

PRODUCER: Everett Chambers
DIRECTOR: Bernard L. Kowalski

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C O L U M B O

FADE IN TO MURDER

Participating Writers

Lou Shaw
Peter Feibleman

COLUMBOFADE IN TO MURDERCAST

COLUMBO
 (X) WARD FOWLER (LUCERNE)
 SERGEANT JOHNSON
 SID DALEY
 CLAIRE DALEY
 WALTER GARY
 MARK DAVIS
 TONY
 MOLLY
 (X) JOHN CHANNING

CREW MEMBER
 ASS'T. DIRECTOR
 CONROY - AN ACTOR (X)
 JOSEPH - AN ACTOR
 DIRECTOR
 ATTENDANT
 1ST COP

SETSEXTERIORS:

TOWN HOUSE SET
 WARDROBE DEPT.
 WARD'S HOME
 GARAGE
 GUEST ROOM
 CITY STREET
 TONY'S DELI
 SOUND STAGE
 BEL AIR HOME SETTING
 BACK LOT

INTERIORS:

TOWN HOUSE SET
 PRODUCER'S SUITE
 WARD'S TRAILER
 WARDROBE DEPT.
 PROP DEPT.
 WARD'S HOME
 LIVING ROOM
 BEDROOM
 HALL
 TONY'S DELI
 SOUND STAGE
 SID'S OFFICE
 SID'S APARTMENT
 BEL AIR HOME SETTING
 STUDIO COMMISSARY

C O L U M B OFADE IN TO MURDER

FADE IN

1 EXT. TOWN HOUSE SET - DAY

1

This is an elegant Georgian affair. It bespeaks wealth and taste for its occupant -- who happens at the moment to be in trouble. The time period is the 1920's and props, dressing(X) and wardrobe express that.

CONROY'S VOICE

(contemptuously)

Let me get this straight, Lucerne -- are you saying that I had something to do with Mrs. Baker's death?

Through above, camera has been moving in on the town house, and now we go to:

2 INT. TOWN HOUSE SET - STUDY - DAY

2

"Conroy" and "Lucerne", two very civilized gentlemen, faultlessly attired for the evening, sip VSOP cognac. "Conroy" we instinctively distrust; "Lucerne", on the other hand -- a handsome man of biting wit -- we are instantly drawn to.

LUCERNE

(amused)

Not 'something,' my dear Conroy.
'Everything.'

CONROY

That's ridiculous. Half-a-dozen people have already attested to the fact that I was nowhere near the Baker home on the night she was killed.

LUCERNE

Or so it seemed. In actual fact, Conroy, what your six witnesses saw was an illusion. Having established your presence by moving among the group, you then slipped behind the screen to change. For the next twenty minutes, you continued your monologue, aware that not one of your six employees would dare to interrupt you.

CONTINUED

LUCERNE (Cont'd)

It worked out perfectly, didn't it? Not one of those six people realized he was listening to a tape. Not one of those six people realized that the vague silhouette seen moving behind the screen was not you at all, but someone else.

CONROY

Fascinating theory, Lucerne.

(smiles)

You know, some people think you're the most brilliant detective of our times. I tend to agree... because, as it happens, you're absolutely right. I did kill Mrs. Baker. But for all your vaunted brilliance, Lucerne, there's no way in the world that you can prove what I've just said.

At this moment the door opens and a thuggy-looking Valet appears, gun leveled at Lucerne.

LUCERNE

Ah -- the other half of the team. The gentleman whose silhouette impersonated you so well behind the screen.

(to Valet)

Joseph, isn't it?

Tough-looking as he is, Joseph is very nervous; so nervous that he says:

JOSEPH

It's going to be a treasure to pill you, Mr. Lucerne....

The mangled line leaves Joseph with an embarrassed face. Conroy suddenly breaks into laughter. Lucerne walks from the set, waving for the director to follow.

LUCERNE

(quietly to director;
an order)

Replace him.

He moves off -- immediately accompanied by his ever-sympathetic gofer, Mark Davis. While the Director looks on helplessly.

Gathered around for a lunch meeting are Claire Daley, Sid Daley, Walter Gray and John Channing. The Daleys produce the "Detective Lucerne" show; Gray and Channing are the studio's TV heads. And here, too, as onstage, an argument rages:

GRAY

(to Claire)

Who does Ward Fowler think he is?

(picking up paper,
waves it angrily)

I won't let him get away with this, Claire! I'm dead set against the raise. Nobody's irreplaceable in this business.

CHANNING

(the voice
of reason)

Claire -- Fowler's not the first actor to win an Emmy, and he's already one of the highest paid performers in television. If we give in to him now, it's going to be worse next year, and the year after that.

CLAIRE

Aren't you both forgetting something?

(beat)

Without Ward Fowler, there won't be next year for this show. Because of Ward, 'Detective Lucerne' is the highest rated show on television -- and, it's good for another five to eight years.

(studying them)

Now -- let's say you don't give in to him. He walks. What do you do then? Sid and I have given you a show that's been a winner year after year. But Ward Fowler is the show.

Swayed by Claire's words, Channing and Gray look at each other undertainly.

SID

(instantly)

As the other half and, rather silent partner of the team -- I'm afraid I have to go along with my wife.

INT. WARD'S TRAILER - DAY

Ward and Mark Davis are playing cards. There's a rap at the door and the Director pokes his head in.

DIRECTOR
(differentially)
Good news, Ward. We got Simon Cole to take over the part. He'll be here in half-an-hour.

WARD
(continuing
to play cards)
Fine. Let me know when he's thoroughly rehearsed and you're ready to roll again.

The Director would love to strangle Ward. Instead he smiles and starts to back out. On the same instant, Claire pushes past him into the trailer.

CLAIRE
Excuse me. Ward -- do you have a minute?

WARD
(warmly)
More than a minute for you. Come in.

He moves to buss her on the cheek, and, as the Director leaves, waves Claire to a seat...then turns to Mark. Looks at him. Smiles.

MARK
(obediently,
scurrying)
On my way.

He exits, closes the door behind him. Ward's smile fades as Claire swivels her easy chair, studies him with a satisfied expression. There is a slight pause.

CLAIRE
Good news.
(beat)
You're the highest paid performer in television.
(no response.
Smiles)
You're number one.

He continues to stare at her. As if to a child:

CLAIRE
How about that?
(beat)
Isn't it lovely?

CONTINUED

WARD

Ducky.

CLAIRE

Oh, I thought you'd be pleased I certainly was.

WARD

How much do I keep?

CLAIRE

The usual. And that's quite a bit.

WARD

Fifty percent. Less the percentage I pay to my business manager, my lawyer, my agent and my public relations man.

CLAIRE

You have the soul of a CPA.

WARD

And approximately the income of one.

CLAIRE

Don't let's exaggerate. Whatever you wind up with, it's a hell of a lot more than you were making when I....

WARD

Discovered me.

CLAIRE

Right.

WARD

Took me out of the nowhere shadows as a hopeless no-talent, and gave me a famous personality.

CLAIRE

Right.

WARD

Gave me a name. Ward Fowler. Made me, as the saying goes, what I am today.

CLAIRE

Right.

(smiles)

Sorry about that.

CONTINUED

WARD

Do you enjoy insulting me as much as you enjoyed making love to me? Or more? You didn't use to think I was so bad.

CLAIRE

I didn't use to think.

WARD

Neither did I. We didn't have to as I remember.

CLAIRE

Oh, do you remember? What a tribute.

WARD

I don't believe the 'Hell hath no fury' act, Claire. I think it's just your way of blackmailing me and feeling wronged at the same time. And, do you know what's so wasteful about it? I'd give you anything you asked for. Just because you asked. Do you know that, Claire? I know you invented me. I'm still grateful.

CLAIRE

I get a little bored with this kind of talk. You give me what I want because there's nothing you can do about it, and that's the only reason. Otherwise, darling, grateful as you are, you wouldn't give me the sweat off your -- personality. Keep remembering I invented all of you but I only take half for my trouble. Just half. And off the top. Please buy silver, the usual way, without using your real name, and deposit the certificates in the same numbered account. And have the bank mail me the receipt.

WARD

You're quite a little dictator. In fact you sound very much like the show we did last August. The one where we tried to make the murderer sympathetic.

CONTINUED

CLAIRE

Yes. Because the blackmailer was so dictatorial and vicious. I wouldn't dwell on it if I were you. You'd never make a murderer, Ward, not even a sympathetic one. That much personality you don't have.

Ward's answer is interrupted by the ringing of the phone. He allows it to ring for a few seconds, staring at her, before he picks it up.

WARD

Yes?
(to Claire)
For you.

CLAIRE

(takes the phone)

...What? No, that's alright, Cathy. We've finished. I can make the 9:20 preview...no, I've got tons of work, just call Sid, and tell him I'm staying at the office...No, thank Mark all the same, but he's Ward's gofer, not mine, and I don't like cheeseburgers. I'll stop at Tony's for a sandwich before the preview. And will you be your wonderful self and make sure the Pucci or the black taffeta is pressed. I won't have time to go home...in my closet in the office. Bless you. I'm on my way back now...Oh, is he there? Tell Sid he's sweet but to leave. I'd rather go alone.

(hangs up)

Sid is having an affair with his secretary. It makes him so considerate. It's boring to have so much attention.

WARD

Anything that doesn't bore you?

CLAIRE

Silver certificates. I'd paper my bedroom with them if I could.

WARD

I wouldn't put it past you.

CONTINUED

4 CONTINUED - 4

4

CLAIRE

Where would you put it?

Smiles. Exits. Ward stares after her.

5 EXT. STUDIO - WARDROBE AND PROP DEPARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT 5

a figure materializes out of the darkness -- Ward wearing gloves. He moves to a door, produces a burglar's kit, selects a wire. Seconds later, a lock gives way and the door is open. (X)

6 INT. WARDROBE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT 6

Ward moves past endless racks of clothing, piercing the darkness with a flashlight. He can't find what he's looking for at first...swings the lights around, finally focuses on a rack of winter clothing. He approaches the rack, and examines a number of parkas. He selects one, tries it on. A little tight. He tries another. Perfect. He removes it, puts it in a plastic bag he's brought.

7 ANOTHER ANGLE 7

as Ward moves to a nearby table, selects a ski hat -- the kind that covers the entire head, leaving space only for eyes, nose, mouth. He shoves it into the plastic bag. Now he crosses toward a door marked: "Prop Dept." Takes out the same burglar kit. (X)

8 INT. PROP DEPARTMENT - NIGHT 8

as the lock gives way and the door is eased open. Ward enters. A room full of assorted objects from stuffed ducks to fake-antique candlesticks. The room has the look of a completely equipped studio prop department. The flashlight beam illuminates a cabinet in which hundreds of hand guns of every description are stored. Ward's flashlight singles out one of the pistols. He picks the lock of the cabinet, selects a gun, drops it into the plastic bag. Now he exits.

9 INT. WARD'S HOME - NIGHT 9

A magnificent house of spacious rooms, handsomely furnished. A large pool is seen past an ample patio. Everything is tasteful and expensive. Ward enters the living room, checking his watch, then looks to a clock on the mantelpiece.

CONTINUED

9

CONTINUED

9

It says 8:30. Then he glances toward an impressive-sized combination TV and video-tape unit. A baseball game fills the TV screen. At this moment, the doorbell rings. Expectantly, Ward moves toward the front door. As he moves about his home we see that it is decorated with the memorabilia of Ward's life and career. Photos, awards, props that were clues from his shows...all props for his ego.

(X)

10

FRONT DOOR

10

as Ward admits Mark Davis, whom he's obviously expecting. Ward heads back into the living room, allowing Mark to close the door for himself and follow. As usual, Mark is on the defensive as:

WARD

Third inning already.

MARK

Yeah, I got held up in traffic, Ward. I'm sorry.

WARD

If you've got something else to do, just let me know.

MARK

I don't, Ward -- honest! I been looking forward to this game like crazy!

WARD

(softening)

Well...good. You know how I hate to watch these things alone. Take a seat. I'll get us something to drink.

Mark settles on the sofa, and Ward moves to an elaborate bar. He pours two stiff Scotches -- and Mark watches the operation with growing apprehension. As Ward approaches with the drinks:

MARK

(uneasy smile)

Hey Ward -- I'm on the soft stuff, remember?

Ward casually hands it over, apparently concentrating on the game as:

CONTINUED

10 CONTINUED

10

WARD

Come on -- one drink's not going to turn you into a pumpkin.

He settles next to Mark, watching the game. Mark stares at the drink in his hand.

MARK

Maybe I'd better not. Eight months on the wagon. That's a world's record for me, Ward.

He starts to rise, obviously intending to change drinks. But Ward's commanding hand stops his movement:

WARD

Mark -- what do you expect me to do -- unwind all by myself? You're making too much out of it.

The tone is impatient, intimidating. Mark slowly eases back; he doesn't dare raise a further stink. As Ward focuses on the game, Mark focuses on the drink. He's magnetically attracted. Tentatively, he sips the Scotch. Ambrosia. He remembers, all right. Another sip, less hesitant. He closes his eyes. Ecstasy. Lushville revisited. Ward looks over -- warmly:

WARD

How're you doing?

MARK

(like a bride)

Good.

WARD

(indicating screen)

Ball four. All right, we've got a man on. Let's get something going.

MARK

(getting with it)

Now this is a guy who can hit!

Excitement rising, he begins guzzling the drink.

11 TV SCREEN

11

as the batter takes a strike, then lashes the next pitch for a hit.

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11

12 ANOTHER ANGLE

12

as Ward and Mark react. And we notice that Mark's glass is empty. Ward notices it too.

WARD

(taking the
glass)

Here -- let's put a little hair
on your chest.

The preoccupied Mark barely notices that his glass has been taken. Meanwhile, Ward moves to the bar, refills Mark's glass -- and quickly adds a couple of crushed Phenobarbitol pills, already prepared, from underneath the bar. He brings the drink back to Mark, who starts sipping immediately.

MARK

(watching the
screen)

Two and two...

(reacting to
o.s. action)

Three and two.

WARD

Who's up?

MARK

Santos.

WARD

(reacting to screen)

Ball four! Bases loaded!

13 TV SCREEN

13

as a runner trots to first, filling the bases.

13-A ANOTHER ANGLE

13-A
(X)

MARK

Oh-oh, we're in trouble. Eberly's
up. Automatic out.

WARD

I like the kid. Couple more years
and he's going to be right up
there.

CONTINUED

13-A CONTINUED

13-A

MARK

No way. Can't hit in the clutch.

WARD

(smiles over)

Want to put your money where your mouth is?

MARK

Sure.

WARD

Ten says he gets a hit.

MARK

You're on.

He gulps more of the drink. His eyes, glued to the TV, start to blink.

WARD

Ball one...if they walk him, no bet.

MARK

(heavy-lidded)

Right....

Suddenly, Mark is out cold. Ward jumps up, takes the glass from Mark's hand, puts it aside. Then he moves to the video-tape unit.

14 INSERT - CONTROL PANEL

14

as Ward's hand moves into shot and sets the "video-tape" switch on "Record."

15 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

15

Claire rounds a corner, approaches "Tony's Deli." She wears a tight-fitting Pucci dress.

16 WIDER ANGLE

16

to include a car parked further along the street. Behind the wheel is Ward. He watches Claire enter the deli. He's wearing the ski parka.

17

INT. WARD'S CAR - NIGHT

17

as Ward pulls out the gun, snaps it open, shakes out the six blanks. He replaces them with bullets. Then he pulls the ski mask over his face.

18

INT. DELI - NIGHT

18

The walls are lined with autographed photos of stars and near stars. Tony is behind the counter, preparing Claire's take-out sandwich as Claire looks on. They're old friends.

TONY

(banteringly)

Come on -- experiment a little once in your life. Try some egg salad. Try some tuna fish. Ham salad. Mix it up a little. Live.

CLAIRE

(grins)

Tony -- for ten years you've been trying to corrupt me. What can I do? I'm a purist -- make the ham and cheese. And on the double. I have to get to a pre-view in ten minutes.

Tony is about to reply -- when he reacts to something o.s. His mouth drops open. Claire turns -- and is equally stunned. Ward, wearing sandals, disguised in ski mask and parka, has quietly entered the deli. Ominously, he points the gun as:

WARD

(disguised voice)

Let's keep it simple -- no noise.

(to Tony)

You -- get your hands up. And just freeze till I tell you.

As Tony hurries to comply, Ward turns to Claire:

WARD

All right, whaddya got? Cash.

A frightened Claire digs into her purse, pulls out her wallet. It's thick with bills. She hands it over. Ward plucks the money from the wallet, which he then lets drop to the floor.

CONTINUED

12 CONTINUED

18

WARD

(to Claire)

Now, get your hands up, and keep them there.

Terrified, Claire throws up her hands. Ward turns his attention back to Tony:

WARD

Okay -- the register.

Tony opens the register, careful not to provoke the interloper. He scoops out the bills, hands them over, uneasy because the amount is skimpy. Ward seems to study the thin sheaf for a second, as though displeased:

TONY

I swear, that's all I got. I made a deposit this afternoon.

Ward shoves the money into the parka, gestures brusquely:

WARD

Turn around. Against the wall.

Fearful, Tony turns as instructed. Ward, shifting the gun from right to left, slams the barrel viciously against his head. Tony sags to the floor, unconscious. As Claire gasps in shock, Ward slowly turns to face her.

WARD

Walk to the door.

CLAIRE

Please. Don't....

WARD

(his own voice)

I said, walk to the door.

CLAIRE

(frowns, recognizing the voice)

Ward?

(a beat)

It is you, isn't it?

WARD

Walk, Claire.

CONTINUED

18 CONTINUED - 2

18

CLAIRE

You're wrong. I know you: You're not the type.

She starts to lower her hands.

WARD

Keep your hands up.

CLAIRE

Why should I do what you say if you're going to kill me anyway.

WARD

Because if you do what I say -- maybe I won't.

She turns her back, walks slowly to door. Stops with her hands up.

CLAIRE

You'll have to clean this mess up yourself -- I can't get you out of this one. All I can do is not know about it. I'm sorry it came to this. I'm sorry you thought you could kill me. I'm sorry for a lot of things.

(X)

Ward brings up the gun, takes aim.

CLAIRE

I'm going to lower my hands now and leave. Good night, Ward.

He takes careful aim, fires. Claire falls forward, to floor, dead. Ward jams the gun into a pants pocket and races out of the deli.

19 EXT. STREET CORNER - NIGHT

19

as Ward stops by a trash bin. He gets out of car, takes out a knife and the parka, slashes the parka several times across, cuts the mask in two, deposits both carefully under a heap of garbage in the bin.

20 EXT. WARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

20

as Ward pulls into his driveway. He stops, gets out of car, takes gun out of pocket, looks around carefully to make sure

CONTINUED

- 20 CONTINUED 20
- he isn't watched, slips a small loose block of repair-cement out of a tree-trunk, deposits gun in hollow of tree, replaces cement. Returns to car. He activates a remote unit and the garage door opens. Ward pulls into the garage, activates the unit again, closes the garage door.
- 21 INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 21
- as Ward appears at a door, checks on Mark. Mark hasn't moved an inch; he's still out. Ward turns back towards:
- 22 INT. BEDROOM 22
- as Ward moves to a closet, slips out of the sandals, gets back into his shoes -- which, for the first time, we realize are lifts. After four inches of lift, in fact. Now he hurries back toward:
- 23 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 23
- as Ward enters. He picks up Mark's limp wrist, resets his watch.
- 24 INSERT - MARK'S WATCH 24
- as it's reset at 8:37.
- 25 CLOSE ON WARD 25
- as he now moves to the clock on the mantelpiece -- resets it also to 8:37. Checks his watch...resets the clock to 8:38. Now Ward returns to the sofa, picks up the glasses, takes them to the bar. He freshens his own drink, washes Mark's glass, refills it, then takes both drinks back and sets them on the coffee table in front of the sofa.
- 26 ANOTHER ANGLE 26
- as Ward moves to the TV unit, turns off the video tape -- resets it to play back through the TV screen.
- 27 INSERT - CONTROL PANEL 27
- as Ward pushes the "Rewind" button.

28

TV SCREEN

28

as the tape winds back at double speed, baseball action moving in swift reverse. Ward stops the action at a point we recognize -- just as the first batter is about to be walked.

29

WARD

29

pushes the video tape "Fast Forward" button.

30

TV SCREEN

30

as the action speeds up, swiftly reaches the exact moment in the ball game we saw last -- Eberly up at bat, waiting for a second pitch.

31

BACK TO SCENE

31

as Ward now returns to the sofa, settles alongside Mark, shakes him, hard.

WARD

Hey! Mark! Come on -- wake up!

A dazed Mark finally opens his eyes, tries to focus.

WARD

Mark! Come on -- you're missing the game!

MARK

(dazed)

Wha...? Hmmm?

WARD

(watching
screen)

How the hell can you fall asleep?
Eberly's got the count to three and two.

Mark looks over to the screen, relieved he has apparently dozed off for only a moment.

32

TV SCREEN

32

as "Eberly" connects, gives it the long ride. A roar from the TV crowd.

WARD

You owe me ten bucks, buddy! Ten big ones!!

Mark takes out a ten dollar bill, hands it over.

MARK

Whaddya know? The dope came through.

He starts to get up, wavers, settles woozily.

MARK

What a head....

WARD

My fault, Mark. I should have realized you can't take that stuff any more.

(decisively risking,
taking Mark's arm)

Let's go. You can sleep it off in the guest room.

Mark doesn't protest any further as Ward leads him out of the living room. Mark is wobbly, needs Ward's guiding arm.

as Ward leads Mark in. Mark stretches out.

MARK

I'm sorry, Ward...Just for a couple of minutes....

His eyes are already closed -- and he's out again. Ward tentatively lifts Mark's wrist. No reaction from Mark -- he's dead to the world. Ward resets Mark's watch, exits the room.

as Ward returns, moves to the mantelpiece clock, sets it to the correct time -- which he gets from his own watch.

as it's set to 10:25.

37

BACK TO SCENE

37

as Ward comfortably settles back on the sofa -- and continues to watch the taped game as he sips his drink.

38

INT. TONY'S DELI - NIGHT

38

Cops all over the place. Tony's banged head is being ministered to by an ambulance attendant. Claire's body is covered with a sheet where she fell. Columbo wanders in, spots a familiar face -- DETECTIVE SERGEANT JOHNSON. (X)

COLUMBO

What've you got, Johnson.

JOHNSON

Oh, hello, Lieutenant.

(to ambulance attendant)

Okay if I ask him a couple more questions before you take him in for x-ray?

The attendant nods. To Columbo:

JOHNSON

(gesturing)

Got us a dead lady and one pretty; beat up deli owner.

COLUMBO

What happened?

JOHNSON

Robbery. Guy comes in all bundled up like a downhill racer, takes her money, clobbers Mr. Kajanian here, the lady tries to get out, and he shoots her in the back...

(indicating Claire's body, grimly)

Well, there's the rest of it.

By now they have approached Claire's body.

COLUMBO

Get an I.D.?

JOHNSON

(nodding)

Almost celebrity, you might say. You ever watch 'Detective Lucerne?'

(X)

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

Are you kidding: We never miss that show at my house. What a detective!

Johnson pulls back the sheet as:

JOHNSON

Claire Daley. She produced it. She and her husband.

He shakes his head commisseratively. Then he notices Claire's alligator purse and wallet beside the body. He takes out a handkerchief, gingerly opens the wallet without disturbing any possible prints.

JOHNSON

(anticipating)

Money's gone, Lieutenant. Didn't bother with anything else.

Nonetheless, Columbo studies the purse and now opens wallet with interest; a number of credit cards are seen. He looks at Claire's left hand. A rather expensive-looking engagement ring and wedding ring are seen, as well as a watch.

as the Attendant finishes patching up Tony.

ATTENDANT

How's it feel now?

TONY

Just like a broken head feels.

(appreciatively)

Thanks.

The Attendant smiles back, moves off -- with a nod to Columbo and Johnson, now approaching.

COLUMBO

(to Tony)

Excuse me, sir, my name's Columbo, Lieutenant Columbo. You think I could ask you a few questions?

TONY

I'm a little scrambled, but, sure -- go ahead, Lieutenant.

COLUMBO

I know this fellow was all covered up, sir, but do you remember anything that might set him apart? Maybe his size...the way he talked ...the way he walked?

TONY

Not really, Lieutenant. The guy comes in, he's cool as a cucumber. Wearing this blue parka, red ski mask...had a gravelly kind of voice.

(gauging)

Came up to about those olive cans on top of the counter...

(eyeing Columbo)

Not a big guy...about your height.

COLUMBO

(writing)

Average height....

TONY

Well...

(their eyes meet)

Yeah, that's right, Lieutenant, average height.

(he coughs)

Or a little shorter.

COLUMBO

(writing)

'Or...shorter.' Go on, sir.

TONY

Well, that's about it. The guy grabs the money, knocks me out. When I wake up...

(grimly indicating body)

This is what I find.

(helplessly)

Who would believe such a thing? A sweet person. We went back ten years...

(indicates photo on wall)

That was taken two weeks after I opened this place.

Columbo dutifully studies the photo.

40 INSERT - PHOTO

40

Claire and Ward Fowler, cheek to cheek, arms intertwined, smiling and happy. Claire is wearing a sweater in the photo.

41 MED. SHOT - COLUMBO

41

as he studies the photo a beat, then goes back to Claire's body, mulls, examines the bullet hole in her dress. Then he backs off to about where Fowler actually stood when he fired. Bemused, Columbo turns to Tony.

COLUMBO

Did he hit you anywhere else?

TONY

No. This was plenty, believe me.

Columbo nods sympathetically -- he believes him. One last glance at Claire's body, and he starts out.

42 INT. STAGE - THE SHOW'S SET - DAY

42

Columbo pushes through the heavy stage door, tentatively peers around. The area is a charnel house of noise and action as a take is being prepared.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

All right, kill the noise! Let's have quiet!

The area grows silent. Columbo tiptoes toward the set -- which is an elegant executive office looking onto a skyscraper b.g...constructed to make the office seem very high up.

DIRECTOR

(same director; Roy)

Let's shoot it!

Ward -- as Detective Lucerne -- enters the office, which is otherwise unoccupied. He moves about the room, searching for some abstract clue in his inimitably cool and precise manner. He focuses on the executive chair behind the desk, experimentally rotates it to face the skyscrapers.

43 COLUMBO

43

tiptoes past the illuminated backdrop at the top of a skyscraper as people in the crew try to wave him back. He disappears...then reappears a moment later going in the opposite direction. The Assistant Director rushes over, drops to his

CONTINUED

43 CONTINUED

43

following Ward, holds his breath each time he pans with Ward toward the window. Columbo appears and suddenly looks down. It is obvious that a man on the floor is talking to him. The Director whispers to the operator.

DIRECTOR

Frame over. Frame over. Miss the window.

THE OPERATOR

If I miss the window I'll miss Ward. He's about to...there he goes.

Ward crosses to the window and stares into Columbo's eyes. The Director yells cut. The A.D. stands up.

44 ANOTHER ANGLE

44

The crew stands watching as Columbo, holding his chair, tiptoes by the window.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Just move. We've cut. It's too late to be careful.

DIRECTOR

(fuming, to anybody)

Who is this? What's he doing here?

A GRIP

Maybe they expanded the tour.

A continually apologetic Columbo backs off into a reflector stand, which is caught by one of the crew before it hits the ground.

DIRECTOR

Somebody get this guy out of here!

WARD

(appraising
Columbo)

Get me the director, Mark.

COLUMBO

Can't tell you how sorry I am, sir
...making this disturbance. Name's
Columbo. I'm with the police.
Lieutenant Columbo.

CONTINUED

WARD

Oh. Mark -- it's alright. I'm sorry, Lieutenant. How can I help you?

(X)

COLUMBO

Well, sir, this is a little difficult...I've been looking for Mr. Daley -- Mr. Sid Daley? He wasn't home last night and he wasn't there this morning, and they just told me at his office they don't know when he's going to be in...so I was wondering if anyone here might have an idea where he is.

(X)

WARD

Is this about Claire?

(X)

COLUMBO

(beat)

Well, yes, sir...I'm afraid it is.

WARD

I heard about the shooting on the radio. I still can't quite...I mean it's hard to believe...she... I keep expecting her to walk in that door. You see, she...Claire meant a lot to a lot of people. I suppose it's silly to think she meant something special to me. We all thought that. But I...well, I wouldn't be a damn thing today without her. And it wasn't that either. She... she was my friend, she....

MARK

Take it easy, Ward....

WARD

(a beat, looks away)
Exactly when did it happen, Lieutenant.

COLUMBO

Last night, sir. About ten minutes to nine.

WARD

(in a dazed way)

Ten to nine. People say, 'I'll always be there if you need me,' but people never are. Ten to nine. God knows what I was doing when she could have used some help.

CONTINUED

WARD (Cont'd)

Nothing probably. By myself.
Reading. Alone in my living
room with some idiot script.

MARK

You were not, you were watching
the ball game with me.

WARD

Was I?

(frowns)

A ball game?

(short laugh,
softly)

That's going to be my epitaph.
'Here lies a man who was always
there when he was needed --
watching a ball game.'

(suddenly loud)

I hope I wasn't. I'd rather have
been alone...I'd rather have been....

(X)

MARK

You weren't alone. He wasn't
Lieutenant, he's just mixed up.
He's upset. He was with me all
the time he....

WARD

Will you for God's sake stop it.
(sharply)

This isn't one of my shows, Mark.
This actually happened. Claire
isn't...Claire is...dead. Look,
Mark, get yourself a cup of coffee
or something, will you. I've had
about all I can take today.

MARK

All I meant was you....

WARD

(hard)

Get out.

Mark exits obediently.

(X)

WARD

And stay out.

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

He didn't mean any harm, sir, if you'll excuse me for saying so... I sometimes have a silly effect on people, you know what I mean? Just because I'm a police detective, you know?

(a slight beat)

I mean I hope that's why.

WARD

I'm sure it is.

COLUMBO

Your friend -- he was just trying to be nice, sir.

WARD

(still dazed)

What? Oh. Him.

(dully)

No, Mark wasn't trying to be nice. He was trying to fix me up with an alibi.

COLUMBO

(a beat)

Then it wasn't true?

They start to move to another part of the sound stage. We dolly with them as they pass a standing set not in use.

WARD

What?

(blinking)

You must forgive me. I seem to be swimming in and out of myself this morning.

COLUMBO

That's what happens, sir. Kind of like being in shock, you know? Maybe you ought to sit down, sir, for a minute.

(X)

WARD

(turns and looks at him, coldly)

No, thank you. I don't need to sit down. And I'm not in shock. I'm fine. What was it you asked me?

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

(embarrassed)

Oh, it was only...what you said, sir, about being fixed up with an alibi...I mean did he have a reason to?

(X)

WARD

Try to speak clearly, Lieutenant. Does who have a reason to what?

(X)

COLUMBO

Make up an alibi. Your friend. I mean, were you watching the ball game at ten to nine, sir, with him?

WARD

(stares at
Columbo)

(X)

I see.

(looks away)

Yes, probably...I don't remember exact times about things, that's what I have Mark for. If he says I was, I was. If he says it was ten minutes to nine, it was precisely, profoundly, and beyond any shadow of a doubt, ten minutes to nine. Mark is very responsible about time. That's what makes him such a superior gofer.

(softly)

You think she was murdered, don't you?

COLUMBO

(taken aback)

Ben pardon, sir?

WARD

You heard me.

COLUMBO

(a beat)

Yes, sir, I did. I mean yes, I do believe it was a premeditated killing. I think the robbery was staged -- to cover up the murder. How did you know that?

(X)

WARD

Why else would you be here?

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

Could be just a routine check, sir. Couldn't it?

WARD

They don't send police detectives stumbling around asking silly fake-innocent questions on a routine check. I know that from my show.

COLUMBO

Oh, you do, sir?...silly, fake-innocent questions like what?

WARD

(sighs, imitating him)

Like 'Mr. Sid Daley wasn't home last night and he wasn't there this morning, and they just told me at his office they don't know when he's going to be in, so I was wondering if anyone here might have an idea where he is.' A man on a routine check just asks for Sid Daley.

COLUMBO

(admiringly)

That's absolutely amazing, sir. You're right. Here I thought you were in shock....

WARD

You didn't think so at all. You thought I was confused, and probably a little scared...And perhaps playing for time.

(X)

COLUMBO

Amazing.

WARD

No, it's not, it's my job. Both our jobs. I don't play a detective off the top of my head, Lieutenant. I studied quite a long time for the part. I had to. The truth is I'm not a very imaginative actor. Not even a very good one, really. I hope you won't quote me on that.

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

Quote you, sir -- you kidding? Look, I guess I better tell you right now -- you're probably tired of hearing this, but I'm one of your biggest fans. So is my wife. When 'Detective Lucerne' comes on the air, she won't talk for the next sixty minutes...except sometimes during the commercials.

(thoughtfully)

Unless they're diet foods commercials. It's interesting the way women go on diets, sir, isn't it?

(X)

WARD

Riveting.

COLUMBO

My wife, for instance, she gets an idea like a new food supplement into her head, she can't get it out. No matter what the medical facts are. Like...well, you know. The way....

WARD

...the way you got it into your head that Claire's murder was premeditated and planned. No matter what the facts prove. Or don't prove.

COLUMBO

(stunned)

How did you know I was going to say that?

WARD

I have something to tell you. Before I decided to play Lucerne as an intelligent-sounding detective, I thought of one other possibility.

COLUMBO

What was that, sir?

WARD

To play him like you.

COLUMBO

(a beat)

Yes, sir. I see what you mean.

CONTINUED

WARD

I doubt it. In any case, what makes you think it was pre-meditated?

They start back toward the shooting area.

COLUMBO

Usual thing. Little facts that plain don't fit, you know, sir? Anything I hate it's one of those facts. Doesn't ever seem to matter how small it is, either. It could be this big.

(holds up two fingers to indicate the size of a very small fact)

Like he left the credit cards behind. I mean why would a street robber grab money from a wallet and leave credit cards? They're worth a pretty good piece of change on the black market. See what I mean?

WARD

Credit cards and what else?

COLUMBO

An alligator purse. A diamond ring.

WARD

I see. Well, it's unlikely a robber in a hurry, on the edge of panic, would be able to get that ring off Claire's finger. It's an engagement ring, she's worn it for years. I've never seen her without it.

COLUMBO

I see, sir. You mean he couldn't get it off if she was dead.

WARD

She is, I believe, isn't she?

COLUMBO

Yes, sir. But he could have asked her for it first. Before he shot her.

CONTINUED

44

CONTINUED - 8

WARD

(a beat)

I saw her try to take that ring off at a party once. Some game people were playing. She couldn't. Not even with soap. You might check that with her husband, he was the one who asked her to take it off.

(X)

(a wan smile)

He was on the other team.

COLUMBO

Boy, when you say you studied, you aren't kidding. Well, then there's the alligator bag.

WARD

An alligator bag that's six years old is apt to be used-looking. It doesn't look as if it's worth very much any more. It probably isn't.

COLUMBO

(admiringly)

How do you happen to know all that much about her bag, sir?

WARD

I gave it to her.

COLUMBO

Oh. Well, that accounts for that. Right. Well. I guess that leaves the credit cards, sir...

WARD

If the man who killed her was an idiot.

COLUMBO

Excuse me, sir, I don't catch your meaning.

WARD

You don't kill a woman and then try to sell credit cards with her name on them, do you? The police have been known to bribe fences, I believe.

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

(snapping his
fingers)

I never thought of that.

WARD

(looks at him)

Didn't you?

COLUMBO

(meditating)

No. No, I guess you're right.
It's not much to go on. Except
the panic.

WARD

The panic?.

COLUMBO

Well, it's like this, sir...I have
a little problem with this part.
Mrs. Daley was shot from a distance
of about thirty feet. And she was
shot in the back. You understand.

(X)

WARD

Yes, I think I can grasp that.

COLUMBO

Now. Tony, he's the owner of the
deli...says the killer was 'cool
as a cucumber.' That's a direct
quote. So that means that when
he saw Claire try to run out...
that's when he panicked and shot
her. But he shot her right through
the heart with one shot at 30 feet
...while she was running. That's
hard to do panicked. What do you
think?

(X)

WARD

(looks at him
quietly)I think I'd better try to help
you. Because you're going to ask
me to, aren't you.

(X)

COLUMBO

You just did it again. Read my
mind. Would you, sir? I mean
it would be an honor. Lieutenant
Lucerne helping me. Wait'll I tell
my wife. Just wait. I mean, if
you're sure, sir....

(X)

CONTINUED

44 CONTINUED - 10

44

WARD

I'm not only sure, I look forward to it, Lieutenant. Very much.

Sid Daley moves to them.

SID'S VOICE

Somebody been asking for me?

45 ANOTHER ANGLE - TO INCLUDE SID

45

WARD

It's all right, Sid. This is Lieutenant Columbo of the police department.

(to Columbo)

Claire's husband, Sid Daley. The man I believe you came in here to look for.

(puts an arm around Sid's shoulder)

What can I say, Sid? You know how I feel about...how I felt about Claire.

Sid nods -- perfunctorily. Obviously, he could do without Ward's presence. He shrugs Ward's arm off, and in doing so a long thread of his jacket catches on a button of Ward's sleeve.

WARD

Hold on. We're hooked. Sorry to have this happen at such a tense moment.

The Assistant Director moves up to them.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

We're ready, Mr. Fowler.

SID

I have to be on the set for this. Do you mind, Lieutenant?

They all move toward the set.

COLUMBO

(looking around)

I must say, this is kind of a surprise, sir. All this... activity. You know, considering what happened....

CONTINUED

45 CONTINUED

45

SID

I authorized today's shooting, Lieutenant. I suppose it seems irreverent to an outsider, but I'm sure you've heard the old legend....

COLUMBO

Oh -- right. 'The show must go on.'

SID

My wife would have wanted it that way, Lieutenant. She was that kind of a woman.

(brusquely)

What in hell's being done about this robber, Lieutenant? Do you have any leads?

COLUMBO

Well, sir...the truth is, it seems to be a little more complicated than a robbery.

SID

Oh?

WARD

What the Lieutenant means, Sid, is that he's come to the conclusion that Claire may have been murdered and the robbery may be a cover-up.

(X)

SID

Murdered! That's insane!

(glancing
to Ward)

And don't you think you should have discussed this with me first, Lieutenant?

COLUMBO

Well, I tried to, sir -- I've been looking for you ever since last night.

SID

(beat)

I was with my lawyer last night. We meet for chess once or twice a month, and last night turned out to be a marathon session. We didn't quit until five in the morning, so I stayed over.

CONTINUED

Columbo whips out pad and pencil. The pencil point breaks. Ward immediately hands him a pen.

COLUMBO

Thanks. This friend, sir, the lawyer -- where could I reach him?

SID

(erupting)

What is this -- a grilling session? Am I supposed to be a suspect here?

COLUMBO

Nothing personal, sir. We have to ask these routine questions.

SID

(somewhat mollified)

His name is Leo Hart -- but it's not going to be that easy to contact him. He left for Rome on the noon plane.

WARD

How convenient of him.

SID

Meaning what?

COLUMBO

(hastily detouring;
to Sid)

Did your wife have any enemies, sir?

SID

I'm not going to pretend that everybody loved Claire. She was tough, and she didn't mind alienating people. But somebody who hated her enough to kill her? No. I don't know anybody like that.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

We're ready to roll.

(eyeing Columbo)

Mark! Why don't you entertain the Lieutenant while we shoot this. He's already seen it anyway.

(X)

CONTINUED

ak #45902

36
(X)

45 CONTINUED - 3

45

MARK

Seen it. He was in it.

Columbo and Mark move toward the exit as Ward moves to the set to shoot the scene.

46 OMITTED

46

47 EXT. SOUND STAGE - DAY - MARK AND COLUMBO

47

as they come out.

MARK

...Yeah Ward is right. I figure time is my business. So I always know it. Ouch. Boy, have I got a hangover. I'll be glad when the day's over. What time you got, Lieutenant?

COLUMBO

Eleven o'clock on the dot.

MARK

(dourly)

Are you joking. This watch cost a thousand smackers and I lost five minutes overnight.

COLUMBO

(indicating
Mark's watch)

Would you mind, sir? I've never seen a thousand dollar watch before.

Mark graciously turns the watch upward for Columbo's inspection.

COLUMBO

Boy, that must be solid gold.

MARK

Platinum.

COLUMBO

No wonder it looks so different.

(suddenly
noticing)

There's nothing wrong with your watch, sir. You've got eleven o'clock, too.

CONTINUED

47 CONTINUED

47

MARK

Yeah, but what I should have is
five after eleven.

(importantly)

I always keep it five minutes fast.
When you're running things for Ward
Fowler, you're racing against the
clock twenty-four hours a day.

The red light goes off. Several crew members exit.

(X)

COLUMBO

Well, sir...I'll just nose around
if you don't mind. Oh -- by the
way, sir, if you're interested...

(X)

(indicates
his watch)

...they're have a sale on these
down at Superdrug. Marked all the
way down to twelve dollars. Never
loses more than two or three minutes
a week. At the end of the year the
band breaks and you throw it away.
And get another one. The band costs
fifteen dollars.

(to a crew
member)

Excuse me, sir, Lieutenant Columbo,
Homicide. If I could have a word
with you.

48 INT. SOUND STAGE - DAY

48

as Columbo enters. Ward is waiting for him.

(X)

WARD

Lieutenant Columbo.

COLUMBO

Lieutenant Lucerne.

They shake hands.

COLUMBO

Just wanted to fill you in.

WARD

Right. What have we got?

COLUMBO

Nothing.

WARD

But we still think it was premeditated,
right?

(X)

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

I don't know, sir. What do you suppose?

WARD

What I suppose is that if that's your instinct, it's right. My instinct about Claire -- I have no clues to go on -- is that she was what they call...I believe the term is victim-prone. Some people are, you know. Claire was given to taunting people, she was a born victim. She was the kind who asks for it. In her marriage; in her life. And very possibly in her death.

(X)

COLUMBO

(staring at him)

That's fascinating, sir. You have quite a way of putting things. Especially about Mrs. Daley. Let me ask you, sir. Could you maybe tell me some more about her?

WARD

Not much.

(stares back
at him; smiles)

But you're right.

COLUMBO

About what?

WARD

What you're thinking. I was lying before. I didn't like Claire very much. Haven't for years. That doesn't mean I wasn't shocked by her death, I was. I was still a bit shook up about it when you first walked in, and I said whatever I thought sounded right to a detective -- or some other detective.
(smiles)

Not you.

COLUMBO

(defensive)

You had me absolutely fooled, sir. Honor-bright.

CONTINUED

WARD

Really? Even after you asked a few questions around the set?

(X)

(a beat)

Our fights, Claire's and mine, weren't always discreet. Several of them were overheard, I believe. You must have been told by the crew.

COLUMBO

(a beat)

Oh well, sir. You know how people talk.

WARD

(smiles)

Yes, I do. I know exactly how they talk.

COLUMBO

But gossip doesn't mean anything... one way or the other...does it?

(a smile)

We still don't have anything to go on except that the killer hit the bulls-eye from thirty feet.

WARD

If he hit the bulls-eye.

COLUMBO

What do you mean, sir?

WARD

I mean Lieutenant that there's as good a chance of a man hitting the heart as there is of his hitting the shoulder which leads to another theory. Now in this theory we're going to assume that our man is a robber, with no prior intent to kill anyone. We are also going to take into account that a bullet aimed high at the back has a better than twenty-eight percent chance of killing the victim by hitting a vital organ...in a murder that is not premeditated...by a killer who is not an expert marksman.

(X)

CONTINUED

WARD (Cont'd)

What do you think those odds would rise to if he were? Do you think a hunter shoots at a still target? A soldier? A...forgive me... policeman? Part of being an expert marksman is hitting a moving target. And men who use firearms enough to be expert marksmen are often in a situation of panic.

COLUMBO

(staring)

That's brilliant, sir.

(indicating set,
smiles)

No wonder you've solved more crimes than I have.

(the smile
fades)

Wait a minute...wait a minute...I almost forgot.

WARD

Forgot what?

COLUMBO

The dress.

WARD

The what?

Columbo spots a nearby clapboard and chalk, takes the chalk, hands it to Ward. He raises his hands high over his head, and turns.

COLUMBO

I think I can show you what I mean, sir. Would you mind drawing a circle back there right around the area of the heart.

Ward proceeds to draw the circle on Columbo's coat.

COLUMBO

Don't press too hard, will you, sir?

(apologetic
smile)

Don't want to ruin the coat.

WARD

(finishes
the circle)

Now what?

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

Now I drop my hands, sir.

He does -- and the circle has dropped with the coat -- to below the heart.

COLUMBO

See what happened, sir? When I dropped my hands, the circle dropped too. And when I first saw Claire Daley's body, I noticed that she was wearing one of those tight-fitting dresses and the bullet hole in the dress was about an inch below the actual wound -- which meant that she had to be holding her hands up at the time she was killed.

WARD

Very well done.

(adjusting)

Then we're back to our deliberate murderer, aren't we? And this time there's no doubt.

(looks at Columbo)

Really very well done.

Columbo nods in gloomy agreement with his partner -- as the Director approaches:

DIRECTOR

(deferentially)

Ward...ready whenever you are?

(X)

Mark returns with the coffee.

MARK

(to Columbo)

Sid had to go to the back lot to check a location. He asked me to ask you there. If there was anything else.

(X)

COLUMBO

Fine, thank you. Oh, just one minute, please.

(embarrassed
to Ward)

I wonder if I could ask you a favor, sir....

WARD

Of course, Lieutenant....

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

Maybe if you had a picture...you know, one of those signed pictures -- for my wife.

WARD

Of course!
(an imperious
snap to Mark)

Mark.

Mark promptly sets down the coffee, moves to a box, pulls out a glossy from a pile. He starts to hand it over to Columbo. Ward intercepts it, picks up a pen.

WARD

Let's make this one a little more personal, shall we -- to Lieutenant and Mrs. Columbo?

Columbo as Ward scrawls the appropriate words, hands over the photo. Ward again gestures to Mark -- meaning, show the nice man out.

COLUMBO

Thanks for everything, sir. This has really been a privilege.

They shake hands as:

WARD

My pleasure, Lieutenant...if I can be of any further help, I'm at your disposal.

COLUMBO

That's really wonderful, Lieutenant...sir. Really appreciate it.

He grins and waves a couple of unnecessary good-byes as he awkwardly backs out.

WARD

Say, he's really a terrific fellow, isn't he?

(X)

COLUMBO

He's the best.

(X)

49-A EXT. BACK LOT LOCATION - DAY

49-A

Sid and his art director are looking over the location for the next day. Columbo drives up -- gets out moves to Sid.

COLUMBO

Sorry to disturb you sir...I'd like to ask a few questions.

SID

All right, I'll give you two minutes.

COLUMBO

...From what I understand, sir, you and your wife have been living apart.

SID

That's true, Lieutenant. We haven't been close for some time now.

COLUMBO

Would you know if your wife was seeing somebody, sir? I don't mean to get too personal, but maybe somebody she was emotionally involved with?

SID

No one I know about. Claire's had her little flings, but they never seemed to last very long. Claire was devoted to her work, Lieutenant. She wasn't any more interested in lovers than she was in her husband. It made for a pretty miserable marriage.

COLUMBO

Still and all, sir, I guess you two got along pretty well in business. I mean, you were partners.

SID

(bitter reflection)

Partners? That was on paper, Lieutenant. Claire fought me on everything. She had to do things her way. If I said white, she said black. If you want a perfect example, you can take a look at the new Ward Fowler contract.

(rising anger)

Paying an actor that kind of money is insanity!

CONTINUED

49-A CONTINUED

49-A

COLUMBO

Wait a minute, sir -- let me get this straight. You didn't think he should get that money?

(X)

SID

I think they should have turned him down and I think he would have folded. Claire argued me right under the table. I was an idiot for giving in. If this show takes a dip they'll drop it.

(X)

COLUMBO

I don't understand, sir. If you and your wife were partners, wasn't it against her best interests to want to pay him more money?

SID

In anything involving Ward -- she always took his side.

(X)

COLUMBO

(delicately)

Forgive my asking this, sir -- but I seem to remember hearing they used to be pretty good friends; are you saying they still had a pretty close relationship going?

SID

(in dismissal)

Not the way you mean it, Lieutenant. Sure, they had a big romance but by the time I came into the picture, it was dead. But that didn't mean Claire was finished watching over Ward's career. She stopped being a lover and became a mother. Sent him off to get his teeth capped. Made him drop ten pounds. Told him how to comb his hair.

(X)

COLUMBO

I guess she was kind of proud of him, sir.

SID

It was ego. Claire's ego. The whole world knew she created Ward Fowler. She wanted the whole world

CONTINUED

49-A CONTINUED - 2

49-A

SID (Cont'd)
to know that she created a Franken-
stein...and made him a winner.

(X)

COLUMBO

Right. Sorry to take up so much
time, sir...Oh. Yeah. By the way.
(he dives into his rain-
coat pocket, pulls out
a crumpled sketch)

I'm kind of passing these around.
Just in case anybody recognizes
anything. It's what our police
artist came up with after he talked
with Tony -- the owner of the
delicatessen.

He hands the sketch to Sid:

(X)

50 CLOSE SHOT - SID HOLDING THE SKETCH

50
(X)

A fair likeness of the parka-covered, ski-masked Ward,
gun in hand.

51 INT. WARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

51

Camera pulls back to reveal Ward looking at the sketch,
next to which is a crisp new file folder. Columbo is
beside him.

WARD

(stares at the sketch
for a moment. Shrugs)
Not much help, is it.

COLUMBO

No help at all...sir. I shouldn't
have wasted your time. I'll just...
let myself out...where was the...
oh here it is.

He tries the door. It is locked. Turns the lock.

WARD

Lieutenant, where do you think he
got the costume?

COLUMBO

Funny you should ask that, sir.
I've been asking myself the same

CONTINUED

COLUMBO (Cont'd)
question all day. Couple of odd things about it.

WARD
Odd things such as what?

COLUMBO
Well, for instance, the parka and the mask -- they were both slashed up with a knife. He practically mutilated them before he threw them away. You certainly lock yourself in here. And very smart to do it, too. Oh here. No....

WARD
There's no need to run off, Lieutenant. You're not keeping me. You think he mutilated the disguise to keep you from finding out where he got it?

COLUMBO
Exactly. Boy, do you and I think the same way, sir. It's amazing. And since there were no markings in them...no way to trace them, it must mean someone could've recognized them. Don't you think so, sir?

WARD
(a beat)
Yes. Very good, Lieutenant. Yes, I do think so.

COLUMBO
Thank you sir. I wonder...is there a trick to unlocking the door? I can't seem to manage it.

Ward turns the locks and opens the door.

WARD
Good night, Lieutenant.

Columbo steps out and then in.

COLUMBO
Did I mention the mask?

WARD
That it was slashed?

COLUMBO
That it's got makeup on it.

51 CONTINUED - 2

51

COLUMBO (Cont'd)

(a beat)

The lab turned it up. Where would he find a mask that had makeup on it?

WARD

(a beat)

Good question. And I believe you know the answer, don't you Lieutenant?

COLUMBO

I believe I do. We could be looking for a woman.

WARD

(after a stunned moment)

Precisely. We've assumed it was a man from the beginning. It's possible we were wrong. Particularly in the light of this.

COLUMBO

Oh, I'm relieved, sir. I was afraid you were going to say it was impossible because of Tony. Tony is the owner of the delicatessen...saying the voice was a man's. But the height, the fact that the voice was disguised, muffled by the mask....

WARD

All indicate that there is, at least, the possibility of a doubt as to the gender. Of course.

COLUMBO

The lab's doing some more tests. What kind of makeup and all, so we'll know more by tomorrow, if we're lucky. I won't keep you any more tonight, sir. You should be on salary with these hours.

WARD

I'm glad you came. Two minds work better than one, as they say.

(X)

(he holds out his hand)

Good working with you.

52 EXT. WARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

52

Ward walking quickly. He stops at the tree, glances around to make sure he's alone. Takes the gun out of the hollow in the tree, and replaces the cement.

53 INT. PROP DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

53

Ward enters with a flashlight, as before. He is wearing gloves. He goes to the table where he got the gun. Before replacing it, he holds it in the beam of the flashlight, and takes from his pocket the thread that came off Sid's jacket earlier. He also takes out a cloth. He wraps the thread around the trigger of the gun. Then as an extra precaution, he wipes the gun carefully with the cloth, and puts it on table. He exits quietly without disturbing anything else.

54 EXT. BEL AIR HOME - DAY - THE SHOW'S SET

54

Studio equipment trucks and other vehicles are scattered around the driveway. Workers are seen scurrying in and out of the house -- which is posh, and within which the shooting is taking place. Columbo's Peugeot pulls up. Columbo gets out, looks toward the house, then moves toward a mobile home.

55 ANOTHER ANGLE

55

as Columbo approaches. On the side of the door, in elaborate letters: "Ward Fowler." Columbo knocks.

MARK'S VOICE

Come on in -- it's open.

Columbo enters the mobile.

56 INT. TRAILER - DAY

56

as Columbo enters, and is even more impressed. Truly luxurious. Everything spotless and in place. At the moment, Mark is busy straightening and fussing over Ward's extensive "Lucerne" wardrobe.

MARK

Oh, hello, Lieutenant. If you're looking for Ward, they're shooting in the house.

COLUMBO

(uneasy, remembering yesterday's fiasco)

Well...maybe I'd better wait here. I don't want to be in the way.

CONTINUED

MARK

Suit yourself -- he'll be back soon.

COLUMBO

(looking around again)

I've certainly got to admire the way you keep this place, sir. It's like a regular hotel suite.

MARK

Well, I like to keep things just right for Ward. He's been great to me; I try to pay him back.

COLUMBO

You know, sir -- that's a rare quality in this day and age: loyalty. I think he's very lucky to have you associated with him.

MARK

(solemnly)

I'd crawl over broken glass for that guy, Lieutenant...

(hesitates, then emotionally vomits it out)

When I met Ward, I was a heavy boozier. I mean heavy. Going nowhere but down. Ward took me in, got me off the stuff, gave me a job...gave me back my self-respect. I owe him.

COLUMBO

(touched)

No wonder you feel close to him, sir...

(beat; smiles)

You know what I just realized, sir? When we talked yesterday, I thought you said you had a hangover. Now I realized you must have meant a headache.

MARK

(sheepishly)

Well, to tell you the truth,

CONTINUED

MARK (Cont'd)

Lieutenant -- it was a hangover.
(shakes head)

First time I took a drink in eight months -- and boy did it knock me out.

(grins)

I was out like a light by nine o'clock. Ward had to put me to bed.

(intimately)

But that's the kind of guy he is.

A rap at the door, and the Assistant Director sticks his head (X)
in:

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (X)

Ward wants you on the set, Mark.

MARK

Right.

(starting out)

Make yourself comfortable.

COLUMBO

Thank you, sir....

Mark exits, and Columbo looks around again, enjoying his surroundings. He becomes fascinated with Ward's wardrobe -- and then his eyes focus on a pair of Ward's shoes. He studies them, circles them. Finally, he can't stand it any more. He slips his own shoes off and tries on Ward's. Now we realize why he's so fascinated. The shoes are elevators. Columbo has just added four inches. He's soaring. He tries a few steps. Nearly falls. But he loves his new height. This is oxygen country.

as Ward enters. Columbo is caught in an embarrassing prance. Ward is not amused -- but he covers his annoyance with a condescending smile. Columbo hastily slips off the elevators and puts on his own shoes as:

COLUMBO

Oh -- I hope you don't mind, sir.
I guess I got a little carried away.

CONTINUED

WARD

Not at all, Lieutenant.

COLUMBO

(indicating shoes)

You know, they're really terrific, sir. Now I can see why Lieutenant Lucerne always looks so tall.

(X)

WARD

Yes...well, I would appreciate a certain amount of discretion here, Lieutenant, if you know what I mean. Public image?

COLUMBO

(as it hits him)

Oh -- right.

(solemnly)

You don't have to worry about a thing, sir. As far as I'm concerned, you're four inches taller than I am, and that's the end of it.

WARD

Thank you, Lieutenant Columbo.

COLUMBO

My pleasure, Lieutenant Lucerne.

(conspiratorily)

We got the second lab report on the mask...so I hurried right over.

(X)

WARD

Yes?

COLUMBO

Turns out it probably isn't a woman. You see it was actor's makeup, not makeup that women use in the street. Pancake.

(X)

WARD

(a beat)

Women very often use a brand of makeup that's made for actors. Like pancake. I, for instance, use exactly that kind of product.

COLUMBO

I know.

CONTINUED

WARD

(smiles)

Yes. I'm sure you do by now.

COLUMBO

What I mean, sir, the lab says there's traces of four different shades of makeup on that mask. And women...they don't usually change shades that much. So I got to thinking.

(X)

WARD

(smiles)

Yes, you're rather good at that. Where did it lead you this time?

COLUMBO

(grins)

Guess.

WARD

(a beat)

To a professional makeup man.

COLUMBO

Right.

WARD

And then to my makeup table.

COLUMBO

Oh, no, sir. I only came here to see you. Honest. I was just fooling around with the shoes for something to do till you came in. Cross my heart. I didn't look at one other thing in here.

WARD

(thoughtfully)

That means you didn't need to. So you already know something.

(a beat)

Where did you look then?

COLUMBO

Guess again.

(grins)

I'll give you three guesses.

WARD

(a long beat)

The studio wardrobe department.

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

(in awe)

Hey, you got it in one. That's absolutely amazing, sir. That's right. That's where the parka came from, and the ski mask too. And....

WARD

And the gun.

COLUMBO

Aw, come on, sir. You're putting me on. You know perfectly well they don't have guns in the wardrobe department.

WARD

No, of course not. How stupid of me.

He stares at Columbo.

COLUMBO

(stares back,
grins)

That's the prop department, not the wardrobe department.

(a beat)

Now how could a smart man like Inspector Lucerne make a mistake like that?

WARD

You're not talking to Lieutenant Lucerne at the moment, are you, Lieutenant? You're talking to Ward Fowler.

COLUMBO

What's the difference, sir?

WARD

The difference is that Ward Fowler is under suspicion of murder. People under that kind of threat are apt to make mistakes. They get rattled.

COLUMBO

Who said anything about Ward Fowler being under suspicion of murder?

CONTINUED

WARD

Lieutenant Lucerne did.

COLUMBO

(frowns)

He did? How did he come to that conclusion, sir?

WARD

The same way you came to it. There are only four people who could have murdered Claire -- if she was killed deliberately....

(X)

COLUMBO

You mean the four people who knew where Claire Daley was going to be that night.

WARD

That's right. And only one of those is instantly associated with makeup and costumes and props.

COLUMBO

Oh yeah. That fact.

WARD

(imitating him)

Yeah. That fact.

COLUMBO

That's very good, sir. Let's see ...Mrs. Daley made the phone call to her secretary from your office. When she said she was going to what's-his-name's. Tony's. You know Tony. Tony is the owner of the delicat ---

WARD

If you tell me that once more, I'm going to shoot myself.

COLUMBO

Sorry, sir, did I say that before? That makes --

(counting on his fingers)

-- her secretary, and Mr. Daley and Mark...who knew where she was going.

CONTINUED

WARD

I'm curious as to how Mark knew.

COLUMBO

He offered to bring Mrs. Daley a cheeseburger and she told the secretary to tell him she didn't want a gofer let alone a cheeseburger...and she was going to pick up a sandwich at Tony's. And she said to tell the same thing to her husband.

(X)

WARD

I see.

COLUMBO

(pointing a finger
at him and grinning)

Aw, no, you don't. You must have seen before, sir. You were in the room when she made the call, weren't you? She made it from your dressing room.

(X)

WARD

Possibly. I'm not sure. I'm not in the habit of listening to other people's telephone calls. I had no idea she was going to Tony's.

COLUMBO

You didn't sir?

WARD

No, Lieutenant.

COLUMBO

Then how did you know that there were only four people who knew where Claire was going? And how did you know you were one of them?

(X)

WARD

(a beat)

The same way you know it. I asked her secretary, Cathy. She informed me the call was made from my dressing room.

(X)

COLUMBO

You did, sir?

(Ward nods)

Oh, that's very good.

CONTINUED

WARD

Thank you. I believe you meant that.

(smiles)

You see, Inspector Lucerne did some investigating himself, so he talked to Cathy and Leo Hart's secretary. You remember what Sid told us. Lieutenant? About playing chess all night with Leo Hart?

COLUMBO

Right, right...We haven't been able to reach Mr. Hart in Rome.

WARD

According to his secretary, Hart went to Rome with a brief case loaded with so much work that he was concerned about not being able to finish it before he got to Rome. Why would Leo Hart stay up all night playing chess if he had so much work? As chess players ourselves, as men of discipline, we know that doesn't make sense. Don't we?

COLUMBO

(stunned)

That's absolutely brilliant, sir.

WARD

I'd say we make rather a good team, don't you, Lieutenant?

COLUMBO

Sort of like Sherlock Holmes and Watson, sir.

WARD

More like Sherlock Holmes and Sherlock Holmes, isn't it?

COLUMBO

All I mean...the way I see it, I'm working with the highest paid detective in the world.

(a beat)

If you don't mind my getting personal, sir, I heard about the million dollars a year raise you got.

CONTINUED

COLUMBO (Cont'd)

Fantastic salary, sir. Not that you're not worth every penny.

(X)

WARD

It's not as fantastic as it sounds, Lieutenant, when you have to pay out as much as I do.

(X)

COLUMBO

Well, I'd better start doing some work on Sid Daley. Oh, it's hard to find someone in Rome, sir.

(X)

WARD

I'll be waiting to hear from you.

COLUMBO

(starts out
and turns)

Oh, by the way, sir...did I mention that we found the gun in the prop department?

WARD

No. You said that that's where you would look for a gun.

COLUMBO

Oh, that's right. And you didn't want to jump to conclusions.

WARD

Right. No good detective should.
(beat)

Was there anything on the gun?

COLUMBO

(staring at him)

Anything like what, sir?

WARD

Fingerprints, what else?

COLUMBO

Oh, right.

(a beat,
staring at him)

No, sir, I don't think so. The lab's still running tests.

(meditatively)

Why do you think he put the gun back and threw away everything else.

(X)

CONTINUED

WARD

Perhaps he never got the chance to get rid of the gun safely. Guns are easy to trace. The prop room may have seemed safest to him.

COLUMBO

(nodding)

I think you've hit it again, sir.

There's a knock on the door, and:

ASST. DIRECTOR'S VOICE

Ready when you are, Mr. Fowler.

WARD

(starting out)

Be right there.

COLUMBO

If you didn't think I'd get in the way, sir....

Ward is apprehensive, but shrugs a "come along."

COLUMBO

Thank you, sir. I really appreciate it.

As they start out, Columbo notices a pile of promotion bios on Ward.

COLUMBO

Oh, excuse me, sir -- I don't mean to be grabby...but I'd sure love to have one of these.

WARD

All you want, Lieutenant. It's just the usual publicity nonsense... 'Ward Fowler this...Ward Fowler that...' Nothing.

As Columbo takes a couple of the sheets:

COLUMBO

Maybe to you, sir, but to my wife -- Boy, she's going to be tickled pink.

They exit.

58

INT. BEL AIR HOUSE - DAY - LIVING ROOM (SET)

58

A man's body is sprawled across the carpeted floor. Ward, as "Lucerne" is walking around the body, his keen eyes taking in a thousand details that any other mortal would miss. Cops and others are looking on.

(X)

LUCERNE

(X)

(a bombshell
indicating body)

Eric Palmer did not die of his bullet wounds...nor, for that matter, was he killed in this house -- which the murderer would have us believe....

As the cast in the room reacts with a gasp:

LUCERNE

(X)

In point of fact, Palmer was killed at his beach house...

(dramatic pause)

By a man with a limp....

All eyes suddenly focus on one of the cast in the room. The man pulls a gun from a desk drawer, limpingly backs up. "Lucerne" is a contemptuously amused.

LUCERNE

Don't bother, Mr. Prager. I took the liberty of emptying your pistol while you were out of the room.

(to man next
to him)

Fielding...would you be kind enough to escort Mr. Prager to police headquarters?

DIRECTOR'S VOICE

Cut! Print!

59

WIDER ANGLE

59

as the Director moves forward with a grin:

DIRECTOR

That's terrific, Ward!

At the same time, the sound of someone enthusiastically applauding is heard. Who else?

clapping away.

COLUMBO

What a scene, sir! I mean, I know it's all make-believe...but it seemed so real!

WARD

Lieutenant, I've got a makeup session before the next scene, so....

He starts off. Columbo tags right along.

COLUMBO

Oh, that's all right, sir. I'll just tag along -- I mean, if it doesn't bother you.

60-A INT. WARD'S TRAILER

60-A

Ward is settled before the mirror. Columbo looks on with growing fascination as Kenny swiftly begins applying makeup. Soon, the insatiably curious Columbo has moved in so close that all three faces are only inches apart. Ward and Kenny and Columbo meet eyes.

COLUMBO

Oh, I'm terribly sorry, sir, I guess I'm in your way.

KENNY

That's all right, Lieutenant.

COLUMBO

You too, sir.

As Kenny expertly dabs away at Ward's face:

COLUMBO

You know that's remarkable, sir -- how fast you can do that. Let me tell you something -- my wife would sure like to have you around.

Kenny smiles appreciatively, dabs here and there, and is finished.

Columbo picks up a bio sheet, reads it.

COLUMBO

You know, sir, this 'bio' sheet -- it doesn't say anything

CONTINUED

COLUMBO (Cont'd)

about when you were first discovered, what you were doing when you were discovered...who discovered you....

WARD

(picking up speed)

Yes, well I'll certainly have to have a chat with publicity about that....

COLUMBO

Come to think of it, it was Mrs. Daley who discovered you, wasn't it, sir?

WARD

I believe I told you that with great emotion and in great detail the first day we met.

COLUMBO

(righteously thumping bio)

That's what I mean, sir -- it should be in here.

WARD

That's fine, Kenny. Lieutenant?

They exit.

61 EXT. HOUSE - SIDE ENTRANCE - DAY

61

as Columbo and Ward come out. Dolly back.

WARD

Lieutenant, why don't you just ask me what you want to know.

COLUMBO

(bright-eyed, getting the inside dope)

Where did Mrs. Daley discover you, sir? That's something even my wife doesn't know.

WARD

(looking at him)

But you know. Don't you?

CONTINUED

61

CONTINUED

61

COLUMBO

Oh. Yes...as a matter of fact, I think I do. On a tour of some kind. Wasn't she? I remember reading some background material on her back at the studio. The tour took her to Detroit... Philadelphia...and Boston. So you must have been in one of those cities when she discovered you.

(X)

Ward indicates a nearby group, obviously waiting for him:

WARD

If you'll excuse me, Lieutenant -- I've got to jump into a rehearsal. Perhaps we can talk later.

He moves toward the group. An oblivious and tenacious Columbo again follows, again thumps the bio:

COLUMBO

Here's another thing, sir -- there's not one word here about how you decided on the name 'Ward Fowler.' And what 'Inspector Lucerne' fan wouldn't want to know that?

WARD

What makes you think 'Ward Fowler' is a stage name, Lieutenant?

COLUMBO

You see, sir, I checked out those three cities and couldn't find a trace of Ward Fowler having been there at the time. So I just assumed that you took on a stage name later. You know -- it's got that dramatic ring to it.

(lyrically)

'Ward Fowler...as Detective Lucerne.'

(X)

There is a pause.

WARD

Look, let's stop pretending I'm brilliant and you're simple for one moment. I'm going to confide something in you.

(X)

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

(solemnly)

Anything you tell me it's between us, sir. Like the shoes.

WARD

Lieutenant -- my real name is -- God help me -- Charles Kipling. And you're the only one who knows that. Charles Kipline was in a little bit of trouble when Claire Daley found him.

(beat)

Actually, I was doing theatre up in Toronto; Claire heard about me while she was in Detroit on that tour of hers. Claire and I hit it off; she thought I had a big future, persuaded me to leave Canada...and that's how it started.

(casually dismissing)

The trouble straightened itself out, of course...but I've always been a little...sensitive about it. You understand.

COLUMBO

I certainly do, sir.

(X)

Sid is on the phone, scribbling figures on a pad as he listens with an astonished expression. He barely pays attention to an apologetically gesturing Columbo -- who, in sign language, is trying to say that there's no secretary outside, so is it all right for him to come in, or should he stay out, or what, sir?

SID

(into phone)

...That's the way it is, take it or leave it...Good...It's a deal.

He hangs up with satisfaction, which sours again as he looks at Columbo.

SID

What is it this time, Lieutenant. I'm a busy man.

CONTINUED

62 CONTINUED

COLUMBO

I can see that, sir...running the ship alone and all.

SID

It's going to be a tight one from now on.

COLUMBO

I would imagine you miss your wife's business sense.

(X)

SID

Are you kidding? You know she threw money away on Ward.

COLUMBO

That may be true, sir, but she certainly knew how to hold onto her own money. You've come into quite a lot of money, haven't you?

SID

(a knowing beat)

So you've heard about my little windfall.

COLUMBO

Yes, sir, I did.

SID

If you think I knew anything about it, you're wrong. My lawyer called and told me my wife's safety deposit box is practically layered with receipts for silver certificates. I'll be damned if I can figure out how she did it, and I'm afraid the government's going to have some trouble, too. Claire never declared the certificates as income. She kept them in a numbered account in a Canadian bank.

COLUMBO

And it all goes to you, right, sir?

SID

And it all goes to me. After taxes. Including some lovely IOU's she was holding on Mr. Ward Fowler.

CONTINUED

62 CONTINUED - 2

62

COLUMBO

Is that so, sir? That's a surprise, isn't it, with all the money he makes.

SID

I never question good fortune, Lieutenant. All I know is, Ward Fowler may be just a little easier to handle from now on.

COLUMBO

(thoughtfully)

You know, that's amazing how she kept it from you.

SID

Well she did. I just found out about it!

(X)

COLUMBO

(pointedly)

Yes, sir, I know, your accountant told me.

SID

Oh. Good. Then that's it?

COLUMBO

Yes sir, thank you very much...
(starts out;
turns back)

There was one more thing. Mr. Hart is due back from Rome, at his hotel in a few hours. Before I talk to him...

(X)

(beat)

Were you really playing chess, Mr. Daley?

(X)

There is a pause.

SID

Look, Lieutenant...we might as well get it straight right now. I wasn't with Leo Hart the other night....

COLUMBO

Really, sir?

SID

But I wasn't busy killing my wife either....

He presses the intercom and a tall, gorgeous, leggy

(X)

CONTINUED

secretary appears at the door: Molly.

MOLLY

Yes, Mr. Daley?

(X)

SID

Come in for a minute, Molly. I need your help.

MOLLY

Yes, sir.

She approaches, looks over, waiting.

SID

(taking a deep breath)

Molly...would you mind telling Lieutenant Columbo where I was on Thursday evening...the night my wife was killed? The truth.

MOLLY

(beat)

Mr. Daley was with me, Lieutenant. We left the office together, and we were together -- in my apartment -- until the following morning.

SID

Molly and I are going to be married, Lieutenant. I was about to ask Claire for a divorce.

COLUMBO

(beat)

Why didn't you just tell the truth about the other night, sir? I think that would have been easier.

Sid remains quiet.

MOLLY

He was protecting me, Lieutenant. I have a child. Sid didn't want any scandal to hurt me.

(forthright)

It's the truth, Lieutenant.

CONTINUED

62 CONTINUED - 4

62

Columbo believes her.

COLUMBO

Yes, ma'am...I'm sure it is.

63 INT. WARD'S HOUSE - DAY - CLOSE SHOT - COLUMBO

63

Columbo is slowly taking off his raincoat...but there is something artificial and self-conscious about his actions. In fact, he is acting like crazy. Camera pulls back and we see Ward video-taping Columbo with the hand-held camera that comes with the unit.

COLUMBO

(stilted, acting)

'Good afternoon, Lieutenant Lucerne.

(X)

I suppose you're here for a confession...Okay. I did it.

(he chuckles)

Now I've got to figure out what I did.

WARD

That's fine, Lieutenant. Now let's just see what we've got.

Ward puts the camera down, fiddles with the video unit controls. The TV minotor now plays the scene just taped, plus the earlier moment:

64 TV SCREEN

64

showing Columbo approaching the camera -- making his grand entrance for Ward. He takes off the raincoat:

COLUMBO'S VOICE

'Good afternoon, Lieutenant Lucerne.

(X)

I suppose you're here for a confession...Okay. I did it.

(he chuckles)

Now I've got to figure out what I did.

65 BACK TO SCENE

65

as Columbo reacts:

COLUMBO

Hey! Look at that! I'm terrible.

(X)

But that's really a fantastic machine, sir.

CONTINUED

WARD

Yes, they're handy.

COLUMBO

How...Uh...how much, roughly,
would you say....

WARD

This particular unit runs about
three thousand. Without the
camera, of course.

COLUMBO

(appalled)

Three thousand! Dollars? I
could buy a new car for that.
Not that I need one.

WARD

Lieutenant, I think you have
something to say to me. Don't
you?

COLUMBO

I'm really sorry to bother you
this way sir.

(awkwardly)

Just a...couple of questions, sir,
before my report on Sid Daley.
It looks like he couldn't have
done it, sir. He was with a girl
-- and she confirms it.

(X)

WARD

I see. I tell you what. Why
don't we discuss what I have to
say to you first. And then why
don't we both interrogate Ward
Fowler? As Lieutenant Lucerne,
I have a rather unpleasant idea
taking shape in my mind.

(X)

COLUMBO

And what might that be, sir?

WARD

That might be...you understand,
of course, I'm speaking now
strictly as Lucerne....

(X)

COLUMBO

Of course.

CONTINUED

WARD

It might be...unlikely as it seems,
it just might conceivably be...
that Ward Fowler is the man we're
looking for.

COLUMBO

You mean the murderer?

WARD

Exactly.

COLUMBO

(dumbfounded)

No.

WARD

Yes.

(smiles)

I know that comes as a terrible
shock to you. Let's think about
it, anyway. Just the two of us.
Let's examine the possibilities.

COLUMBO

If you say so, sir...only if
you'll forgive my asking, what
possible motive could there be?
I mean why would Ward Fowler
want to kill Claire Daley?
She made him famous.

WARD

That's what I kept wondering.
Why would he kill someone who had
done so much for him? Discovered
him -- made him a star -- made
him millions.

(beat)

Then I got to thinking about the
IOU's.

COLUMBO

(a beat)

You did, sir?

WARD

(smiles)

Yes. Oddly enough. I did. I'm
speaking as Lucerne, of course.

(X)

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

Of course.

WARD

Surely you must know about the IOU's by now. I mean Claire's lawyers must have found them in her safety deposit box...nearly half a million dollars in IOU's. You see, I couldn't help wondering why, with all the money Ward Fowler makes, he could still owe Claire that much.

(a beat)

And then it hit me.

COLUMBO

What hit you, sir?

WARD

Didn't you say, Lieutenant, that you'd seen all of my television shows?

COLUMBO

Nearly all, sir. Only missed a couple. On account of work, you know, sir.

WARD

Let me ask you...did you happen to see a show last August that had to do with a man who was being blackmailed?

COLUMBO

No, sir. Wait...a man who... Right. Right, I did see that one. This guy was being blackmailed by this woman, and he....

They stare at each other.

COLUMBO

...He shot her.

WARD

Exactly.

COLUMBO

But why, sir? Why would Claire Daley have blackmailed Ward Fowler? And how?

CONTINUED

WARD

Now that's where I'm going to need your help, Lieutenant. Have you, by any chance, checked by now with the Toronto police?

COLUMBO

(a beat)

Yes, sir, matter of fact, I have.

WARD

I thought so. And they told you...?

COLUMBO

(going along
with it)

They told me that Charles Kipling was an alias. That's when I....

WARD

That's when you decided you'd better get Ward Fowler's fingerprints. When you handed him that police artist's sketch....

COLUMBO

That's fantastic, sir. How did you know that?

WARD

Don't take this too personally, Lieutenant, but on reflection, it did seem to be slightly out of character when you handed him the sketch -- already somewhat the worse for wear -- inside a spotlessly clean file folder.

COLUMBO

That's remarkable, sir -- how you picked that up.

WARD

Thank you. And since you've got the fingerprints, what you probably did was check them out with the FBI.

COLUMBO

Right again, sir. You are amazing.

CONTINUED

COLUMBO (Cont'd)

(a beat)

Turns out Fowler's real name is John Snelling. You...he's not a Canadian, sir. Snelling, I mean. Alias, Kipling, alias Fowler. He's American. He went to Canada after he deserted from the Korean War.

WARD

You don't say.

(smiles)

Well? There's your motive.

COLUMBO

Excuse me, sir, but surely you're aware that the statute of limitations on Korean war deserters ran out some time ago.

WARD

(carefully)

And surely, Lieutenant, you are aware that what a successful actor worries about most is his public image. One word from Claire Daley, and Ward Fowler would have been finished. How would it look if America's favorite detective turned out to be a Korean war deserter? Or didn't that occur to you?

COLUMBO

Well, yes, sir. It did.

(a beat, frowns)

Something's a little wrong with it, though, sir. If you'll excuse a criticism.

WARD

Yes?

COLUMBO

You see, sir, I look at it this way...if Ward Fowler's career was ruined...she couldn't blackmail him any more, could she? He wouldn't have any money. And on top of that, the show would fold. Her show.

CONTINUED

(X)

65 CONTINUED - 6

65

COLUMBO (Cont'd)

(swallows)

You see my point, sir. I mean...
does an intelligent woman go and
destroy her own means of income?

(X)

WARD

I don't know, Lieutenant? Does she?
(smiles)

It's what the character did in the
program last August, isn't it?

COLUMBO

Just a television show, sir. What
do they know?

WARD

I beg your pardon?

(X)

COLUMBO

I mean...

(embarrassed)

Sorry, sir. All I meant was,
maybe that motive worked on
television...but it's not enough
to hold up in a courtroom, I mean.
Why, the defending lawyer would
tear it apart in a minute...the
way you did just now. It's only
good, sir, if it fits in with a
bunch of other clues. Check?

(X)

WARD

(a beat)

There is one other clue.

COLUMBO

Yes, sir?

WARD

The one you mentioned before.
Why would Ward Fowler lie to you
about his alias? Why would he
give a false name when you asked
him for his real one?

COLUMBO

(a beat)

Well, sir, I see what you mean,
but I'm afraid any decent lawyer

CONTINUED

COLUMBO (Cont'd)
would shred that one, too. I mean,
if it's true that an actor worries
about his public image, like you
just said, sir, then he'd hardly
spill the flat-out truth to a
police detective, would he?

WARD
He would if he thought the detective
would swallow it without first
checking the files at the FBI.

COLUMBO
Maybe he didn't think the detective
would go to that much trouble.

WARD
That's a point.

COLUMBO
Can I ask you a question, sir?

WARD
Certainly.

COLUMBO
Why don't we just ask Ward Fowler
whether he was being blackmailed
or not?

They stare at each other.

WARD
(a long beat)
I asked him.

COLUMBO
And?

WARD
He claims not. He has what he
calls...a 'weakness.' Unfortunately,
he says, this weakness has cost
him a great deal of money.

COLUMBO
(nodding, slowly)
So he must claim that Mrs. Daley
was kind enough to lend him the
money to make up for....

WARD
Precisely. For these rather
extensive losses. Yes. That's
what he says.

CONTINUED

65 CONTINUED - 8

65

COLUMBO

Do you believe him, sir?

WARD

(a beat)

I think so. I'm not sure yet.
Do you?

COLUMBO

Hard to say, sir, isn't it? I mean, in my experience, if a man will lie about one thing, the chances are he'll lie about another, you know what I mean?

(grins)

He might even leave something out.

WARD

Such as what?

COLUMBO

Such as the fact that the army unit he deserted from was in the artillery, sir. He's an expert marksman. I checked on that too.

WARD

That is a point.

(smiles)

He never told me.

COLUMBO

See, sir? You never can tell.

(shakes his
head morosely)

That's why I believe in making a thorough investigation whenever I can, sir.

(a beat)

Course, even with that clue, it wouldn't hold up in court.

WARD

Why not?

COLUMBO

You're forgetting his alibi, sir, aren't you? He was with Mark the whole time the murder was taking place. And that alibi is air-tight.

CONTINUED

WARD

Is it? As airtight as Sid Daley's?

COLUMBO

Oh, more sir. A girl you're going to marry has much more reason to give you an alibi than a gofer.

WARD

(smiles)

I see. Then what do we conclude?

COLUMBO

I guess we conclude that so far Ward Fowler denies having a motive, doesn't admit have a means and can prove he didn't have an opportunity.

WARD

Then our interrogation has led us to believe...?

COLUMBO

How's this for a third act line, sir... Maybe Ward Fowler didn't do it. And maybe Sid Daley did.

pull back as Ward exits a scene playing the Detective. The director calls "cut" -- we pan to Columbo as he comes up to Ward as he walks off the set.

COLUMBO

I don't have to tell you what I thought about that scene, sir.

WARD

Oh, Lieutenant, thank you. You know you don't have to report every day.

COLUMBO

Yes, sir. But, you see, we've got something more on the gun.

WARD

Really? What, Lieutenant?

COLUMBO

A thread.

CONTINUED

66 CONTINUED

66

WARD

From the parka?

COLUMBO

No, sir. We haven't traced the garment yet.

WARD

I'd get a search warrant for all four people involved.

COLUMBO

That's just what I've done, sir.

67
thru
69

OMITTED

67
thru
69

70 INT. SID'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

70

A dinner party in full swing. Ward is there. It's after dinner, the guests sipping brandy in the living room. There's a ring at the front door. Ward looks over with amused anticipation as Sid moves to answer it. He opens the door to Columbo, backed up by a couple of cops.

SID

What is this, Lieutenant?

Columbo presents a search warrant:

COLUMBO

I'm sorry to disturb you, sir, but we'd like to take a look around.

SID

For what? What's going on here?

As Columbo signals his men to start looking around, Molly approaches:

MOLLY

Please, Sid....

(X)

SID

What is it you expect to find, Columbo?

COLUMBO

Part of the disguise used to kill your wife, sir. Or rather, the part you didn't use.

Molly and Sid exchange stunned expressions, as Columbo moves to the bedroom.

71 INT. SID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - COLUMBO

71

enters as Sid and Molly look on -- Molly in cold anger, Sid openly fuming. Ward is watching as Columbo, and the two cops comb through the room. They find nothing.

FIRST COP

Afraid not, Lieutenant.

COLUMBO

Nothing at all, huh?

(to Ward)

Sorry, Lieutenant Lucerne.

(X)

SID

(to Columbo)

You mean you had no reason to do this Lieutenant beyond his suspicions? For God's sake, he's a television detective.

(X)

COLUMBO

Well, sir. I did have a reason beyond his suspicions. You see, the gun that killed your wife had a little piece of thread attached to the trigger. I'm afraid sir, it came from one of your jackets.

SID

My....

COLUMBO

Yes, sir. Tweed, the lab says. It's about the color of the jacket you were wearing the day I met you. The morning after she was killed.

SID

But that's incredible.

COLUMBO

Yes, sir, I agree with you. Still, I had to check it out. The jacket I mean's in that closet there. I just saw it.

WARD

(quietly)

Bravo, Lieutenant. Even I had no idea what you were looking for.

COLUMBO

That's right, sir. You couldn't have, could you?

CONTINUED

COLUMBO (Cont'd)

(slowly)

Unless you planted the thread on the gun yourself, I mean. Before you put it back in the prop department.

(X)

(a beat)

You probably got the thread the day I first met Mr. Daley -- when you and he got hooked.

WARD

(a long beat)

I don't quite follow you.

COLUMBO

Don't you sir? Supposing you...I mean supposing Lucerne was correct before...Supposing Claire Daley was blackmailing you...bleeding you dry, sir...just like that TV show... threatening to tell the world that your real name was John Snelling... that America's favorite detective was a Korean war deserter. And supposing you shot her.

(X)

WARD

(smiles)

I thought we agreed that I had what you call...what is the term?...an iron-clad alibi?

COLUMBO

Air-tight, sir, is what we actually say.

WARD

I stand corrected. You are a master of the cliché.

COLUMBO

Yes, sir...your alibi had me puzzled for quite awhile. But then you showed me that video machine of yours, sir...and suddenly it hit me. That's how you did it.

WARD

How did I do it, Lieutenant?

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

Well, the first thing you did, sir, was to make sure Mr. Davis would be dead to the world. So you put something in his drink. Like a small amount of barbiturate, or even Phenobarbital! It would put him out, but you'd still be able to wake him -- and it would account for the terrific hangover he had the next day, after only two drinks. Then, while Mr. Davis was out, you set the video machine so it would tape the ball game. -- You got in your car and drove to Tony's delicatessen...put on the disguise that you stole from the wardrobe department, took out your gun -- stolen from the prop department -- entered the deli ...went through the motions of a robbery...then took careful aim, and murdered Mrs. Daley.

(X)

WARD

Fascinating, Lieutenant...a fairy tale.

(X)

COLUMBO

Now you were ready to complete your alibi, sir. Mr. Davis was still in a deep sleep when you got home, so you rewound the tape on your video machine...then you set Mr. Davis' watch back and woke Mr. Davis up -- and when he saw the ball game on TV, just about the same as when he passed out, he had to assume he was asleep for about a minute... instead of the hour and a half that had actually passed.

(beat)

And after you helped Mr. Davis into bed...you changed his watch back to the correct time.

(beat)

That was your mistake, sir. You shouldn't have set it to the correct time...because Mr. Davis always kept his watch five minutes fast.

CONTINUED

71 CONTINUED - 3

71

WARD
(contemptuously)
Is that it, Lieutenant?

COLUMBO
No, sir. There's also the height
of the killer. Which is about my
height, sir. And your height --
(indicating)
-- without those platform shoes.

WARD
There must be about a million
people in the city roughly 'our'
height, Lieutenant.

COLUMBO
Yes, sir -- but there's something
else. You are a crack shot, sir.

WARD
Endlessly fascinating, Lieutenant.
But as Lucerne would say: 'Where
there is no proof, there is no
criminal...' Fascinating, not-
withstanding.

(X)

COLUMBO
Yes, sir...but I think we've got
the proof...right here....

He lays the gun on a table, takes out some powder, shakes
it over the barrel.

72 INSERT - GUN

72

No marks come up, no prints.

73 BACK TO SCENE

73

WARD
What proof, Lieutenant. There
are no prints. You told me so
yourself this morning. That was
a rather silly demonstration.

COLUMBO
You're absolutely right again, sir.
The killer wiped the gun clean of
any incriminating prints...but the
thing is, he forgot something....

CONTINUED

WARE

What's that, Lieutenant?

COLUMBO

Well, sir, as you know this gun was only used as a prop. So, of course, it was never filled with anything but blanks. That is, until you stole it, sir. And in order to kill Mrs. Daley, you had to shake out the blanks... and insert the real bullets.

Columbo breaks open the gun through the above as:

COLUMBO

There aren't any prints on the gun because you wiped it clean, sir... but you see, there was a reason the lab report took so long... You cleaned the gun. Check?

Gingerly now, he removes one of the remaining bullets in demonstration:

COLUMBO

(staring at
him, slowly)

But you didn't remember to do the same thing with the bullets.

Ward stares back, stunned -- and trapped.

WARD

(a very long
beat, quietly)

I had to forget something, didn't I?
That's always how the third act ends.

(dully)

You see, I've had no rehearsal as a murderer. I am, after all, a detective.

COLUMBO

You shot Claire Daily, didn't you, sir?

WARD

(laughs)

All you detectives are alike.
You're not a gentleman, Lieutenant Columbo. You have no style.

CONTINUED

WARD (Cont'd)

I should never have played silly word games with you. You want your drama played out to the end, don't you? You want me to confess to you as so many murderers have to me. She was a blackmailer and I killed her. And up to now I've been glad I killed her. I believe that in this killing the murderer has the sympathetic part. Does that satisfy you?

COLUMBO

Yes, sir. That satisfies me.

(a beat)

You see, sir, I know that you know all murderers make one little mistake.

WARD

Little mistake.

(laughs)

What a mistake! To forget to wipe my fingerprints off the bullets.

COLUMBO

No, that wasn't the mistake. The mistake was in knowing too much about fingerprints. Do you know how hard it is to raise a clear fingerprint? Do you know how seldom it's done? Do you know how hard it is to raise a fingerprint off a bullet?

WARD

(after a moment)

How hard?

COLUMBO

Too hard for us to do. I sure hate cheating at games. Course, there's another side to it, I guess.

(smiles)

You did a little cheating yourself, didn't you, sir?

WARD

You would do me an enormous favor, Lieutenant, if you stopped calling me sir.

FREEZE FRAME

FADE OUT

THE END