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C O L U M B O

TRY AND CATCH ME

by
Richard Alan Simmons
and
Luther Davis

NOTE: All references to the character "CAROLINE" are to read "VERONICA."

COLUMBO

TRY AND CATCH ME

CAST

COLUMBO

ABIGAIL MITCHELL
EDMUND GALVIN

CAROLINE
MARTIN HAMMOND
ANNIE
SERGEANT BURKE
DANCE INSTRUCTOR
P.A. VOICE

POLICE TECHNICIAN
ANOTHER POLICEMAN
DETECTIVE
GROUP OF WOMEN
6 WOMEN BELLY DANCERS

COLUMBO'S DOG
PASSENGERS (STOCK)
O.S. BAND

(X)

SETS

INTERIORS:

LIBRARY
ABIGAIL'S HOME
ABIGAIL'S BEDROOM
CAROLINE'S OFFICE
CORRIDOR ENTRANCE TO
CAROLINE'S OFFICE
KITCHEN
STAIRWAY
LIBRARY ENTRANCE
ENTRANCE TO FOYER
LIVING ROOM
WOMEN'S CLUB AUDITORIUM
MOVING CAR
EDMUND'S APARTMENT
EDMUND'S BEDROOM
ABIGAIL'S GROUNDS
BELLY DANCING CLASS
ABIGAIL'S CAR
SHIP'S CORRIDOR (STOCK)
ABIGAIL'S SUITE

EXTERIORS:

ABIGAIL'S HOME
NEW YORK SKYLINE (STOCK)
747 AIRCRAFT IN FLIGHT (STOCK)
GARDEN AREA OF GROUNDS
WOMEN'S CLUB
THE CORNICHE
KITCHEN ENTRANCE AREA
SANTA MONICA PIER AND ENVIRONS
PIER PARKING LOT
SAN PEDRO DOCKS (STOCK)
PASSENGER LINER (STOCK)
SHIPBOARD DECK (STOCK)
SHIP'S FUNNEL AND WHISTLE (STOCK)

(X)

COLUMBO

TRY AND CATCH ME

FADE IN

1 INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT - CLOSE SHOT - COMBINATION LOCK 1

A woman's hand on the dial of a massive, walk-in safe -- the mood clandestine, surreptitious, as the dial is revolved and counter-revolved. Opening credits superimposed. The full combination: the lock clicks audibly and the heavy door is swung back.

Camera angle widens to give us Abigail Mitchell and the library of a vast home in old Bel Air.

The room is handsome, large, book-lined, furnished with antiques; it also contains the desk and implements of a working writer: an old Underwood on a table, a desk lamp, dictation equipment, a scatter of manuscript pages on the desk. Also on the desk is a framed photograph of a young woman whom we will come to realize is Abigail's niece. There is an Oscar, several Tony's, an Edgar, some framed book jackets with pictures of Abigail; we see the caption on a framed book ad with her picture: "ABIGAIL MITCHELL FOR BEST IN MURDER!"

The walk-in safe itself, a veritable fortress, is inserted in one of the walls.

Abigail is in her late sixties, hale and hearty and aflow with vitality.

She runs her hand over the safe door, inside and out, checking operation of the handles. Now she steps inside.

2 INT. SAFE - ABIGAIL 2

The safe is about five feet deep and gives full standing height. On its shelves is a stack of four black metal boxes of the safety-deposit type, several large typewritten manuscripts, a jewel box, various other boxes. There is also an overhead bulb which does not function.

Abigail again examines the inner handle, pulls the heavy steel door almost entirely closed, blocking off the light.

3 THE LIBRARY - THE SAFE - ABIGAIL 3

as the door swings open and Abigail emerges, crosses to her desk.

CONTINUED

3 CONTINUED

3

and picks up a small tape recorder; she puts it on rewind and carries it back to the safe where she switches it to play and we hear her voice:

ABIGAIL'S RECORDED VOICE

All right, Caroline, this one's for the ladies' club. Just a rough copy to play with: I come before you as the author of thirty-two books on the same subject. In other words I have one of the most limited minds in the world.

Abigail turns up the volume to a strong level. She places the recorder on a shelf in the safe and swings the heavy door as:

ABIGAIL'S RECORDED VOICE

That's bad enough, but to limit myself to writing about murder seems to me pathological. You may take it as a confession that I cannot....

The door now is totally closed and the voice effectively silenced. Abigail goes to a desk inter-com and pushes a button as:

ABIGAIL

Caroline, dear, are you still here?

CAROLINE'S VOICE

(on filter)

Just winding up. Be right in.

Abigail picks up some galley proofs from her desk and crosses toward the safe. Caroline Bryce enters carrying a shorthand book. She is Abigail's secretary and her office is nearby. She is about thirty, a little overweight, and good at her job.

CAROLINE

Galleys ready, Abigail?

ABIGAIL

This much, anyway.

(gives her
the proofs)

I really should have sent you home hours ago....

Abigail makes a listening gesture.

CONTINUED

3 CONTINUED - 2

3

CAROLINE

Something wrong?

ABIGAIL

Don't you hear it?

Caroline shakes her head.

ABIGAIL

I think it's a nightingale. We haven't had any for years.

CAROLINE

(listens)

Can't hear a thing.

(starts out)

I'll send these in the morning.

ABIGAIL

Oh, Caroline, just one small thing. Would you call Edmund for me. Ask him to stop by tomorrow.

CAROLINE

(making a note)

Call your nephew....

Abigail crosses back to her desk and fusses with some papers as:

ABIGAIL

He is not my nephew, he was merely married to my niece. That's an entirely different thing, my dear. Perhaps he'd like to take me for a walk on the beach. Two-thirty would be nice.

CAROLINE

(another note)

Two-thirty.

(crosses to exit, pauses)

I think I heard something.

Abigail's eyes snap up.

ABIGAIL

What?

CAROLINE

The nightingale.

CONTINUED

3 CONTINUED - 3

3

ABIGAIL:
What a clever girl you are. They
bring luck, you know. Or if they
don't, they should.

CAROLINE
(a laugh and)
Good night, Abby.

ABIGAIL
Good night.

Caroline exits.

4 ABIGAIL

4

Her amused expression vanishes. She crosses back to the safe.
As she opens the door we hear:

ABIGAIL'S RECORDED VOICE
...which brings me of course to the
question, why are so many millions
of people interested in reading about
murder -- ?

Abigail has retrieved the tape machine and now snaps it off.
She puts it down on a table nearby, stands by the safe door
and slowly, thoughtfully swings it shut. Her hand grasps the
handle, turns it. The door opens. Now, once again, Abigail
swings it shut -- this time with an energetic slam.

5 CLOSE SHOT - SAFE HANDLE, ET AL.

5

The impact makes the dial jump a few stops. Abigail's hand
checks the handle. It will not turn. The door will not
open. It is locked. Camera angles up on her face: she
is satisfied.

6 EXT. BEACH - DAY

6

Shot starts on surf and pans to discover two distant figures
walking on the beach. It is a windy day and a chilly one.
The smaller figure, Abigail, wears a hooded sweatshirt pulled
closely about her neck and face.

Beside her walks Edmund Galvin. He is in his early thirties,
a handsome, strongly-made young man whose good manners decor-
ate a rather brutal quality.

CONTINUED

6 CONTINUED

6

Their voices come to us with immediate presence.

EDMUND

What a marvel -- the primitive forces
of nature. The sea, the sky and
Abigail Mitchell.

ABIGAIL

Flattery will get you everywhere,
Edmund.

7 MOVING TWO SHOT - ABIGAIL AND EDMUND

7

ABIGAIL

As for the broad Pacific, I find it
rather an effeminate body of water.

EDMUND

Nobody but you would put down a whole
ocean.

ABIGAIL

On the cape, when I was a girl, I'd
watch the Atlantic day and night.

She stops, facing the surf, her face in immediate f.g., Edmund
behind her.

ABIGAIL

Oh, how it churned and boiled and
roared...

(a beat)

Did it roar the night Phyllis was
drowned?

Her expression has grown cold and alien.

EDMUND

Abby, please don't.

ABIGAIL

I loved my niece. With all my heart.
With all the love I could ever give
anyone. She was only five when I
gave her the rights to the play --
a birthday present. A birthday party.
A birthday dress. Pink for little
girls. You loved her, too, didn't
you Edmund?

CONTINUED

7 CONTINUED

7

Her back is still toward him; her face displays the intensity of her loathing.

EDMUND

She was my wife....

ABIGAIL

And you loved her.

EDMUND

I loved her.

ABIGAIL

How terrible it must have been for you -- alone in the sail boat -- coming up from the cabin. And Phyllis gone. Disappeared into the sea -- the darkness. 'Accident' is such an accidental word. We never even had the comfort of finding her body -- of knowing she was safely buried.

EDMUND

The Coast Guard tried....

Now, her face carefully rearranged, she turns to face him.

8 ANOTHER ANGLE - ABIGAIL AND EDMUND

8

ABIGAIL

And you tried. You did your best, Edmund. I know what you did. Everything you did.

She takes his arm, lightens her voice as they resume their stroll.

ABIGAIL

Well, I'm a depressing old woman and you have your life to live. We both have to do what we have to do.

9 WIDER ANGLE

9

as they move back from the surf line. Again their voices come with immediate presence.

ABIGAIL

I would have left her everything, you know.

CONTINUED

9 CONTINUED

9

ABIGAIL (Cont'd)
Now there's no one but you, Edmund.
We're all that's left of her.

10 MOVING TWO SHOT

10

ABIGAIL
And so, when I die, I intend to
make you my principal heir.

Edmund comes to an astonished stop.

EDMUND
Abby, I can't....

ABIGAIL
(slicing in)
Please don't comment. I detest
being edited.

EDMUND
I'm not going to stand here and
discuss your death....

ABIGAIL
Nor I yours, Edmund. Please ac-
cept the fact that you will inherit
a great deal of money. Don't pretend
that doesn't please you.

Of course it pleases him. He regards her fondly, suddenly
kisses her cheek.

ABIGAIL
There.

11 HIGH ANGLE SHOT - EDMUND AND ABIGAIL

11

moving again. And their voices:

ABIGAIL
Life is short and life is fleeting.
I'm glad you're not going to protest.
Because, you see, Edmund, I really
have made up my mind -- about you
and me.

His arm encircles her as they walk, two distant figures on
the beach.

12 EXT. ABIGAIL'S HOME - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING SHOT 12

The imposing home of Abigail Mitchell. Lights on in upper and lower stories. Some cars in evidence, including Abigail's Corniche and Edmund's two-seater Mercedes.

13 INT. ABIGAIL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - LIGHT SWITCH 13

Using a nail file as a tool, Abigail's hands work on the light switch. She has unscrewed and removed the face plate. Camera angle widens to include her tipped-in face. The ticking of a watch is heard strongly. She starts to disconnect one of the switch wires.

Now camera begins to pan the room. We see a stop watch on a nearby table -- handsome objects d'art from all over the world -- framed photographs of Dwight Eisenhower, Harry S. Truman, John Kennedy, Alfred Hitchcock, Winston Churchill, etc.

We see some suitcases packed and ready; near them her fur coat, gloves, purse.

And a table lamp which flickers on and off and finally remains off as we hear o.s. sound of switch being worked.

14 ANGLE ON ABIGAIL - AT LIGHT SWITCH 14

She wears a tweedy traveling outfit. The face plate is being fastened back into position. Giving a screw a last turn with the file, she picks up the stop watch, checks the reading. It seems to give her assurance. Opening the door to the corridor, she calls out:

ABIGAIL

Annie, my bags are ready.

She goes to place the watch in her purse, takes purse and gloves and exits.

15 INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT - ABIGAIL AND ANNIE 15

Abigail descending, grooming her nails with the file, as Annie, the elderly Irish maid, comes up.

ANNIE

Your nephew's finished with dinner,
Miss Mitchell.

CONTINUED

15 CONTINUED

15

ABIGAIL

Edmund? Did he eat well?

ANNIE

Very well, ma'am.

ABIGAIL

Isn't that nice? I always like to hear that a young man has a good appetite.

From somewhere o.s. comes the sound of a typewriter. Abigail continues down the stairs and crosses to the partially open door to:

16 INT. CAROLINE'S OFFICE - NIGHT - CAROLINE AND MARTIN HAMMOND 16

The office is reasonably small and thoroughly work cluttered. Caroline stops typing and watches Martin Hammond, an attorney of approximately Abigail's age, as he reads and makes some notes on a rough draft. Simultaneously, Abigail nudges the door open.

MARTIN

Notwithstanding anything heretofore set forth in this document -- and being of sound mind and body....

ABIGAIL

The mind is not only sound, it's triumphant. Finished yet?

MARTIN

(negatively)

Are you sure you want to go through with this?

ABIGAIL

I promise you, Martin, I'm not in the habit of dallying with lawyers. Not at your prices. Now we have a plane to catch, so stop splitting hairs or infinitives or whatever it is you people do with wills. Caroline will drive us to the airport.

CAROLINE

Can I go too?

17 INT. AT CORRIDOR ENTRANCE TO CAROLINE'S OFFICE - NIGHT - 17
ABIGAIL

ABIGAIL

Certainly not.

She closes the door and crisply moves on to enter:

18 INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT - ABIGAIL 18

as she enters.

ABIGAIL

Edmund. How nice you look.

Angle widens to discover Edmund, branc̄y in hand, examining some books. He turns to her.

ABIGAIL

Dressed for the occasion.

She crosses to the safe. O.s. typewriter is heard intermittently.

EDMUND

I didn't know there was an occasion.

19 AT SAFE - ABIGAIL 19

as she dials the combination. Edmund enters shot through:

ABIGAIL

I want to sign my new will in your presence. It'll give you a lovely sense of security.

EDMUND

Abby -- I want you to understand -- I hope you live forever. I don't want anything from you.

ABIGAIL

It's not a question of what you want. It's what I want. And I do not intend to live forever. If I did, I wouldn't fly around in airplanes. I couldn't sleep a wink if I didn't settle all this business before I took off.

She pulls open the safe door, crosses to her desk where she sits and signs some checks laid out for her signature.

CONTINUED

19 CONTINUED

19

ABIGAIL

'Murder of the Year' is closing,
you know -- tomorrow night. I'll
be there for the last performance.

EDMUND

After nineteen years -- I think
you've had a pretty good run.

He pours himself another brandy as:

ABIGAIL

Well, the rights belonged to
Phyllis -- and you, of course,
after the accident. I understand
they'll be doing it in Warsaw.
Would you bring my jewel case from
the safe, Edmund?

EDMUND

Certainly.

He crosses to enter the safe, looks around.

ABIGAIL

Leather case -- rather flossy.
You'll see it.

20 INT. SAFE - ANGLE ON EDMUND - ABIGAIL IN B.G.

20

Abigail is seen at the desk through the open door of the
safe. Edmund works a light switch, looks up at the dormant
bulb.

ABIGAIL

Martin's coming with me. He speaks
very sternly to my publishers.

EDMUND

The light doesn't work.

He finds the jewel box.

21 ABIGAIL AND EDMUND

21

as Edmund comes from the safe.

ABIGAIL

(finishing checks --
re the light)
Not for months. I must tell
Caroline to have it fixed.

CONTINUED

21 CONTINUED

21

She rises now and goes to him.

ABIGAIL

And Edmund, I'll need some cash.
Those metal boxes -- the third
one from the top.

Edmund returns to the safe, brings out the black safety-
deposit type box, hands it to her with the jewel box.

EDMUND

There you are.

Abigail sets the jewel case aside, places the metal box on a
table and flips it open. Edmund reacts to:

22 INSERT - THE METAL BOX

22

crammed with high-denomination banknotes.

23 BACK TO ABIGAIL AND EDMUND

23

EDMUND

My God, Abby....

ABIGAIL

Somebody's God, I suppose.

She helps herself to a supply of the bills, puts them in her
purse as:

ABIGAIL

It's what W.C. Fields called geta-
way money. I want you to know
about it. It's not that I want
to cheat the government -- well,
maybe I do want to cheat, just a
little bit. Back it goes.

She hands him the box.

EDMUND

Respectfully.

He moves into the safe to return the black metal box. Abigail
moves to the safe door, watching him. Again her face has
taken on that cold, hardened expression.

ABIGAIL

Respect takes all the fun out of
it.

CONTINUED

23 CONTINUED

23

Her hand touches the edge of the door -- then opens it a bit wider to facilitate his reemergence. They respond to sound of door open and:

24 ANGLE ON LIBRARY DOOR - NIGHT - MARTIN

24

as he enters. He holds some papers.

MARTIN

All right, Abby --
(a nod to Edmund)
-- Edmund.

EDMUND

Nice to see you again, sir.

Martin crosses to the desk, sets out the documents.

MARTIN

If you'll gather here....

Edmund and Abigail cross to him.

25 AT DESK - ABIGAIL, EDMUND, MARTIN

25

MARTIN

Your new will, Abigail -- signature here. And your will, Edmund.

EDMUND

(puzzled)
Mine?

ABIGAIL

Oh, Edmund, I've taken the liberty of asking Martin to draw up a will for you, too. You're my heir and I'll be yours. Even Steven. If you should predecease me -- a most unlikely event -- then the rights to 'Murder of the Year' would come back where they started. Is that all right?

Edmund would not object if she threw castration into the deal.

EDMUND

I should have thought of it myself. As you said, Abby, we've nobody but each other now. May I have a pen?

CONTINUED

25 CONTINUED

25

Martin hands him a pen.

MARTIN

Aren't you going to read it?

EDMUND

Why? Don't you think I trust her?

A smile at Abigail. He signs with a flourish, hands her the pen. She signs, takes up both documents and gives them to Martin.

ABIGAIL

Martin, please have Caroline witness these.

Martin starts to exit, glances at his watch.

MARTIN

That plane isn't going to wait for us.

ABIGAIL

They might if I asked them.

He gives her a look and exits.

26 ABIGAIL AND EDMUND

26

ABIGAIL

There. The deed is done.

She turns out the desk lamp. Then:

ABIGAIL

(quietly)

Edmund, there's one more thing.

She crosses to close the library door and then the door of the safe, turning the dial to lock it, motioning for him to join her.

27 AT SAFE - ABIGAIL AND EDMUND

27

Her manner now is vaguely conspiratorial.

ABIGAIL

Only three people know the combination.
My attorney, Caroline and myself.
Now I want you to have it, too.

CONTINUED

27 CONTINUED

27

EDMUND

Abby, I'd rather I didn't....

ABIGAIL

Well, Martin also would rather you didn't. But it's my safe. So we'll just sneak around Martin and do as I wish. I want you to drive away and come back up the service road. The back door is open. I'll see that Martin won't disturb us for a few minutes.

Edmund searches her face for a beat, then:

EDMUND

Whatever you say, Abby.

ABIGAIL

Thank you, Edmund. I simply couldn't set foot on that plane without doing this.

28 EXT. ABIGAIL'S HOME - NIGHT - EDMUND AND ERCEDES

28

as Edmund slams the door of his Mercedes. He is behind the wheel, lowering the window for:

EDMUND

Have a fine trip, Abby -- Mr. Hammond....

Camera zooms back to reveal Abigail in the open doorway and Martin, with the help of Annie, loading the luggage into the trunk of the Corniche.

Caroline, wearing a top coat, stands by the driver's door.

ABIGAIL

We will, dear.

Martin flicks him a desultory wave as Edmund starts the engine and drives off.

29 EXT. ABIGAIL'S HOME - ABIGAIL, MARTIN, CAROLINE, ANNIE

29

Caroline glances at her watch.

CAROLINE

We're cutting it awfully fine.

CONTINUED

29 CONTINUED

29

She slides behind the wheel of the Corniche.

ABIGAIL

I'll just get my coat. Oh, Martin,
there's something I want to show
you.

MARTIN

Not now.

ABIGAIL

(firmly)

Now.

(then)

Humor an old lady.

She turns into the house. Martin gives up and follows her.
So does Annie.

30 INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT - ABIGAIL, MARTIN, ANNIE

30

Abigail leads the way up the stairs; Martin follows. Annie
stands by the base of the stairway.

ANNIE

I'll say good-by, then, Ma'am.

ABIGAIL

Good-by, Annie.

Annie goes off.

MARTIN

Abigail, you are the most exasper-
ating woman I've ever met.

ABIGAIL

I accept all superlatives.

31 INT. ABIGAIL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - ABIGAIL AND MARTIN

31

as they enter.

ABIGAIL

It's the light switch.

She works the switch. It hisses slightly. No lamps come
on.

CONTINUED

31 CONTINUED

31

ABIGAIL

It hisses. And the lamps don't work. There could be a fire.

MARTIN

Abby, for Pete's sake....

ABIGAIL

You're so clever with these things. And I simply won't sleep a wink if you don't fix it.

MARTIN

With what?

ABIGAIL

This.

She hands him the nail file.

MARTIN

All right -- anything to get out of here.

She takes her coat and exits. He starts to remove the plate.

32 INT. BASE OF STAIRWAY - NIGHT - ABIGAIL

32

as she sets the coat aside removes the stop watch from her purse, starts it, slips it into her pocket and moves swiftly through the house to.

33 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - ABIGAIL

33

as she enters the darkened kitchen -- large, spotless -- and moves to a rear door. And there stands Edmund. She makes a shushing gesture, reaches to snap the lock shut on the door, then takes his hand and hurries him back through the kitchen, her manner conspiratorial and larky. He holds his car keys in his hand.

34 INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT - WALL PANEL

34

A secret wall panel about a foot square is slid open by Abigail's hand, revealing a labelled burglar alarm, a simple up and down switch marked "On" and "Off."

Camera angles back to reveal Abigail and Edmund. They speak in whispers. A single lamp is on.

CONTINUED

34 CONTINUED

34

ABIGAIL

Here's the alarm. It has to be off, as it is now.

Edmund works the switch up and down.

ABIGAIL

Now the combination.

She takes him to the safe, adjusts the dial as:

ABIGAIL

You have to turn it to the right -- at least three times -- then start here at this position, on the twelve.

EDMUND

Right.

She gives him a piece of paper and a pencil as:

ABIGAIL

Write it down, dear. Left twenty-four....

EDMUND

(writing)

Left twenty-four....

ABIGAIL

Right to six....

EDMUND

Right to six....

35 INT. ABIGAIL'S BEDROOM - AT SWITCH - NIGHT - CLOSE SHOT - MARTIN

35

Martin has the face plate off the switch and is tightening a connection. He works the switch. Lamps come on.

36 INT. LIBRARY - AT SAFE - NIGHT - EDMUND

36

Edmund is at the safe, working the combination, consulting the paper he holds in his hand along with the pencil. Camera angles to Abigail watching him. She takes the cupped stopwatch from her pocket, surrepticiously checks the time. She glances down at an adjacent table; her gloves lie there, and two legal-type brown envelopes.

Sound of the safe opening and she takes gloves and envelopes, crosses to Edmund who pulls the door open, looks at her.

CONTINUED

36 CONTINUED

36

EDMUND

No trick at all.

He stuffs the paper with the combination into his pocket. Abigail reaches to reclaim the pencil.

ABIGAIL

Now you must memorize it. And we've forgotten the wills.

(she hands him
the envelopes)

They should be in the safe.

EDMUND

Where do I put them?

ABIGAIL

(pulling on
a glove)

The metal box -- the one on top.

Edmund steps into the safe. Abigail moves closer. Again the iced expression has returned to her eyes. Edmund lifts the lid of the top box, slips the envelopes inside. And now Abigail speaks, her voice pronouncing his death sentence.

ABIGAIL

Edmund -- you murdered my Phyllis.

Edmund's startled eyes turn toward her.

ABIGAIL

Did you really think I wouldn't know?

She slams the safe shut.

37 CLOSE SHOT - THE DIAL

37

as it jumps a few points. Abigail's hand twists it further, tries the handle. Locked. She returns the dial to its original, jumped position.

Camera comes up to her now as she crosses to the alarm panel, reaches for the switch which is in the off position, hesitates, then simply pulls the panel shut.

Sound of o.s. door open. She turns to:

38 AT LIBRARY ENTRANCE - NIGHT - MARTIN 38

MARTIN

It's fixed.

Her eyes go to:

39 ZOOM SHOT TO DESK - NIGHT - EDMUND'S CAR KEYS 39

Edmund's car keys lie on Abigail's desk.

40 ABIGAIL 40

ABIGAIL

Of course it is. Thank you,
Martin.

With unblemished poise she crosses to the desk. Her back to Martin, she scoops up the keys, inserts them in her glove and flicks off the desk lamp.

41 INT. ENTRANCE FOYER - NIGHT - ABIGAIL AND MARTIN 41

The front door stands open. Caroline waits in the Corniche. Abigail ushers Martin out before her.

ABIGAIL

Don't dawdle -- we do have a plane
to catch.

He gives her another one of his looks and exits. Abigail's hand drops to:

42 CLOSE SHOT - SAND ASH TRAY 42

A large, sand ash tray near the door. And Abigail's gloved hand slips the keys into the sand, burying them. Then her hand is gone and we see the door slam shut.

43 EXT. ABIGAIL'S HOME - NIGHT - ABIGAIL, MARTIN, CAROLINE 43

all in the Corniche as it drives off.

44 EXT. 747 AIRCRAFT IN FLIGHT - NIGHT - LEFT TO RIGHT - STOCK 44

The moonlit aircraft wends its way as:

CONTINUED

44 CONTINUED

44

ABIGAIL'S VOICE

Of everything in the world, I
think I like flying best of all,
don't you, Martin?

MARTIN'S VOICE

(wearily)

Next time let's take the day flight.

ABIGAIL'S VOICE

Days are for work. Nights are
for play. Stewardess, may I have
another scotch?

45 EXT. NEW YORK SKYLINE - DAY - STOCK

45

And:

CAROLINE'S VOICE

(filtered, distraught)

I still can't believe it, Abby --
I opened the safe this morning and
he was there -- Edmund's body....

46 EXT. 747 AIRCRAFT IN FLIGHT - DAY - RIGHT TO LEFT - STOCK

46

CAROLINE'S VOICE

(filtered)

You have to come back -- right
away -- please, Abby....

ABIGAIL'S VOICE

(with equanimity)

Stewardess, may I have another scotch,
please?

47 EXT. ABIGAIL'S HOME - DAY - CAB, POLICE CARS, ET AL

47

About four police cars parked at all angles in front of the
house -- Caroline's car also, and the Corniche and Columbo's
Peugot. A couple of uniformed officers speak together near
the entrance as Abigail emerges from a cab into the arms
of a distraught Caroline who comes flying from the entrance.

As they proceed to the house, one of the officers takes
Caroline aside for a few more questions.

48 INT. ABIGAIL'S LIBRARY - DAY - ABIGAIL, POLICE

48

The following picture as Abigail enters: a police technician dusts for fingerprints. Another takes flash photographs of several objects spread near the safe, said objects to be discussed later. A detective is dialing the combination of the closed safe. Another detective, Sergeant Burke, makes an inventory of the objects being photographed.

Abigail enters, stops a few paces into the room, absorbing it all. Sgt. Burke looks up.

SGT. BURKE

Miss Mitchell?

ABIGAIL

Yes....

SGT. BURKE

I'm Sgt. Burke. You know about the body in your safe, ma'am.

Abigail's manner is small and chastened. She cannot tear her eyes from the safe as the detective continues to dial the combination, consulting the notes in his hand.

ABIGAIL

Caroline called me in New York this morning.

SGT. BURKE

(re the safe)

We'll have it right open.

49 ANGLE ON SAFE AND DETECTIVE

49

as he swings open the door of the safe so that it obscures Abigail's view of the interior. At the same time, we hear:

COLUMBO'S VOICE

Six - five - four - three - two
one - bingo.

50 CLOSE SHOT - ABIGAIL

50

Her reaction.

51 ABIGAIL, COLUMBO, POLICE

51

as Columbo emerges from the safe and Abigail moves to see that it is quite empty of Edrund's remains. The detective closes the safe door. Columbo picks up a lighted cigar and:

CONTINUED

51 CONTINUED

51

COLUMBO
(to Sgt. Burke)
Hear anything?

SGT. BURKE
Nothing.

COLUMBO
Sound proof.

His head sinks thoughtfully to his chest. Then, as he sees Abigail, his eyes ignite with delight. He goes to her.

COLUMBO
Oh, excuse me, ma'am. You're Abigail Mitchell --
(he indicates her photograph)
-- 'The Best in Murder,' it's a very great honor to meet a famous writer, ma'am. I just wish we were meeting under happier circumstances.

ABIGAIL
Thank you, young man, you're very kind.

COLUMBO
I'm Lieutenant Columbo, ma'am. Homicide. Mr. Galvin, the deceased, I understand he was your nephew.

ABIGAIL
No blood relation, Lieutenant. He was married to my niece.

Columbo consults a miniscule notebook as:

COLUMBO
Oh, yes, yes, your secretary told us how your niece died in that boating accident four months ago.

As for Abigail, she flounders in clever confusion.

ABIGAIL
They loved each other so. It's inconceivable that another accident could take Edmund's life....

CONTINUED

51 CONTINUED - 2

51

COLUMBO

Excuse me -- what accident was that ma'am?

ABIGAIL

My safe -- his death....

COLUMBO

Oh, I doubt that was an accident, ma'am. I doubt that very much. Now he did have the combination to your safe....

ABIGAIL

I gave it to him last night....

COLUMBO

And we found it in his pocket. But if you'll just take a look over here.

As he leads her across the room, we see the police techs are packing their gear.

SGT. BURKE

All done, Lieutenant. Anything else?

COLUMBO

Out in back, Sergeant. You know what we're looking for.

SGT. BURKE

Yes, sir.

All four cops exit as:

52 THE ALARM WALL PANEL - COLUMBO AND ABIGAIL

52

The panel is open, the alarm switch in the "Off" position.

COLUMBO

This is the burgler alarm. When your secretary went to open the safe this morning, the alarm switch was on, like this.

CONTINUED

52 CONTINUED

52

COLUMBO (Cont'd)

(switch on,
then off again)

Now how did your nephew get into
the safe, all by himself, with the
alarm on all the time?

ABIGAIL

I can't imagine, Lieutenant -- I'm
so confused....

COLUMBO

Oh, I can't really imagine your
being confused, Miss Mitchell.
Not someone who plans a murder the
way you do -- I mean all your
mystery books, ma'am. But me, I
don't mind admitting I'm confused.
Because we didn't just find your
nephew in the safe.

He takes her now to:

53 ANOTHER ANGLE - ABIGAIL AND COLUMBO

53

and the objects we saw being photographed. On a large piece
of cardboard what appears to be a burst manuscript is spread
out in jumbled order.

COLUMBO

Now all this was spread out on
floor of the safe, just the way it
is now....

Abigail, sincerely puzzled, identifies one of the pages.

ABIGAIL

It's one of my manuscripts --
'The Night I was Murdered' -- it's
to be published next year.

COLUMBO

Well, it was all pulled apart, ma'am.
Nothing missing. All the pages
are here.

ABIGAIL

You don't suppose he was reading
it to pass the time. Surely he
expected to be rescued....

CONTINUED

53 CONTINUED

53

COLUMBO

Well, the light in the safe doesn't work, ma'am. And he only had those four matches which he used up.

He shows her the four matches, neatly laid out on a blotter.

ABIGAIL

The poor soul, burning up his oxygen....

(then)

Did he leave a note?

COLUMBO

No, ma'am. Nothing to write with. But he took his belt off.

And now he shows her Edmund's belt, spread out on another piece of cardboard, a plastic bag over the buckle.

ABIGAIL

His belt?

COLUMBO

His belt, ma'am. It has little flecks of black something, like maybe paint, on the buckle. The medical examiner said the same black stuff was under your nephew's fingernails.

ABIGAIL

Scratching at the door of his death trap -- hideous....

COLUMBO

Well, the thing is, ma'am, the only black paint around the door is on the outside.

Now he picks up two pieces of wadded-up, unmarked white paper, in plastic bags.

COLUMBO

And there's these, Miss Mitchell. Just two pieces of paper with torn edges. Nothing on them.

ABIGAIL

Oh, dear. I'm afraid I can't absorb it all....

COLUMBO

I was hoping you might be able to explain....

CONTINUED

53 CONTINUED 2

53

ABIGAIL

Do you mind if we get out of this room, Lieutenant? The whole thing is oppressive.

COLUMBO

Certainly, ma'am. I understand.

54 INT. STAIRWAY - DAY - CAROLINE

54

Descending to the midpoint of the stairway, Caroline sees Abigail and Columbo about to enter the living room.

CAROLINE

Abby, I've put a tea tray in the living room. After that, you really should get some rest.

ABIGAIL

I couldn't possibly, dear. Besides, I have work to do -- with Lieutenant Columbo.

She follows him into the living room.

55 INT. ABIGAIL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - ABIGAIL AND COLUMBO

55

The room is vast, the decor magnificent. Columbo takes it all in. A silver tea service is laid out on a coffee table.

COLUMBO

I have work to do with Lieutenant Columbo -- I wish Mrs. Columbo could've heard that.

He turns to Abigail as she sits by the tea service.

COLUMBO

I'll tell you, ma'am, she's one of your greatest fans. I mean the day one of your books comes out, she's the first one to get her order in at the library.

ABIGAIL

I'm delighted, Lieutenant.

As she pours tea into the most fragile of tiny cups, Columbo begins to patrol the room, fascinated by every painting, art object and bauble.

CONTINUED

55 CONTINUED

55

COLUMBO

This is certainly a magnificent room.

(a beat)

You know a woman in your position, Miss Mitchell, I'm surprised you don't have a lawyer here.

ABIGAIL

(stiffening)

I don't understand.

COLUMBO

I mean an important person like you, your lawyer was here last night, he flew to New York with you, I would've thought he'd come back with you.

ABIGAIL

I did not consider it appropriate to return to a corpse in my safe, in my home, hand in hand with my lawyer. The image lacks civility. Besides, I have work for him in New York. His strong point is money, not bodies. One lump or two?

COLUMBO

Three, thank you, ma'am.

He comes to:

56 TWO SHOT - COLUMBO AND ABIGAIL

56

as he accepts his cup of tea, takes advantage of this moment of intimacy for:

COLUMBO

What I wanted to ask you, Miss Mitchell -- all those books -- all those brilliant murder schemes -- how do you think them up?

ABIGAIL

By putting myself in your position, Lieutenant. I try to think of everything a man like you would look for. Every observation, every thought every intuition. Then I eliminate all that -- and create my murder another way.

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

Isn't that something? That's what I told Mrs. Columbo. I said when that lady writes, she doesn't think like a murderer, she thinks like a policeman.

ABIGAIL

Having composed myself, I'm ready to think like a policeman now. I believe I can explain what happened here last night -- and why the alarm switch was on this morning.

COLUMBO

Oh, I'd appreciate that, ma'am. That would be a big help. Can I sit here?

He indicates an adjacent antique chair.

ABIGAIL

That's what it was made for -- four hundred years ago.

Columbo sits, hitches forward, balances his tea cup.

ABIGAIL

I gave Edmund the combination to my safe after my decision to leave him a great deal of money. Are you aware of that?

COLUMBO

Yes, ma'am. We found the wills in one of those metal boxes.

ABIGAIL

He drove off just before we left for the airport. My attorney was here at the time. And my maid and secretary. Later last night Edmund must have returned. He knew I keep a great deal of money in the safe.

COLUMBO

You mean he came back to steal?

CONTINUED

56 CONTINUED - 2

56

ABIGAIL

Let's say to take an advance against his inheritance. It seems I misjudged Edmund.

She rises now, moves deftly in illustration of her dialogue.

ABIGAIL

But you see, Lieutenant, I'd neglected to turn the alarm back on when I closed the safe last night. So I called Annie from the airport -- my maid. She went into the library to switch on the alarm. Poor Edmund was already in the safe. I believe he heard her coming, panicked and pulled the door shut. The dial must have jumped and locked itself. It does that sometimes. You may check for yourself.

COLUMBO

I already did, ma'am.

ABIGAIL

So you see, Lieutenant, it was an accident.

COLUMBO

Well, that certainly makes sense. An accident -- that's what it probably was.

They react to:

57 AT ENTRANCE - DAY - SGT. BURKE

57

as he enters.

SERGEANT BURKE

Lieutenant, we found it. Can I talk to you?

58 COLUMBO, ABIGAIL, BURKE

58

COLUMBO

Yes, Sergeant.

CONTINUED

58 CONTINUED

58

He puts his teacup aside, rises and crosses to Burke. Burke's eyes remain on Abigail as they exchange whispers. Then:

COLUMBO

Excuse me, Miss Mitchell. I can't tell you what a help you've been.

ABIGAIL

A help to Lieutenant Columbo. I wish my publisher could hear that.

Burke and Columbo exit. Abigail rises, crosses quickly to:

59 INT. ENTRANCE FOYER - DAY - THE SAND ASH TRAY - ABIGAIL

59

She glances around. She is alone. Her hand digs into the sand -- searches -- searches avidly. Her consternation mounts. The keys are not there. Again the search.

CAROLINE'S VOICE

Abby....

Abigail whirls. There stands Caroline, a brandy glass in her hand.

CAROLINE

You'd better drink this. It looks like an awful day.

ABIGAIL

(a beat)

Yes, doesn't it, dear.

She takes the glass, stares into it briefly, then:

CAROLINE

To Edmund.

She drains the brandy.

60 EXT. AT KITCHEN ENTRANCE AREA - DAY - CLOSE SHOT - SHOE AND FOOTPRINT 60

Here, in the general area of the kitchen entrance, we see a well-defined footprint in moist soil. A hand inserts a gleaming shoe -- Edmund's shoe -- into the footprint. And camera angles to include Sergeant Burke, the manipulator of the shoe -- Columbo watching him -- and one of the police technicians preparing some plaster of paris.

CONTINUED

SGT. BURKE
(as the shoe fits)
The nephew's.

He exchanges glances with Columbo, is handing the shoe to the technician as:

COLUMBO
Wait a minute, let me see that shoe.

He takes it, holds it up, inspects it minutely.

COLUMBO
That's a very nice shoe. You like that shoe, Sergeant?

SGT. BURKE
(what the hell is he supposed to say?)
Very nice, Lieutenant.

COLUMBO
Practically new. That's terrific. I've been looking for a pair of shoes just like that.

A shadow falls across him. He looks up. We angle to discover Abigail.

ABIGAIL
If you fancy them, Lieutenant, as Edmund's legal heir I'm empowered to make you a gift of his shoes.

COLUMBO
(rising)
Well, thank you very much, ma'am, but they aren't my size. They do fit this footprint, though. We're making a plaster cast.

61 ANGLE ON FOOTPRINT AND POLICE TECHNICIAN 61
as the technician pours the plaster of paris.

62 ABIGAIL AND COLUMBO 62

ABIGAIL
Yes, very impressive.

CONTINUED

ABIGAIL (Cont'd)

But we do know he was here, Lieutenant. Remember? He was found dead in my safe.

COLUMBO

Yes, ma'am, the only question is how he got into the house.

ABIGAIL

Presumably with a key.

She moves to a flower pot by the kitchen door, lifts it to take a key from its base, shows it to Columbo.

ABIGAIL

My niece knew I kept it here. She must have told Edmund.

(then)

Oh, dear. Fingerprints. Is it too late?

She extends the key.

COLUMBO

Forget it, ma'am.

ABIGAIL

Well, then. If there's nothing else....

She starts into the kitchen entrance.

COLUMBO

As a matter of fact, there is, Miss Mitchell. If we could just take a stroll, ma'am?

First we are aware of flowers, then of Abigail and Columbo as we find them in this area of her estate. Camera trucks with them for:

COLUMBO

(confidentially)

Now it's about your nephew's car keys. I mean you and everyone else saw him drive away.

CONTINUED

COLUMBO (Cont'd)

We found his car back there on the service road. So he had to have car keys, ma'am.

He stops facing her directly.

COLUMBO

But there weren't any car keys on the body. Now the question is: what happened to his keys?

ABIGAIL

(with equal directness)

I can't imagine. What do you think?

COLUMBO

(a grin)

Oh, I'm not a writer, Miss Mitchell. It's not what I think, it's what I can prove. And I can't prove a thing about those car keys. But I'm going to work on it, ma'am. I'm going to work on it very hard.

(his hand touches
a particularly
appealing blossom)

Would it be all right if I took this flower for Mrs. Columbo?

ABIGAIL

I insist, Lieutenant.

Columbo carefully breaks the stem.

COLUMBO

Wait'll I tell her it came from Abigail Mitchell. Goodbye, ma'am.

And off he goes, pleased with his flower.

as she looks after him, suddenly quite thoughtful about this curious little man.

Only a few lights on: in Abby's bedroom, in the foyer.

66 INT. FOYER, ET AL - ABIGAIL - NIGHT

66

Wearing a nightgown and robe, Abigail comes from the library into the foyer, glances around, goes again to the sand ash tray, again sifts quickly through it, moves to a companion receptacle not far away, searches this one also. Some foot-steps. She turns.

67 ANGLE TO INCLUDE ABIGAIL AND ANNIE - NIGHT

67

ANNIE

Ma'am, if there's nothing else,
I'll be turning in.

ABIGAIL

Yes, it's time we all had some
rest.

She starts back to the stairs as Annie moves to the initial ash tray and pokes around in the sand. Abigail, on the stairway, looks back at her, checks.

ABIGAIL

What are you doing, Annie?

ANNIE

That policeman, ma'am -- the
one in charge. He kept putting
his cigar butts in the sand. I
dumped it out and made it nice
and fresh.

ABIGAIL

(a beat)

And where did you dump it?

ANNIE

The trash, ma'am. It was just
before the garbage truck came.

ABIGAIL

(thoroughly
satisfied)

Thank you, Annie.

She continues up the stairs; Annie starts out, stops for:

ANNIE

Ma'am -- there were some keys, there
in the sand.

68 ON ABIGAIL
as she freezes.

68

ABIGAIL
Were there?

69 ABIGAIL AND ANNIE

69

ANNIE
Miss Caroline said they were hers.
She'd been looking for them.

ABIGAIL
. And Miss Caroline took her keys?

ANNIE
Yes, ma'am.

ABIGAIL
(a beat)
How fortunate for her. Good night,
Annie.

And she continues up the stairs.

70 INT. ABIGAIL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - ABIGAIL

70

as she enters through the partially open door, reacts to
Caroline's presence as camera discovers the latter placing a
file on the night table beside the turned-down bed.

Caroline wears a topcoat, ready to leave. She looks up.

CAROLINE
Oh, Abby. Before I split, I
thought you might like the draft
of the ladies club speech.

As Abigail comes to her, Caroline hands her the file.

71 TWO SHOT

71

Abigail sits on the edge of the bed. Her eyes remain riveted
on Caroline's face.

ABIGAIL
Thank you, dear. Is there anything
else?

CONTINUED

71 CONTINUED

71

CAROLINE

Can't think of anything. Can you?

ABIGAIL

Not for now. Tomorrow's another day, isn't it?

CAROLINE

It better be. Night, boss.

ABIGAIL

Good night, Caroline.

And Caroline exits.

72 ABIGAIL

72

She holds the file, tapping it against her cheek, thinking, thinking. Oh, what a tangled web we weave.

73 EXT. WOMEN'S CLUB - DAY - ESTABLISHING SHOT

73

Perhaps this is the club on Benedict Canyon near Hartford way. A sense of many cars parked, including Abigail's Corniche. Sound of laughter and applause from within, from an assemblage of women, as Columbo and his car make an atrocious entrance and park. Columbo emerges and enters the club. Over scene:

ABIGAIL'S VOICE

(delivering
her speech)

You may take it as another confession that I cannot write any kind of fiction that doesn't have a murder in it, and a sleuth. There it is. As Agatha Christie once said when someone asked her why she didn't write other kinds of novels, Madam, one does what one can, not what one can't.

74 INT. WOMEN'S CLUB AUDITORIUM - DAY - ON A GROUP OF WOMEN IN AUDIENCE

74

laughing and applauding. Caroline sits at the end of an aisle.

75 AT ROSTRUM - DAY - ABIGAIL

75

She is smartly dressed and enjoying herself.

CONTINUED

75 CONTINUED

75

ABIGAIL

Putting the murderer behind bars is the business of detective fiction -- or delivering him or her to the executioner. Why do so many readers take joy in that? Is it because we're punishing something we feel in ourselves? Is there murder in our civilized hearts? Obviously, there is in mine. And it pays well.

The women in the audience chuckle. Looking toward rear of room, Abigail reacts with some surprise to: (X)

76 INT. AUDITORIUM - ABIGAIL'S POINT OF VIEW - COLUMBO 76
as he enters, a single male among the feminine audience.

77 FAVORING CAROLINE 77
seeing Abigail looking toward back of room, she looks too, goes to Columbo and guides him to a seat.

78 FAVORING ABIGAIL AND ROSTRUM 78

ABIGAIL

There are murders and again there are murders. Once upon a time an offended person could issue a challenge to a duel. What a wonderful solution to a problem! By the time the duel was over the problem no longer existed. Of course dueling existed only for our forefathers, not our foremothers. That's chauvinism at its worst! However, women were the cooks, and all kinds of poisons were readily available. (X)

CONTINUED

78 CONTINUED

78

Laughter.

ABIGAIL

Where was I? Oh, yes, well, the murder itself, in my books and plays, is what veal is to a French chef -- something to be surmounted; a platform -- like this one -- on which to show off. So today we can't challenge people to a duel. All we can do is -- contrive to kill them secretly, and cleverly.

Titters from the audience.

ABIGAIL

Or at least we can fantasize about it. Well, that's murder in the mind. In our midst today, ladies, is someone who deals with murder in fact.

79 ON COLUMBO

79

ABIGAIL'S VOICE

To him it's a fact of our lives, real and frightening, a dark probability from which he must defend us.

80 FULL SHOT

80

ABIGAIL

I wonder if we can prevail upon Detective Lieutenant Columbo of the Police Homicide Division to say a few words to us?

All are following her gaze now, all looking at Columbo. And all applaud.

81 COLUMBO AND CAROLINE

81

Applause continues, swelling in intensity, as Columbo looks his distress at Caroline.

CAROLINE

(amused)

She's gotcha.

CONTINUED

81 CONTINUED

81

She joins the applause. And there is nothing for it but for Columbo to rise and move to the rostrum.

ABIGAIL

(a bit dryly)

Perhaps Lieutenant Columbo will address us today on his special field of interest -- hyper-modern chemical techniques and their applications to advanced criminology.

82 AT ROSTRUM - COLUMBO AND ABIGAIL

82

as she gestures that the stage is all his and departs.

He is singularly alone on the rostrum. Our initial impression is one of extreme unease. Then, as he begins to speak, we realize that Columbo is very much as he always is, and perhaps even enjoying his moment in the spot light.

COLUMBO

Well, it's a very great pleasure, ladies.

(he lights

his cigar stub)

I didn't expect anything like this. I came here like you did ---

83 ANGLE ON ABIGAIL

83

seated in the front row, her expression amused.

COLUMBO'S VOICE

-- to enjoy the famous Abigail Mitchell. As for all that chemical stuff ---

84 ANGLE ON COLUMBO

84

COLUMBO

-- I think Miss Mitchell must have been putting you on, because I don't know anything about that. And about my work being dark and frightening, to tell you the truth I'm not so sure about that, either.

CONTINUED

84 CONTINUED

84

A little flutter of laughter.

COLUMBO

As a matter of fact, I like my job. I like it a lot. I don't get depressed by it, and I don't think the world is full of crime and full of murderers. Because it isn't. It's full of nice people like you. And if it wasn't for my job, I wouldn't be getting to meet you like this.

He hitches forward on the rostrum, thoroughly at home, points his cigar at his audience, lets his gaze fasten on Abigail through:

COLUMBO

And let me tell you something else. Even some of the murderers I meet, I even like them, too, sometimes.

85 COLUMBO'S POINT OF VIEW - ABIGAIL

85

listening intently.

COLUMBO'S VOICE

Like them and even respect them. Not for what they did, certainly not for that ---

86 BACK TO COLUMBO

86

COLUMBO

-- but for the part of them that's intelligent, or funny, or just nice. Because there's niceness in everybody, a little bit, anyway. You take a cop's word for it. Thank you, ladies.

87 FULL SHOT

87

and the enchanted applause of the audience as Columbo leaves the rostrum.

88 EXT. WOMEN'S CLUB - DAY - FULL SHOT

88

The session is breaking up -- women exiting -- others driving off. We also see a cluster of ladies around Abigail who autographs the various books they have brought.

Now Abigail is trying to break away and Caroline takes over, telling the ladies: No more, very sorry...That's all, please...Miss Mitchell has a very important appointment....

As Abigail cross toward her car, Columbo appears and moves after her.

COLUMBO

Miss Mitchell, ma'am....

89 MOVING SHOT - ABIGAIL AND COLUMBO

89

as he joins her and they walk to her car.

ABIGAIL

Your speech was very nice indeed, Lieutenant. I hope you forgive my little prank.

COLUMBO

I'll tell you, a secret, ma'am, I enjoyed myself.

They reach the Corniche and he opens the door for her. His own abysmal Peugeot is parked nearby. She slides behind the wheel and Columbo bends to the open window to continue their conversation.

COLUMBO

The reason I wanted to see you, Miss Mitchell, I'd like to have a look at your nephew's apartment.

ABIGAIL

(a bit startled)

Whatever for?

COLUMBO

Oh, if I knew that, ma'am, I wouldn't have to look at it. Now you inheriting his property and all, I'd like you to be there, too. I could run you over. My car is right here....

He indicates:

90 POINT OF VIEW SHOT - THE PEUGOT

90

There it stands

91 BACK TO ABIGAIL AND COLUMBO

91

and Abigail's reaction

ABIGAIL

There?

COLUMBO

It's French. Very rare
(patting the Corniche)
Now a car like this, how many
would you say there are in the
country?

ABIGAIL

A hundred -- two hundred -- I
wouldn't know.

COLUMBO

(triumphantly)
There's only four like mine.

ABIGAIL

Yes, I can see why. Would you
consider joining me?

COLUMBO

Well, thank you, I'd like that
very much.

He goes around to the passenger side as Caroline approaches
Abigail's window.

CAROLINE

All set?

ABIGAIL

I seem to have a mission with
Lieutenant Columbo.

CAROLINE

The travel agency called about
your stateroom. Shall I take
care of it?

ABIGAIL

Just tell him I'd like a 'A' deck
again.

CONTINUED

91 CONTINUED

91

She starts the engine and the car begins to move as Caroline calls out:

CAROLINE
Terrific talk, Lieutenant!

And she waves them off.

92 EXT. ANOTHER LOCATION - DAY - DOWN ANGLE - THE CORNICHE

92

weaving neatly through Los Angeles traffic.

93 INT. MOVING CAR - DAY - COLUMBO AND ABIGAIL

93

Columbo enjoys the luxurious ride, looking around, checking this, checking that.

COLUMBO
Well, this is very nice.
(pats the seat)
Leather.

ABIGAIL
Leather.

COLUMBO
(inhaling deeply)
Smells like a new car.

ABIGAIL
Possibly that's because it's a
new car.

COLUMBO
You know, I remember the only new
car my father ever bought. How
proud he was. The way it smelled.
Kind of like the inside of a Pull-
man car. It wasn't like this,
though, I'll tell you that.

ABIGAIL
My father never owned a car. Not
until I bought him one. I was
twenty. I had just sold my first
book. Shall we compare poverty
stories, Lieutenant?

Columbo taps his cigar into the ash tray.

COLUMBO
Not in a Rolls Royce.

94 EXTERIOR - DAY - THE CORNICHE

94

as it pulls into the curving entrance drive of a West Los Angeles high rise.

95 INT. EDMUND'S APARTMENT - DAY - ANGLE ON WINDOW DRAPES

95

as the drapes are whisked open, admitting a flood of sunlight, and we hear:

ABIGAIL'S VOICE

What a treat, to watch a consummate professional at work.

Camera finds her at the drape drawstrings, widen angle as she comes around to sit on the couch and we see Columbo and the living room of Edmund's apartment.

It is on a high floor. The decor is contemporary. There are nautical momentos, skis in a corner, a tennis racket tossed down.

Columbo proceeds to give the room a general survey.

ABIGAIL

You may ignore me. Proceed to detect.

Through following, he eccentrically proceeds to draw his finger along the wall at shoulder height -- to peek behind the couch -- to inspect the drawers of a desk.

COLUMBO

Well, there won't be much to watch, ma'am.

(a beat as
he perseveres)

What did you say your nephew did for a living?

ABIGAIL

You see those quaint objects in the corner? They're called skis. The funny whatchamacallit over there is a tennis racket. The gizmo on the wall is a sailboat's wheel. You may now deduce what Edmund did with his time.

96 ANOTHER ANGLE - COLUMBO AND ABIGAIL

96

Columbo is at the desk drawers now.

CONTINUED

96 CONTINUED

96

COLUMBO (Cont'd)
Any enemies, would you say?

ABIGAIL
I can't imagine why there should
be. Do you still intend to hold
to your theory of malice and murder?

COLUMBO
(searching through
a drawer)
Until I find those keys, ma'am.

ABIGAIL
Are they in the drawer?

Columbo gives her a sideways look as:

COLUMBO
You're putting me on again, Miss
Mitchell. Would you kindly
observe me in this other room?

He exits toward bedroom area. Abigail looks after him for a
beat, then follows.

97 INT. EDMUND'S BEDROOM - DAY - COLUMBO

97

as he enters. There is a large, unmade bed -- open blackout
draperies -- a half-finished glass of orange juice and a can
of beer on a bedside table -- a bath towel and few articles
of clothing strewn around.

Columbo takes it all in, peeks into the bathroom as Abigail
enters and stands near the doorway.

COLUMBO
Back there at the ladies club, Miss
Mitchell, when you were talking
to Caroline, she mentioned something
about a stateroom and you said,
'A deck.'

He repeats the strange business of walking along the wall,
drawing his finger over its surface; he checks behind a
dresser and goes through a few drawers as:

ABIGAIL
Yes, I'm sailing in three days.
The Far East. Off with the old,
on with the new. Whatever that
means. I've decided to do my
new book on shipboard.

CONTINUED

97 CONTINUED

97

COLUMBO

Oh, I wouldn't count on that, ma'am. We'll need your presence in town until we get this thing settled.

ABIGAIL

There's nothing to settle....

COLUMBO

Just bear with me, ma'am....

ABIGAIL

My plans were made weeks ago....

COLUMBO

I know you'll understand....

ABIGAIL

I do not understand. You'll have to discuss this with my attorney!

COLUMBO

Well, we're finished here, Miss Mitchell.

He walks out. Abigail turns after him.

98 INT. EDMUND'S APARTMENT AT FOYER AREA - DAY- ABIGAIL AND COLUMBO

98

Abigail's anger betrays itself in an acid quality as:

ABIGAIL

And what, precisely, have you learned from all this poking around?

He regards her with astonishment.

COLUMBO

I'm surprised ma'am, I really am. Didn't you see it?

ABIGAIL

Evidently not.

COLUMBO

Your niece and your husband, you said they were very much in love, but they couldn't have been. In fact they must've had a very poor marriage.

CONTINUED

98 CONTINUED

98

COLUMBO (Cont'd)

You see, Miss Mitchell, there aren't any pictures of Edmund's dead wife -- not a single one.

She stares at him with a chill sense of burgeoning respect.

99 MED. CLOSE SHOT - COLUMBO

99

He gives her a little grin as:

COLUMBO

And I'll be glad to talk to your attorney, ma'am.

100 EXT. ABIGAIL'S GROUNDS - DAY - LONG SHOT - ABIGAIL, CAROLINE 100

Abigail, appropriately dressed, is tending her flowers. Caroline approaches her.

101 CLOSER SHOT - ABIGAIL

101

With shears she cuts some blossoms, as if choosing flowers for a bouquet. Caroline comes into shot.

CAROLINE

Playing hooky again?

ABIGAIL

It's the blessing of being two years ahead with my books. I can squander a whole afternoon.

She gives Caroline the flowers she has already cut, continues to cut and hand them through:

CAROLINE

I thought you should know -- that Lieutenant Columbo's back again.

ABIGAIL

Is he?

CAROLINE

In the library.

ABIGAIL

Whatever does he expect to find there?

CONTINUED

101 CONTINUED

101

Caroline extends her closed hand, opens it to reveal Edmund's car keys.

CAROLINE

These?

Abigail's reaction is carefully controlled. She cuts another flower.

CAROLINE

Edmund's car keys. I knew the police were looking for them. So were you, Abby -- in the sand.

She extends the keys. Abigail takes them, pockets them.

ABIGAIL

How very thoughtful of you.
(re another flower)
I think we'll have this one, too.

She passes the flower to Caroline who admires it.

CAROLINE

It's lovely.
(then)
I've been meaning to speak to you about my salary. We've been together almost four years....

ABIGAIL

I was thinking more of a bonus, Caroline. Perhaps a long trip. Have you ever been to Europe?

Caroline arranges the flowers into a tasteful bouquet as:

CAROLINE

Oh, I wouldn't want to be away from you too long. It might turn out like one of your plots. I mean by the time I got back, the police might somehow even suspect me of murdering Edmund.

ABIGAIL

Yes, I understand.

CAROLINE

I thought maybe we could travel together. On your cruise. I've never been on a cruise.

CONTINUED

- 101 CONTINUED - 2 101
- ABIGAIL
- What a delightful idea. You could help with the book.
- CAROLINE
- And there'd be plenty of time to talk about our futures. Oh, Abby, I hope you don't think I'm forcing myself.
- ABIGAIL
- My dear, I've always been baffled by people who say they won't submit to force. I can't think of anything else to submit to, can you?
- She hands her another flower. And Caroline smiles.
- 102 INT. THE LIBRARY - DAY - ANGLE ON SAFE 102
- Drapes have been drawn; the room is semi-darkened. From the safe we angle to discover Columbo. He is seated, back-lit, smoking his cigar, staring at the safe, sunk in thought.
- Now he rises, goes to the safe, pulls it open and moves inside.
- 103 INT. SAFE - COLUMBO 103
- The safe has been returned to its proper order. His hands explore its stainless flanks. Now his attention goes to the stack of four boxes on a shelf. He removes a pen light from his pocket, flashes it onto the black metal surfaces, peers intently.
- 104 INSERT - THE METAL BOXES 104
- We observe a vertical scratch exposing bare metal near the left side of the first box -- and another, shorter scratch near the right side of the bottom box.
- 105 REVERSE ANGLE - CLOSE SHOT - COLUMBO 105
- and his examining gaze turns elsewhere in the safe, searching (X) for God knows what. Sound of o.s. door open and close.
- He turns. (X)
- 106 THE WALK - IN SAFE 106
- as Columbo's head emerges, looking toward:

107 ANGLE ON MARTIN HAMMOND

107

He has just entered. His manner is crisply business-like. He crosses toward the safe as:

MARTIN
Lieutenant Columbo?

COLUMBO
(emerging to
threshold
of safe)
Yes, sir.

MARTIN
I'm Martin Hammond, Miss Mitchell's
attorney.

COLUMBO
Oh, right, sir. You've been in
New York.
(indicating
the safe)
Would you care to join me?

MARTIN
You understand that Miss Mitchell
is a rather important woman?

Through following, Columbo returns to the safe, takes out his notebook and pencil, proceeds to make some notes regarding the safe's contents -- with special regard for the metal boxes and some thick type-written manuscripts. Martin stands by the threshold.

COLUMBO
Oh, yes, sir, I saw the pictures
in her bedroom, signed by Eisenhower
and Truman and Kennedy and Mahatma
Ghandi. How did she know Mahatma
Ghandi?

MARTIN
Perhaps through her travels. She
intends to travel again the day
after tomorrow.

COLUMBO
I'm afraid I can't permit that, sir.

He emerges from the safe and crosses to:

108 THE DESK - COLUMBO

108

On the desk are the two plastic bags holding the wadded pieces of blank paper. Martin comes into shot.

MARTIN

Why not?

Now Columbo extracts the pieces of paper, approximately the same size, and smooths them out on the desk.

COLUMBO

Like Miss Mitchell said. the body was found in her safe and her house.

He busies himself trying to fit the two torn edges together. The mismatch is obvious.

MARTIN

Edmund left this house and drove away in front of three other witnesses, myself among them.

109 INSERT - THE PIECES OF PAPER

109

and Columbo's hands trying to make the torn edges fit.

MARTIN'S VOICE

He returned to the house sometime after Miss Mitchell departed for New York, a fact to which ---

110 COLUMBO AND MARTIN

110

MARTIN

-- I am also a witness. Do you intend to hold her as a suspect?

COLUMBO

(intent on his puzzle)

No, I don't see how I could properly do that, sir.

MARTIN

As a material witness, then?

Columbo thinks about this one.

CONTINUED

110 CONTINUED

110

COLUMBO

No, I don't think I could do that, either, sir, since the lady wasn't here. Do these two pieces of paper look to you like they go together?

Martin glances at the indicated objects.

MARTIN

No, they do not.

COLUMBO

Would you say something is missing?

MARTIN

Something appears to be missing.

As Columbo gathers up the pieces of paper and puts them in his pocket:

COLUMBO

You're a very good lawyer, sir, very convincing. Good-bye, sir.

And he exits. Martin crosses to the safe and firmly slams the door shut.

111 EXT. ABIGAIL'S HOME - DAY - COLUMBO

111

He emerges and crosses to his car, is about to get it as we see Abigail approaching him, holding the completed bouquet.

ABIGAIL

Lieutenant....

112 TWO SHOT - COLUMBO AND ABIGAIL

112

Abigail coming into shot.

ABIGAIL

Did you speak with Martin?

COLUMBO

Yes, ma'am, I certainly did.

ABIGAIL

I'm so pleased.

(handing him
the bouquet)

These are for Mrs. Columbo.

CONTINUED

112 CONTINUED

112

COLUMBO

(admiring
the flowers)

Miss Mitchell, you're going to make
that woman very happy.

She regards him with a certain affection.

ABIGAIL

I'm sure you make her very happy,
too, Lieutenant.

COLUMBO

(a finger
pointed
at her)

I'm going to tell her what you said.

He gets into his car.

COLUMBO

(through open
window)

Oh, Miss Mitchell -- that stuff under
your nephew's fingernails and on his
belt buckle, it was black paint.

ABIGAIL

And what do you make of that?

COLUMBO

Maybe I'll think of something --
before the ship sails.

A wave and he makes the Peugeot start and go away.

113 INT. BELLY DANCING CLASS - NIGHT

113

The class is held in a simple room, much like a rehearsal
hall, one wall of which is lined with mirrors. There is a
portable record player and several records. At the end of
the room is a kind of alcove which (we shall presently see)
contains a dressing room and a makeup table.

Eight women are present, one of them an instructor. Her
students (housewives, secretaries, etc.) are decked out in
exotic belly-dancing costumes. Some of them are veiled.

(X)

CONTINUED

113 CONTINUED

113
(X)

The instructor helps the ladies adjust their costumes as:

INSTRUCTOR (X)

All right, now that we've got our new costumes, let's prove that we deserve them. Betty, here's your zills. Don't you all look smashing.

She moves to start the record player: appropriate throbbing rhythms fill the room.

INSTRUCTOR

Emily, it's the right foot you roll off of.

(back among
the girls)

It's all marvelous exercise, girls -- your tummies never looked better. Now remember: sexy but dignified -- it ain't a strip tease.

(counting off
the beat)

One and two and three!

The dancers, all working more or less independently, begin to gyrate their respective anatomies with varying degrees of expertise.

114 ANOTHER ANGLE - FAVORING ENTRANCE - DANCERS, ET AL

114

The door opens. Enter Columbo, somewhat bemused by the fact that, wherever he turns, someone's pelvis is being aggressively shaken at him. (X)

COLUMBO (X)

Excuse me -- pardon me, ma'am -- sorry -- excuse me, ma'am....

Until the Instructor stops the music and:

INSTRUCTOR

Yes, what is it, please?

Columbo searches his pockets for a slip of paper as:

COLUMBO

Excuse me, I'm Lieutenant Columbo.

CONTINUED

114 CONTINUED 114

COLUMBO (Cont'd)
I was looking for Miss Caroline --
(consults the slip)
-- Bryce?

115 MED. CLOSE - CAROLINE 115

revealed as she removes her veil.

CAROLINE
Yes, Lieutenant?

116 ANGLE ON COLUMBO AND CAROLINE 116

COLUMBO
(astonished)
You?

CAROLINE
Me.

COLUMBO
Well, you fooled me, Ma'am, you
really did. Excuse the interrup-
tion, but I was wondering, if you
wouldn't mind....

CAROLINE
More questions?

COLUMBO
A few.

CAROLINE
Over here.

She leads him toward the dressing room alcove at the end of
the room as the Instructor claps her hands for attention.

INSTRUCTOR
All right, girls, let's mind our
own business.

She starts the music again.

INSTRUCTOR
One and two and three!

And the dancing continues, the Instructor moving here and
there to adjust technique.

117 ALCOVE AREA - COLUMBO AND CAROLINE

117

From Columbo's position he can see the dancers.

(X)

COLUMBO

That's quite a costume, ma'am. I though this was some kind of exercise class.

CAROLINE

That's exactly what it is. What can I do for you, Lieutenant?

Columbo's gaze has strayed again to the dancers. Caroline sways her hips and taps her zills to regain his attention.

CAROLINE

Lieutenant?

COLUMBO

Yes, Ma'am. It's about how you came to find Edmund's body in the safe.

CAROLINE

It wasn't very hard. I opened the door and there he was.

She checks herself in the make-up mirror.

COLUMBO

I mean how did you come to open the safe at that particular time on that particular morning? Do you usually open it twice a week, once a week, once a month? How often?

CAROLINE

Whenever I have something to put in it. That morning I finished typing Abby's new book.

Again Columbo consults his notebook.

COLUMBO

'The Night I was Murdered' -- that book?

CAROLINE

No, she finished 'The Night I was Murdered' last year. This was a brand new one. She told me to be sure and lock it in the safe as soon as I finished the last few pages.

CONTINUED

117 CONTINUED

117

COLUMBO

She told you that when, the night before?

CAROLINE

Yes, Lieutenant, the night before. Now, if you don't mind, this is my last class before we sail.

She starts back onto the floor. Columbo goes with her.

118 AMONG THE DANCING GIRLS - COLUMBO AND CAROLINE

118

COLUMBO

You mean you're sailing with Miss Mitchell?

CAROLINE

Does that surprise you?

COLUMBO

Well, yes, it does, Ma'am. It's just that there in front of the ladies club, I got the impression you were making the arrangements just for her.

CAROLINE

Did you? Well I'm included now, Lieutenant.

She refastens her veil and sways into her dance.

(X)

CAROLINE

May I?

COLUMBO

Certainly, Ma'am. Thank you. Thank you very much.

She dances, and as Columbo makes for the door, he is again confronted by an attack of shaking femininity, as if all were springing to the defense of Caroline.

COLUMBO

Excuse me -- pardon me -- sorry....

Until he ducks around them and is gone.

- 119 EXT. SANTA MONICA PIER AND APPROACHES - DAY - ABIGAIL'S CAR - 119
ESTABLISHING SHOT (X)
- A gleaming, blue morning. Abigail's car approaches the pier. (X)
- 120 OMITTED 120
and and
121 121
(X)
- 122 EXT. PIER - ABIGAIL 122
(X)
- She crosses toward a railing. (X)
- 123 EXT. SANTA MONICA PIER - AT RAILING - ABIGAIL 123
- She comes to the railing, leans against it, looks out to sea. Her gaze finds:
- 124 POINT OF VIEW SHOT - SAIL BOAT 124
- A sail boat, about forth feet and beautiful, is approaching.
- 125 MED. CLOSE - ABIGAIL 125
- A sadness in her face as her eyes track the boat.
- 126 ANOTHER ANGLE - ABIGAIL 126
- Her hand slides into her coat pocket. We catch a glimpse of Edmund's keys. Then her hand closes, rests for an instant on the rail. She is about to drop them into the sea when:

COLUMBO'S VOICE

Good morning, ma'am. What a nice surprise.

Her hand returns to her pocket as she looks to:

127 THE PIER - COLUMBO'S DOG - ANGLE ON COLUMBO

127

as Columbo approaches her, hauling on a leash. At the other end of the leash is Columbo's dog. It droops and sags alarmingly, the ultimate victim of gravity, and seems reluctant to expend the energy required to respond to Columbo's tug on the leash.

He comes into shot with Abigail.

ABIGAIL

Good morning, Lieutenant. Do you love surprises as much as I do?

COLUMBO

(removing the leash)

Well, that depends, ma'am. I've had a few nasty ones.

ABIGAIL

And given them, too, I'm sure. Do you come here often?

COLUMBO

Sometimes in the mornings, to walk my dog here.

She eyes the dog whose main business in life is to just stand there.

ABIGAIL

Is he all right?

COLUMBO

Well, yes, ma'am. Do you see something wrong?

ABIGAIL

He seems to be scraping bottom.

COLUMBO

That's the way he's made.

He bends and hoists the dog up like fifty pounds of raw liver. They turn to the railing.

128 AT PIER RAILING - ABIGAIL, COLUMBO, THE DOG

128

COLUMBO

We come here to walk and think. My business, the thinking never stops.

(re the dog)

He likes the sea.

CONTINUED

- 128 CONTINUED 128
- ABIGAIL
How can you tell?
- COLUMBO
It makes him frisky.
(to the dog)
Had enough?
- He turns from the rail.
- 129 WIDER ANGLE - COLUMBO, ABIGAIL, THE DOG 129
as he sets the dog down, points his finger:
- COLUMBO
Okay, don't run around. Stay.
- The dog stands there. It is difficult to imagine it doing anything else.
- COLUMBO
(to Abigail)
Trained.
- ABIGAIL
Amazing.
- She turns back to the rail. So does Columbo.
- 130 AT RAIL - COLUMBO AND ABIGAIL 130
- ABIGAIL
(looking off)
I've been watching the sail boat.
- 131 POINT OF VIEW SHOT - THE SAIL BOAT 131
maneuvering.
- 132 BACK TO ABIGAIL AND COLUMBO 132
- COLUMBO
Beautiful things.
- ABIGAIL
Not to me. It's like the one
Phyllis was on -- the night she
drowned.

132 CONTINUED

132

COLUMBO

I looked into that ma'am. She disappeared off the boat. But police don't know for a fact that she died by drowning.

Abigail turns, looks at him -- a long look.

ABIGAIL

I didn't know the police took that much interest. It was all -- so officially closed.

COLUMBO

Nothing else they could do, ma'am.

ABIGAIL

No.

(then)

No. Nothing else.

Her eyes return to the sea. She and Columbo are linked now in a kind of very personal intimacy.

COLUMBO

It must be very hard to lose somebody you love like that. I've been lucky. I lost my parents -- that's the way of the world. But to lose somebody young, that's like being cheated. That's very hard.

Abigail's eyes return to him, searching his face.

ABIGAIL

I'm beginning to be fond of you, Lieutenant. I think you're a very kind man.

Now it is Columbo who turns, looking directly into her eyes.

COLUMBO

Don't count on it, Miss Mitchell. Don't count on it.

(a beat)

A few weeks before your niece died, she filed an assault and battery complaint against her husband. Then she withdrew the charges. You must've had some idea about that. And you still arranged to leave him your money.

CONTINUED

132 CONTINUED - 2

132

Abigail breaks the eye contact, looks off.

ABIGAIL

I believe, in his own way, Edmund loved her as much as I did.

COLUMBO

Well, people have different ways of loving.

Again he turns from the rail.

133 WIDER ANGLE - COLUMBO AND ABIGAIL

133

She watches him as he bends to restore the leash to the dog.

COLUMBO

I still think Edmund was murdered, ma'am. I'll still keep looking for his car keys. When I find the keys, I'll find the murderer.

ABIGAIL

Are you quite sure, Lieutenant?

COLUMBO

(facing her)

Very sure, ma'am.

She draws her hand from her pocket, holds out Edmund's keys.

ABIGAIL

These are his keys. And I am not his murderer. He drove way; I went to New York. Remember?

Columbo looks at the keys, at Abigail. He takes the keys, examines them, looks at her again.

ABIGAIL

I found them this morning -- out in back.

COLUMBO

In back.

134 EXT. ABIGAIL'S HOME GENERAL KITCHEN ENTRANCE AREA - DAY - LOW 134
POSITION SHOT - THE KEYS - ABIGAIL'S HAND

The keys lie well hidden beside the walkway, under a shrub

CONTINUED

134 CONTINUED

134

which overhangs the pavement about ten feet from the point where Edmund's footprint was discovered.

Abigail's hand points to the keys.

ABIGAIL'S VOICE

Here, Lieutenant.

Columbo's hand enters shot.

COLUMBO'S VOICE

Right there.

His hand scoops up the keys and camera adjusts for wider angle, giving us Columbo, Abigail and our orientation. They rise from kneeling positions.

COLUMBO

Well, I don't know what to say, ma'am.

ABIGAIL

You might say that Edmund dropped his keys. Lieutenant, I am a very old lady. I must seem very stupid to you. The truth is, I'm only really intelligent when I write. Still, it seems quite clear.

(point at shrub)

There were his keys --

(pointing at

house)

-- and there was Edmund.

COLUMBO

Yes, ma'am, that certainly explains it. It certainly does.

(pocketing the
keys)

I'll be running along now.

ABIGAIL

Good-bye, young man.

Columbo starts away; so does Abigail. But she turns for:

ABIGAIL

Oh, Lieutenant Columbo.

CONTINUED

134 CONTINUED - 2 134

ABIGAIL
Just one more question.

COLUMBO
Yes, ma'am.

ABIGAIL
Are you prepared to drop your
murder theory?

135 ANGLE ON COLUMBO 135

COLUMBO
The ship hasn't sailed yet, ma'am.
A wave of his cigar. And a grin.

136 EXT. SHIP'S FUNNEL AND WHISTLE - DAY - STOCK 136

A strong, single blast.

137 EXT. SAN PEDRO DOCKS - PASSENGER LINER - DAY - STOCK 137

All the hoopla and festival of sailing day. Somewhere an
o.s. brass band is playing.

138 EXT. SHIPBOARD DECK - DAY - STOCK 138

Passengers on deck waving down to well-wishers on the dock.
And the band plays on.

P.A. VOICE
(filtered)
Your attention, please -- your
attention, please. All visitors
must now go ashore.

139 INT. SHIP'S CORRIDOR OR PUBLIC ROOM - DAY - STOCK 139

Again: the business of getting ready to sail. A trace of the
o.s. band.

P.A. VOICE
(filtered)
All ashore who are going ashore.

140 INT. ABIGAIL'S SUITE - SITTING ROOM - DAY - CLOSE SHOT - 140
STEWARD'S COCKTAIL TRAY

as several hands return drained cocktail and champagne glasses to the tray. Angle widens to reveal the steward, Abigail, Caroline, Martin, Annie, a couple of older women friends of Abigail.

The sitting room is jammed with farewell gifts of flowers, champagne, elaborate gourmet baskets -- trays of canapes -- luggage yet to be removed to the staterooms on either side of the sitting room.

P.A. VOICE

(filtered)

All visitors must now go ashore.

O.s. sound of ship's whistle.

The door to the corridor is open and we have a sense of bellhops, stewards, trundling luggage, passengers.

Caroline finds the portable typewriter and takes it to her stateroom as Abigail ushers her guests (with the exception of Martin) into the corridor.

ABIGAIL

Good-bye, dear -- thank you all --
thank you for coming.

ANNIE

You have a fine time, now, ma'am.

ABIGAIL

(kisses her cheek)

Good-bye, Annie. You enjoy your
vacation, too.

And they are gone. She closes the door, turns, leans back against it.

ABIGAIL

Well, Martin.

141 ANGLE ON ABIGAIL AND MARTIN 141

He is sitting, finishing his drink, scanning her face. He raises his finger.

MARTIN

All clear-eyed and bushy-tailed.

ABIGAIL

Indeed.

CONTINUED

MARTIN

You are quite a girl.

ABIGAIL

I just write well.

(she starts
to clean up
some of
the mess)

Thank you for rescuing me from
the Lieutenant's clutches.

MARTIN

(rising)

My pleasure.

(to o.s. Caroline)

Bon Voyage, Caroline.

Caroline comes from her stateroom.

CAROLINE

Oh, thank you, Mr. Hammd.

Martin kisses Abigail.

MARTIN

(a bit dryly)

Call on me anytime you find a
body in your safe.

He exits. Caroline starts to help Abigail clean up.

CAROLINE

It's all like a dream, isn't it,
Abby? How can I thank you.

ABIGAIL

I'm sure you'll find a way, my dear.

CAROLINE

Is it all right if I go on deck?

ABIGAIL

You're free to do exactly as you
please.

Caroline moves to open the door, revealing Columbo about to
knock.

CAROLINE

(a startled beat)

Excuse me, Lieutenant.

She ducks around him and Abigail whirls to face Columbo as he
comes into the room.

CONTINUED

141 CONTINUED - 2

141

He carries an eight-by-ten brown manila envelope.

ABIGAIL

All visitors must go ashore,
Lieutenant. Or are you sailing
with me?

COLUMBO

Oh, it's not that I wouldn't like
that, Ma'am. Mrs. Columbo and I
tried it once. It was terrific.

Abigail extends her hand.

ABIGAIL

Then good-bye. Thank you for
seeing me off.

COLUMBO

Well, the fact is, Miss Mitchell,
I'm going to have to ask you to
leave with me.

Abigail's hand falls away. She tightens visibly.

ABIGAIL

(snapping)
That's impossible!

COLUMBO

Not really, Ma'am. I've got a
bench warrant here.

He produces a document from his inner pocket.

COLUMBO

To show to the captain.

ABIGAIL

May I ask why?

As he opens the large manila envelope:

COLUMBO

Well, Ma'am, it's those car keys
again.

He moves to:

142 AT A STEAMER TRUNK COLUMBO 142

As he comes to an up-ended steamer trunk, extracts a sheaf of eight-by-ten police photos from the envelope.

COLUMBO

You see these pictures?

He lays them out on the surface of the trunk as Abigail comes into shot.

143 INSERT - THREE PHOTOGRAPHS 143

of Edmund's footprint in the damp soil -- the footprint with Edmund's shoe in it -- the footprint filled with plaster. Columbo's hand indicates:

COLUMBO'S VOICE

They're shots of Edmund's footprint, out there in back of your house. And I asked the police photographer --

144 COLUMBO AND ABIGAIL - THE PHOTOS 144

COLUMBO

-- to take more pictures of the whole area, so I could orient myself.

(other photos)

He took these other photos -- that was the same day Caroline found the body -- and this picture here, you see?

145 INSERT - PHOTO - COLUMBO'S HAND 145

The photo clearly encompasses the precise area in which Abigail said she found the keys.

COLUMBO'S VOICE

That's right where you said you found Edmund's keys, Ma'am. Right under that bush.

146 BACK TO COLUMBO AND ABIGAIL 146

COLUMBO

But there weren't any keys there, not the day after Edmund was killed -- you see that?

CONTINUED

146 CONTINUED

146

COLUMBO (Cont'd)

So how could you have found them there yesterday?

Abigail's eyes come up from the photos. She remains fully in possession of herself.

ABIGAIL

Then obviously I was mistaken. The curse of old age, Lieutenant, forgetfulness. One bush is much like another.

Columbo looks at her as one looks at a naughty child.

COLUMBO

Do you want me to talk to the captain, Ma'am? I'll be needing your help back at the house.

They react to o.s. door open and:

147 COLUMBO, ABIGAIL, CAROLINE

147

as Caroline enters.

CAROLINE

Excuse me, I'll need a coat out there.

She crosses to her stateroom. Abigail looks at Columbo.

ABIGAIL

So will I.

She moves to take her coat from a chair.

COLUMBO

I'll just wait outside Ma'am.

He exits to corridor as Caroline comes from her stateroom. Both she and Abigail are putting on their coats as:

ABIGAIL

Caroline, I'm afraid I'll have to leave the ship. (X)

CAROLINE

(freezing)

What?

ABIGAIL

Just for a few days. I'll rejoin you in Honolulu.

Caroline scans her narrowly.

CAROLINE

This isn't one of your tricks?

CONTINUED

147 CONTINUED

147

ABIGAIL

No, my dear. It's one of Lieutenant Columbo's tricks. I know you'll accustom yourself to the life you expect to lead.

And she exits.

148 INT. ABIGAIL'S LIBRARY - DAY - WALL PANEL COVERING SAFE

148

The wall panel is sliding open. Camera angles to discover Abigail and Columbo. Heavy drapes are drawn. Lamp illumination is low-keyed. Most of the furniture is sheeted. Abigail's coat lies across a chair.

Columbo indicates the safe.

COLUMBO

If you please, ma'am.

As Abigail dials the combination, Columbo moves to open the alarm panel and turn the switch to the "Off" position.

ABIGAIL

Is this the important help you needed, Lieutenant?

COLUMBO

Oh, no, Miss Mitchell, I need a lot more than that.

He helps her open the safe door, then crosses to the desk.

149 AT DESK - COLUMBO

149

From his pocket he takes the two pieces of torn, wadded paper. As before, he smooths them on the desk, tries to fit the edges together -- this as Abigail comes into shot.

COLUMBO

You see these two pices of paper? You can see there's a missing piece, ma'am. And I said to myself, I kept thinking, there's Edmund in the safe. Now supposing, just supposing, I'm right and you're wrong, there he is locked in there by his murderer. And he certainly must've known who that was.

CONTINUED

149 CONTINUED

149

COLUMBO (Cont'd)

If I'm right, that is. Would you agree with me, ma'am?

ABIGAIL

If you insist.

COLUMBO

(fiddling with
the paper)

Then, I said to myself, if I was Edmund, if I knew I was going to die in there, I'd want to see my murderer punished -- I'd certainly want the police to know who murdered me.

ABIGAIL

But you have nothing to write with, Edmund.

Columbo turns back toward the safe, pauses at its threshold -- this as:

COLUMBO

Absolutely correct. And even if I could've written out an accusation, I wouldn't know who'd open the safe and find it -- or destroy it, ma'am. I mean, for all Edmund knew, it might be his murderer who'd be the first person who'd open the safe.

(X)

(again examining
the inner door of
the safe)

But I can't get it out of my head, Miss Mitchell, maybe the dead man left us something -- a message -- some sort of sign.

ABIGAIL

Ahhh. The missing bit of paper.

COLUMBO

Well, not exactly, ma'am. That's a puzzle, all right. But I've been thinking maybe Edmund, he left us a different kind of a puzzle.

150
thru OMITTED
153

150
thru
153

154 ANGLE ON COLUMBO

154

He enters the safe and gathers up the four black metal boxes.

COLUMBO

These safe-deposit boxes, ma'am -- they've all been in and out of the safe half-a-dozen times since the murder. Stacked every which way.

He emerges with the stack of boxes.

COLUMBO

I'll just put them here.

He places the boxes, still in column, on a refectory table near Abigail. Columbo shows her his nails and his belt buckle as:

CONTINUED

154 CONTINUED

154

COLUMBO

Now you remember Edmund had black paint under his nails and on his belt buckle. The only black paint in the safe is on these boxes. So he must have tried to scratch them -- nice, fresh, new scratches....

He shows her the scratches we saw earlier in the safe -- a long vertical scratch on one box, a short vertical scratch on another.

COLUMBO

You see those scratches?

ABIGAIL

Ahh. His message from the grave.

Columbo end-for-ends the two scratches boxes so that now no scratches whatsoever appear on the front surfaces -- this as:

COLUMBO

Please, bear with me, ma'am.
(looks thoughtfully at the rear surfaces of the boxes)

There's more scratches here. It's like we have to interpret them, Miss Mitchell -- get them in the right order, ma'am. If there is any order that is. Now, if we turn one of these boxes around -- like this -- let's see what we've got.

He reverses the topmost box and we see, in exposed silvery metal, a crudely scratched "V". He studies it closely.

COLUMBO

What do you make of that, ma'am?

155 INSERT - THE METAL BOXES

155

and the "V" on the top box.

ABIGAIL'S VOICE

Scratches.

156 BACK TO SCENE

156

COLUMBO

Fresh.

CONTINUED

156 CONTINUED

156

ABIGAIL

(studying the
scratches)

A 'V' -- 'V' for victory. Perhaps
he was expressing his life force.
Or is it 'V' for Veronica? How
very cruel of her. Do you think
Veronica killed him, Lieutenant?

(Note: The name of the character of "Caroline" has been
changed to "Veronica.")

COLUMBO

No, I doubt that, ma'am. I doubt
it very much. But maybe she got
an idea who did kill him.

ABIGAIL

Really? What a clever girl she is. (X)
(her attention
returns to
the boxes)
Perhaps it's upside down.

She turns the top box downside up.

157 INSERT

157

We see an inverted "V."

158 BACK TO SCENE

158

ABIGAIL

(cheerily)

An unfinished 'A' -- 'A' for Annie.
Did Annie the maid do it? We
haven't got a butler.

Columbo is looking at her.

COLUMBO

'A' for Abigail, ma'am?

ABIGAIL

Was he accusing me -- are you
accusing me, Lieutenant? But I
wasn't here.

COLUMBO

Right, ma'am. That's a fact. Now
if we turned this box around....

CONTINUED

158 CONTINUED

158

He end-for-ends the second box from the top and we see:

159 INSERT

159

On the second box from the top is a long, vertical scratch which lines up under the inverted "v."

COLUMBO'S VOICE

And we turn this one upside down....

CONTINUED

159 CONTINUED

159

He turns the top box upside down, making a "V" again; the scratched on the top two boxes, taken together, form a "Y."

160 BACK TO SCENE

160

as they both study the new pattern.

ABIGAIL

A 'Y.' Maybe it's a cosmic question
-- 'Why?' There's dear Edmund in
the safe, questioning the meaning
of life....

COLUMBO

(thoughtfully)

Or 'why' was he murdered, ma'am?

ABIGAIL

Oh, every character I write knew
exactly why he was murdered. Let's
try again.

(X)

Columbo turns the top two boxes upside down and:

161 INSERT

161

The scratches on the top two boxes forming an inverted "Y."

162 BACK TO SCENE

162

Hand to chin, Columbo studies this pensively.

ABIGAIL

The Greek letter Lambda. 'L' for
life. You don't suppose Edmund
was practicing his Greek in there?

COLUMBO

Now you're putting me on again,
ma'am.

Again he studies the boxes, takes the top two, with their
inverted "Y" and puts them aside through:

COLUMBO

You know, ma'am, those car keys.

CONTINUED

162 CONTINUED

162

COLUMBO (Cont'd)

There's only one way you could have
got them after Edmund drove away.

Now he puts one of the remaining boxes directly on top of
the inverted "Y," studies the effect, then takes the remaining
box, end-for-ends it and places it on top of the pile. On
the front face of this top box, we see a short, vertical
scratch inscribed.

163 INSERT - THE FOUR BOXES

163

giving us a short vertical scratch, a blank, a long vertical
scratch and the inverted "V."

COLUMBO'S VOICE

He must've come back here before
you left for the airport.

164 BACK TO SCENE

164

Columbo is closely inspecting the pattern.

COLUMBO

And you were with him, ma'am.
Edmund and you were together.

ABIGAIL

That's very extravagant, Lieutenant.
Can you prove it?

Now Columbo end-for-ends the second box in the pile: a
second long, vertical scratch appears, giving us an inverted
"Y" with a very long shank.

COLUMBO

Oh, no, ma'am. No, not a chance.
Now what do you think of this,
ma'am?

He starts to turn the bottom box upside down.

165 INSERT - THE BOXES

165

With the bottom box upside down, the effect now is that of an
arrow pointed downward.

166 BACK TO SCENE

166

ABIGAIL

An arrow -- an arrow pointing
straight down.

CONTINUED

166 CONTINUED 166

ABIGAIL (cont.)

Do you think he was calling attention to his new shoes?

COLUMBO

Excuse me, ma'am.

He picks up the stack of boxes and carries them into the safe.

167 ANGLE ON COLUMBO IN THE SAFE 167

as he puts the boxes back on their shelf, starts rearranging them. Abigail enters shot and joins him:

168 INSIDE THE SAFE - CLOSE SHOT - THE BOXES 168

as Columbo completes placing the boxes in a new order: the arrow is now pointed upward. Camera angles to Columbo and Abigail in a tight two shot.

ABIGAIL

Pointing straight to heaven.
Heaven's my destination?

Columbo looks upward.

169 CLOSE SHOT - THE DORMANT LIGHT BULB 169

We see the dead light bulb -- and now Columbo's hand entering shot to unscrew it. Camera adjusts for two shot as he lowers the bulb, shakes it against his ear.

ABIGAIL

He wanted us to know the light doesn't work. He always was a bit of a complainer.

Columbo looks upward again. Camera tracks his hand to the light socket. His fingers dig inside and remove a tightly folded wad of paper.

170 ANGLE ON COLUMBO AND ABIGAIL - INSIDE THE SAFE 170

Columbo unfolds the paper into a long, narrow strip. He looks at Abigail. They come from the safe. Columbo goes to a lamp, inspects the slip closely.

CONTINUED

170 CONTINUED

170

COLUMBO

It's from the title page of your manuscript, ma'am.

ABIGAIL

(a trepidatious beat)

'The Night I Was Murdered'?

He hands the slip to her.

COLUMBO

It's the missing piece.

(leaning over her)

You see -- these two words have been rubbed out by a burned match.

(he straightens)

Would you mind reading it for me?

Abigail silently reads the slip -- slowly sinks into a chair.

COLUMBO

Out loud -- please, ma'am?

ABIGAIL

(reading -- a slight tremor in her voice)

'...I Was Murdered'-- by -- Abigail Mitchell.

COLUMBO

Murdered by Abigail Mitchell. Deathbed testimony -- that's considered very strong evidence, ma'am.

Abigail looks up at him. He takes back the slip.

COLUMBO

I understand why you did it, Miss Mitchell.

ABIGAIL

Veronica will spit when she hears.
(a beat)

I don't suppose you could make an exception in my case? An old woman -- quite harmless, all in all. Under the circumstances -- your kindness....

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

Well, I'll tell you, ma'am. I thank you for the compliment. But you're a very professional person in your work. So am I, ma'am.

ABIGAIL

(she nods)

Very professional indeed.

(a beat)

Just think, Lieutenant. If only you had investigated my niece's death, all this need never have happened.

She manages to smile at him. An answering smile from Columbo. Abigail starts to rise. He takes her arm. Picture freezes.

FADE OUT

THE END