

COLUMBO

UNEASY LIES THE CROWN

written by

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FADE IN

EXT. 9200 SUNSET BOULEVARD - NIGHT

We're zooming in on a darkened office on the sixth floor of this splendid highrise. Over, we hear a phone ringing.

INT. KITTY BERGMAN'S OFFICE IN TOP TALENT AGENCY - NIGHT

The office is completely darkened save for the pallid gleam from light in an inside corridor, which comes through the slightly-ajar door. Against this is silhouetted the ringing telephone on Kitty's script-cluttered desk. After about three more rings:

KITTY (o.c.)

I'd better get that, Jimmy. It's my private line.

JIMMY (o.c.)

Meaning it's probably your husband. Let it ring.

KITTY (o.c.)

No... it might be somebody important.

Chuckling at this, Jimmy comes and lights the desk lamp and scoops up the instrument. Jimmy De Paul is 28, an up-and-coming mean streets-born actor, as macho as they come. We follow him and the phone back to the sofa, where Kitty is sitting up and adjusting her clothes. Kitty Bergman is 35, looks 20 and clearly has resisted all temptations to turn herself into a stereotypical 'powerhouse Hollywood agent.' She answers the phone as though she'd had to come running for it:

KITTY

Hello?

(nods at Jimmy)

I was in the little girls room. Are you still at the office?

(a beat)

Jimmy De Paul? Gee, I can't imagine. He was here late this afternoon, to say good-bye, but I was out at Universal. What time was he supposed to see you?

ANGLE ON JIMMY

as he returns to the desk, battening down his custom T-shirt, and gathers up his wallet and loose change and pockets them in his jeans. During this:

KITTY (o.c.)

Well his plane doesn't leave 'till midnight; it's only around eight now. Can't you give him another half-hour? I'm sure you don't want him to leave the country without getting that crown cemented in.

Jimmy starts to lift his car coat off the back of the desk chair, but then decides that he has to go to the men's room. As he starts out of the office, we let him go and sweep back to Kitty.

KITTY

(a cajoling note)

Max, I know you're going to Vegas tonight. But Jimmy'll be gone for six weeks. Suppose that crown falls out while he's on the Sicily location? I can just see the make-up man putting it back in with spirit gum.

(a beat; chidingly)

Of course I put my clients before my husband. What kind of a dentist would you be if I didn't?

(laughs; a beat)

Thanks, Max. See you tomorrow night...

(a beat)

Oh -- I thought you wanted to go to that thing at the Film Institute. But I can get one of the boys to take me.

(a beat)

Okay -- fly carefully. Say good-bye to Jimmy for me.

*why hide fact
Jimmy here -- if all
he has to do is
take elevator down
a few floors +
discover them?*

ANOTHER ANGLE

as Kitty hangs up and Jimmy returns.

KITTY

You better get your tail up there.

JIMMY

What made him think I was here?

CONTINUED

KITTY

He didn't. He just thought I might have some idea where you might be.

JIMMY

You don't think he knows?

KITTY

(a pause)

I'm sure he knows something's going on. I haven't known happiness often enough to become adept at hiding it. Don't worry -- he'd never dream it was you.

She gets up and starts getting ready to leave.

KITTY

Anyway, he doesn't give a damn about losing me. His only fear is that when I go, I'll take my clients with me.

JIMMY

I told you to stop doing that.

KITTY

Doing what?

JIMMY

Underestimating yourself -- and him. Where are you going?

KITTY

Home, James.

JIMMY

You're not going to wait, and drive me to the airport?

KITTY

Your kid brother's driving you to the airport. I'm not exactly his favorite mistress-in-law, you know.

INT. ELEVATOR CORRIDOR - ON KITTY AND JIMMY

as they come forward to the elevators.

KITTY

Besides, I can't bear to say good-bye at airports at night... ever since my father made His Last Flight.

CONTINUED

JIMMY

(hitting 'up' button)
I always thought your father died
of a heart attack.

KITTY

(hitting 'down' button)
His Last Flight is the name of one
of his early pictures.
(a sudden rush of
emotion)

Oh my God Jimmy how am I going to
survive six weeks without you!

JIMMY

You'll find ways. You're a Survivor.

His elevator arrives. He touches Kitty's face, gently,
smiling seriously; then quickly enters the elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR - ANGLE TO INCLUDE KITTY IN CORRIDOR
as Jimmy hits the topmost button.

KITTY

Jimmy?

Jimmy holds the door.

KITTY

Six weeks is a long time, in this
business. You don't think you
might change your mind about
marrying me, do you?

JIMMY

(joking)
I don't think so... at the moment.

KITTY

Don't let me tell Max I'm leaving
him and then find out I've broken
up my home for nothing.

JIMMY

(only half-joking)
It's time you left him anyway.
What's a big shot like you doing
married to a dentist?

INT. WAITING ROOM IN OFFICE OF MAX BERGMAN, D.D.S. - NIGHT

It's like no waiting room you've ever seen, not even in the movies. Sumptuous, sensuous -- a veritable Hollywood Showplace, it reflects relentlessly the sort of man who'd nail to the door of his private office a 'fun' sign which reads MAX BERGMAN - DENTIST TO THE STARS. There's nobody in sight but Jimmy's 16-year-old brother, Rennie, who is sitting slumped over the bar, sound asleep, his hand wrapped around a bottle of coke. Then Jimmy enters from the outer corridor. Grinning, he creeps up to Rennie and then yanks the bottle out of his hand, snapping the kid awake, and takes a long swig.

RENNIE

(whispering)

What the heck you been doin' down there? You were supposed to be here an hour ago!

JIMMY

(whispering, too)

I been sleepin'... same as you.

RENNIE

(knowingly)

Yeah, I bet.

Jimmy gives a low little laugh, punches Rennie's arm, and then thunders:

JIMMY

Max! I'm here!

Max's response comes muffled but clear through the closed door to his private office:

MAX'S VOICE

I'm on the phone. Go get in the chair -- I'll just be a minute.

INT. MAX'S PRIVATE OFFICE - ANGLE ON MAX

He's not on the phone, he's simply sitting at his magnificent desk smiling at the unsmiling photograph of his wife that dominates it. Over-fortyish, ebullient and garrulous, amusing in a vaguely Jewish-mother kind of way, Max Bergman is a brilliant professional in a profession where brilliance is rarely noted and, what's worse, seldom deemed necessary; hence his apparent dependence upon a star-studded clientele for the ego satisfaction that is traditionally denied second-class citizens of the medical world. Now he rises and crosses softly to a curio cabinet which contains his rare collection of Chinese figurines. Using a tiny key which

CONTINUED

hangs on a chain around his neck, he opens the cabinet and takes from it a small, jade figure of a concubine reclining naked on a chaise. It appears to have been carved out of a single piece of jade. With a few deft (and obviously secret) moves, however, Max separates concubine from chaise. The chaise contains a secret compartment large enough to hide one perfect pearl. What it's hiding right now, though, is a round, pinkish pellet, very tiny, very mysterious. Max empties the pellet into the palm of his hand and regards it with the shadow of a murderous smile playing on his face. Then he drops it in his shirt pocket.

INT. EXAMINING ROOM - ANGLE ON JIMMY

stretched out in the chair, his back to the pair of louvered doors that open onto the waiting room, and which stand open. A few beats, and he starts yelling.

JIMMY

Come on, Max, will ya'! You want me to miss my plane?

MAX

(entering)

The worst thing that could happen to me is that you should miss your plane.

JIMMY

Okay, okay... I'm sorry I was late.

Max turns to close the doors but Rennie is already coming in. With a flicker of annoyance, which Jimmy catches, Max moves to the tray and measures up a syringe-full of novacaine.

JIMMY

Maybe you want to take care of this when I get back...?

MAX

I put that crown on with temporary cement because I was afraid the tooth was gonna die and I'd have to do a root-canal.

JIMMY

It didn't die.

CONTINUED

MAX

My point is, that cement has to be disintegrating by now. You want your crown to fall out while you're on location? I can just see the make-up man puttin' it back in with chewing-gum.

(laughs)

Relax, this isn't going to take all night.

some joke

RENNIE

(to Jimmy)

Don't forget we still have to stop home and pick up your gear.

MAX

(sweetly)

Rennie, do you wanna stand here and make a nervous wreck out of your own brother? Or do you wanna save time by gettin' his bags while I'm workin' on him.

JIMMY

Yeah, Rennie...!

RENNIE

You're askin' me to lug four duffle bags and a foot locker all by myself?

MAX

They're not heavy, they're your brother's.

Jimmy laughs. Rennie grouses under his breath, but he goes. Jimmy looks at Max, and abruptly stops laughing.

JIMMY

Something wrong, Max?

MAX

Huh? Why?

JIMMY

You usually laugh when you say something funny.

MAX

Only when other people don't.
Open your mouth.

JIMMY

I don't need novacaine for this.

CONTINUED (2)

MAX

For this even Clint Eastwood in
Dirty Harry needs novacaine.

JIMMY

It takes too long. Just do what
you have to do.

MAX

(patiently)

Jimmy, what I have to do is take
a crown off a tooth that's been
ground down 'till it's nothing
but a stump with a raw nerve
hangin' out. Then, before I can
sterilize the stump, I have to
clean it with my high-speed drill.
After that, I replace the crown
with permanent cement that in
order to mix right, I have to
use extremely cold water. Now,
knowing this, do you still say
you don't need novacaine?

Jimmy answers by opening his mouth as wide as it'll go.
Max laughs, and drives the needle home. He then goes to
the cabinet and takes out the necessary tools and medicines
and arranges them neatly on the cabinet's counter-top.

JIMMY

(making conversation)

So you're flying up to Vegas
tonight.

MAX

Kitty told you?

JIMMY

(cautious)

I think you mentioned it.

MAX

I mean about my latest love affair.

JIMMY

Oh -- what?

MAX

I bought a little airplane.

JIMMY

To go with your little boat!

CONTINUED (3)

MAX

One day it hit me: There's not a week in the year that at least five of my biggest patients aren't headlining in Vegas. And not a week goes by that I'm not making on an average of two emergency trips -- usually, late at night. I don't know why it is, but it's always the midnight show that brings on the gum-boils. Not that I mind, mind you; I mean, when you think of the joy that these people give to countless millions... You startin' to get numb?

JIMMY

Yeah, go ahead.

Max starts prying the crown off, chattering on as he works.

MAX

What I do mind is sitting around airports waiting for --

He breaks off as Jimmy gives a faint cry of pain.

MAX

I'll give you some more novacaine.

JIMMY

No, it was your fingernail.

MAX

Sorry.

He gets the crown off, sets it down on the tray, and then starts cleaning with scraper and drill Jimmy's tiny stump of a tooth.

MAX

So, since I'm already a trained pilot -- I learned when I was making those Save-a-Tooth flights to south of the border -- I figured, why not indulge myself?

(laughs)

My accountant had a heart attack.

He lays the drill aside, takes up the mirror, studies the stump.

*If he's this successful without
does he need his
wife for ---*

CONTINUED (4)

MAX

I had to make it a little smaller;
the permanent cement takes more
room.

He moves to the tray and, with his body masking Jimmy's view, picks up the crown.

CLOSE ON CROWN

held between thumb and forefinger of Max's left hand. He scrapes the residue of temporary cement out of it, then takes up his drill and carefully drills a small recess in the underside of the crown, making very careful not to break through the porcelain outer surface.

CLOSE ON MAX

His back still turned to Jimmy, he now takes from his shirt pocket the tiny, mysterious pellet and drops it into the recess he's just drilled in the underside of the crown, gently tamping it down with the handle-end of his probe. He then mixes up some dental cement, and applies it to the rim of the crown.

ANOTHER ANGLE - MAX AND JIMMY

as Max turns to Jimmy, whose eyes are closed. He studies Jimmy for a long moment expressionlessly; then, in a voice hoarse with high tension, whispers:

MAX

Open wide.

Jimmy's eyes snap open; a long beat later, he opens his mouth.

EXTREMELY CLOSE ON JIMMY'S MOUTH

as the lethal crown, held delicately between thumb and forefinger of Max's faintly unsteady hand, goes in. Freeze Frame. Then

CUT TO

EXT. THE BERGMAN HOUSE - NIGHT

A lovely old house in a fashionable street in Beverly Hills. One second floor window glows brightly; all the rest is darkness. A car comes slowly down the street and pulls up in front of the house next door. We can't see who's at the wheel, and have no way of knowing whose car this is.

ANGLE - LIGHTED WINDOW OF BERGMAN HOUSE

seen from the point of view of the unseen person in the unknown car.

INT. KITTY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - ON KITTY

sitting up in bed reading a fat screenplay. In b.g. is seen the door to the hall, open all the way.

*her face glistening with some
sort of night cream.*

INT. ENTRANCE HALL OF BERGMAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Dark, except for one small lamp at the top of the stairs, and silent, until the grandfather's clock starts striking midnight -- drowning out the sound of a key in the front door. Very stealthily, the door begins to open.

BACK TO KITTY

reading on, unaware, her lips moving as, unconsciously she counts in silence the strokes of the clock.

BACK TO ENTRANCE HALL

We're following, closely, the shadow-shrouded feet of a man who is tip-toeing up the stairs. The hour struck, the clock falls silent.

BACK TO KITTY

as she moves to make a phone call, but then, realizing the hour, thinks better of it.

BACK TO ENTRANCE HALL

as the man nears the top of the stairs. Inevitably, a stair creaks.

BACK TO KITTY

as she looks toward the door, frowning uncertainly, and then calls:

KITTY

Max?

BACK TO ENTRANCE HALL

The man is holding dead still; waiting.

Bullshit!

BACK TO KITTY

as she returns to her screenplay, convinced that she only thought she heard something.

BACK TO ENTRANCE HALL

as the man resumes his ascent and then turns in the direction of the lighted doorway to Kitty's room.

BACK TO KITTY

as she hears, right outside her door, a slight stumble that sounds almost as if it had been made deliberately.

KITTY

Max? Is that you?

Silence.

KITTY

Who is it? Who's out there?

More silence. She begins to know fear. Still, she manages to sound pretty convincing when she warns:

KITTY

You'd better get out of here!
I've got a gun...!

JIMMY'S VOICE

Don't shoot! It's your hottest client!

KITTY

Oh, hello, Liza. Is Jack with you?

Jimmy saunters into the room, takes off his car coat and flings it on a chair. Then, like a man in his own bedroom, he dumps his wallet, keys and loose change on the

CONTINUED

bureau. Then he fooks off his shoes, yanks off his socks, shucks off his jeans and T-shirt and comes and sits on the bed clad only in his trim-line boxer shorts.

KITTY

What happened?

JIMMY

A sudden killer fog. If and when conditions improve -- my little brudder knows where to reach me.

KITTY

So you come sneaking into my house without calling to make sure my husband --

JIMMY

(cuts in)

The weather was fine when he took off. He left right after he did his thing.

He leans closer, opens his mouth and shows her the cemented-in crown.

KITTY

Did you see him take off? He could have changed his mind, you know.

JIMMY

Where's the excitement in having a key to a woman's house if you're going to make sure her husband's not home before you use it?

(removes her
eyeglasses)

Now go wash that turtle-soup off your face. The smell's making me queasy.

KITTY

(getting up)

It's odorless.

She goes into the bathroom, leaving the door open so she can keep a loving eye on him in the mirror. He hops into bed and takes his shorts off under the covers, like the basically shy boy that he is. He's just gotten them twisted around his ankles when Kitty, somewhat bemusedly asks:

CONTINUED (2)

KITTY

What would you do if Max walked in
that door right now?

As though in response to her question, Jimmy suddenly stops wriggling; a strange, shocked look contorts his face; he begins clutching his chest and gasping for air.

ANGLE ON BATHROOM MIRROR

to include Kitty and, in the bedroom beyond, Jimmy, who, as Kitty sees it, is giving an excessively realistic and tasteless imitation of a man suffering a sudden, fatal heart attack.

KITTY

Don't do that, Jimmy. If you had
watched your father die that way,
you wouldn't think there was any-
thing funny about a heart...

Her voice trails off. Slowly, she turns to take a first-hand look at the stricken man; as if maybe mirrors do lie, sometimes. After several, breathless moments, during which she is physically incapable of moving, she goes to him -- but slowly, as though she knows he's already dead. He is.

EXT. LAS VEGAS AT NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

Over, we hear a telephone ringing. After several rings, somebody picks up.

MAN'S VOICE

Doctor who? Oh, you mean Max.
Yah, he's here. Hold on.
(yells above
background din)
Max! Telephone! In the john.

INT. STAR'S DRESSING ROOM IN VEGAS HOTEL - NIGHT - ANGLE ON MAX

as he tears himself away from the group of friends and fans surrounding the comedy star, who's just come off and can't come down.

MAX

Don't finish till I get back.
It's probably Sonny and his little
sore spot.

CONTINUED

STAR

Max, tell them about the night
Sonny spotted Ruthie sitting
ringside!

MAX

(only too glad
to oblige)
Well, they had just gotten the
divorce, see ---

STAR

And she had cleaned him out!

MAX

Anyway, he's doin' the dinner
show, real nice, and he's just
swingin' into one of his real
biggies when all of a sudden he
looks down ---

STAR

And there's Ruthie Roter-Rooter!

MAX

But he don't miss a note -- right?
-- like he didn't even see her.

STAR

Tell them what he's singing!

MAX

All of me.

STAR

You know...
(singing it)
'All of me... why not take all
of me...?'

CLOSE ON STAR

as he takes over and tells the story the way it ought to
be told.

STAR

Two choruses, and not once has
he given Ruthie another look
-- dig? Now it's socko ending-
time, and he's inching closer
and closer to her...

(sings)

'You took the part, part, part,

CONTINUED

STAR (cont'd)
 that once was my heart, heart,
 heart, so why not...'
 (speaks)
 He's still not looking at her...
 (sings)
 '... I said why not...'
 (speaks)
 He's standing right over her
 table...
 (sings)
 '... baby, why not take all
 ... of...'
 (speaks)
 Suddenly he stops -- like he's
 gonna grab a big breath for the
 'me' -- but instead, he takes
 out his dentures...
 (breaking up)
 ... he takes out his dentures
 and he... Max, tell them...!
 (looks around)
 Max...?

INT. BATHROOM OF STAR'S DRESSING ROOM - CLOSE ON MAX

as he closes the bathroom door and then just stands
 there, the phone to his ear, smiling to himself, his
 eyes slits of secret triumph. After a moment:

KITTY'S VOICE

(drained of all
 emotion)

Did you hear what I said, Max?
 I said... Jimmy died.

MAX

Honest to God I can't find my
 voice, I'm so shocked. How did
 it happen? Plane crash?

KITTY'S VOICE

No. He had a heart attack.

MAX

Kitty, I'm gonna come right home.
 I'll be there in less than an
 hour.

(a beat)

Why don't you call somebody to
 come over and stay with you, in
 case I get held up. You shouldn't
 be alone at a time like this.

CONTINUED

KITTY'S VOICE

I'm not alone, Max.

MAX

Oh. Good. Who's there?

KITTY'S VOICE

Jimmy.

EXT. THE BERGMAN HOUSE - NIGHT - WITH MAX'S CAR

as it swerves onto the circular driveway and squeals to a stop before the front door. Max gets out, pauses to scan the sleepy neighborhood, and spots Jimmy's car. He shrews his mouth; then hurries into the house.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT - CLOSE ON GRANDFATHER'S CLOCK

It's chiming the half hour, the time being half-past one.

INT. KITTY'S BEDROOM - ON KITTY

seated on a chair next to the bureau, her eyes averted both from the bed and the bureau-mirror which reflects the bed -- and the body in it. In ritual-like fashion, she is arranging and rearranging Jimmy's wallet, keys and loose change.

ANGLE - TO INCLUDE MAX

as he enters, pauses to look at Kitty, and then goes to the bed, stands there, viewing the body, struggling to keep his frustration and rage under control.

MAX

(unaware he's
speaking aloud)

He was supposed to be on that
plane when...

He catches himself; looks at Kitty. She doesn't seem to have heard him. He goes to her.

MAX

You didn't call anybody?

KITTY

No. You told me not to.

(a beat)

The phone rang a few minutes ago.
I thought it was never going to
stop. But then it stopped.

CONTINUED

MAX

Who'd be calling at this hour?
 (lets it go)
 Get dressed.

He gathers up Jimmy's clothes and takes them to the bed and lays them out piece by piece, side by side. Something is missing. He lifts the bedcovers a little ways, then turns to scan the room.

MAX

Where's his shorts?

KITTY

(slowly coming
 alert)

What are you going to do?

Max reaches down toward the foot of the bed, slips his hands under the bedcovers, feels around until he finds the undershorts. He pulls them out and adds them to the other items. Then he returns to the bureau and picks up Jimmy's car key -- and answers Kitty's question.

MAX

I am going to get him out of this house. We are going to get him out of this house. Now get dressed, quick, and go bring his car around to the alley.

KITTY

Are you crazy? What do you think this is -- a Hitchcock movie? I haven't committed any crime!

MAX

There are crimes and there are crimes.

KITTY

God how I hate lines like that! What does that mean? That it's a crime to sleep with someone you love?

MAX

If he has a heart attack and you don't lift a finger to help him -- yes!

KITTY

Help him how? He was dead!

Yeeeahh!

CONTINUED (2)

MAX

In your opinion. Are you a qualified expert?

KITTY

(shaken)

What are you saying?

MAX

What everybody will say -- if we give them the chance.

KITTY

What? That I didn't call the Police, the Fire Department? When my father died I called everybody but the Department of Water and Power! It didn't do any good! It never does any good! When your heart stops beating, you're dead! Forever!

MAX

Do you know how many people whose hearts stopped beating are walking around today because somebody rushed them to the hospital?

KITTY

Don't do this to me, Max. I know you must hate me for this --

MAX

I wish I could!

KITTY

-- but please, don't try to make me feel guilty, Max... don't make me go through life wondering if I could have... saved him...

MAX

That you'll have to live with. But I am not going to let you live with everybody else wondering. And that's what will happen. You report this now, and when the police get done with you the newspapers and TV will eat what's left. You think anybody's gonna believe you were in a state of

*This is all
bullshit*

CONTINUED (3)

MAX (cont'd)

shock? What kind of shock is it where you can call a husband who's three hundred miles away, but can't call a doctor who lives right next door? And if you're thinking I won't tell them you called me -- it's too late! I told a room-full of people I had to rush home because you'd suddenly taken ill. How's it gonna look? The extremes these people think in -- they'll think you murdered him!

(a beat)

Now. What's it gonna be? You gonna take this key? Or you gonna go pick up that phone and call the police? The decision is yours.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND THE BERGMAN HOUSE - NIGHT - ON JIMMY'S CAR

as it comes to a stop in front of the rear gate. Kitty gets out and moves to the gate, opens it with her key, goes in, leaving the gate slightly ajar.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT - ON KITTY

as she comes in from the darkened rear of the house and stops at the sight of Max half-carrying, half-dragging Jimmy's fully-clothed body down the stairs. She can see he's having a hard time of it: at one point, he almost comes tumbling down, body and all. She forces herself to go and help him. But just as she reaches the stairway -- the doorbell rings! She freezes. Max freezes. It rings again.

MAX

(whispers)

Go look from the living room. Be careful!

Kitty disappears into the darkened living room. Max waits, breath-held. Another ring; then the pound of the door-knocker. Kitty reemerges, shakes her head No. She starts tip-toeing toward the door. Max signals her not to, and almost loses his balance again. Kitty gasps, stops dead. An eternity of seconds pass. Then comes the sound of footsteps receding down the driveway; the distant, almost inaudible sound of a car driving off.

EXT. MULHOLLAND DRIVE - NIGHT

A dark, lonely stretch; deserted. Then we see headlights in the distance: Jimmy's car, followed by Max's car.

INT. JIMMY'S CAR - ON MAX

as he picks his spot and swerves off the road and into a stout tree -- approximating, as safely as possible, the sort of move a car might make if its driver suffered a swift and fatal heart attack. Max's car, Kitty at the wheel, is seen passing, and pulling over a little ways ahead. Quickly now, Max sets the emergency brake, cuts the headlights, and gets out, leaving the motor running, the gear lever in 'Drive' and the door open.

INT. MAX'S CAR - ON KITTY

as she turns off the motor and cuts the headlights. She takes a few seconds to summon courage and energy, and then she gets out. Her foot comes down on a fallen rock, and she goes over on her ankle. A bad turn, it rips a cry of pain from her mouth; she has to grab on to the door to keep from going down on her knees.

ON MAX

as he leaves the open trunk of Jimmy's car and goes to see what has happened to Kitty. We hold on trunk. We can just barely make out the outline of Jimmy's body. After several beats, Max returns; alone. He reaches into the trunk.

INT. MAX'S CAR - ON KITTY

as she slides over onto the passenger seat; sits there, one hand gripping her injured ankle, the other smoothing down her wind-tousled hair.

VARIOUS SHOTS - INSIDE AND OUTSIDE JIMMY'S CAR

of Max setting Jimmy's body behind the wheel, slumped over; arranging the hands and feet in their proper position; releasing the emergency brake; turning the headlights on; closing the door; finally, hurrying to his own car.

INT. MAX'S CAR - ON MAX AND KITTY

as Max slides under the wheel and gets set for take-off.

CONTINUED

MAX

Fasten your seat belt.

KITTY

(distantly)

'... it's going to be a bumpy ride.'

MAX

Hmmm?

KITTY

Just a line from an old movie.

Max puts the car in gear and they drive off.

EXT. MULHOLLAND DRIVE - DAWN

The body of Jimmie De Paul is exactly as Max left it. The coroner's wagon and several police cars are on the scene; police calls filter through the air from the radios in the cars, drowning out the hushed conversation between a detective and the Woman-with-Dog who made discovery and notification. A second detective -- a young eager-beaver named Spinola, is sherlocking the area around Jimmy's car, but not touching the vehicle itself. Other, uniformed officers and a couple of ambulance attendants are standing around waiting, freezing their tails off in the dawn's surgical chill.

ANGLE - ARRIVING CAR

It's Columbo. He looks like he feels like he's not out of bed yet. He evicts himself from his warm car and heads for the scene. Almost instantaneously, Spinola falls in step beside him, thermos at the ready.

SPINOLA

Want some coffee, Lieutenant?

COLUMBO

Is it lukewarm?

SPINOLA

Heck, no! It's steamin' hot!

COLUMBO

Then, no, thanks.

SPINOLA

(after a moment)

I don't understand.

