

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 foots 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.

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

Extremes, Spinola: some days you just have to take a stand against them.

(indicates Jimmy's car)

What's the story?

SPINOLA

Well, we haven't touched him, you understand, but from the look of things, I'd say it was a coronary.

(as they reach the car)

Wait'll you see who it is!

Columbo peers in at Jimmy's face; obviously does not recognize it -- a fact which Spinola seems to find utterly amazing.

SPINOLA

It's Jimmy De Paul! The movie star!

COLUMBO

They always look different in person.

(a beat)

Awful young for a coronary.

Columbo's merely making a rueful comment, but Spinola thinks maybe his theory is being questioned.

SPINOLA

Well, look here, you can see the marks where he suddenly swerved off the road when it hit him. Then there's the fact his lights are still on -- the motor, too, which is why his battery is comatose -- and the gear lever's still in 'Drive.'

COLUMBO

(unwrapping a cigar)

Got a match, Spinola?

SPINOLA

Coming right up.

Spinola runs off. One of the ambulance attendants (both of whom are hovering impatiently) gives Columbo a book of matches. It contains a single match.

ON COLUMBO

Nodding his thanks, he hunches down close to Jimmy's car so he can light up out of wind's way. As he strikes the match, something catches his eye:

WHAT HE SEES

The lower left corner of Jimmy's coat has been caught in the car door -- at a point very near the bottom edge of the door. Only the merest tip protrudes: it could easily have passed unnoticed, or been mistaken for a chip in the paint.

BACK TO SCENE

Columbo has let the match go out. Now he straightens up and opens the car door very carefully, so as to not disturb the position of Jimmy's coat. He studies everything as though photographing it with a brain-camera. Then he gives the attendants the go-ahead to take the body and starts for his own car. Spinola intercepts him -- not with a match, but with a dashboard cigarette-lighter.

SPINOLA

Nobody seems to carry matches, nowadays.

Columbo looks at the lighter, which has lost its glow.

COLUMBO

It's comatose, Spinola.
(moves on)

Never mind, get me his driver's license, will you?

ON COLUMBO

as he reaches his car. He unbuttons his coat before getting in; then, before pulling the door shut, adjusts his coat so it'll get caught in exactly the same way as Jimmy's. This done, he sees if it's possible to drive without knowing that the coat is caught. No way. He can barely reach the wheel with his left hand, much less navigate a right turn. While he's thinking about this, Spinola approaches.

SPINOLA

He didn't have his license on him, Lieutenant. Funnily enough, he didn't have any personal effects on him. Just this dental-appointment card.

*Easy / Cool
dumb of Max.*

CONTINUED

Spinola gives the card to Columbo and then turns to watch the departing coroner's wagon go by.

SPINOLA
(no humor intended)
Somebody up there must be casting
a real block-buster.

Columbo suppresses a smile. Then he pockets the card, frees his coat, and starts his motor.

SPINOLA
Lieutenant...? Want me to make
notification? All there is is a
kid brother.

Columbo clucks his tongue.

SPINOLA
Yeah, the parents died years ago,
long before Jimmy hit it big.

COLUMBO
(half-kiddingly)
Was he a paizan of yours, Spinola?

SPINOLA
(taken aback)
What? Not that I know of. Why?

COLUMBO
You seem to know a good bit about
him.

SPINOLA
(a long pause; an
abashed confession)
I'm a fan mag-freak.

EXT. 9200 SUNSET BOULEVARD - MORNING

The scene is pervaded by that eerie, Saturday-morning calm. A black Mercedes comes down the street and turns into the parking entrance. At the wheel is a very subdued Kitty.

INT. PARKING LEVEL ELEVATORS - MORNING

Kitty comes limping toward an open elevator. A hand reaches out to hold the door for her.

INT. ELEVATOR

The hand is Columbo's. Kitty enters without a glance or

CONTINUED

a thank-you. She also neglects to select her floor.

COLUMBO

Excuse me, m'am, but did you want any particular floor?

Still without looking at Columbo, Kitty presses button number six. She doesn't notice that the topmost button is lit. Columbo lets the door go. He studies Kitty's swollen ankle, shaking his head sympathetically.

COLUMBO

You shouldn't be walking on that, if you can help it.

Kitty acknowledges neither the remark nor its maker. The elevator reaches the sixth floor, and she gets off. Columbo looks like he'll never really get used to the coldness of some people.

INT. MAX'S WAITING ROOM - MORNING

Deserted, silent; all interior doors closed. Through the glass door to the corridor Columbo is seen approaching. One glance inside, and he stops dead. This is a dentist's office?! He takes out the dental-appointment card Spinola gave him and checks it to make sure he's come to the right place; then quietly enters the waiting room and looks around in something approaching awe. Suddenly, the silence is punctured by a woman's ungodly shriek of pain, followed by:

MAX'S VOICE

Is that where it hurts?

INT. EXAMINING ROOM - STARTING CLOSE ON VANESSA WALKER

a Rhodaesque TV-star who can be funny even when it hurts.

VANESSA

Gee, I'm not sure. Jab it again.

As Max laughs appreciatively, widen to include him -- looking his usual ebullient self -- and also Vanessa's husband, Craig Jordan, a failed fashion designer whose all-embracing hostility comes veiled in see-through humor.

MAX

(to Craig)

She's got a little pocket there. Take a second to clean it out.

*These two
are real
and add
nothing to
the story.*

CONTINUED

VANESSA

(horrified)

Without novacaine?

MAX

I thought you were in a hurry...

CRAIG

She is! Come on, Vanessa, you know
Kitty isn't the kind of agent you
can keep waiting.

(to Max)

Go ahead, she can take it, she's
a Star.

INT. WAITING ROOM - ANGLE ON COLUMBO

as he reaches the closed door to the examining room.
Through the louvres comes:

MAX'S VOICE

I can't bear to make a star
suffer...

INT. EXAMINING ROOM

MAX

... especially one who also
happens to be my wife's hottest
client.

CRAIG

That's not who I heard was your
wife's hottest client.

This bit of bitchery earns Craig a sharp sideglance from
Vanessa, but Max appears unfazed by it as he moves to
prepare a shot of novacaine.

INT. WAITING ROOM - ON COLUMBO

debating whether to make his presence known. Slowly, he
raises his hand and with the knuckle of his forefinger
gives a single, almost inaudible tap on the door.

MAX'S VOICE

Open.

Columbo opens the door.

INT. EXAMINING ROOM

Max, poised to give Vanessa her shot, looks up, startled: his 'open' -- as Columbo now sees -- had been a command to Vanessa to open her mouth.

COLUMBO

(mortified)

Oh, I'm sorry, I thought you were talking to... Please, excuse me...!

MAX

(laughs graciously)

It's all right. Relax. You want a cup of coffee?

COLUMBO

Oh, no, sir, thanks all the same, but --

CRAIG

(cuts in)

'I never drink while on duty.'

COLUMBO

That's not what I was going to say, but -- you know, you're only about the second person who ever pegged me right off!

MAX

(too quickly)

I thought you were a comedy writer.

Max laughs a bit too loudly. Columbo gives him an odd little smile and comes in, producing his ID.

COLUMBO

No, sir. Lt. Columbo...

His face lights up as he gets his first glimpse of Vanessa -- who humorously has kept her mouth wide open throughout.

COLUMBO

Hey, look who it is! The Vanessa Walker Show -- right?

VANESSA

No autographs, please.

COLUMBO

Oh, I wouldn't think of it... at a time like this. Never miss your show, though.

CONTINUED

MAX

Who'd you want to see me about,
Lieutenant?

COLUMBO

(a pause)

No hurry, sir. I'll just wait out
here... out of your way.

(backing out into
the waiting room)

Nice meeting you, Miss Walker
... Mr. Walker.

VANESSA

Just for the record, Lieutenant,
my husband prefers to be called by
his maiden name.

COLUMBO

(going along with
the fun)

Oh. I'll remember that. What is
your maiden name, sir?

Vanessa bursts out laughing. Max breaks up. Craig guns
them both down with a single glower. Columbo quick closes
the door. Max poises the needle again:

MAX

As I was saying...

Vanessa opens her mouth and Max injects the novacaine.

ANOTHER ANGLE - MAX

as he moves to his counter and makes like he's checking
over Vanessa's chart and x-rays. Actually, his mind is
on Columbo; he keeps stealing little sideglances at the
door. After a bit -- a deliberately little bit -- he
turns to Vanessa.

MAX

Is that numb yet?

VANESSA

Are you crazy? You just gave it
to me!

Precisely the reaction Max anticipated.

MAX

Then I'll go see what he wants.
Take your time.

He hurries out, closing the door after him.

INT. MAX'S PRIVATE OFFICE

A beat, and then Max opens the door and ushers Columbo in. Columbo stops, looks around, at once impressed and incredulous. Max closes the door and goes and sits at his desk.

MAX

Sit down, Lieutenant -- and don't tell me you never saw a dentist's office like this because I already know you never saw a dentist's office like this.

Slowly, Columbo makes his way to the chair alongside Max's desk, sits down, still shaking his head at the splendor of it all.

COLUMBO

I never saw a dentist's office like this.

MAX

Listen -- it's all an ego thing. It's supposed to make me forget that I'm a second-class citizen. That's right, Lieutenant: a dentist is a second-class citizen. Be honest. Do you think of your dentist as a Doctor? Of course you don't. Nobody does. Nobody takes a dentist seriously -- until it's too late. Then they curse us for making them dentures instead of miracles. Is it any wonder that the dental profession has the highest divorce and suicide rate?

COLUMBO

I don't know, sir. Lately I seem to be hearing that about every profession.

MAX

(laughs; then)

So. What's your problem?

Columbo hands him the dental-appointment card.

COLUMBO

Did he keep this appointment with you last night?

Max barely glances at the card before handing it back.

CONTINUED

MAX

Amazingly enough, yes.

COLUMBO

Why 'amazing' -- if you don't mind my asking.

MAX

Ask me anything you want, Lieutenant. All I meant was, when it comes to taking care of their million-dollar mouths these stars are no better than your average citizen. Getting them into that chair is -- you should excuse the expression -- like pulling teeth. Now -- if you don't mind my asking, why are you looking for Jimmy De Paul?

COLUMBO

We're not looking for him, sir. He was found this morning in his car up on Mulholland.

Max gasps, clutches his chest, falls back in his chair. Columbo springs up.

COLUMBO

Can I get you something?

MAX

No... I'll be all right... I didn't mean to scare you... I'm sorry, Lieutenant... just give me a second to get it through my head.

COLUMBO

Take your time, sir.

MAX

I can still see him sitting in that chair... so alive. That was his great thing, you know. That trick of seeming more alive than the next guy. Only your really big stars have it. And now it's over. Just like that. One minute my wife's hottest client... and the next minute, her coldest.

(looks quickly
at Columbo)

I didn't mean that to sound funny...

COLUMBO

It didn't, sir.

CONTINUED (2)

MAX

That boy was like a son to Kitty
and me...

(suddenly)

Oh my God! If she hears about
this on the news, she'll have a
heart attack!

He reaches for the phone, but Columbo stays his hand.

COLUMBO

Please, sir... if it could wait
just another minute or so? It
won't be on the news for a while
yet anyway.

MAX

Are you kidding? A top-flight
Hollywood death...?

COLUMBO

We get really great cooperation
from the news-media, sir. They
always respect our policy of
notifying next of kin first.
Then there's the fact that -- well,
I don't know your wife, of course,
but if she's anything like mine,
sir, the worst thing you can do to
her is to give her bad news over
the phone.

MAX

You're right. Thanks, Lieutenant.
I wasn't thinking.

(a look)

There's a very sensitive man
underneath that... surface you're
wearing.

COLUMBO

Listen, I'm only sorry I didn't
stop to think that Mr. De Paul
might be more to you than just
another million-dollar mouth.

MAX

(nods mournfully)

Now closed forever.

COLUMBO

Anyway, what I wanted to ask you,
sir, was --

CONTINUED (3)

MAX

(overriding)

Did you know he was *only* 28 years old?

COLUMBO

In that neighborhood.

MAX

It's funny: you can read all the reports that say that more and more men his age -- even younger; children, even -- are being struck down by heart attacks...

He looks at Columbo whose expression remains unchanged, and goes on quickly and smoothly:

MAX

... or cancer, or -- you name it! But when death takes a young person who you happen to know personally... you wanna cry, 'No! There must be some mistake!'

(a sudden laugh
of chagrin)

Do you hear the way I'm talkin'? Like you got nothing better to do than sit and listen?

COLUMBO

Oh, don't stop on my account, sir. So long as you're not worried about Miss Walker's novacaine wearing off...

MAX

(gasps)

I forgot all about her! Let me go finish...

He heads for the door. Columbo moves with him:

COLUMBO

Do you know where Mr. De Paul went last night after he left here?

MAX

(stops)

How would I know that?

COLUMBO

He might've mentioned.

CONTINUED (4)

MAX

He mentioned where he was supposed
to go.

COLUMBO

I'll settle for that.

MAX

The airport. What he was doing up
on Mulholland Drive we'll never
know.

COLUMBO

Sure we will. Did he leave here
by himself?

MAX

I don't know.

COLUMBO

You didn't see him leave?

MAX

I left first. I had to get to
Vegas, and I was already late.
So Jimmy said, 'Go ahead, Max,
I'll remember to lock up.' See,
he was waiting for his brother
who was driving him to the airport.

COLUMBO

Would your nurse know whether --

MAX

(cuts in)

What nurse? The hours these
crazies make me keep, go find me
a nurse who'll --

He is interrupted by a pounding on the door.

MAX

Who is it?

CRAIG'S VOICE

Who the hell do you think it is?

MAX

Be right with you, baby.

CRAIG'S VOICE

You've got thirty seconds -- then
I take my wife's gums elsewhere!

CONTINUED (5)

MAX

He's only kidding, Lieutenant.
His wife's gums belong to my wife.
I'm kidding, too. So, go ahead;
you were saying...?

COLUMBO

Then Mr. De Paul was alone here
-- after you left, I mean.

MAX

When I left. After I left... who
knows?

COLUMBO

I meant 'when,' sir.

MAX

(laughs and opens
the door)

I know. I'm always doing that.

INT. WAITING ROOM - ANGLE ON PRIVATE OFFICE
as Max emerges with Columbo right on his heels.

COLUMBO

Doing what, sir?

MAX

Making those little, unnecessary
distinctions. My wife says I
treat words as if each one was
a tooth and God forbid anybody
should put a molar where they
oughta put a canine.

(stops abruptly)

It just occurred to me: Why are
you askin' me all these questions?

COLUMBO

Well, partly because you say things
I don't get, right-off.

MAX

(laughs)

I mean about last night.

(lowers voice)

Wouldn't Rennie be the logical
person to ask?

COLUMBO

Rennie?

CONTINUED

MAX

His brother.

COLUMBO

Oh.

(quick checks
notebook)

Lorenzo.

MAX

Nobody calls a 16-year-old kid
Lorenzo. Then you've already
talked to him?

COLUMBO

Not yet, sir. As of right before
I came up here, we still haven't
been able to locate Lorenzo.

MAX

(concerned)

Where could he have gone?

(abruptly)

Listen, I wish I could talk to you
more; but I'm afraid Miss Walker
will need another shot.(shows Columbo
the door)

If you don't mind...?

COLUMBO

(starts out)

Not at all, sir. Thanks for talking
as much as you did.

(stops and turns)

Just one more question? It's a
personal one.

MAX

Yes?

COLUMBO

What made you think Mr. De Paul died
a natural death?

MAX

(as though mystified
himself)I don't know, really. I guess,
being a doctor, it's not in my
nature to think of anything
unnatural.

CONTINUED (2)

COLUMBO
 (somewhat ambiguously)
 Very good, sir.

He goes quickly. Max watches him go, his smile fading, then turns toward the examining room.

INT. AUTOPSY ROOM IN CITY MORGUE - DAY - STARTING CLOSE ON SLAB

with Jimmy De Paul's body, covered with a sheet; and widening to see Dr. Johnson, the medical examiner, a black giant with a style that can only be described as theatrical; and, finally, Columbo, who's waiting for the doctor to finish his report. After a few moments, the doctor pockets his pen, looks at Columbo, and pronounces:

JOHNSON
 This man's heart did not attack him.

COLUMBO
 I knew you were going to say that.
 (waits)
 Not in those words, of course.
 (gives in)
 Okay, doc -- what did?

JOHNSON
 What killed him was a kind of
 medicine you take to prevent heart
 attacks.

COLUMBO
 Digitalis?

JOHNSON
 In its pure form, it's deadly.
 (nose a trifle bent)
 How'd you know? Do you have a
 heart condition?

COLUMBO
 Me? No. My heart's as sound as
 my mind, God bless 'em both. How
 I know is, I saw all those movies
 where the husband's over here
 graspin' for the little bottle and
 the wife's over there pourin' it
 in the geraniums.
 (a beat)
 Now and then the wife grasped and
 the husband poured.

Johnson chuckles and hands the report over:

CONTINUED

JOHNSON

The interesting thing is that there is no evidence of heart disease.

COLUMBO

(perusing report)

No, huh?

JOHNSON

Even if there was -- it's not likely he'd have taken an overdose.

Columbo looks up, arrested.

JOHNSON

Minimum fatal dose is three milligrams, and my tests indicate there was five times that amount in the body.

COLUMBO

How would you say it got in?

JOHNSON

I'd have to say orally. No marks on the body. Speaking of which -- I don't know if this means anything, but it might be good for a laugh: He had his undershorts on backwards.

COLUMBO

You mean inside-out?

JOHNSON

No. Backwards.

COLUMBO

You work in a place like this long enough -- I guess anything's good for a laugh. About this overdose: How long would 15 milligrams take to kill him?

JOHNSON

Almost instantaneous.

COLUMBO

Then it couldn't have been given to him before he left the house.

JOHNSON

He never would have made it to his car.

CONTINUED (2)

COLUMBO

On his own two feet, that is.

He starts toward the door.

JOHNSON

You want my theory on this?

COLUMBO

(stops)

Suicide?

JOHNSON

Makes more sense than murder
-- when you think about it.

COLUMBO

When you think about it, doc,
anything makes more sense than
murder. That's why I never cease
to be amazed...

He shakes his head, resumes; Johnson moves with him to
the door.

JOHNSON

How in the world would you get a
fatal dose of digitalis into a
man's mouth while he's driving a
car?

COLUMBO

(stops; thinks)

You couldn't stick it in a bubble
gum or something? My wife's forever
forcing unknown goodies in my mouth
while my eyes are on the road.

JOHNSON

Well, I doubt if chewing gum would
disguise the taste of raw digitalis
-- but then, I've never tasted it
myself. I'll have to conduct a
test... if I can find a volunteer.

He looks sidewise at Columbo, who exits fast.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE AUTOPSY ROOM - ANGLE ON COLUMBO

as he exits autopsy room and heads hurriedly for street-
exit. Spinola intercepts him.

CONTINUED

SPINOLA

Lieutenant...? We found the kid brother.

He points off; Columbo looks and sees:

COLUMBO'S POINT OF VIEW - RENNIE

seated on a hard bench, alone, his hands in his lap, his head lowered, not moving a muscle, not making a sound. It's a heartbreaking thing to see. Over this:

SPINOLA (off)

He was at the airport. He couldn't find his brother anywhere so he figured maybe he'd got word the airport was open again, and gone out there.

BACK TO SCENE

COLUMBO

What did you tell him?

SPINOLA

I told him it looked like a coronary.

His expression adds 'what else could I say?' Columbo nods understandingly, gives him a 'wait here' sign.

ANGLE - RENNIE AND COLUMBO

as Columbo approaches.

COLUMBO

Mr. De Paul?

Rennie looks up, but says nothing.

COLUMBO

(producing ID)

Lt. Columbo. Mind if I sit for a minute?

Rennie looks away, remains silent. Columbo starts to sit down, but instead:

COLUMBO

Maybe we'll go get a cup of coffee? There's a place right down the street.

CONTINUED

RENNIE

I can't remember what to do.

Columbo doesn't quite know what the boy means. He sits down, waits for him to go on. After a few moments:

RENNIE

When my father died, Jimmy knew exactly what to do.

COLUMBO

Oh, you mean arrangements... things like that.

RENNIE

I don't know where he found the undertaker. I think, in the Yellow Pages. But that was in New York. We were still living in New York then, me and Jimmy.

COLUMBO

You have relatives there?

RENNIE

We didn't have no relatives. My father's people died when he was little, and my mother's people never came over. Jimmy was gonna try and track them down when he got to Sicily. I was supposed to go over and join him, next week, when school's out. He wouldn't let me leave school even one week early. He could be a drag sometimes. A real pain in the ass. Like when we got home from the airport last night.

COLUMBO

What happened?

RENNIE

They said they'd call us if the fog cleared up, so, you know, stay close to the phone? But he wanted to go out. So, okay, I said I'd stay close to the phone and if they called, I'd call him. So around one-thirty, they call -- no more fog, we're takin' off in an hour -- and I call him up and there's no answer. Now, I

CONTINUED (2)

RENNIE (cont'd)

know he's there, right? -- because where else would he be? So I go over there and I ring the doorbell and nobody answers. Then I see his car's not there. So I go, 'Okay, where the heck is he?' At this point I'm only bugged, you know? Like, if he's gonna say one place and then go another, at least let me know -- right? So I figure, maybe he called the airport and got the word himself and that's where he went. So that's where I go. And he's not there and nobody's heard from him and what am I supposed to do -- go lie down in front of the plane? In the old days there was six or seven chicks I could've called and he would've been with one of them. But those days are gone. Gone are the days... Now it's gettin' light, and I'm not bugged anymore. I'm just, you know... worried. So I call his business manager, but he don't know nothin'. Finally I go home... he's still not there. I go again to her house... still nobody answers the door. I go back to the airport ... and the cops are lookin' for me... and that one over there tells me...

(breaks off; fights
back the tears)

A real pain in the ass.

COLUMBO

(after a moment)

What about this business manager?

RENNIE

What about him?

COLUMBO

Wouldn't he be the logical one to take care of the arrangements? That way you could be with some friends.

RENNIE

I had a teacher in grammar school named Columbo. He said he was related to a famous singer. But I never heard of him.

CONTINUED (3)

COLUMBO

He was before your time. Come on, I'll drive you home; while you're calling your friends I'll fry us some eggs. I make 'em with hot red pepper and a little burned around the edges.

RENNIE

(almost smiles,
but)

No. I'm stayin' right here.

COLUMBO

Who's this business manager? We'll get him down here.

RENNIE

Forget him! Jimmy couldn't stand the sight of him. Look, you wanna be helpful? Go away and let me think.

COLUMBO

You're a pretty good pain in the ass yourself, you know that?

Spontaneously, Rennie laughs, but cuts it off real quick. It's as if he knows the risk of allowing himself to feel any emotion but anger.

RENNIE

I bet they don't even have a copy of the Yellow Pages in this place.

COLUMBO

(calls)

Spinola? Get the Yellow Pages, will you?

ON SPINOLA

He holds for a moment, dismayed, then turns and wanders off.

BACK TO COLUMBO AND RENNIE

A beat.

COLUMBO

Mr. De Paul... I have to ask you questions.

CONTINUED

RENNIE

People only call kids Mister when they're feeling sorry for them.

COLUMBO

You want me to not feel sorry for you? Don't confuse sympathy with pity.

RENNIE

Okay. Don't mind me. I'm just lookin' for things to get mad at. Jimmy says gettin' mad keeps you from gettin' crazy.

COLUMBO

Where did you call your brother last night?

RENNIE

(evasive)

Just a number.

COLUMBO

You said you went there twice; to 'her house,' you said.

RENNIE

I told you -- he wasn't there.

COLUMBO

Nobody answered the phone, nobody answered the door, therefore he wasn't there. If that's how you add things up it's no wonder your brother wouldn't let you miss even a week of school. Now, come on -- whose house?

RENNIE

Look -- she wasn't just another chick to him. He was gonna marry her -- don't ask me why! I think she's cold, man. But he didn't want anybody to know about them because she was still with her husband. He didn't want people laughin' at the guy, makin' the horns behind his back. You think just because he was a movie star he didn't have any respect for anybody? Any feelings about what's right and wrong? He wasn't

CONTINUED (2)

RENNIE (cont'd)

some studio stud, man! He was a man! My brother was a man! Now if I wouldn't blow it for him when he was alive, do you really expect me to do it now that he's --
 (as though shot
 in the belly)

Holy Mary Mother of God my brother is dead!

He doubles over, rocks back and forth, his arms pressing his stomach like he's trying to force the pain up into his throat and out his mouth. But it won't come; he cannot cry. Columbo watches until he's convinced of this, then lays a firm hand on the boy's shoulder, stilling him.

COLUMBO

Your brother didn't have a coronary. He was murdered.

Slowly -- very, very slowly, Rennie turns his head and looks at Columbo.

EXT. THE BERGMAN HOUSE - DAY - ANGLE ON COLUMBO'S CAR

as it pulls into the driveway. Columbo gets out and walks to the front door; rings the doorbell. From an intercom imbedded in the wall alongside the door comes:

KITTY'S VOICE

Who is it?

Startled, Columbo looks this way and that, finally spots the source of Kitty's voice. He goes close, reflexively producing his ID and sort of holding it up to the device.

COLUMBO

Lt. Columbo, m'am.

(a beat)

Can you hear me?

KITTY'S VOICE

Come on in, the door's open.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - ANGLE ON COLUMBO

as he enters, looks around, sees no one. He closes the door; waits. From upstairs:

CONTINUED

KITTY'S VOICE

I'm up here. Would you mind coming up? I've got a problem.

INT. KITTY'S BEDROOM - DAY - STARTING CLOSE ON KITTY'S PROPPED-UP FOOT

The ankle has really blown up; it's also been bandaged. We widen to see Kitty is recling on the bed finishing that fat screenplay and nibbling on something from a bowl on the bed-table. There are cracks in the dam of her composure.

ANGLE - TO INCLUDE COLUMBO

as he enters, smiles in instant recognition and, almost at the same time, frowns in admonishment.

COLUMBO

I told you it would get worse if you kept using it.

Kitty smiles uncomprehendingly.

COLUMBO

You don't remember. We met on the elevator this morning when I was going up to see your husband. Of course, I didn't know then that the two of you were even acquainted.

KITTY

(a measuring look)

What did you want to see me about?

COLUMBO

You mean your husband hasn't told you yet? Oh, gee, m'am, maybe I'd better... Is anybody else home? A maid, or something?

KITTY

I have as much luck with maids as my husband has with nurses, and for the same reason: he bullies them. I know Jimmy De Paul is dead -- if that's what this is in reference to.

COLUMBO

(a whew of relief)

Glad I didn't have to be the one to break the news to you. Your husband was sure you'd have a heart attack.

CONTINUED

Columbo's irony is not lost on Kitty. She smiles sardonically:

KITTY

The heart indeed is weak, but the flesh is steel. I grew up in the film industry.

COLUMBO

You did? I didn't even know that. Mind if I pull up a chair?

KITTY

(indicates photo
on bed-table)

This was my father. I'm sure you remember him.

COLUMBO

Like it was yesterday. Wait a minute, wasn't he married to --
(snaps his finger)

My feet are killing me.
(goes to get a
chair)

I can't think of her name but I know she was pretty big herself, wasn't she? It must be something -- both parents big stars. It's a miracle you're not one yourself.

KITTY

I was adopted. Please don't sit too close to the bed.

COLUMBO

(quickly dragging
chair away)

Oh, of course, sorry.

KITTY

Nothing personal. I was sick in bed a lot when I was a kid; some stranger was always sitting vigil. That's far enough, Lieutenant. I didn't mean you had to sit in the bathroom.

COLUMBO

(glancing into
bathroom)

Listen, it'd be a pleasure to sit in a bathroom like that. Is that a color TV in there?

CONTINUED (2)

KITTY

My husband told me you were trying to trace Jimmy's movements, after he left the office.

COLUMBO

That's right, m'am. Do you happen to know where he went after he left here?

Kitty starts to deny it, but then thinks better of it.

KITTY

Back to the airport.

COLUMBO

(as though merely confirming)

That's International Airport?

KITTY

Yes. Of course.

COLUMBO

Did you drive him there?

KITTY

I play many roles for my clients; Chauffeur is not one of them.

COLUMBO

He was more than just a client, though... wasn't he?

KITTY

Every client is 'more than just a client.'

COLUMBO

Just to satisfy my curiosity, would you mind telling me what's in that bowl?

KITTY

Eggplant jerky. Help yourself.

COLUMBO

Oh, no, thanks. Not because it's purple. I just haven't had any appetite since I saw that coat caught in the door. In other words, he said he was going to the airport, and you took his word for it. What time did he leave?

CONTINUED (3)

KITTY

(cautious)
I'm not sure. A little after
twelve, I think.

COLUMBO

He would've gotten here a little
before twelve, according to his
brother. So he was only here a
short while.

KITTY

(a larger meaning)
He was only here a short while.

COLUMBO

Wait a second -- I think I've
got it! Your husband got home
-- what? An hour later?

KITTY

Approximately.

COLUMBO

Was there some kind of emergency?

KITTY

Not that I know of.

COLUMBO

The reason I asked -- most people,
when they go to Las Vegas, stay
the night.

KITTY

My husband doesn't like sleeping
in strange beds.

COLUMBO

That's nice to hear, nowadays.

(a beat)

Then that's it! He didn't leave
to go to the airport. He left
because he knew your husband
would soon be home.

KITTY

Are you trying to make this sound
like an item for Miss Rona?

COLUMBO

No, m'am. I've never even met
Miss --

CONTINUED (4)

KITTY

(overriding)

Jimmy De Paul was a client and a friend, and, as such, had every right to be in this house at any hour of the day or night.

COLUMBO

And in any room, I'm sure! No, m'am, honest, I'm just trying to figure out why a man would a) head for an airport that's still socked-in and b) head in the exact opposite direction.

KITTY

Well, you'll just have to figure it out for yourself.

COLUMBO

Oh, I will, m'am. You're not sore at me...?

KITTY

(laughs)

Would you like to meet Miss Rona?

COLUMBO

Tell you the truth, m'am, you Hollywood folks always make me feel like my good suit is in the cleaners -- when I've got it on.

KITTY

I see what you mean.

COLUMBO

So after he left you went right back to bed.

KITTY

I went back to my reading.

COLUMBO

You didn't go out at all?

KITTY

Believe it or not, Lieutenant, we folks rarely go out after midnight... unless there's a full moon.

COLUMBO

You weren't here when his brother called.

CONTINUED (5)

KITTY

Of course I was here! I had the phone turned off.

COLUMBO

I mean when he called at the door.

KITTY

Oh, is that who that was? I never answer the door at night if I'm alone in the house.

COLUMBO

No, this was after your husband got home. He saw the car out there. Believe me, I went over this with him very carefully; several times.

KITTY

He must have been asleep by then.

COLUMBO

Oh, no, m'am, not him, he's a very wide-awake boy.

KITTY

I meant my husband.

COLUMBO

Maybe he played Chauffeur for Jimmy De Paul.

Kitty tries to look incredulous.

COLUMBO

Somebody did.

KITTY

Apparently, you're convinced of that.

COLUMBO

Yes, m'am. The coat caught in the door, no personal effects on the body, the underwear on backwards -- take my word for it, m'am, Jimmy De Paul was not driving that car. He didn't even know he was in it! I think the last thing he knew, he was in somebody's bed, safe and sound as a --

Kitty interrupts him with a noise that sounds like a tape-recorded scream played backwards. Then she gets off the

CONTINUED (6)

bed as though it has suddenly become the most unbearable place in the world, and hobbles over to the chair next to the bureau. She sits there, hands folded in lap, face lowered, struggling to keep from bursting wide open. Columbo knows this is not the time to ask Are you all right? or offer to get a drink or to say or do any of the things people only say and do in television shows. After a while Kitty looks over at him. She looks like a very old little girl.

KITTY

I saw my father die the same way.
I was reading to him because his
eyes were tired and then my throat
got dry so I went in the bathroom
to get a drink of water. By the
time I reached him, he was dead.
Everybody said it was the best
kind of heart attack, because it
doesn't leave you a vegetable.
Excuse me?

She covers her mouth with her hand and heads for the bathroom, limping badly. Columbo moves to help her but she gestures him away.

EXT. BERGMAN HOUSE - DAY - ON MAX

as he rushes from his car to the front door, his key at the ready. He stops, suddenly, as he notices the other car in the driveway. He seems to know instinctively whose car it is.

INT. KITTY'S BEDROOM - DAY - ON COLUMBO

hanging close to the bathroom in case Kitty needs help. A beat, and she opens the door, wearing the anguished look of a person who needs to throw up, but can't. Simultaneously, there's a bounding up the stairs in a violent hurry, and Max bursts into the room. One look at Kitty's condition, and he looks at Columbo as if the man were a monster.

MAX

You told her? After I warned
you about her heart?

COLUMBO

(dismayed)

Told her what, sir?

MAX

What I just heard on the news!

CONTINUED

Kitty's expression makes it clear that Columbo did not tell her. So Max tells her!

MAX

The police think Jimmy was murdered!

In fact, the news has a bracing effect on Kitty -- due to her total conviction that Jimmy died of a heart attack. She looks at Columbo with a faint smile on her face.

KITTY

Tell the police they're wrong, Lieutenant.

Calmly, she goes and climbs back on the bed and props her foot up again. Columbo sort of follows her.

COLUMBO

I'm afraid not, m'am. It was just supposed to look like he had a heart attack.

(a pause)

But he wasn't supposed to have it here...

(looks at Max)

... right?

MAX

Here?

(laughs)

Am I going crazy, or what?

(to Kitty)

You want to tell me what he's talking about?

KITTY

(with a terrible kind of calm)

His coat got caught in the door.

MAX

I am going crazy.

KITTY

(opens drawer of bed-table)

Also, you forgot his -- what did you call them, Lieutenant?

Columbo peeks in drawer and sees Jimmy's wallet, keys and loose change.

COLUMBO

Personal effects, m'am.

CONTINUED (2)

KITTY

(shuts drawer; back
to Max)

And you put his underwear on
inside-out.

COLUMBO

Backwards.

Several beats.

MAX

Tell me, Lieutenant, what kind
of offense is moving a dead body?
I ask you this because I hereby
assume full responsibility, and
I want to know how much trouble
I'm in.

COLUMBO

Hard to say, sir. Moving dead
body. I guess it would depend
on intent. If you knew, for
instance, that Deceased had
been murdered...

MAX

To know that, I'd have to've
been the one who murdered him!
And I was three-hundred miles
away, don't forget. So, all
we're talking about here is
moving a body presumed dead from
a heart attack.

(to Kitty)

You want me to tell him why I
moved it?

KITTY

Would you, Max?

(gets up)

I think I can throw up now.

She goes into the bathroom and closes the door. Max
turns back to Columbo.

MAX

Because by the time I got home
-- and believe me, I was off
the ground before she hung up!
-- it was too late to save
anything but my wife's skin.
Go hate me for it. But before
you start making...

(takes Columbo's
elbow; drops voice)

CONTINUED (3)

MAX (cont'd)

Let's step outside: she can't do that with strangers in the room.

(starts out)

Before you start making judgments, Lieutenant, try putting yourself in my place. A man has a heart attack while he's in bed with your wife -- that's bad enough. But then -- she can't pick up the phone and call a doctor? How you gonna explain that?

UPSTAIRS HALL - ON MAX AND COLUMBO

as they emerge from bedroom and, at Max's prodding, move on to the stairs.

COLUMBO

You could say she was in shock.

MAX

Damn right she was in shock! Total shock! But do you think the people in this town will buy that? They'll hound her to death. And for what? Will it bring Jimmy De Paul back?

COLUMBO

I'll tell you what bothers me, though.

MAX

Come down to the den, where you can talk free.

(starts down)

You got time for a couple beers -- or do you have to get back to work?

COLUMBO

I am at work, sir.

ENTRANCE HALL - ANGLE ON COLUMBO AND MAX

as they descend stairs.

MAX

So we'll make it another time. Go ahead -- what bothers you?

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

You said you were 'off the ground
before she hung up.'

MAX

So I exaggerate.

COLUMBO

Oh, that's not my point, sir.

MAX

Then why bring it up?

COLUMBO

Because it means she called you
in Las Vegas.

MAX

Of course she called me! At a
time like that -- who's she
supposed to call?

COLUMBO

A doctor.

Max stops. Columbo continues on to the front door and
exits without a backward glance.

ANOTHER ANGLE - MAX

He looks worried. Slowly, he turns to go back upstairs.
He stops, startled. Kitty is standing at the top of the
stairs. Her face is expressionless; her voice toneless.

KITTY

How did you do it, Max?

MAX

(a sad little smile)

'How'? Not 'why?'

KITTY

I know why.

Max starts up the stairs. Slowly. Very slowly.

MAX

Tell me. Tell me why.

KITTY

You knew I was going to leave
you. You were afraid I'd take
my clients with me.

CONTINUED

MAX

~~_____~~
~~_____~~
~~_____~~
~~_____~~

You're right about the first part: I knew you were going to leave me. Those other times... those other men... you just put on weight. This time I put on weight. At my age, that can be very dangerous. Whatever's causing it has to be cut out.

KITTY

You frighten me, Max.

Max stops one step below her.

MAX

You're afraid of anyone who might actually love you. That's why you prefer people who only want to use you. You feel safe with the users. Users can blow a deal, but they can't break your heart.

KITTY

It's been years since we stood close enough to touch each other.

MAX

Have I ever complained?
(bursting)

God in heaven! Can you really believe that I'd commit murder to protect my practice? Yes! You can! Kill to keep a client, kill to get a part, kill for money, fame, fun -- that you can accept! That you've seen in the movies! How many movies do they make where somebody's crazy enough to kill for love? Ah, Kitty. What a dark place your world is. A screening room... where you never see the light of day.

(pleading)

Come out, Kitty. Just a little. Just enough to touch. Touch me,

CONTINUED (2)

MAX (cont'd)

Kitty. Please? Don't be afraid.
What's to be afraid of?

KITTY

Frankly, Max, I'm afraid I'll
push you down the stairs.

Max turns his face as if he'd been slapped. Kitty goes
back into her bedroom and closes the door. And locks it.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Columbo, waiting for something, looks like he's just a
little bit discomfited by all these cold, efficient,
all-knowing machines. Presently, a young Policewoman
brings the computer print-out that Columbo's been waiting
for. It's one hell of a long piece of paper -- and it
has only one name on it. Columbo gives a long, incredulous
look, then addresses the computers.

COLUMBO

One name? That's all you could
come up with? In this great big
state there's only one person
who combines two simple character-
istics?

POLICEWOMAN

The other day a man from Homicide
needed a female Caucasian with a
background in glass-blowing who'd
been married to a midget and would
only commit murder on February
29th.

(a beat)

Do you know how many names we came
up with?

COLUMBO

(starts out)

I don't want to hear about it.

(stops)

How many?

POLICEWOMAN

None.

COLUMBO

(exiting)

You made my day.

EXT. THE GOLDEN YEARS - EVENING

A shabby but clean little retirement home overlooking the Hollywood Freeway. Establishing with Columbo's car parked in the driveway.

INT. THE GOLDEN YEARS - VISITORS PARLOR - EVENING

There's nobody around except Columbo, who has dozed off with his eyes open. He snaps to at the approach of the manager, an apple pie-faced woman who looks like she should be wearing one of Jane Darwell's old aprons.

MANAGER

Sorry it took so long, Lieutenant
... and then to have to disappoint
you.

COLUMBO

(concerned)
Something wrong?

MANAGER

Oh, my, no! Nothing ever goes
wrong in The Golden Years. It's
simply that Dr. Granville can't
see you just now.

(a pause)

He's napping.

Columbo knows a poor liar when he meets one.

COLUMBO

He doesn't want to see me.

MANAGER

You must understand, Lieutenant:
our guests are not the kind you
find in other retirement homes.
These gentlemen are here because
they... outgrew... their former
places of residence.

COLUMBO

Tell him if he doesn't see me
I'll go through his parole
officer.

(grins)

I won't -- but tell him anyway.

EXT. GROUNDS OF THE GOLDEN YEARS - EVENING - ON DR.
GRANVILLE

sitting in his wheelchair in his own private corner of

CONTINUED

the place. He's a regular old grumpy loveable Gillespie.

GRANVILLE

Still hounding me to death, eh,
Lieutenant?

ANGLE - TO INCLUDE COLUMBO AND MANAGER

as they approach.

MANAGER

Stop that now. The Lieutenant
never even heard of you until
today. He got you out of a
computer.

GRANVILLE

Leave us alone, Nosey-Parker.

The manager leaves in low dudgeon.

ANOTHER ANGLE - COLUMBO AND DR. GRANVILLE

GRANVILLE

If you want me to look you in the
eye, sit down. My uppers drop
when I tilt my head back.

There's nothing for Columbo to sit on, so he hunkers down
on his heels.

COLUMBO

I'm going to come right to the
point, sir. I want you to tell
me how to commit a murder.

GRANVILLE

(whispers)

You don't happen to have a cigar,
do you?

Columbo gives him a cigar, starts searching for matches.

GRANVILLE

Never mind. I'm not allowed to
smoke. This is for re-sale.

(puts cigar away)

You want me to tell you how to
commit a murder. Wouldn't you
be wiser to ask a man who got
away with it?

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

They're pretty hard to find, sir.
Especially if you're looking for
one who also happens to be a
dentist.

GRANVILLE

Ah. I see. We want to do it
while we have her in our chair.

COLUMBO

It's a him.

GRANVILLE

Immaterial -- unless it's some
kind of kinky sex-crime...?

COLUMBO

Oh, no, sir. A perfectly normal
murder.

GRANVILLE

(a hrumph)

I should hope so.

(a beat)

Of course we don't want him to
expire while he's in our chair.

COLUMBO

I should hope not.

GRANVILLE

(thinks for a
moment)

We'll give him two shots of
novacaine -- only the second
one won't be novacaine. It'll
be a slow-acting poison.

COLUMBO

(a gentle reminder)

There'll be an autopsy, sir.

GRANVILLE

Do you mean to say that in all
these years they haven't come
up with an autopsy-proof poison?

COLUMBO

They've been busy putting men on
the moon.

CONTINUED (2)

GRANVILLE

And of course they'll trace his movements, find he's been to our office...

COLUMBO

... and know in a flash how the poison was administered.

GRANVILLE

What we want is a method that'll make them scratch their heads and say, 'How did he do it?'

COLUMBO

May I make a suggestion, sir?

GRANVILLE

I've never heard a man ask that question and then take No for an answer. Go ahead.

COLUMBO

Digitalis.

GRANVILLE

(incredulous)

Is that what your suspect used?

COLUMBO

(nods)

Pure form. Fifteen milligrams.

GRANVILLE

Death would be instantaneous!

COLUMBO

That's the problem. It wasn't. Victim died some four hours later. Excuse me, sir, but I gotta stand up a little, or this is it for life.

Columbo unbends, tries to stretch the kinks out, which is not easy. Granville suddenly gets up and starts pacing and pondering. Columbo sees no reason why he shouldn't borrow the man's chair, so he does. After a bit, Granville stops, holds, his face lit up.

GRANVILLE

Have you ever taken those cold capsules you only take every twelve hours?

CONTINUED (3)

COLUMBO

I've seen 'em advertised...

GRANVILLE

Time-release capsules. They're coated, so they'll dissolve gradually, over a period of several hours. You follow?

COLUMBO

Coat the digitalis?

GRANVILLE

With medical gel.

COLUMBO

How do you get him to take it? Tell him it's a pain-killer, for when the novacaine wears off?

GRANVILLE

See how your mind works? That's because you're not a murderer. No, Lieutenant, I can't take the chance that he'll go home and follow my instructions. I have to make dead certain that my little time-bomb is in him when he walks out of my office.

COLUMBO

How about telling him he's got a tooth that's gotta be filled immediately or the nerve's gonna die. A dentist said that to me once. ■

GRANVILLE

Yes, go on...

COLUMBO

Well, the tooth didn't hurt so I figured he was just hustlin' me, but the very next day --

GRANVILLE

(cuts in)

Never mind that. Go on with whatever it was you were about to say.

CONTINUED (4)

COLUMBO

Oh. Well, you convince him he's got this endangered tooth and then you drill a hole in it the size of a nostril...

GRANVILLE

Actually, it wouldn't have to be a very big hole at all.

COLUMBO

Then, instead of filling it with the usual stuff, you stick your little time-bomb in there, cement it over, and send him happily on his way.

GRANVILLE

(a wistful sigh)

Why didn't I think of that.

COLUMBO

You did, sir.

GRANVILLE

I mean forty years ago.

INT. CITY MORGUE - NIGHT - CLOSE ON DENTAL X-RAYS

bearing the name Jimmy De Paul and marked Post Mortem.

JOHNSON (o.c.)

One filling, Lieutenant, and much too small for our purposes. This chap had an exceptionally healthy mouth, for an actor.

ANGLE - TO INCLUDE JOHNSON AND COLUMBO

Columbo looks disappointed, but undaunted. He peers at the x-rays; points to a white blank space between two teeth, which has roots below it.

COLUMBO

What's this?

JOHNSON

A crown. X-ray can't penetrate the metal jacket.

(a beat)

It would help if we could compare these x-rays with a set taken while he was alive.

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

(doubtful)

You really think it would help?

JOHNSON

Not in the least. But if I know you, you'll get them anyway.

COLUMBO

Well, when you consider who our Number One Suspect is... it'll be interesting just to see if I can get them without a court order.

EXT. 9200 SUNSET BOULEVARD - NIGHT

It looks to be around 10 p.m. Establishing with Columbo's car parked on the side street.

INT. LOBBY OF 9200 SUNSET - NIGHT - ON COLUMBO

waiting for his elevator while the man at the night desk eyes him coldly. The elevator comes up. Columbo walks in -- and stops in surprise and concern when he sees who got on at the parking level: Vanessa Walker and husband Craig Jordan. Vanessa is holding a big towel clamped over her mouth.

COLUMBO

Miss Walker -- what happened to you?

INT. ELEVATOR

Craig punches the 'Close Door' button. Vanessa tells Columbo what happened -- but without removing the towel; hence he can't understand a word she's saying. He looks to her husband.

CRAIG

One of her front caps fell out.

Vanessa opens her fist, shows Columbo the cap, says something unintelligible.

COLUMBO

You don't have to be ashamed in front of me. I'll bet you look cute with a front tooth missing.

CONTINUED

CRAIG

She's not 'ashamed,' officer.
She's in agony. That six-hundred-dollar cap was covering a live tooth. Obviously, you've never had a cap-job.

COLUMBO

On my salary...?

CRAIG

Which we pay. And our best friend's murder is still unsolved.

COLUMBO

My condolences...

(a beat)

I know this is gonna sound dumb,
Mr. Jordan...

Craig's hostility does a slight nose-dive.

COLUMBO

(continuing)

... but is the agony because the tooth has gone bad?

CRAIG

The healthiest tooth in the world can't take cold night air if it's been ground down to the nerve, Lieutenant.

The elevator door opens. Craig exits and strides on ahead, in the direction of Max's office. Columbo holds the door for Vanessa. As she starts up, she accidentally drops the cap, which bounces out of sight.

COLUMBO

Don't panic. It's gotta be in here. You hold the door, m'am.

Vanessa holds the door open while Columbo searches for the cap. No sign of it. He gets down on his hands and knees, peers into the corners. Suddenly -- there it is. He picks it up between thumb and forefinger, delicately; studies it as he clambers to his feet and returns it to Vanessa. The towel muffles her profuse thanks.

INT. CORRIDOR - MOVING WITH COLUMBO AND VANESSA

as they head for Max's office.

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

Funny how a little thing like that
can cost an arm and a leg.

VANESSA

(muffled but audible)

It's the labor.

Just as they reach Max's office, Craig emerges, outraged.

CRAIG

He's not here!

Vanessa groans in exasperation and despair.

COLUMBO

How far would he go -- with the
door unlocked?

(to Vanessa)

Go get in the chair; I'll see if
he's in the bathroom.

MOVING SHOT - COLUMBO

heading down corridor in direction of men's room. As
he comes abreast of the elevator, Max emerges, stops
dead.

COLUMBO

Just the man Miss Walker wants to
see.

MAX

What do you want?

COLUMBO

That lady's in agony, sir. This
is no time to worry about me.

Max stands firm, waiting for his answer. Columbo grins
in friendly admonishment.

COLUMBO

I thought you couldn't bear to
make a star suffer...

A beat, and Max starts toward his office. Columbo falls
in step beside him.

COLUMBO

What I want, sir, is Jimmy De
Paul's dental x-rays. Am I
gonna need a court order?

CONTINUED

MAX

(laughs)
A court order? What for? I
have nothing to hide.

Max unconsciously picks up his pace, reaching his door several steps ahead of Columbo. But then he realizes what he has done, and stops, holds the door for Columbo.

INT. EXAMINING ROOM - NIGHT

Vanessa is in the chair. Craig is putting the bib around her neck. Max enters from waiting room. Columbo comes as far as the door.

MAX

I'm sorry, darlings. I had to
run some empirin/codeine down
to Kitty.

CRAIG

She must be taking Jimmy's death
very hard.

MAX

Who isn't. But you know how she
is. Heavy heart, sprained ankle
-- she's down there working for
her clients!

CRAIG

Probably trying to find a hurry-
up replacement for The Sicily
Story.

During this, Vanessa gives Max the cap. Now he puts it on the tray, takes up an already prepared syringe of novacaine.

MAX

Would you mind closing the door,
Lieutenant?

Columbo comes in and closes the door -- which isn't what Max meant at all. But Max merely smiles and gives Vanessa her shot of novacaine.

CRAIG

I suppose you have dozens of
suspects, Lieutenant.

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

(shakes his head)

Just one.

(a beat)

But it's the right one.

Craig and Vanessa react, but Max goes on about his work as though pleasantly preoccupied.

CRAIG

Who is it? Anybody we know?

VANESSA

We know everybody! Tell us for our own protection!

She's joking, of course. Columbo chuckles and comes in closer for a better look at what Max is doing; but he acts as though he's watching out of idle curiosity.

COLUMBO

Well, we haven't charged him yet, so I can't name names. But we know he did it. Problem is we don't know how we did it.

CLOSE ON MAX

as he picks up Vanessa's cap and proceeds to remove with his drill the residue of cement in the cavity. He knows Columbo is watching him; this fills him with a kind of wry and delicious amusement. For what he is doing to Vanessa's cap is virtually the same thing that he did to Jimmy's crown -- except that, in this case, there is no intent to kill. During this, without interruption:

VANESSA (o.c.)

You can rule out poison, since it was a man.

COLUMBO (o.c.)

That's a myth, you know -- that poison is strictly a woman's weapon.

BACK TO SCENE

as Max sets the cap down on the ¹try, then moves to work on Vanessa's exposed tooth, tapping it to see if the novacaine has taken effect yet. It has, so he proceeds to clean and medicate the tooth. During this, Columbo sidles closer to ¹try and studies the cap.

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

Yeah, we've had a lot of cases involving male poisoners. Had one recently, in fact. Six victims right in a row, all employees of a very exclusive ladies health club. Killer turned out to be the cleaning woman... who turned out to be a transvestite.

Vanessa and Craig burst out laughing. Max gives an irritated little smile.

MAX

Please, Lieutenant, don't make her laugh when I have my fingers in her mouth.

COLUMBO

Oh, I'm sorry, sir.

Columbo backs off a little, like a little boy who's going to behave. Vanessa and Craig go silent and solemn, too. With this silence the atmosphere in the room shifts subtly. Unconsciously (except in Columbo's case), all eyes are on Max's hands. It begins to make him nervous. Taking up the cap, to apply dental cement, he fumbles; nearly drops it.

ANOTHER ANGLE - MAX AND COLUMBO

Columbo watching intently as Max presses the cement into the cavity of the cap. The tension is spiraling; becoming almost palpable.

CLOSE ON CAP - (COLUMBO'S POINT OF VIEW)

in Max's hand. He carries it to Vanessa's mouth. As he slips it over the tooth:

CLOSE ON COLUMBO

A faint smile lights his face. He knows how Max murdered Jimmy De Paul. His lips hardly move as he asks Max:

COLUMBO

Mind if I use your phone, sir?

CUT TO

INT. FILE CLOSET - NIGHT - TIGHT ON DRAWER OF FILE CABINET

as Max's hands extract Jimmy De Paul's file folder and remove from it a brown envelope labeled X-RAYS.

INT. WAITING ROOM - TO INCLUDE VIEW OF EXAMINING ROOM

Both rooms are empty, Vanessa and Craig having already gone. Max emerges from the file closet and crosses to his private office, the door to which is closed. He pauses to look at the sign on the door -- MAX BERGMAN - DENTIST TO THE STARS -- and it brings a bitter smile to his face. He opens the door.

INT. MAX'S PRIVATE OFFICE - ON MAX

entering to find Columbo is still on the phone, but doing all the listening. Max wanders over to the curio cabinet and stares at the jade concubine.

ON COLUMBO

with his ear to the phone and his gaze fixed on the unsmiling photograph of Kitty, on Max's desk. After a few moments:

COLUMBO

All right, Doc. If I'm right, let me know right away, will you? I'm at...

(gives Max's phone number)

Thanks, Doc.

He hangs up, but holds there, looking at Kitty's photograph.

ANOTHER ANGLE - COLUMBO AND MAX

as Max comes to the desk.

COLUMBO

You know, I've seen hundreds of desks with the wife's picture on them. This is the first one I've ever seen where the wife isn't smiling.

MAX

I don't like her smile. It looks like something you send away for. I don't say that as

CONTINUED

MAX (cont'd)

a criticism, mind you. Smiling is one of those things you have to learn to do when you're little. She grew up in a world where everybody she met would look at her and wonder -- usually aloud -- how the child of two beautiful movie stars could be such a little dog. So instead of learning to smile she learned to say, 'I was adopted.'

INT. KITTY'S OFFICE - NIGHT - ON KITTY

as she gets ready to leave, her ankle apparently feeling somewhat better. Over, we hear Max's voice, continuing without interruption:

MAX (v.o.)

When I met her -- do you know what she was doing, Lieutenant? She was working in the mail room of the talent agency she now practically owns! I did that for her.

INT. MAX'S PRIVATE OFFICE - ON CCLUMBO AND MAX

as before; continuing without interruption:

MAX

I taught her to use all those influential 'friends of the family' who enjoyed pitying her. I taught her to turn their pity into guilt.

INT. CORRIDOR - ON KITTY

as she emerges from elevator and heads slowly for Max's office. Max's voice over continues.

MAX (v.o.)

And once she had them feeling guilty, she could make them do anything for her. I taught her to be a force.

INT. MAX'S PRIVATE OFFICE - ON COLUMBO AND MAX
as before.

MAX

And the more important she got,
the prettier she got. Because
she began to care about how she
looked.

INT. WAITING ROOM - ON KITTY

entering. Now Max's voice is heard coming from his
private office.

MAX'S VOICE (off)

There are two kinds of beautiful
people in this world: The kind
that are born beautiful and the
kind that have a reason to be
beautiful.

Slowly, Kitty starts toward Max's office.

INT. MAX'S PRIVATE OFFICE - ON COLUMBO AND MAX
as before.

MAX

But she could never get it
through her head that I was
doing all this for her because
I loved her. I guess believing
that you're loveable is another
one of those things you have to
learn to do when you're little.

ANGLE - TO INCLUDE KITTY IN B.G.

stopping just outside the door. Columbo sees her; Max
doesn't.

MAX

She thought I did it for myself.
She thought all I wanted to be
was... Dentist to the Stars.
Isn't that sad?

KITTY

Max?

Max turns with a slight start. Kitty remains silent and
expressionless. Columbo watches her, alert, cautious.
After several moments:

CONTINUED

KITTY

Good-bye.

Kitty leaves. Max holds, staring, until her footsteps recede, then turns back to Columbo and hands him the brown envelope. Columbo doesn't take it.

MAX

They're the x-rays you wanted.

COLUMBO

I know. We probably won't need them after all. I'll know as soon as the coroner --

MAX

(cuts in)

Did you see my wife just now?

COLUMBO

Yes.

MAX

Good. I thought maybe I dreamed it.

Max laughs the way he used to laugh, but it doesn't sound the same. Then he starts to leave.

MAX

I better go drive her home.

COLUMBO

Would you mind waiting, sir?
I'm expecting a call.

MAX

(stops)

So? Just be sure and lock up
when you leave.

COLUMBO

Sorry, sir. Please... sit down?

MAX

You'd let my wife drive with that
foot?

COLUMBO

She'll still be there when we go
down.

CONTINUED (2)

MAX
(as though it
were a joke)
We're being detained?

COLUMBO
Just till the coroner calls.

Max gives an exasperated laugh, but he sits down.

COLUMBO
It shouldn't take long. The
body's still in the morgue.
(shakes his head)
That's some kid brother. You
know what he decided to do?
Conduct personal telephone-
interviews of every undertaker
in the Yellow Pages! He
remembered that that's how
Jimmy did it when they lost
their father.

(a beat)
That's sad, too, isn't it.

MAX
You're waiting for the coroner
to tell you you're right about
-- what?

COLUMBO
How you killed Jimmy De Paul.

MAX
Oh. May I ask you what, exactly,
you expect the coroner to find?

COLUMBO
Traces of digitalis and a residue
of medical gel.

MAX
Where?

COLUMBO
In that crown you fixed for
Jimmy De Paul shortly before he
left for the airport.

MAX
How do you know I fixed the crown?
Maybe I just cleaned his teeth.

CONTINUED (3)

COLUMBO

His kid brother was here, don't forget. Until you sent him home to pick up the bags.

MAX

(a pause; then,
more to himself)

A killer fog.

COLUMBO

Pardon me, sir?

MAX

He told Kitty his flight was grounded because of 'a killer fog.'

(rises)

Come on, Lieutenant, let's go. You don't need a coroner to tell you you're right.

Columbo rises. They start out.

MAX

The trouble with living in Southern California is that you come to expect perfect flying weather every day of the year.

(a what-might-
have-been sigh)

If Jimmy had been on that plane...

INT. WAITING ROOM - ANGLE ON MAX'S PRIVATE OFFICE

as Columbo and Max emerge and Max reaches back to pull the door shut.

COLUMBO

There still would've been an autopsy, sir.

Max stops, surprised.

COLUMBO

Most people don't realize an autopsy is required in a situation like that. I'm a

CONTINUED

COLUMBO (cont'd)
little surprised you didn't, though
... I mean, being a doctor.

MAX
(a pained laugh)
Who's a doctor?

He gestures toward the 'Dentist to the Stars' sign on the door without looking at it, then starts away; Columbo reaches in and pulls the door shut the rest of the way.
Freeze Frame.

THE END