spot on the show? Wanted to show me his Treplef.

(laughs)

I should have sent him over to Carson. How about you coming on again next week?

LEE (v.o.)

Love to. Could you move over a bit -- I'd like to get a side angle.

DOWNS

(moving in front of mirror)

Why don't you turn that thing off. I've been in front of a camera all evening.

Into f.g. comes the derringer, both hammers cocked, in Lee's hand. Downs begins to grin, thinking it's some kind of joke. (X)

LEE (v.o.)

That's right. Smile for the camera.

The derringer is in full frame f.g. We see Lee's hand squeeze the trigger and both hammers descend simultaneously with one loud report.

CONTINUED

13 CONTINUED - 2

13

In b.g. we see Downs fall backward, two neatly-spaced holes in his dinner jacket, the camera, reacting to the recoil of the gun, swerving violently, slightly blurring the image.

LEE (v.o.)

I hope that recorded all right.  
Just a second, now, I'm going to  
set this camera down.

The camera swerves some more, then is set down and becomes stationary, viewing things still straight ahead, but tilted toward the floor. However, Downs' corpse is very much in the picture.

A pair of legs enter the frame, near Downs' head. They are all we can see.

LEE (v.o.)

Damn. One moment.

The legs move out of frame and the camera is jostled again, moved backward and up higher, so we have a better, more complete view of the room, still including Downs' body. Quentin Lee enters the picture, this time from the right. It is the first time we have seen him; short, dapper, bespectacled, hardly able to contain his excitement. His stance over Downs vaguely suggests a hunter with his trophy.

He peers into the camera with something very close to pride. (We should see here a faint pinkish ring around the lower part of Lee's right eye. Later in the story we will learn that this mark only appears after he has had the camera eyepiece up to his eye for a period of time, and that it wears off in a few moments after circulation has returned.)

A beat, then Lee starts going around the room, overturning book-cases, generally tearing the place apart. (X)

14 EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

14

A limousine arriving -- police car parked in front. A news crew -- some curiosity seekers milling about. Two uniformed officers. Columbo's car arrives -- he gets out, Hernandez, a plainclothes officer joins him -- they move into the lobby:

COLUMBO

Which apartment?

CONTINUED

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13  
(X)

14 CONTINUED

14

HERNANDEZ

6-C.

COLUMBO

We got a full crew here?

HERNANDEZ

Almost finished.

COLUMBO

How late am I?

HERNANDEZ

Not too much.

COLUMBO

You'll never believe why I'm late. My set was busted so my wife and I went next door to our neighbors to watch...guess who. And then they interrupt the show for the news -- that he was shot -- it really threw me -- you forget those shows are all on tape ---

15 INT. APARTMENT - DAY

15

The scene of the crime, lots of hustle and bustle. The place has been torn apart. Downs' body lies where it fell, covered with a sheet. Quentin Lee sits on a couch on the other side of the room, on the telephone. He is now wearing a voluptuous bathrobe, slippers, and a towel muffler. His camera equipment and the derringer are gone, of course, but there is still a trace of that pinkish ring around his right eye. A plainclothes cop chats with him. Columbo and Hernandez enter.

HERNANDEZ

The place has really be torn apart, as you can see -- must have been quite a struggle.

COLUMBO

Forcible entry?

Hernandez points to safety chain -- which is still attached to the door and a section of the molding that has been broken away.

HERNANDEZ

Safety chain and part of the molding ripped off.

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

Boy they really don't build these very well, do they?

They move to the main area of the living room.

COLUMBO

Who found the body?

HERNANDEZ

Delivery boy from the liquor store -- about ten-fifteen.

COLUMBO

Excuse me -- who is that?

HERNANDEZ

Quentin Lee. The writer.

COLUMBO

No kidding. Gee, this place is loaded with celebrities.

(beat)

Who was the writer?

HERNANDEZ

Quentin Lee. That's him over there.

COLUMBO

What's he doing here?

HERNANDEZ

Friend of Downs.

Columbo becomes confidential.

COLUMBO

Listen...ah, I recognize the name, but...what has he written.

HERNANDEZ

A lot of stuff on crime...novels... his last book was...about murder, called 'Deliberate Malice'...he was on Downs' show sometimes.

COLUMBO

Yeah, I guess that's why he looks familiar.

They walk across the room to Quentin Lee, who watches their approach without considerable interest. Still on the phone.

CONTINUED

15 CONTINUED

15

LEE

(into phone)

Jim, I think that's a wonderful idea.

(X)

(beat)

I'm flattered that you asked me to host the show. We'll make it a real tribute to Duane.

(beat)

I'll do my best. The fact that it is a television show doesn't absolutely preclude good taste, does it? Good. Right. Good-bye.

Lee is about to dial another number, when:

COLUMBO

Excuse me...Mr. Lee.

LEE

Yes.

COLUMBO

I'm Lieutenant Columbo.

LEE

I'm sure you are -- but I've already given my statement.

He starts to dial again.

LEE

(quickly)

I live upstairs. 9-C. I was in my bath, heard the shots at exactly 10 p.m.

(X)

(X)

(dials)

It's all in my statement, if you'd care to read it.

(into phone)

Carol...Quentin. Yes, darling, it's too true. Listen, Carol...I'm taking over the show tomorrow night... a memorial to Duane...Yes, he would have wanted you there....

Hernandez takes Columbo aside.

HERNANDEZ

Lieutenant, there are some kids outside -- they know you're here and they want in. They say you're they're field assignment.

CONTINUED

15 CONTINUED - 2

15

I'm what?

COLUMBO

Field assignment.

HERNANDEZ

Me.

COLUMBO

That's what they said...authorized  
by the department....

HERNANDEZ

Columbo remembers.

Oh...wait a minute....

COLUMBO

He pulls some papers out of his pocket, searches through them.

I remember...the Captain sent me a  
memo....  
(shuffles papers)  
...better let them in.

COLUMBO

Hernandez goes, Columbo finds the memo, reads:

...graduate class...lecture...and  
observe...methodology...methodology?

COLUMBO

Enter three college students. Chapman, Spielberg and Brooks.  
Brooks is female. They have tape recorders, camera and note-  
books.

Lieutenant Columbo....

CHAPMAN

Yes.

COLUMBO

I'm Chapman. This is Brooks,  
Spielberg.

CHAPMAN

Hand shakes all around. In the b.g., Quentin Lee is placing  
another call.

CONTINUED

15 CONTINUED - 3

COLUMBO

Well, ah...how's your research coming along?

CHAPMAN

(dry)

Funny you should ask that, Lieutenant. Since you haven't shown up for any of our class meetings.

COLUMBO

Oh, yeah. That. Look, I'm really sorry, but I've been so busy I just forgot.

BROOKS

It's all right, Lieutenant. We were taking notes on the night shift when we got the report on this.

COLUMBO

Look...just make yourself at home. Maybe you'd like to see how things are going...downstairs.

CHAPMAN

I think it will be more interesting here, Lieutenant.

COLUMBO

Oh, I'll answer any questions you like...just don't touch anything.

CHAPMAN

Isn't that Quentin Lee?

COLUMBO

Yeah. Excuse me.

Columbo crosses to Lee. The trio follows, and during the following Chapman plays the mike of his tape recorder back and forth between the two men. Brooks makes notes...and Spielberg takes photographs.

QUENTIN LEE

(into phone)

Fine, Tim. I'd say one song will be fine. Just pick something Duane liked.

(beat)

Your new single?

(beat)

It hasn't come out yet, but you know he would have liked it? Well, how about something you're sure about. Okay. Bye.

Quentin Lee hangs up the phone.

CONTINUED

go

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18.

15

CONTINUED - 4

COLUMBO

Mr. Lee, I was wondering if you would mind identifying the body.

LEE

What is this -- meet the press?

COLUMBO

This is Chapman, Spielberg and Brooks -- they're doing research.

LEE

Obviously a real trio of crime stoppers.

Columbo points toward the body.

COLUMBO

If you don't mind, Mr. Lee. Just for the record, you understand.

LEE

No, need to be so solicitous. I'm used to gore.

COLUMBO

Oh, that's good, sir. Could you come with me. This will only take a minute.

Columbo does everything but take Quentin Lee's arm to help him over to the body. As Quentin Lee walks across the room, Columbo speaks to the students, loudly, as if lecturing.

COLUMBO

Right now, Mr. Lee is going to identify the body.

One of the students, Chapman, speaks up.

CHAPMAN

Why isn't this being done at headquarters?

COLUMBO

Why -- well, to save all the time and trouble....

CHAPMAN

Isn't this improper procedure.

COLUMBO

That's a very good question.

CONTINUED

Quentin Lee is leaning down over the body. One of the policemen is pulling the sheet back. Lee turns to Columbo.

LEE

Excuse me, Lieutenant but that's him.

Closeup of two closely spaced bullet holes in Down's chest.

Quentin Lee turns to leave. Columbo walks up to him very close, and speaks in almost confidential tones ---

(X)

(X)

COLUMBO

Oh yes, sir.

(beat)

You're sure all of this hasn't been too upsetting. We could put a man on your door.

LEE

Don't be absurd.

COLUMBO

Boy, that's a crime writer for you. Cool as a cucumber. Most people would be a nervous wreck if a guy were killed right next door.

QUENTIN LEE

Sometimes in my writing, Lieutenant, I analyze crime. But I am not a crime writer. I leave that to the paperback hacks. I'm only interested in crimes that probe the great philosophical questions of our day. And this may be one of them. In which case I would write about it with complete emotional detachment as you, hopefully, would investigate it.

(X)

COLUMBO

(slightly puzzled)

Sure, you're right. I was just -- you know -- concerned.

(X)

LEE

(smiling slightly)

Good night.

CONTINUED

15 CONTINUED - 6

15

He closes the door behind him and goes out. Columbo stands there thinking for a second, then turns to go back into the room. The kids have come up behind him, and have him more or less cornered against the door.

The following dialogue is all very fast; a lot overlaps.

CHAPMAN

You through questioning him,  
Lieutenant?

COLUMBO

For now.

CUT TO

16 INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

16

Columbo being dogged by the students. They walk, we dolly.

BROOKS

Lieutenant, could you give us your  
impressions.

COLUMBO

It's a little early for that -- we  
should wait for the lab results.

CHAPMAN

How do you suppose the killer got  
out of the building.

COLUMBO

Well we know a basement door was  
jimmied....

(2)

CHAPMAN

Yes, but we don't know for certain  
that he went out that way.

(2)

COLUMBO

You're certainly right about that.

(2)

CHAPMAN

People can't exactly walk in and  
out of here, you know. We had some  
trouble ourselves.

CONTINUED

BROOKS

What about a motive -- does this look like a Manson-type murder.

Columbo stops.

COLUMBO

Look, it's a little late and...may I ask you a question.

(to Spielberg)

Why is it you don't ask any questions.

SPIELBERG

I'm into electronics. Surveillance devices. Photographic equipment.

(X)

COLUMBO

Oh.

Columbo goes through his pockets.

COLUMBO

I think I left my car keys upstairs -- we'll get together later, if you don't mind.

CHAPMAN

How about tomorrow. 9:30. Police lab. They promised the results by then.

COLUMBO

That's a good idea. Tomorrow.

CHAPMAN

You'll be there.

COLUMBO

Wouldn't miss it. Good night.

He moves off as they ad lib good-byes. We hold on the trio.

BROOKS

I think he's nice.

CHAPMAN

They say he has a very high arrest percentile.

(shrugs)

We'll see.

(9th floor -- a redress of the 6th floor) Columbo coming down the hall, going to the door of 9-C. He pushes the bell.

CONTINUED

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21-A

17 CONTINUED

17

LEE'S VOICE

Yes....

COLUMBO

Pardon me, Sir. It's Lt. Columbo.

LEE'S VOICE

What is it ---

COLUMBO

Could I talk to you for a moment.

The door opens -- we see Lee. (Important to note that the ring around eye is gone).

LEE

Yes.

COLUMBO

I'm terribly sorry to bother you,  
but may I come in ---

LEE

All right.

Columbo enters.

18 INT. LEE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

18

(redress of Down's apartment). Expensive, but lived in. Lee and Columbo enter.

COLUMBO

As I was saying, I don't want to bother you, but I have a very important meeting in the morning -- and I have to make sure I've got my facts straight.

LEE

Ask me whatever you like. Briefly.

COLUMBO

Well -- say that is a beautiful view you get from here.  
(points to door)

May I?

LEE

By all means.

He goes to the balcony, opens the sliding glass door -- goes out. Lee follows.

19 EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

19

Columbo taking it in, Lee hanging back by the door, losing patience.

COLUMBO

You forget just how big this town is -- I have a little place -- small house...and you know sometimes months go by and I never see anything like this.

LEE

Lieutenant, it is late.

COLUMBO

Oh, yeah. You're certainly right about that. By the way, I suppose you were out here when you heard the shots.

They go inside.

LEE

If you'll recall, Lieutenant I said I was in the bath.

COLUMBO

Is that what you said?

LEE

Check my statement.

COLUMBO

Oh, no need for that. It must have just slipped my mind.

LEE

But of course this door was open so that I could hear the gunfire.

COLUMBO

Oh, sure. You a bachelor, Mr. Lee?

LEE

A well-publicized fact.. Why?

COLUMBO

Well, this place is really immaculate. If it wasn't for my wife, well...for example, I would never have thought to close that door. I mean, especially with all this excitement.

CONTINUED

19 CONTINUED

19

As if on cue, Lee slides the door shut.

QUENTIN LEE

(X)

I closed it just before you came in, as matter of fact. I was feeling chilly.

COLUMBO

(X)

Oh. But you had it open earlier, though?

QUENTIN LEE

(X)

I didn't feel the chill earlier. Now it's gotten later, and I'm so tired....

COLUMBO

Oh, certainly. Listen, I don't want to keep you...but would you mind if I looked at your bathroom. That's why I really came up here.

LEE

If you like.

20 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

20

Large, elaborate. A sunken tub. Columbo looks around Lee watches him.

LEE

(X)

Maybe I could help...if I knew what you were looking for ---

COLUMBO

You see, we'll need time on the killing and you said that you heard the shots at exactly 10:00.

LEE

That's correct.

COLUMBO

(X)

Since you're not wearing a watch, I just figured there must be a clock in here.

LEE

Very observant, Lieutenant. And there is no clock in here ---

We hear a grandfather clock strike the hour of twelve.

CONTINUED

20 CONTINUED

20

LEE

But there is one in the living room -- and it was striking the hour. Just like now.

COLUMBO

May I see it?

LEE

Certainly -- since it's on the way out.

21 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

21

Columbo at the grandfather clock.

COLUMBO

Say, this is a magnificent clock -- is it an authentic antique?

LEE

Of course -- why?

COLUMBO

Well, the time is important -- I just want to make sure that the clock wasn't slow or anything.

22 ANGLE - COLUMBO

22

Columbo exposes his wrist watch to compare the two, frowns as he discovers that his watch has stopped -- he taps it twice, twists stem, listens.

COLUMBO

How do you like that -- busted again. I just had this thing fixed ---

He looks up to see ---

23 LEE - HIS POINT OF VIEW

23

aiming the videotape camera at him.

LEE

Don't worry, lieutenant. You're not obliged to smile.

(The rest of this scene is shot from the point of view of the videotape camera.) Columbo is extremely uncomfortable and nervous at the prospect of being videotaped.

COLUMBO

Excuse me, sir -- what is that?

LEE'S VOICE

I'm committing my daily diary to film, Lieutenant. And you certainly have been an inescapable part of my day.

COLUMBO

Listen, I'm really flattered to be in your movie, sir. I really am. Only -- I'm not very photogenic.

QUENTIN LEE

Be yourself, Lieutenant, and that'll be fine.

COLUMBO

Uhh, would you mind not doing that, Mr. Lee? I get awful self-conscious. I don't even let my wife take home movies of me.

QUENTIN LEE

Then how about making a statement on the murder, Lieutenant? Just for my own personal record.

Columbo is heading for the door.

COLUMBO

Sir, if you don't mind, I'll just say good night.

LEE'S VOICE

Good night, Lieutenant.

Columbo opens the door, starts out, leans back in:

COLUMBO

Thanks again for your cooperation.

He lowers the camera -- (we note the ring is around his eye again.)

LEE

Take care, Lieutenant.

CONTINUED

26 ANGLE - COLUMBO

26

He takes a beat to note the ring, doesn't point up his interest, however.

COLUMBO

Oh? Right. Good night.

He exits.

27 RESUME - LEE

27

picks up the camera again.

28 INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT - CAMERA POINT OF VIEW - NIGHT

28

Lee taping Columbo's exit, as he goes off down the hall, with an occasional glance back.

LEE (v.o.)

The lieutenant was not as stupid as he first appeared, but all in all, I think his bag of tricks is rather shabby. I would say that if handled properly, he presents no real threat.

Lee closes the door so that it blacks out our view of the hall -- and curtains the scene.

DIRECT CUT TO

29 INT. QUENTIN LEE'S STUDY - DAY

29

On the playback set -- a repeat of the murder -- at some point we drop back to reveal Lee, and that there is daylight outside.

Quentin Lee is comfortable in his very spacious, elegantly decorated work room, sitting next to the screen. Another videotape machine is in evidence, the camera of which is focused on Quentin Lee's face, and which he addresses directly.

LEE

(conversational)

I should explain that I wanted to record my reactions as I played back the tape to study it.

Quentin Lee has a lavalier mike around his neck. He gets up to make a minor adjustment to the videotape camera, then sits back

CONTINUED

29 CONTINUED

29

at the machine again. We can see the tape of the murder running on the machine and hear some of the soundtrack, although very softly.

LEE

(smiling as  
he watches)

That derringer I used has been in the family since before the turn of the century. It's an antique. Therefore impossible to trace.

He continues to watch the screen with great interest and pride. We hear sneezes, and we see, although not well, the image swerving all over the video screen. Then we see Quentin Lee do a take at something he sees on the screen. He reaches for the rewind switch and runs the tape back a bit.

LEE

Holy mother....

His surprise is turning quickly to anxiety. We watch him very tensely running the tape forward again from the time of the first gunshot. Suddenly he reaches out and slams his hand against the rewind switch.

LEE

There. There! It is! But how could it be? Oh my God.

Abruptly, as an afterthought, he yanks the videotape camera around to a new angle, one that includes him but favors the video screen more fully. He fumbles furiously to adjust the lens.

LEE

There was someone there. Someone watching. See? There? Right there?

He adjusts the lens of the videotape camera to zoom in to the image on the video screen. As he does so, we move slowly in to the screen, uncovering what Quentin Lee sees.

LEE

(a trace of  
hysteria)

Do the police know? Probably now. They would be at the door right now if they did. Why hasn't he gone to the police? He must want

CONTINUED

29 CONTINUED - 2

29

LEE (Cont'd)

something. A lot. Everything.  
But who is he?

As Quentin Lee runs on, we zoom closer and closer to the image that is giving him so much concern. Finally we make it out. There on the screen, blurry from the camera movement and traces of gun powder in the air, is a reflection in a mirror. It is of a man, and it is distinct enough to see that he is watching the killing as coolly as if it were a television show.

LEE

Wait. I know him. That idiot actor.  
The one in the hall with Downs.  
Just take another look....

(X)

Quentin Lee rewinds the tape, stopping on the image of Lynn Loring as he handed Downs his photograph. There's no mistaking him. The face in the mirror is Lynn Loring.

LEE

Right. Absolutely right. What was  
his name? Some phoney fancy thing...  
Loring. Lynn Loring.  
(to monitor)

(X)

An actor with negligible prospects.  
And probably a taste for blackmail.  
Well, come ahead and make your move,  
my friend. I could use a subplot.

CUT TO

(X)

30 INT. ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

30

The sort of store that would sell videotape equipment. (This is seen from a videotape camera point of view -- we will learn soon enough that Columbo is at the controls, so the picture is unsteady -- we will pan by and pick up the store manager, Ferris.) As the camera pans the store:

FERRIS' VOICE

This model is 2400 dollars, including the playback machine. It needs only available light, so that you can film anywhere.

COLUMBO'S VOICE

What about night in say, a living room?

We are now holding, as best Columbo can, on Ferris.

CONTINUED

30 CONTINUED

30

FERRIS

That should be no problem.

In the b.g. behind Ferris -- we see Chapman, Spielberg and Brooks enter.

COLUMBO

This is really amazing.

CHAPMAN

Lt. Columbo ---

31 ANGLE - COLUMBO

31

He lowers the camera -- we don't make a big point of it, but he has a ring around his eye -- he glances during the following in a nearby mirror -- or his reflection in a glass case ---

CHAPMAN

(to Ferris)

Would you excuse us for a moment, please. This is police business.

COLUMBO

(to Ferris)

Thanks for your help. I'll just look around a little.

(X)

CHAPMAN

Lieutenant -- this is important -- we went to a lot of trouble to track you down ---

(X)

COLUMBO

What is it ---

CHAPMAN

We've just found a clue that your department over-looked.

COLUMBO

No kidding -- where?

Spielberg hands Chapman a photo.

CHAPMAN

Right here. In Spielberg's pictures he took last night -- there was a man on Downs' balcony during the investigation.

(X)

Columbo looks at the photos.

32 INSERT - PHOTOGRAPHS

32

of the investigation scene.

COLUMBO'S VOICE

How do you like that?

33 RESUME

33

BROOKS

I don't see how he could have been there -- when no one saw him ---

CHAPMAN

It was dark out there. Maybe he was hanging over the side of the balcony ----

(X)

COLUMBO

(to Spielberg)

These are very good photographs, incidentally.

(X)

SPIELBERG

Thank you.

Chapman gestures to Spielberg -- who hands him still another photo.

CHAPMAN

Now -- if you didn't see it in the original, this blow up should make it clear.

COLUMBO

Oh, good.

34 INSERT - BLOWUP

34

Loring's face reflected in the glass of the balcony door.

CHAPMAN'S VOICE

You do see it now, don't you Lieutenant?

35 RESUME

35

Columbo returns the photos.

COLUMBO

Oh, yeah. And it's very good photography. But there's one problem with it.

CONTINUED .

ak #37113 30.

35 CONTINUED

35

CHAPMAN

What.

COLUMBO

This face is a photograph reflected  
in the balcony door glass.

(beat)

Here, look at this.

He takes a photo.

36 INSERT - PHOTO

36

A wider view of the room -- if we move in, following Columbo's  
finger -- we see the photo on the mantelpiece.

COLUMBO'S VOICE

There -- see the photo on the  
mantelpiece.

Now Columbo's hand brings into frame the blowup ---

COLUMBO'S VOICE

That picture -- reflected here ---

37 RESUME

37

Brooks and Spielberg are impressed. Chapman, dampened.

BROOKS

We never saw that.

CHAPMAN

I suppose we shouldn't have rushed  
it over here to the lieutenant --  
if we'd studied it -- we would have  
seen it ---

COLUMBO

Oh, I'm sure of that -- you kids  
are very bright.

(beat)

Don't feel bad. I made the same  
mistake once. Put out an APB and  
a description. I got half-way  
through the description before I  
realized I was talking about Rock  
Hudson.

CUT TO

38 EXT. TV STUDIO - DAY

38

Quentin Lee arrives in his expensive car, comes to a stop at the far side of the parking lot. He gets a few feet only to be confronted by Lynn Loring.

LORING

Mr. Lee.

LEE

Yes -- Mr. Loring.

LORING

You know of me ---

LEE

Mr. Loring -- I think it's enough that I know you were at Duane Downs apartment last night -- at a rather embarrassing time.

LORING

You know that....

LEE

(interrupts)

This isn't the time -- or place to discuss who saw whom -- don't you agree?

LORING

I didn't want to go to the police.

LEE

Of course not.

LORING

I mean, being the last one to see Mr. Downs alive, suspicion might fall on me. The last one, that is, except for the murderer. You understand.

LEE

Completely.

(beat)

I suggest we meet privately -- later -- I have a show to do -- where are you parked.

LORING

Over there. The green sports car.

LEE

Wait for me there.

Lee moves away, we hold on Loring, who doesn't know quite what to make of this, but with a career at stake, not about to ask.

CUT TO

39 INT. TV STUDIO - NIGHT

39

Columbo and the A.D. are standing backstage behind a curtain, peeking out at Quentin Lee hosting the show. The set looks like any late night talk show. The chair behind the host's desk -- where Downs would sit -- is empty, draped in funeral black for this mournful occasion. Quentin Lee sits off to the side. On the end of the couch at the other side of the desk is the show's announcer, fall guy and loyal laughing machine, Roy Edwards. He is apparently in a state of shock. (X) Next to him is a young actress, Carol Robinson, who tries very hard to look subdued.

LEE

You all know that Duane Downs introduced many people on this show, made them a part of each of our lives. This next guest really requires no introduction from me. Like myself he has come to pay tribute to a loved and lost friend. Here is Tiny Tim.

Tiny Tim comes tripping onto the stage, more subdued than usual.

TINY TIM

I'm much better at singing than talking. So I'd like this song to be my memorial to Duane Downs, a man of humility who was a great help to me in my career. This was the first song I ever sang on this show.

He is too overcome to continue. After struggling to regain control of himself, he starts plunking on his ukulele.

TINY TIM

'Red sails in the sunset  
Way out on the sea  
Oh carry my loved ones  
Home safely to me....'

While Columbo watches, a little incredulous, the A.D. slips out from behind the curtains, and goes over to whisper in Quentin Lee's ear. There is a brief conversation, then the A.D. comes stealthily back.

A.D.

Mr. Lee says he'll be with you right after the commercial.

Tiny Tim has finished up his number, and bows off stage soberly, as the audience applauds.

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

(enthralled  
by Tiny Tim)

Yeah. Thanks.

Quentin Lee resumes his host's chores.

LEE

Welcome, Tiny.

TINY TIM

(sniffing)

I wish I could be happy to be here.

LEE

We all share your feeling. But there are certain fundamentals to consider which are inescapable, I think. I'm going to address myself to the nature and meaning of this ...this hideous but historic crime -- right after this commercial message.

(slight pause)

As soon as the commercial goes on, Quentin Lee gets up from behind his desk and walks across the small stage to slip behind the curtains and talk to Columbo. (X)

LEE

Delighted you could come, Columbo.

COLUMBO

All I need's a second or two of your time. Nothing....

Columbo is interrupted by a boom mike brushing the top of his head.

COLUMBO

...urgent. Just a couple of routine questions.

LEE

(wry)

Don't apologize. Routine questions are the only kind I would expect.

The A.D. comes up to them, brisk and businesslike.

A.D.

Ten seconds, gentlemen, please.

CONTINUED

39 CONTINUED - 2

39

Quentin Lee nods. Columbo looks about curiously.

COLUMBO

For what?

The lights suddenly go down. There is a slow fanfare from the studio orchestra -- a couple of bars of a hymn -- since this is a memorial show.

COLUMBO

(disconcerted)

What's going on?

LEE

You are!

The lights come up fast. Columbo spins around just in time to see the curtain he has been standing behind part to reveal an eager and curious studio audience. Columbo shields his eyes from the sudden harsh light. A TV camera dollies in on him for a closeup.

LEE

(smoothly)

We're back. For this next portion of the Duane Downs memorial, I'd like to introduce a surprise guest. He will be of great help in our discussion of the crime. Police Lieutenant...Columbo.

Columbo, trapped in front of 25 million people, seems paralyzed.

LEE

(to audience)

Of the homicide division. Let's make him feel welcome.

The audience applauds politely. Columbo, too nervous to be angry, allows himself to be led across stage by Quentin Lee. He is seated in the honored guest's chair. Quentin Lee resumes his position behind the desk, next to the chair draped in black.

LEE

(conversationally)

The lieutenant is the officer in charge of investigating Duane's murder.

CONTINUED

(X)

39 CONTINUED - 3

39

LEE

Perhaps you'd be more comfortable  
if we took that for you.

COLUMBO

What?

LEE

That coat, or whatever it is, you're  
always affecting. (X)

COLUMBO

That's all right. I'm fine.

It's apparent now Columbo's really put out. He unconsciously hugs the raincoat a little tighter around himself, but Quentin Lee catches the tone in his voice and reacts to it.

LEE

Lieutenant, so many of our capital crimes -- especially murder among the famous are crimes all inspired, indeed, designed for public consumption. These killers are the true children of the media. And I think whoever fired those murderous shots at Duane Downs is one of that select number. (X)

We see Columbo react, slightly but significantly, when Quentin Lee says "shots."

CAROL

(awed)

That's really far out. Did you write that?

LEE

No. But I intend to. Tonight I'm making the first public announcement of my latest project. I believe that will be my best. It will be the detailed study of this media murder. What do you think of my theory Lieutenant? (X)

COLUMBO

Of what?

CONTINUED

39 CONTINUED - 4

39

LEE

The theory. Or perhaps the police have a better one.

COLUMBO

Well, we don't really have a theory worked out yet.

LEE

Well, now that you're out here, Lieutenant Columbo -- suppose you tell us how you go about singling out a suspect.

COLUMBO

Well -- I just ask a lot of questions, Mr. Lee.

LEE

And then add up the answers?

COLUMBO

Something like that. Yes, sir.

LEE

But suppose somebody lies to you?

COLUMBO

Oh, well. If he lies -- then he becomes a suspect.

Laughter from the audience.

LEE

How perceptive. Of course, you have to catch him in the lie.

COLUMBO

Well, I don't like to make it sound too hard. A lot of fellas catch themselves.

LEE

You're not nervous are you, Lieutenant. Being up here in front of 25 million people.

(X

COLUMBO

Nervous? Oh, no. No, no. Not me.  
(beat)  
Twenty-five million?

(X

Lee looks off, sees an o.s. signal, then:

(X

CONTINUED

LEE

On that slightly anxious note, we  
pause again for a commercial message.

COLUMBO

Excuse me, sir. If you don't mind  
-- I'll be going.

LEE

What about those questions you were  
so eager to ask me.

COLUMBO

I don't think it would be appropriate  
to ask them here, sir.

LEE

Appropriate? You mean I am a suspect?

COLUMBO

Well, you know, Mr. Lee, anybody  
who was near the scene ---

LEE

I quite understand...go ahead, ask.

COLUMBO

Well, that little ring around you  
eye ---

LEE

What ring around my eye?

COLUMBO

Oh, it isn't there now -- but it  
was when I got to Duane Downs  
apartment and you were waiting.

LEE

And what do you conclude from that?

COLUMBO

Well, it wasn't there when I came  
to see you today -- until after  
you took my picture. So I realized  
it came from the eyepiece of your  
camera.

CONTINUED

39 CONTINUED - 6

39

LEE

And you conclude from that, that I was using my camera just prior to the crime?

COLUMBO

Yes, sir.

LEE

But I told you I was in the bathtub.

Laughter from the audience.

COLUMBO

Yes, sir.

LEE

You think I was photographing myself in the tub?

COLUMBO

I was wondering ---

LEE

If I understand you -- which is a little difficult -- you're saying I did in Duane Downs, and taped myself doing it. Now modesty isn't one of my vices. But doing that would require more ego than even I possess. And probably some acrobatic ability as well.

(X)

The A.D. reappears.

(X)

A.D.

Five seconds.

LEE

What ring around my eye?

COLUMBO

Oh, it isn't there now -- but it was when I got to Duane Downs apartment and you were waiting.

LEE

And what do you conclude from that?

COLUMBO

Well, it wasn't there when I came to see you today -- until after you took my picture. So I realized it came from the eyepiece of your camera.

CONTINUED

39 CONTINUED - 7

39

LEE

And you conclude from that, that I was using my camera just prior to the crime?

COLUMBO

Yes, sir.

LEE

But I told you I was in the bathtub.

COLUMBO

Yes, sir.

LEE

But I told you I was in the bathtub.

COLUMBO

Yes, sir.

LEE

You think I was photographing myself in the tub?

COLUMBO

I was wondering ---

LEE

You're surely not suggesting that I'd murder Duane Downs and tape myself doing it. That would take a supreme egotist, and I'm known for my modesty.

The A.D. reappears.

A.D.

Five seconds.

COLUMBO

-- I'll see you later.

LEE

Yes -- I'm sure you probably will.

Columbo hurries off, nods good bye to the other guests. The lights come up.

40 ANGLE - LEE

40

To camera.

LEE

The lieutenant was...uh...suddenly called away.

He doesn't bother to make this seem credible.

CONTINUED

40 CONTINUED

40

LEE

(to camera)

After these messages, we'll be right back with more of our tribute to Duane Downs, with a special eulogy by Rev. Dr. Billy Garland. Stay with us.

41 OMITTED

41

42 ANGLE - COLUMBO

(X)

42

Watching from the curtains -- he turns and exits.

(X)

CUT TO

43 EXT. TV STUDIO PARKING LOT - DAY

43

Lee makes his exit, waving good bye to an obsequious guard. With a quick scan of the area -- to see that he's not being observed, Lee makes his way across the lot, slipping between cars.

44 INT. LORING'S CAR - DAY

44

Loring in the driver's seat, reading Variety. He lowers the trade paper as Lee gets into the car with him. Lee takes out a precautionary pair of sunglasses, puts them.

LEE

Mr. Loring, let's get right to the point. What exactly do you want?

LORING

Well, I heard you were guest hosting for Mr. Downs, and I thought you might give me the chance he promised me. I have some suitable readings in my one-man-show repertoire for a nice memorial. Marc Antony's eulogy for Julius Caesar might be apropos, don't you think?

LEE

Mr. Loring, I appreciate your sense of irony, but can't we speak bluntly and to the point?

LORING

I beg your pardon?

LEE

What do you want?

LORING

Just a chance, Mr. Lee.

CONTINUED

LEE

Are you telling me you'd settle for just one appearance on the Duane Downs show?

LORING

Oh, yes sit. It would make me.

LEE

You'd soon want more, of course.

LORING

Oh, no, sir. I wouldn't bother you again.

LEE

I'm not a fool, Mr. Loring, and I probably know more about this business than you do.

LORING

(taken aback)

I'm sure you do, but....

LEE

Then let's start with a payoff worthy of your...capabilities... I want our relationship to be brief...and conclusive.

(beat)

Just what would you like most out of life?

LORING

I hadn't really thought about it in those terms....

LEE

Then allow me. Suppose I backed you in a one-man show on Broadway?

LORING

You're kidding.

LEE

Of course, I'd want to see your repertoire.

LORING

Naturally.

LEE

I'd especially like to see your Teflef.

CONTINUED

LORING

Anything.

LEE

Where could we meet.

LORING

I have a small studio workshop.  
I teach acting -- if you wouldn't  
mind, we could meet there -- I  
have all my props ---

LEE

Your suggestion borders on the  
ingenious. We would have complete  
privacy?

LORING

Absolutely. My classes don't  
start until the afternoon.

(writes on  
scratch pad)

Here's the address.

LEE

I'll be there tomorrow morning.  
Ten a.m.

LORING

I can't tell you how grateful I  
am for this opportunity ---

LEE

Yes, I'm sure. Now I hope that  
I don't have to impress on you  
the need for keeping our negotia-  
tions totally confidential.

(beat)

There isn't a wife or some girl-  
friend to be dealt with, is there?

LORING

Oh, no.

(holds up  
fingers)

Four divorces.

LEE

Good for you.

With that, Lee exits. We hold on Loring, too pleased about  
his good fortune, to question anything.

CUT TO

45 INT. QUENTIN LEE'S APARTMENT - DAY

45

The author in residence is dressed in a luxurious at-home outfit -- something on the order of a custom-tailored safari jacket -- and as the scene begins is on his way to answer the front door. It is Columbo.

LEE  
(not entirely  
unfriendly)

Well, here you are again. A day without Lieutenant Columbo is like a day without smog. It would be nice to have one occasionally.

(X)

COLUMBO  
I hope I'm not disturbing anything.

LEE  
Not at all, Lieutenant. I assume this is another official visit. Am I supposed to demand a search warrant, this early in the morning.

(X)

COLUMBO  
Oh, no sir.

Columbo struggles through the door carrying a bulging briefcase, like a kid's schoolbag.

LEE  
What's in that? Refuse from an autopsy?

COLUMBO  
No, it's just...My wife, when I told her I was coming to see you, well she has read all your books -- never misses your TV specials -- anyway, she gave me all these books to autograph....

Columbo starts unloading books. There are a great many.

LEE  
You could start a mobile library with all those.

COLUMBO  
Well, to be perfectly honest, sir, they're not all ours...Some are for my father-in-law, my wife's second cousin, he teaches English up in....

LEE  
Got a pen?

CONTINUED



COLUMBO

You know, this is a remarkable bathtub. Look at those fixtures. French?

LEE

Venetian. Now if you'll just....

COLUMBO

Incredible. My cousin is a plumber ...You won't believe how much money he makes. I can imagine how much these cost.

Columbo tries one of the fixtures, then the other. He turns them on far enough so that a thunderous gush of water comes spewing from the tap. Columbo jumps back, but doesn't avoid getting sprayed.

COLUMBO

Boy, that really comes out of there!

LEE

(beginning  
to get it)

Now I see why you wear the raincoat.  
May I adjust those?

(X)

Lee reaches over and lowers the flow of water.

LEE

At the time of the murder, the water was coming out at just about this speed ---

(beat)

Do you have to signal your man to fire the shot in Duane's Downs apartment, or is everything all arranged.

We hear a gunshot. Lee reaches over and turns off the water. Columbo looks at him, sheepishly.

COLUMBO

I know it seems like a dirty trick, Mr. Lee, but I had to check out your story about hearing the shots in the bath -- and if I didn't tell you, then it would be a better test.

(beat)

But I should have known better than to try and put over anything on you ---

CONTINUED

48 CONTINUED - 2

48

LEE

Subtlety doesn't seem to be your strong suit.

COLUMBO

No sir, I guess now.

LEE

If you're finished....

COLUMBO

Oh sure. Thanks.

They start out of the bathroom through the bedroom and on back into the living room again.

49 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

49

Columbo getting his books.

COLUMBO

But it was for real about all these books. And I really want to thank you.

LEE

I'm touched by your regard for my ego, if not my honesty.

They head for door.

COLUMBO

I know sir, I really wanna apologize, but we had to check that was what you heard. You're sure, now, that what you heard in there just now is what you heard the night Downs....

LEE

(impatient now)

Of course I'm sure.

COLUMBO

But that was only one shot. Last night you said you heard shots.

LEE

Well, then, shots -- let's not quibble over words.

COLUMBO

No words, sir, numbers, and they are important.

CONTINUED

COLUMBO (Cont'd)

You see, there was only one shot fired. We've established that the gun was a derringer that fired two bullets simultaneously with only one pull of the trigger -- and only one report.

LEE

Lieutenant, one of my greatest talents is a photographic memory....

COLUMBO

(firm)

Two shots. One sound.

LEE

That little instant replay of yours just now cleared everything up just fine. Of course, I heard only one shot. You're right. I just hope you don't think I was trying to... deceive or mislead you or anything.

COLUMBO

Of course not, Mr. Lee. Not with a memory like yours.

Lee gives him a quick look, but Columbo looks innocent. Columbo exits, we hold on Lee.

CUT TO

INT. ACTORS' ART STUDIO - DAY

The walls are covered with posters of Loring. The place, itself is nothing more than a one-time loft converted into a little theater workshop -- if its funky furnishings and decor can be called a conversion. There are a few dozen folding chairs, some risers to approximate a stage -- and, in a corner, a card table littered with Samuel French paperback plays and typewritten sides for actors. There is a battered typewriter on the table. The framing becomes jerky as it did in earlier scenes, when Lee has picked up his camera and used it hand-held. It pans to the doorway catching Loring on entrance.

CONTINUED

LORING

Oh -- Mr. Lee, you startled me.  
Am I late?

LEE'S VOICE

I just arrived.

LORING

How did you get in?

LEE'S VOICE

The door was open.

LORING

Oh. I thought I locked it up  
last night.

LEE'S VOICE

Obviously, you didn't.

LORING

(uncertain)

I guess not.

Loring shrugs. This guy is nuts but, what the hell, he's  
the producer.

LORING

What's the camera for?

(X)

LEE

Well, my backers -- our backers --  
may not be completely familiar with  
your work. I'll shoot some tape of  
you here, and show it to them. That  
will be their introduction. They'll  
want to know what they're investing  
in, after all.

(X)

(X)

LORING

Oh -- of course.

Lee's camera follows him as he goes onstage to examine the  
props.

Loring is handling the props, and seems puzzled by the  
presence of the gun.

LORING

I see the gun here, so I assume  
we'll be doing the last scene.

CONTINUED

LEE'S VOICE

Precisely. I shall read Nina.

LORING

But the gunshot is offstage.

LEE'S VOICE

Not on this tape. Treplev's suicide will take place onstage, in full view.

LORING

Interesting touch.

LEE'S VOICE

An oblique comment on contemporary violence.

(X)

LORING

Yes, An attempt to bring the audience into a sudden, shocking confrontation with Chekov. I like that.

LEE'S VOICE

I hoped you would.

(X)

LORING

And I like this hat. But the scarf...I'm sorry. I'd rather not use it. It would be con-  
straining.

LEE'S VOICE

As you prefer, of course. Only the gun is important. It is the focal point of our production, in a sense.

LORING

Shall I stylize the use of it?

LEE'S VOICE

No, no. We'll be looking for impact here. I'd say that extreme realism is called for.

LORING

More Moscow Art, less Peter Brook?

CONTINUED

50 CONTINUED - 3

50

LEE'S VOICE

Very much less. And while you're at it, would you mind signing this release? The backers won't look at a foot of film without it. That way they have legal protection.

(X)

Lee's hand comes into scene extending thick contract and pen. Loring is now wearing his Treplev hat, and picks up the pen without hesitancy, although he is still faintly curious. (X)

LORING

Protection against what?

(X)

LEE'S VOICE

Oh, unauthorized use of the film, and all the rest of that legal mumbo-jumbo. I know it's a bore, but you do understand, don't you?

(X)

Loring nods and starts signing with Lee's hand doing the page opening. To further distract him from scrutinizing the contract, Quentin Lee starts chattering on.

LEE'S VOICE

I see on those posters you've previously played Treplev in Kansas City, Minneapolis, Seattle, Dallas, the Troy Summer Playhouse, the Poughkeepsie -- is that right? -- Players, the Ashtabula Drama Festival and the Westbury, Long Island, Music Tent.

LORING

(signing)

Yes.

LEE'S VOICE

You must tell me sometime what new dimension to Treplev you stumbled on in Ashtabula.

Loring has finished signing.

CONTINUED

LORING

(fake modesty and  
a little defensive)

I'd go anywhere to play Treplev.

LEE'S VOICE

You seem to have exhausted all the  
possibilities.

LORING

Excuse me?

LEE'S VOICE

Just a joke between partners.  
Now, since you know the play  
so well, I won't bother to set the  
scene. I'll just cue you from Nina's  
line. You can take it from there.  
Ready?

(X

LORING

Always.

Lee's hand picks up manuscript.

LEE'S VOICE

Fine. Then we'll begin.  
(reads)

'To bear one's cross and have faith.  
I have faith and it doesn't hurt so  
much...' Oh...do keep that pistol  
in mind, won't you? '...hurt so  
much, and when I think of my voca-  
tion I am not afraid of life.'

LORING

(rumbling, hammy)

"you have found your path, you know  
which way you are going, but I am  
still floating in a chaos of dreams  
and images, not knowing what use  
it is to anyone. I have no faith  
and I don't know what my vocation  
is.'

With each word, Loring's performance grows more pompous and  
phoney.

LEE'S VOICE

Oh, that's really magical.

CONTINUED

LORING

(stupendous, false  
modesty)

They call that acting. Say can you  
come onto the tape like that?

LEE'S VOICE

Oh, I'll edit myself out. Now Nina  
has her melancholy speech. I'll  
give her last line, then you can  
do your suicide scene.

LORING

Treplev is supposed to wreck the  
room.

LEE'S VOICE

Well, don't go quite that far. Just  
mime the destruction, then finally  
discover the gun on the table and...  
use it.

LORING

Fine.

LEE'S VOICE

Yes, perfect. Here we go.

LORING

Do you mind if I make some noise?

LEE'S VOICE

Not at all. Do anything that makes  
you feel comfortable. Just be  
careful to stay in camera range.  
Now let's begin. 'On the meadow  
the cranes no longer waken with a  
cry and there is no sound of the  
May beetles in the lime trees.'

LORING

'It will be a pity if someone meets  
her in the garden and tells mother.  
It may upset mother.'

Loring now launches into the world's most embarrassing mad scene. Quentin Lee has some difficulty suppressing a giggle. At the end of all his furious carrying on, Loring 'discovers' the gun on the table. He looks less like Treplev finding the weapon than a California '49er striking gold. He seizes the gun, presses it hard to his temple, and in a frenzy of characterization, pulls the trigger. Of course, it fires. Loring has just blown his brains out. He looks surprised as he falls backward, dead.

CONTINUED

50

CONTINUED - 7

50

There is a moment of absolute silence. The gun powder starts to clear. From the back of the room comes the sound of clapping. Quentin Lee puts camera on a chair and walks into scene. Since he has been using camera there is that ring around his eye. He extracts the suicide note from the contract so that we see that it has Loring's signature as a result of the folded insert. He leaves the suicide note, pockets the contract, returns to his camera, picks it up causing scope to spin and blurr as we:

DISSOLVE TO

51

INT. ACTORS ART STUDIO

51

Loring's body is on the floor, police mill about. Columbo looks around the room, pondering, as a cop (the same one that brought Columbo into Downs' apartment in the earlier scene), reads from a piece of paper. The college trio is on hand, taking photos of the murder scene, etc.

COLUMBO

'Downs is dead by my own hand. I could no longer endure the gamut of humiliation in which his was the last blow. In the words of Treplev: 'My youth was, as it were, torn away all at once and it seems to me as though I have lived for ninety years already.' I die of hopelessness and of guilt. Lynn Loring.' Boy, that's some suicide note.

CHAPMAN

Bizarre.

COLUMBO

Yeah...ah...who is Treplev.

LEE'S VOICE

You need a literary man to answer a question like that.

(X)

Quentin Lee enters, with his handy videotape recorder.

COLUMBO

Thank you very much for coming, Mr. Lee. I really appreciate it.

(to students)

Would you excuse us for a moment.

The two men move away from the trio.

CONTINUED

LEE

What exactly is it that you want.

COLUMBO

Well, I'm not sure, but I think this might be one of those media murders -- which would certainly fit right into your theory.

(beat)

Quite frankly, Sir, this is a very unique case -- and I could use your advice.

LEE

In what way?

COLUMBO

First of all, the victim here was an actor.

LEE

(interrupts)

...I thought I heard you read a suicide note....

COLUMBO

Yes, that's right. But I'm not entirely convinced it was suicide.

(beat)

Ah...who was Treplev?

LEE

A young and rather impetuous poet in Chekhov's play -- The Seagull.

(beat)

Who kills himself in the course of the play.

COLUMBO

That certainly explains a few things.

LEE

Excuse me, Lieutenant, but I don't quite follow your reasoning -- it's not a suicide?

COLUMBO

Oh, I didn't say that. What I mean to say is, it's certainly meant to look like one.

CONTINUED

LEE

What makes you suspect that it isn't.

COLUMBO

I'm not sure -- there's just a few things that don't hang together. That's why I appreciate getting your ideas.

LEE

What is it that doesn't hang together?

COLUMBO

First of all, there's the note itself.

LEE

May I see it.  
(looks)  
Is this his handwriting?

COLUMBO

It certainly looks like it -- we don't know for certain until the lab gets through with it -- but we compared it to a couple of things on his desk over there -- and it looks like his ---

LEE

Then what is the problem?

COLUMBO

I've had this happen before -- where someone types a suicide note.

LEE

What's wrong with that -- I think it's rather tidy.

COLUMBO

Most people write them by hand -- I mean, someone else could have typed it for him.

LEE

But if he signed it --

COLUMBO

But you know, he could have been tricked into it.

CONTINUED

51 CONTINUED - 3

51

LEE

That's a little thin, Lieutenant.

COLUMBO

Boy, I know it. I told you I wasn't sure of anything -- that's why I wanted to talk it out with you -- you've certainly been very accurate so far -- and maybe you can explain the hat.

(X)

LEE

Hat.

COLUMBO

The man was wearing a hat when he shot himself. Why would anybody put on a hat to blow their brains out?

(X)

LEE

Really, Lieutenant. What difference does it make. This man, Loring, was an actor -- obviously some sort of crank.

(beat)

Actors do behave irrationally, you know. It's practically their whole life style.

(X)

COLUMBO

Oh, yes. I've heard that.

LEE

Lieutenant, if I may presume....

COLUMBO

Oh, please do ---

LEE

Do you mind if we bring those young students of yours into this?

(not waiting)

Come on over here, will you.

(X)

The students come over to Lee -- and he takes over, playing to this audience.

LEE

(to Spielberg)

Here -- you with the cameras -- you know how to operate this?

CONTINUED

SPIELBERG

Yes, sir.

LEE

Then do. I'd like a record of this.

Spielberg looks to Columbo for permission.

COLUMBO

Oh, go right ahead.

LEE

(to Chapman)

Why don't you get this down?

CHAPMAN

Yes, sir.

Chapman turns on the tape recorder.

LEE

(to Brooks)

And you...what do you do.

BROOKS

I just take notes.

LEE

How prosaic. No pun intended. Jot away. (X)

BROOKS

Yes, sir.

LEE

First of all, it is important that we try and see if in fact there was a relationship between the dead actor and Downs.

(beat)

Lieutenant, what progress have you made in that area?

COLUMBO

I've got a man checking on that right now.

LEE

When may we expect a report.

CONTINUED

51 CONTINUED - 5

51

COLUMBO

I'll call him.

LEE

It would be useful, Lieutenant.

Columbo fades, Lee continues.

The trio follows Lee around the room, as he declaims:

LEE

Next, since the Downs murder weapon was never found, there is a strong possibility that Loring might have used the same gun to kill himself.

CHAPMAN

As a matter of fact, there was a derringer in Loring's hand. They sent it to ballistics.

LEE

The lab report, of course, will be definitive -- but there is certainly a strong connecting link --

(beat)

Now Lieutenant Columbo has been slouching around behind me for the past 48 hours, as though, in some mysterious way, I might have had something to do with Downs' murder.

(beat)

The only thing the Lieutenant hasn't been able to cook up is a motive. I guess his imagination doesn't extend to science fiction. So without a motive, there isn't a case. There isn't even the basis for this investigation.

Columbo returns.

LEE

Ah, Lieutenant, we were just talking about you.

COLUMBO

Oh. I just called one of the detectives at headquarters -- and he said that as a matter of fact, Loring has been trying to get on Mr. Downs' show for some time.

CONTINUED

(X

LEE

Unsuccessfully, I would imagine.

COLUMBO

(admitting it)

Yes, sir. In fact, Mr. Downs' secretary has stated that he was really harrassing Mr. Downs -- hanging around the office, the studio, his apartment....

LEE

That, Lieutenant, looks like the final link in the chain. A rejected actor murders a successful performer in a position of power. It only proves my hypothesis on media murders.

(to students)

By the way, I'm having a small soiree at my place tonight -- I'm running some of my tapes on penal reform -- you're all invited.

The three students don't know quite how to respond, but ad lib thank yous.

LEE

I think that ends the interview:

(to Columbo)

And the case, I would say ---

Spielberg hands him the camera.

COLUMBO

Mr. Lee, it certainly looks that way. We knew that there was a connection between them, but it never occurred to me that it was anything like this....

LEE

You knew what....

COLUMBO

Oh. Yeah.

(to Spielberg)

Do you have those photos.

Spielberg goes to his camera case, shuffles out the photos.

CONTINUED

cw #37113

59  
(X)

51 CONTINUED - 7

51

COLUMBO

He's a very talented photographer,  
by the way. What he can do with a  
camera is just incredible.

(beat)

If you ever need a photographer,  
the kid is really terrific.

Spielberg comes up with the photos. Columbo hands Lee the  
first one.

52 INSERT - PHOTO

52

The wide shot of the room, in Lee's hand.

COLUMBO'S VOICE

He took this the night of the murder...  
see that photo proper on the mantle ---

Now the blowup comes into frame.

COLUMBO'S VOICE

The reflection made it look like  
Loring was there -- when it was just  
the photo.

53 RESUME

53

Lee lowers the photograph, pale, but he recovers quickly.

COLUMBO

You all right?

LEE

Fine. Fine. That's extraordinary.  
A coincidence worthy of Thomas Hardy.  
But...I really have to go and get  
ready for the party.

COLUMBO

Oh. Sure. See you later.

Lee exits. Columbo watches him go.

COLUMBO

Who was that he said? Worthy of  
who?

BROOKS

Thomas Hardy. Another writer.

CONTINUED

53 CONTINUED

53

COLUMBO

Oh, yeah. To tell you the truth,  
though, they all give me a pain.

(X)

Columbo moves away, self-absorbed. The three students look at each other, feeling sorry for him.

54 INT. DINER - NIGHT

54

We're on Bert, the owner-operator. He moves with a fly swatter to where Columbo sits at the counter, reading the menu. Bert swats at something on the counter near Columbo -- from his expression, he missed whatever it was. Columbo is unmoved by this activity, still reading the menu.

COLUMBO

Don't feel bad, Bert. I've had  
a few get away myself.

Bert turns to him.

BERT

You want to order, Lieutenant.

COLUMBO

How's the chili.

BERT

You tell me. You eat it, I don't.

COLUMBO

Maybe I'll have something different,  
Bert. I'll have the chili, but put  
some meat in it this time.

Bert gets with the good-natured by-play.

BERT

You've got a real sense of humor,  
Lieutenant.

COLUMBO

I know -- that's why I eat here.

BERT

For you, Lieutenant, I'll open  
a fresh can.

CONTINUED

Bert moves off, Columbo lights his cigar -- and is surprised to find Chapman, Spielberg, and Brooks appearing at the counter.

CHAPMAN

Mind if we join you, Lieutenant?

COLUMBO

What are you doing here?

BROOKS

The dispatcher told us you have dinner here, if you work late.

COLUMBO

Oh, yeah. My wife and I have an understanding. I understand if I'm home later than eight o'clock, I don't get fed.

(beat)

I thought you'd be going to Lee's party.

CHAPMAN

Well, it sounds like a bore.

BROOKS

A lot of Lee's self-congratulations.

CHAPMAN

What do you recommend here?

COLUMBO

I don't recommend anything. But I like the chili.

CHAPMAN

That sounds good.

BROOKS

Make it two.

Spielberg raises three fingers, Columbo looks at them, smiles.

COLUMBO

That's really very nice. I mean it. You thought I was depressed because of Lee -- and you came here to cheer me up -- Thank you. That's very nice. But don't worry. I'm not really depressed. I'm just trying to think my way through it.

CONTINUED

54 CONTINUED - 2

54

Bert arrives with Columbo's chili.

COLUMBO

Three more, Bert.

BERT

Okay.

During the following, Bert turns on a television set that's behind the counter.

CHAPMAN

What is there left to think through?

COLUMBO

Because Lee's right about one thing -- I never could figure out his motive ---

BROOKS

We tried -- but we couldn't either.

Now Bert is adjusting the volume so that we can hear as well as see Quentin Lee on television (a talk show format -- Lee is expounding on some crime theory).

COLUMBO

Did you ever get the feeling that you were being followed.

BROOKS

(to Bert)

Do we have to hear that, Sir.

Bert turns down the volume, watches set.

BERT

I think this man's a genius. What a talent.

CHAPMAN

Could we have those three chilis, please.

BERT

Oh, yeah.

He moves off. Columbo stares at the set, mesmerised.

CONTINUED

CHAPMAN

It could be worse, Lieutenant. They could be replaying your appearance with him.

On that note, Columbo does a long take -- looks at him. Chapman becomes uncomfortable.

CHAPMAN

I'm sorry...I meant it as a joke.

COLUMBO

But that's it -- what's the matter with me -- why didn't I think of that -- he told me himself.

BROOKS

When did he do that?

COLUMBO

When I was on the show with him. Boy, he is clever. I was so nervous -- so self-conscious -- I'd almost forgotten what he said about the eyepiece ring around his eye the night of the Downs murder.

(beat)

He was the one who suggested he might've filmed himself killing Downs.

CHAPMAN

Why would he film that?

COLUMBO

How do you like that -- he told me himself -- he did it out of ego.

(beat)

All those shows and books about crime -- he just had to show how good he'd be at it.

CHAPMAN

What're we waiting for, Lieutenant? All we have to do is play Lee's video tapes, and if he's got ---

COLUMBO

(interrupting)

We can't just break in and grab his tapes.

BROOKS

That's right -- evidence illegally obtained is inadmissible.

CONTINUED

CHAPMAN

All you need is a search warrant,  
Lieutenant.

COLUMBO

(patiently)

You know what would happen if I  
asked a judge for a search warrant  
because I thought a suspect had  
recorded himself committing murder?

(X)

BROOKS

What?

COLUMBO

He'd have me committed for observa-  
tion.

They all stare gloomily at the TV set. Bert returns, gives  
them their chili. A moment, then:

CHAPMAN

Of course, we wouldn't have to  
actually break in. We've been  
invited to a screening at his party.

BROOKS

What are you suggesting?

COLUMBO

Now look, I wouldn't in any way  
want to involve you ---

BROOKS

(interrupts)

You could keep him busy while we  
went through his tapes.

COLUMBO

Thanks, but you've got to remember  
-- there are hundreds of tapes in  
his library -- and we don't know  
for certain that Lee has the in-  
criminating tape there.

CHAPMAN

That would be very obvious.

SPIELBERG

I think that's exactly what he'd  
do.

CONTINUED

54 CONTINUED - 5

54

They all stop -- turn to Spielberg. This is the first time he's really said much, and they are all taken aback.

SPIELBERG

Let's don't depart too soon from his meglomania. First, he wouldn't let the tape be far from his sight. Second, his overweening ego would go for a stunt like the Purloined Letter, as it was described in the story by Edgar Allan Poe. In that story, the incriminating letter was placed on a desk in plain view -- but along with a number of other letters. The analogy to Lee's tape library would be perfect -- and it is the kind of pseudo-literary trick that would appeal to Lee. No matter what diversionary ploy is used, it is quite accurate that there are too many tapes to go through all of them. Therefore, I suggest that we get Lee to lead us to the tape itself.

(beat)

The chili is very good, Lieutenant.

Spielberg returns to his chili. Columbo looks to Chapman and Brooks -- who are just as startled as he is.

CHAPMAN

Just how do we get Lee to do that?  
To lead us to the tapes?

SPIELBERG

Got me.

(X)

A moment, then.

COLUMBO

Maybe you should go to Lee's party  
after all.

Now the trio share a look -- does Columbo have an idea?

DIRECT CUT TO

55 INT. APARTMENT CORRIDOR - NIGHT

55

Columbo coming down the hall. We hear the sounds of the o.s. party. Columbo stops at the door to Lee's apartment, does a fast polish on each shoe on the back of each trouser leg. He rings the bell -- a butler appears. He scans Columbo, disapproving.

BUTLER

Yes.

COLUMBO

Is Mr. Lee here, please.

BUTLER

Who is calling?

COLUMBO

Oh, I'm a guest. I was invited.

(beat)

Is there something wrong. I mean, is it formal or something? Am I out of uniform?

BUTLER

(looks)

That would be difficult to say.

COLUMBO

(flashes buzzer)

I'm Lieutenant Columbo. Police.

BUTLER

Oh. Come in.

They go inside.

56 INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

56

The light is low-key and so are the people. Columbo and the butler enter.

BUTLER

Wait here, please.

Columbo does -- looks off to see ---

- 57 CHAPMAN - HIS POINT OF VIEW 57  
standing beside a group of chatterers. He smiles and gives a small wave to Columbo.
- 58 ANGLE - COLUMBO 58  
returns it.
- 59 ANGLE - LEE 59  
standing with a few admirers, one of them a woman, Claire.
- CLAIRE  
Any cartoons with the main feature,  
Quentin? (X)
- Lee has two tape boxes in hand.
- LEE  
Darling, I'm showing the two educational television specials I did on prison reform. (X)  
(beat)  
I'm sorry to say they're both in black and white -- this new monitor --  
(shows us)  
does color beautifully.  
(sees Butler)  
What is it ---
- The butler comes up to Lee, whispers.
- LEE  
Oh. All right, I'll see to him.  
(beat)  
Excuse me. Maybe we'll have some comic relief after all. Excuse me just a minute. (X)
- He moves off.
- 60 ANGLE - COLUMBO 60  
Columbo standing by the door. Lee joins him.

CONTINUED

60 CONTINUED

60

LEE

What a surprise, Lieutenant. Is this an official call or do I have to be charming.

COLUMBO

Mr. Lee, I know you're busy and you have guests -- and it certainly looks like a swell party -- but....

(X)

LEE

(interrupts)

...but you were wondering if you could try out another of your stunts on me....

COLUMBO

Oh, no, sir. This is no stunt. This is very serious.

(confidential)

May I speak to you privately.

LEE

Oh, all right. But let's make it quick.

(nods)

On the balcony.

They head for the balcony.

61 ANGLE - CHAPMAN

61

Watching Columbo go -- Brooks and Spielberg move into shot beside him -- then Chapman and Brooks go in one direction -- Spielberg in another.

62 INT. BALCONY - NIGHT

62

Columbo and Lee enter, Lee closing the door.

LEE

Tonight, Lieutenant, please skip those disarming discourses on the view -- just get to the point.

(X)

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

Yes, sir. I intend to --

(takes out paper)

You see, I was having dinner and I got this call from the lab -- it was about the murder weapon.

LEE

Did it check out.

COLUMBO

Oh, yes. One hundred per cent.

LEE

Then what's the problem.

COLUMBO

The problem, sir, is the gun itself. Here's the report.

He hands it to Lee, who reads it.

LEE

Okay, Lieutenant. So your ballistics expert says the derringer was a presentation model, special issue, 1884? Have you traced it to me? Is that what this little drama is about?

(X)

COLUMBO

Oh, no, sir -- that's just the point -- the gun is untraceable. No registration number.

LEE

Sorry, Lieutenant.

(X)

COLUMBO

But we did find out that fifty of them were presented to the survivors of a Confederate outfit after the Civil War.

(consults notebook)

7th Artillery Regiment, Brundige, Alabama.

LEE

Get to the point, Lieutenant. The point.

COLUMBO

Well, remember I told you my wife read all your books? I looked at one this evening when I got home. It said you were born in Brundige, Alabama.

CONTINUED

LEE

Is that the best you can do,  
Lieutenant?

Columbo seems to be angry -- he's really pressing him. Lee turns for the door, Columbo takes him by the arm.

COLUMBO

How do you explain that.

LEE

I don't have to explain anything.  
Good night.

Lee turns to open the sliding door -- Columbo slams it shut.

COLUMBO

(prosecuting)

Just a second. You and that great mind of yours -- make me some odds. Make me the odds on Loring having an antique gun from your home town. What do you figure? Maybe ten million to one?

LEE

Call your bookie, Lieutenant. Don't ask me.

COLUMBO

He had it because it was your gun. You killed Downs. Then you killed him.

Lee stares at him for a long moment, then laughs.

LEE

A little Joe Friday, a little Hercule Poirot. You're a unique combination, Lieutenant. Too bad you're not as effective as you are novel.

(beat)

I get the feeling you really wanted me to believe this little scene you just pulled off. You thought maybe you could unnerve me, make me think there was something connecting me with that gun -- an old court record, a piece of family history. Well, to tell you the truth, I'm crestfallen. Bitterly disappointed. That after all

CONTINUED

62 CONTINUED - 3

62

LEE (Cont'd)  
this time, all our fond talks, you  
have such a low opinion of me. That  
I could ever use a weapon that could  
be traced back to me. Or that I'd be  
dumb enough to get bluffed into  
admitting I had. Really, Lieutenant.  
I deserve something better.

Columbo looks at him, half-smiles. He crumples up the  
report, tosses it aside.

COLUMBO  
Not too good, huh. Well, I had to  
give it a shot -- I figured, what  
have I got to lose.

LEE  
No hard feelings, Lieutenant. Stay  
and have a drink.

Lee opens the door.

COLUMBO  
Thanks anyway, Mr. Lee. But I'd  
better get home -- I'm late as it  
is.

Columbo is about to move past him.

LEE  
From here on in, whenever you see  
me -- I hope it will only be on  
television.

COLUMBO  
I guess it'll have to be.

Columbo goes ahead of him, into the living room.

63 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

63

Columbo heading for the door as Lee follows him into the  
room -- notes that he is, in fact, making an exit, then  
heads toward his videotape monitor setup. He claps his  
hands to call attention.

LEE  
Okay, everyone. Movie time.

CONTINUED

Some sycophantic laughter. Lee puts a tape on from one of the two boxes. We see that Chapman, Brooks and Spielberg are nearby.

LEE

This first one is a little thing I did at Folsom Prison -- you know, the one the hillbillies are always singing about.

Lee turns on the set, steps back -- onto the screen comes the legend: THE ART OF THE DYING: POETRY ON DEATH ROW -- NARRATED BY QUENTIN LEE. Lee moves forward, steps to the machine.

LEE

Just a second. There's a little mix-up.

(looks at box)

Misfiled. That shouldn't happen. It never happens.

(beat)

Well, this show has been on TV so much anyway, you all should have seen it by now. Let's switch to the Alcatraz show. The place still has warm memories for me, even though it's been shut down. Maybe they should convert it to a tourist....

He turns the tape on, somewhat anxiously. This time a legend comes on the screen: CHRISTMAS MEMORIES WITH FLORA BY QUENTIN LEE. Lee is nearly in a sweat -- he moves quickly to the set, shuts it off. During the ensuing walla, he picks up the box -- and looks at it.

Alcatraz report -- by Quentin Lee

Holding the box, panicked.

LEE

How...

(to guests)

Look, give me just a minute to straighten all this out. Talk to each other or something.

CONTINUED

65 CONTINUED

65

Small laughs -- Lee takes both tape boxes -- and politely hurries to his study.

66 INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

66

Lee enters, locks the door behind him. He moves over to the wall of tapes, looks at them -- then something catches his eye -- he looks over at a closet door. Lee moves over to the door, stealthily. He quickly opens it -- but there is no one hiding there. Closing the door, Lee is certainly alone. He goes to the wall of tape, removes a box. We notice his videotape camera, mounted on a tripod, in a corner of the room.

67 INSERT - BOX

67

labeled: RANDOM INTERVIEWS

68 RESUME

68

He goes to his monitor, puts on the tape. He turns on the playback -- we see the tape of the Downs murder. Lee quickly shuts it off, replaces the tape to its position on the shelf. Relieved, Lee walks to the door, opens it -- finds himself confronting Columbo, backed up by the three students.

COLUMBO

I decided to hang around after all, Mr. Lee. I didn't want to miss the world premiere.

Columbo and the students come into the room.

LEE

What are you talking about? What moth-eaten stunt are you trying to pull now?

COLUMBO

Listen. I want to tell you something. This one you're going to appreciate. I promise.

LEE

Maybe some other time, Lieutenant. I have guests, Lieutenant, and none of us like charades.

CONTINUED

68 CONTINUED

68

COLUMBO

I think so highly of this, sir, I'm going to have to insist you stay. Believe me -- you can't help but be impressed. Now, remember I told you that kid was a terrific photographer? Well, he does incredible things with electronics, too. He rigged your door there with a little photo-electric gizmo. As soon as anyone opened the door -- your camera over there was switched on. And recording. Isn't that something?

LEE

(sweating)

A regular little Thomas Edison.

During the above, Spielberg goes across the room, opens Quentin Lee's videotape camera and pulls out a tape. He walks back across the room, puts the tape on the playback machine, and switches it on.

COLUMBO

While Spielberg was doing that, we were out on the balcony chatting. And Chapman and Brooks here, they got hold of those tapes you were going to show tonight and scrambled them all around.

LEE

Wonderful.

COLUMBO

We were hoping that we could panic you into showing us where the murder tape was.

They all look at the screen.

69 ANGLE - SCREEN

69

As it goes to Lee putting his hand on the fateful tape box.

COLUMBO'S VOICE

But I bet you we got a dividend, too.

70 RESUME - ALL

70

The tape keeps playing. We can see Quentin Lee coming over to the playback machine with the murder tape, putting it on and watching it.

CONTINUED

70 CONTINUED -

70

COLUMBO

See that? Boy, that's terrific.  
We can see which box the tape is in.  
And we have swell pictures of you  
watching the tape yourself. Look  
at that. Every detail sharp.

We can almost make out the details of what Quentin Lee is  
watching on the playback: Downs' murder.

LEE

Well, I suppose this is what they  
mean by cinema verite.

COLUMBO

Sorry, sir, I don't quite get it.

LEE

That's all right, Lieutenant. You  
got me.

COLUMBO

Well, I'll have to say that I have.  
I have to warn you, Mr. Lee, that  
anything you say may be used against  
you.

LEE

I don't know how you did it, Lieu-  
tenant, but you have certainly  
spoiled my posthumous release plans  
for this picture.

COLUMBO

Shall we go, Mr. Lee?

LEE

Don't you want to see the rest of  
it?

COLUMBO

No, thanks. I know how it comes  
out.

We freeze frame then run the tape on the set -- start end  
credits.

FADE OUT

THE END