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COLUMBO

MURDER BY THE BOOK

by

Steven Bochco

sn

#33302

PLEASE NOTE:

The character "Hal Franklin"

will become

"KEN FRANKLIN"

COLUMBOMURDER BY THE BOOKCAST

COLUMBO
JAMES FERRIS
KEN FRANKLIN
LILLY LA SANKA
JOANNA FERRIS
1ST DETECTIVE
2ND DETECTIVE
MIKE TUCKER
BEAUTIFUL WILLOWY THING
MAID
GLORIA JR.
SPECTATOR #1
SPECTATOR #2
WOMAN
OFFICER
PATROLMAN
FIRST REPORTER
SERGEANT
SECOND REPORTER
THIRD REPORTER
DRIVER
MOVER #1
MOVER #2
OFFICER BOWSER

(X)

(X)

COLUMBO

MURDER BY THE BOOK

SETS

EXTERIOR:

CENTURY CITY OFFICE BUILDING
COUNTRYSIDE
ROAD
GENERAL STORE AND COUNTRY ROAD
LAKEFRONT COUNTRY ROAD
FRANKLIN'S CABIN
FERRIS HOUSE
BEVERLY HILLS HILLS
FRANKLIN'S HOUSE AND GARAGE
HOT DOG STAND
MUSIC CENTER AND AHMANSON THEATRE
DOCK
LAKE AND LAKEFRONT

INTERIOR:

FERRIS AND FRANKLIN'S OFFICE
CORRIDOR
LOBBY AND ELEVATORS
FRANKLIN'S CAR
LA SANKA'S GENERAL STORE
STORE
ALCOVE
DINING ROOM
KITCHEN
FERRIS HOME
ENTRANCE
LIVING ROOM
KITCHEN
FRANKLIN'S CABIN - LIVING ROOM
FRANKLIN'S GARAGE
FRANKLIN'S HOME
RECEPTION HALL
LIVING ROOM
COCKTAIL LOUNGE

COLUMBOMURDER BY THE BOOK

FADE IN

INSERT - TYPEWRITER KEYS 1

as they bat out the following: "Mrs. Melville looked at the various members" -- The carriage backs up, "X's" out the misspelled word "members," and continues: "members of the team, her gaze settling on the Frenchman. 'J'accuse,' she said, pointing at him. You killed the Ambassador's daughter."

CLOSE SHOT - JAMES FERRIS 2

hunched over the typewriter, finishing up a sentence. He stops, briefly looks over what he's written, stretches in his chair, lights up a cigarette, and begins typing again. Camera pulls back to reveal we are in:

INT. FERRIS' AND FRANKLIN'S OFFICE - DAY 3

A large, elegant room, expensively appointed. Ferris sits working at an enormous mahogany desk, on which rest a telephone, tape recorder, clock radio, an open ream of paper, the electric typewriter, of course, and an ashtray overflowing with butts. As camera pans the room, and over the erratic noise of the typewriter keys hitting the page, we see the mementos and memorabilia of a long and distinguished writing career. On the walls of the paneled office are large, framed posters duplicating exciting, colorful, and fairly lurid book jackets. The books are all Mrs. Melville Mysteries, and the posters all indicate dual authorship: James Ferris and Hal Franklin. Also on the walls are citations and awards from various literary clubs, Mystery Writers organizations, and the like. On one section of wall, in eminent display, are two framed reproductions of covers of major news magazines, both featuring photos of Ferris and Franklin. On the Time Magazine one, a ribbon across the lower right-hand corner of the cover proclaims: "BEST-SELLING MYSTERY TEAM!" And on a few of the bookcases scattered around the office, we can see several "EDGARS," the Mystery Writers of America award. As Ferris continues to work, we

CUT TO

EXT. CENTURY CITY OFFICE BUILDING - DAY 4

Bright sunlight, exploding fountains of water. Since it is a Saturday, the area is all but deserted. Camera establishes, then pans to show a sleek luxury car pulling around to the (X) side of the building.

INT. CAR - DAY

5

to show Hal Franklin. Good-looking, tanned, great charm, polish, and an urbane sophistication. Also, the hint of willfulness, a temperament that demands its own way. He leans across the seat, snaps open the glove compartment, and removes a .38 revolver. Checking the chamber, he puts the gun in his belt and closes his jacket.

OMITTED

6

INT. OFFICE - DAY

7

Ferris is still at work when a knock sounds on the door. He looks up, puzzled.

FERRIS

Who is it?

No answer.

FERRIS

(again)

Yes? Who is it?

Still no answer. Frowning, Ferris gets up and crosses to the door. He listens for a moment, hears nothing. Finally his curiosity gets the better of him and he yanks it open.

HIS POINT OF VIEW - HAL FRANKLIN

8

standing in the doorway, expressionless, implacable, the muzzle of his pistol pointing directly at camera.

ANGLE - THE TWO

9

A beat. Then Ferris starts to laugh.

FRANKLIN

(disappointed)

You're not intimidated?

FERRIS

(smiling)

Come on, Hal. I'm one half of the world's greatest mystery team, right? So naturally I noticed that the safety catch is on. And that you're not wearing gloves. And that you don't even have your finger on the trigger.

CONTINUED

FRANKLIN

(grins)

Okay, okay, I'm a terrible
practical joker.

FERRIS

What are you doing here with that
thing anyway?

FRANKLIN

(putting it away)

I'm on my way to the cabin and I
thought I should have some kind
of protection up there.

(beat)

And I came to apologize.

FERRIS

For what?

FRANKLIN

(apparently
sincere)

For blowing up the other day. I
was out of line.

FERRIS

Look, forget it. These things
happen.

FRANKLIN

They shouldn't happen to us.

(then, buoyant)

So ---

He ducks outside the door and returns with a champagne bottle,
striding past Ferris and popping the cork.

FRANKLIN

Believe it or not, this is a
peace pipe.

He goes to the bar and fills two glasses, hands one to his
partner.

FRANKLIN

Bottoms up.

FERRIS

At ten o'clock in the morning?

CONTINUED

FRANKLIN

(smiles)

In the writer's soul it's always
the middle of the night.

(raises glass)

To our divorce.

They drink, but Ferris is reflective.

FERRIS

Well -- it's not exactly a divorce.

FRANKLIN

Sure it is. Let's be honest.
No alimony but it's a termination.

He strolls over to the bookcases.

FRANKLIN

(wry)

Our children. Fifteen books,
fifty million copies sold.

He pauses at an oil portrait of a venerable-looking maiden
aunt-type.

FRANKLIN

And, of course, dear Mrs. Melville.
We brought her to life and now we
bury her.

FERRIS

Come on, Hal. You're making me
feel guilty. All I want to do is
write on my own.

FRANKLIN

I know. And I was being selfish.
From now on you can solo with my
blessings.

FERRIS

(touched)

Thanks, Hal. Appreciate it.

FRANKLIN

Friendship is more important than
a partnership, right?

FERRIS

Sure.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

9

FRANKLIN

To friendship, then.

They drain their glasses again. Franklin immediately pours a refill.

-A ANGLE - FRANKLIN'S HAND

9-A

as he slides his cigarette lighter along the desk and leaves it behind the phone.

-B BACK TO SCENE

9-B

He claps Ferris on the back.

FRANKLIN

And now I'm going to kidnap you.

FERRIS

What?

FRANKLIN

The aforementioned cabin's been finished for six months now and you haven't even seen it. You're going to be my first male guest.

FERRIS

Now? Hal, I can't.

FRANKLIN

(filling his
glass again)

Why can't you?

FERRIS

Well, it's all the way down in San Diego.

FRANKLIN

So? It's a few hours' drive. I'll have you home before midnight.

FERRIS

But I promised Joanna I'd take her to dinner and a show ---

FRANKLIN

You'll tell her you're working late at the office.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

9-1

FRANKLIN (Cont'd)

(tosses his
jacket at him)Now let's go. We'll uncork another
bottle and do some fishing.

FERRIS

(reluctant)

Well....

FRANKLIN

(again, the arm
around his part-
ner's shoulder)You know what your trouble is, old
buddy? You can't even let your-
self unwind for just one day.

FERRIS

Sure I can.

FRANKLIN

Then prove it. And if you need
justification, consider it a favor,
okay? I just want to bury the
hatchet in style. You can't drop
me as a partner and turn down my
invitation all in the same week,
can you?

Ferris thinks it over, but he already knows he's hooked.

CUT TO

12

INT. GROUND FLOOR OF BUILDING - DAY

12

as the elevator doors slide open and Franklin and Ferris emerge. They head through the lobby toward the rear exit doors.

(X)

FERRIS

Actually, the timing's not so bad. I was just finishing up the final chapter.

FRANKLIN

(shaking his head)
Mrs. Melville's last case. We should send flowers to the old broad.

Ferris laughs as they go out.

13

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

13

as they cross toward Franklin's car. Franklin pauses, takes a folded sheet of paper from his pocket.

FRANKLIN

By the way, I made up a list of the things I'll want to take from the office.

(hands it over)

Look it over, will you?

As they walk, Ferris opens the paper, scans it with puzzlement.

FERRIS

I don't understand...It's a list of names.

Franklin takes it back, looks it over, shakes his head.

FRANKLIN

I'm losing my mind. It's the wrong one. Must've left the other at home.

They have reached the car now. He pockets the paper and both men get in.

14

INT. CAR - DAY

14

as Franklin starts the motor.

FRANKLIN

Okay. Let's put some distance between us and the smog.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

14

He digs out a cigarette, then pats his pockets.

FRANKLIN

I am losing my mind.

FERRIS

What's the matter?

FRANKLIN

I left my lighter in the office.

FERRIS

Do you need it?

FRANKLIN

Security blanket. I'll be right back.

EXT. CAR - DAY

15

as Franklin gets out and heads swiftly toward the building.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

16

A key is fitted into the lock and the door opens. Franklin enters, his motions now precise and almost programmed. First he goes to a row of filing cabinets, pulls out the drawers and begins scattering papers around the room. Then, removing the paper he "mistakenly" showed his partner, he places it in the back of one of the desk drawers. Finally he turns over the desk chair and leaves it lying on the floor. He pauses, looking around carefully. Then he snaps on the desk lamp and the overhead lights and goes to the door. Before he leaves he suddenly grins to himself, remembering something. He goes back to the desk and retrieves the lighter. Pocketing it, he exits, closing the door very carefully so that it's still unlatched. Camera holds on the almost-closed door for a beat, then-pans slowly to the portrait of Mrs. Melville.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

17

flashing by. The urban landscape has given way to panoramic vistas of California scenery.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

18

as Franklin's car speeds along. The top is down now.

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8

19

INT. CAR - DAY

19

FRANKLIN

Glad I talked you into this? Smell that air.

FERRIS

How far to the cabin?

FRANKLIN

Another hour. We have to skirt San Diego.

A silence. Then:

FRANKLIN

You know, now that we're splitting you really ought to take Joanna on a trip. Europe, Japan, someplace.

FERRIS

Not yet...I have a serious book or two I want to get out of my system.

FRANKLIN

Know what I'm going to do?

FERRIS

(grins)

Sure. The same thing you've been doing for years. Except that they seem to be getting younger.

FRANKLIN

No...It's just that I'm getting older.

20

EXT. ROAD - DAY

20

A runby. More lush scenery.

DISSOLVE TO

21

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

21

The terrain has changed considerably now. More wooded, secluded. A lake glints in the distance. Establish Franklin's car heading toward a quaint and charming structure nestled by barely traveled crossroads. This is a community general store serving the needs of those who -- like Franklin -- own property by and on the lake-front.

ANOTHER ANGLE

22

as the car pulls past the front of the store and for some inexplicable reason continues around to the side, stopping there. Nearby is a water spigot with a hose attached.

INT. CAR - DAY

23

FRANKLIN

Only be a minute. I just have to pick up some supplies...Oh, and hand me that book in the glove compartment, will you?

Ferris passes it over to him.

FERRIS

It's one of ours.

FRANKLIN

The boss-lady here is a fan. I've been promising her this for months.
(smiles)
The price of fame.

Starts to open the door.

FERRIS

Want me to come with you?

FRANKLIN

(a beat)
Uh -- no.
(looks around)
Tell you what --
(indicates hose)
Could you put some water in the radiator? She's been running kind of hot.

FERRIS

Sure.

FRANKLIN

And I'll be right out.

He leaves the car.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

24

Charming, lots of jars, barrels full of pickles, clothing, and, of course, foodstuffs. As Franklin enters, the store is empty. He looks around, then calls out.

CONTINUED

11

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9-A
(X)

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24

CONTINUED

24

FRANKLIN

Miss La Sanka?

LA SANKA'S VOICE

In a minute.

25

ANGLE ON MISS LA SANKA

25

as she enters through a curtain at the back of the store that

camouflages the stairs leading to her living quarters. She is a woman in her early thirties, not at all unattractive, but obviously not a master of understatement in her personal appearance and makeup. Seeing Franklin, she smiles loudly and approaches.

LA SANKA

(flirting)

Mr. Franklin. My planets must be in the right house.

FRANKLIN

Not only that, they're working overtime. I brought you a present.

He hands over the book.

LA SANKA

Pour moi?

(reading the cover)

"Prescription: Murder"...A Mrs. Melville thriller...by James Ferris and Hal Franklin....

FRANKLIN

Open to the first page....

LA SANKA

You signed it, you dear man....

(opens the book,
sees the inscription)

'To My Lilly -- Love Always, Hal.'
(closes book)

Well, Mr. Franklin, I'm very grateful, but I'd rather have the storyteller than the story.

FRANKLIN

If you're good and get me some groceries, someday you'll have both.

LA SANKA

(smiles)

Empty promises. What do you need?

FRANKLIN

(handing her a
scrap of paper)

Just a few things for overnight.

She begins filling the order. Over her shoulder:

CONTINUED

25

CONTINUED - 2

25

LA SANKA

Who is it this week? The blonde or the redhead?

FRANKLIN

Neither nor. I'm all alone this weekend. Contemplation, fishing, and the refreshment of my spirit.

She gives him a disbelieving glance. He digs out a dollar.

FRANKLIN

Break this for me, will you? I have to make a call.

She changes the bill and gives him the coins, then returns to filling his order. He moves through the curtain toward the rear of the store.

26

INT. ALCOVE

26

at the foot of the stairs leading up to her living quarters. There is a pay phone on the wall. Franklin deposits a dime.

FRANKLIN

Operator? I'd like to make a long-distance call to Los Angeles....

27

INT. FERRIS LIVING ROOM - DAY

27

Close on a phone as it rings. It sits beside a photograph of Ferris. Angle widens to show other photos -- Franklin and Ferris in various poses of friendship. Widen still more as Joanna Ferris picks up the receiver. She is an attractive, intelligent woman, more classy than the standard housewife type.

JOANNA

Hello?

NOTE: INTERCUT CONVERSATION.

FRANKLIN

Joanna? Hal.

JOANNA

(surprised)

Hello, Hal. I thought you weren't speaking to us.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

27

FRANKLIN

All patched up. I just saw Jim at the office a few hours ago and we signed an armistice.

JOANNA

Really? Oh, Hal, that's a relief.

FRANKLIN

Don't mention it to Jim, by the way. He wants to surprise you.

JOANNA

Why don't you join us for dinner and we'll celebrate?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

(X)
27

FRANKLIN

Love to, but I'm calling from the cabin. I'm spending the weekend in San Diego.

JOANNA

Maybe some other time.

FRANKLIN

Fine. In case you or Jim need me, you've got my number. Right, hon... see you in a few days. Bye.

He hangs up with a slight smile of satisfaction.

DISSOLVE TO

COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

28

as Franklin's car moves along the lakefront.

INT. CAR - DAY

Franklin driving, Ferris lost in thought on the seat beside him. Finally:

FERRIS

You ever get the feeling of *déja vu*?

FRANKLIN

What?

FERRIS

You know, like you've done something before, but you know you haven't?

FRANKLIN

Why?

FERRIS

I'm getting it right now. Isn't that strange? I've never been here in my life.

FRANKLIN

Maybe in a previous incarnation.
(nods ahead)
There's the cabin.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

30

Establishing. Some "cabin." It's an expensive rustic retreat with all the extras. Franklin's car pulls to a stop and the two men exit, Franklin carrying the carton of groceries. Ferris is frankly bowled over.

FERRIS

Hal, it's fantastic.

FRANKLIN

The house that Mrs. Melville built. Wait'll you see the inside.

INT. CABIN - DAY

31

as the two partners enter. Again, the opulence is overpowering. A large beamed room, beautifully furnished, leather chairs, brick fireplace, the works. Ferris is speechless.

FERRIS

No wonder....

FRANKLIN

No wonder what?

FERRIS

What woman could resist this setting?

FRANKLIN

(smiles)

Not too many. How about a drink?

FERRIS

More alcohol? No, thanks. You'll corrupt me.

(X)

His mood grows somber. Franklin picks up on it.

FRANKLIN

Thinking about Joanna, aren't you?

FERRIS

I guess so. I mean, just taking off like this...not telling her. She still expects me for dinner.

FRANKLIN

All right, Plan A goes into effect. Pick up the phone and call her.

FERRIS

What do I say?

CONTINUED

31
CONTINUED

FRANKLIN

(shakes his head)

The man is too square for words. You tell her you're calling from the office. She knows you've got a deadline on the book so just say you're working late. How many times have you had to do that?

FERRIS

(rueful)

A few hundred.

FRANKLIN

Exactly. That's why she'll believe you.

FERRIS

I hate lying to her.

FRANKLIN

You're not lying. You're just saving her a little anguish. Now get it over with and let's start enjoying ourselves.

Ferris frowns, but he knows he'll have to go through with it. Somewhat reluctantly he picks up the receiver, dials "0."

FERRIS

Operator, I'd like to ---

Franklin quickly presses the cutoff bar.

FRANKLIN

It's obvious you never cheated on Joanna. If you want her to think you're at the office, you don't have the operator place your call.

FERRIS

All right. Area code for L.A. is 213, right?

Franklin nods. Ferris dials the area code and his number, shoots a nervous look over to Franklin. Then:

FERRIS

Honey? How are you... Yeah, well, that's just it... I'm really into this last chapter and I want to work straight through.

ON FRANKLIN

32

He takes a few steps back, out of his partner's line of sight.
Opens his jacket, removes the gun.

BACK TO SCENE

33

FERRIS

I know, I know, but it's the last
time. That's a promise....

ON FRANKLIN

34

Carefully aiming the gun.

ON FERRIS

35

Catching the movement out of a corner of his eye. He half
turns.

FERRIS

Hey!

INT. FERRIS KITCHEN - DAY

36

Joanna is on the other end of the line. We hear, with her, a
shot ring out over the phone, a muffled cry from her husband.

JOANNA

(alarmed)

Jimmy?

FERRIS' VOICE

(over phone)

I'm -- shot ---

JOANNA

(screaming)

Jimmy!

INT. CABIN - DAY

As Franklin quickly hangs up the phone.

(X)

INT. FERRIS KITCHEN - DAY

as Joanna drums the cutoff bar.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

38

JOANNA

(panicking)

Hello...Hello...Jimmy?

She finally hangs up, not quite sure what to think. Then she snatches up the phone and with a shaking finger, dials.

JOANNA

Operator, get me the police!

Quickly! There's been a shooting!

INT. CABIN - DAY

39

Franklin is calmly pouring himself a drink. The gun lies on the bar next to the telephone. Ferris is slumped on the floor, dead. Franklin takes a swing, sets down the glass, and crosses to the door.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

40

as he comes out and goes to his car. He looks around. All isolation and the sound of birds. He unlocks the trunk. Inside, a tarp has been laid out neatly. Carefully, he unfolds one end of the tarp and we should realize that this is where he intends to place the body. From inside the cabin comes the sound of a ringing phone. Apparently he has been expecting this because, with no effort at speed, he returns to the front door.

INT. CABIN - DAY

41

as he goes to the phone.

FRANKLIN

(answering)

Hello? Joanna?...What?...Now wait a minute, say that again....

(a beat)

You're sure? Did you call the police?...Yes, I'll come back right away. And Joanna -- try not to worry. Maybe it's some kind of idiotic joke.

He hangs up, again the slight smile of satisfaction on his face. Then he raises his glass in an ironic toast to his dead partner and drinks.

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE IN

12 EXT. CENTURY CITY BUILDING - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING 42

13 INT. FERRIS AND FRANKLIN OFFICE - NIGHT - CLOSE SHOT 43

on portrait of Mrs. Melville. Gradually pan the room to show that it's a hive of police activity. Technicians are doing their respective things and there is the occasional pop of a flashbulb. Cigar and cigarette smoke hang in the air. Over this:

JOANNA'S VOICE

It's insane...I don't know how to feel...All I can think of are cliches...Jim and Hal wrote this scene a hundred times in their books....

We now find Joanna talking to two detectives as the activity mills around them. She's got the bewildered look of someone in a state of functional shock.

1ST DETECTIVE

Look at it this way, Mrs. Ferris -- maybe he isn't dead. There's no body, no blood....

JOANNA

But he was shot! I know it! I heard him over the phone.

2ND DETECTIVE

This place was searched, Mrs. Ferris. Papers all over the floor. Any idea why?

JOANNA

No. Unless they wanted money or something.

1ST DETECTIVE

Did you notice if anything's missing?

JOANNA

(upset)

I don't care if anything's missing. I just want to know what happened to my husband!

(beat)

Look, can I have a drink of water?

CONTINUED

9c

43

CONTINUED

1ST DETECTIVE

Sure. Harry'll ---

JOANNA

No, I'll get it myself. I want to clear my head.

He nods understandingly and she moves toward the office door.

44

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

It is relatively dark. In the distance is a bank of elevators. Joanna emerges from the office and makes her way, like a sleep-walker, toward a drinking fountain in a niche along the wall. She is bending over the fountain when:

COLUMBO'S VOICE

Uh -- it's out of order, ma'am.

She wheels around sharply.

45

NEW ANGLE

to include Columbo, who is standing nearby wearing a raincoat that for years has repelled everything but water.

COLUMBO

That's the trouble with these buildings. The fountains never work and you have to use the coffee machines...Sorry if I startled you.

JOANNA

Who are you?

COLUMBO

(showing his badge)
Lieutenant Columbo, ma'am. Police.

JOANNA

(confused)

Were you in there with the others?
I didn't see you.

COLUMBO

Guess I was there before you came. But it's kinda crowded, y'know? And all that smoke. I came out here to breathe.

CONTINUED

43

44

45

(X)

90

45

CONTINUED

45

JOANNA

Well...I suppose I'd better get back.

COLUMBO

(studies her,
sympathetically)

Look, you must be tired. This is
a pretty rough experience. Why
don't I drive you home?

JOANNA

Won't they need me for questioning?

COLUMBO

I don't think they'll mind. I'll
call them and let them know you're
with me.

They start walking toward the elevators.

JOANNA

(almost to herself)

I wonder why Hal isn't here....

COLUMBO

Hal? Is that Mr. Franklin, the
other half of the writing team?

JOANNA

(laughing softly)

Yes, that's the other half.

Columbo gives her a look but doesn't say anything. By now
they have reached the elevators and he presses the "Down"
button.

COLUMBO

I really like these buttons. You
don't even touch them and they go
off with the heat of your hand.

This prompts a wan smile from her. The doors slide open. As
they go in:

COLUMBO

I'll bet you haven't had anything
to eat....

CUT TO

(X)

- 45-A EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT - MOVING SHOT - FRANKLIN'S CAR 45-
as it moves along, doing five over the limit.
- 45-B INT. CAR - NIGHT - ON FRANKLIN 45-
driving. One hand on the wheel, the other draped over the
back of the seat. Pleasant music filters through the car's
stereo system. He whistles along quietly, a man obviously
with an unburdened soul. Suddenly, there's a loud bang,
and the car lurches violently.
- 45-C EXT. CAR - NIGHT - EXTREMELY CLOSE ON WHEEL 45-
The left front tire is rapidly deflating with a loud hiss.
- 45-D EXT. CAR - NIGHT - LONG SHOT 45-
As it bucks between lane dividers.
- 45-E INT. CAR - NIGHT 45-
As Franklin fights the wheel for control.
- 45-F INT. CAR - NIGHT 45-
As the car slows down, finally under control.
- 45-G EXT. HIGHWAY SHOULDER - NIGHT 45-
As the car limps onto the shoulder and comes to a halt, safe
and sound.
- 45-H INT. CAR - NIGHT 45-
As Franklin cuts the ignition, sits for a beat, shaking his
head. Whew! Then, he can't help it, he laughs.

FRANKLIN

It figures....

Suddenly, Franklin's face turns to oatmeal, as the car's
entire interior is bathed in red. He reflexively checks
his rear-view mirror and sees, naturally:

-I FRAMED IN MIRROR - POLICE MOTORCYCLE 45

as it pulls in behind him, double red lights shining up front, orange ones blinking in back.

-J EXT. SHOULDER - NIGHT - WITH COP 45

as he swings off his bike and heads for Franklin's car. This cop is big. Clint Eastwood-big. He's got the helmet and the boots and a leather jacket with more zippers on it than a double suitcase. He jangles as he walks. Appropriately enough, his I.D. tag reads: BOWSER. Finally, after what seems to be an eternity, he reaches Franklin's car, addresses him through the window.

OFFICER BOWSER

License and registration, please?

Without a word, Franklin hands them over. His fingers visibly quiver. A beat, as Slaughter looks the stuff over, then:

OFFICER BOWSER

Nice going, sir.

FRANKLIN

Huh?

OFFICER BOWSER

(handing back
the license and
registration)

That was a nice piece of driving,
getting off the road as safely as
you did.

FRANKLIN

(flooding with
relief)

Well, thanks.

OFFICER BOWSER

(indicating tire)

Left front. Could've been hairy.

Franklin gets out of the car, finally, the old confidence returning.

FRANKLIN

Yeah, sure could've been...well,
no harm done. But thanks for
stopping. Appreciate it.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

45-J

OFFICER BOWSER
(heading for
the trunk)
Open 'er up.

FRANKLIN
(a beat)
The trunk?

OFFICER BOWSER
Uh-huh. Might as well get your keys
and I'll help you take the spare out.

FRANKLIN
Of course....

He goes for the keys, reaches into the car, pulls them out,
all the while thinking a mile a minute. Finally:

FRANKLIN
Isn't that ridiculous!

OFFICER BOWSER
What?

FRANKLIN
My spare's useless. No air. I've
been meaning to have it filled, but
you know how it is.

OFFICER BOWSER
Yeah. You somehow never figure it'll
be you gettin' the blow-out.

FRANKLIN
Right...well, I'll know better next
time.

OFFICER BOWSER
Suppose I call you a tow truck?
They'll bring out a pump.

FRANKLIN
Great. Thanks a lot.

Slaughter goes to the motorcycle, flicks on the radio.

OFFICER BOWSER
(into mike)
Yes, Officer Bowser...Need a tow
truck dispatched to seventy-one north-
bound, mile past the Colbey exit...
okay, good.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

45-

He comes back to Franklin.

OFFICER BOWSER

All taken care of.

(X)

FRANKLIN

That's very kind of you.

OFFICER BOWSER

Don't mention it.

(X)

He mounts his cycle, flicks off the flashing lights.

OFFICER BOWSER

Truck should be about ten minutes.
Good night, now.

(X)

FRANKLIN

'Night....

And like the Lone Ranger, Officer Bowser barrels off down the road. A beat, then Franklin quickly opens his trunk, removes the spare tire and jack, and begins changing the tire.

(X)

INT. FERRIS KITCHEN - NIGHT - CLOSE ON COLUMBO'S HAND

46

breaking an egg into a bowl.

WIDER ANGLE

47

He stands by the sink, still wearing his raincoat. Joanna is with him. She watches as he begins, with fierce concentration, to whip up the eggs.

JOANNA

(amused in spite
of herself)

Really, Lieutenant, this is very nice of you but I'm not hungry.

COLUMBO

Mrs. Ferris, I'm the world's worst cook. But there's one thing I do pretty well, and that's an omelette. Even my wife admits it...Have you got any salt?

JOANNA

(passing it to him)

Honestly, I'm not hungry.

COLUMBO

Well, at least you'll have a taste. The secret is just eggs, no milk... I could use a skillet.

JOANNA

(handing him one)

You're a very persuasive man. I suppose I should hold up my end and make some coffee.

He nods, intent on his eggs. She gets the coffeepot. Then she pauses. Quite suddenly she is close to tears.

JOANNA

(turns to Columbo,
anguished)

Lieutenant -- what did they do with him?

(X)

COLUMBO

I don't know, ma'am.

JOANNA

I keep realizing his body wasn't found in the office. Couldn't that mean he isn't dead?

(X)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

COLUMBO

Hard to say. It's been botherin' me, too. It doesn't make sense unless it's a kidnapping.

JOANNA

(hopefully)

And you don't shoot your victim first, do you?

A pause. Then:

COLUMBO

Why'd you laugh before?

JOANNA

When?

COLUMBO

When I asked if Mr. Franklin was the other half of the writing team.

JOANNA

Did I laugh?

COLUMBO

Uh huh.

JOANNA

I guess it was the way you put it. 'Writing team.' Maybe I shouldn't say this, but Hal hasn't written one word of a Mrs. Melville mystery in years.

(X)

COLUMBO

(who?)

Mrs. Melville?

JOANNA

The lady Jim and Hal created. She solves all their crimes. Brilliantly.

Columbo begins dishing up the omelette. They go to the kitchen table and Columbo places the plate in front of her.

COLUMBO

Why'd your husband put up with it? I mean, doing all the work?

JOANNA

Because there were compensations. Hal promoted the books into a national habit. He'd go on talk shows, give interviews, cultivate the film people...

(X)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

JOANNA (Cont'd)

He did contribute, Lieutenant. He just didn't write.

COLUMBO

Boy, I wish I could write. It's fantastic, y^tknow? Where'd he get all his ideas?

JOANNA

From anything. People, magazines, conversations...When he heard something he liked he'd put it down... I'm always finding scraps of paper or matchbook covers with notes on them.

COLUMBO

(marvelling)

All that tricky mystery stuff... I'd never be able to figure it out.

JOANNA

It was getting harder. That's why Jim decided to go out on his own.

COLUMBO

(perking up)

Oh?

JOANNA

(nods)

He wanted to do some serious work.

COLUMBO

No kidding. How'd Mr. Franklin feel about that?

JOANNA

Not very happy. He's getting over it.

COLUMBO

I'd hate to be in his shoes.

CONTINUED

gc

#33302

23

47

CONTINUED - 3

47

JOANNA

Why?

COLUMBO

Well, here's this writing team, very famous. And they break up. Now what happens? One guy keeps turning out books and the other guy suddenly stops.

JOANNA

I'm afraid I don't follow you.

COLUMBO

I'm only saying that it wouldn't take long for everybody to figure that Mr. Franklin can't write -- and maybe never could. Kinda hard on the ego, isn't it?

A beat while she looks at him, not quite sure what he's getting at.

COLUMBO

Aren't you gonna eat your eggs?

8

EXT. FERRIS HOUSE - NIGHT

4

as Franklin's convertible roars down the street and jolts to a stop. Franklin gets out and strides swiftly to the front door, impatiently jabs the bell.

9

NEW ANGLE

4

A moment, then the door opens to reveal Joanna. He holds out his arms comfortingly.

FRANKLIN

Jo....

She moves into his enfolding grasp, the tears starting to flow. He pats her on the back.

FRANKLIN

Hey, now...Easy...easy....

INT. HOUSE - DAY

50

They are still standing in the doorway as Columbo comes in from the kitchen. Neither of them notices him and he remains silent, trying not to intrude on what is obviously a very personal moment. Finally Joanna disengages herself.

FRANKLIN

I drove up as fast as I could.
Anything new?

JOANNA

No. Not yet.

FRANKLIN

(shaking his head)
It's incredible. I just saw him
this morning in the office....

He pauses, looking over her shoulder and seeing Columbo.

JOANNA

Oh...Hal, this is Lieutenant
Columbo. Lieutenant -- Mr. Franklin.

COLUMBO

(deferential)
How you doing?

FRANKLIN

The question is, Lieutenant, how
are you doing?

COLUMBO

Well, we've really just started.

FRANKLIN

Has Jim been found yet?

COLUMBO

Ah -- somebody tell you he was
gone?

FRANKLIN

(talking to a
three-year-old)
Lieutenant, I've just spent several
hours driving in from San Diego.
This case is on every news station.

COLUMBO

Oh, yeah, I shoulda thought of
that.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

50

FRANKLIN

So. Has he been found yet?

COLUMBO

Afraid not. What were you, visiting friends in San Diego?

JOANNA

Hal has a place down there. A cabin.

COLUMBO

(to Franklin)

Away for the weekend, huh. That's nice.

(X)

FRANKLIN

Lieutenant, let's get back to the subject. Have you found any leads, clues?

(X)

COLUMBO

(shrugs)

Little early for that.

FRANKLIN

Early? Sounds to me like you people are marking time. Mrs. Melville would be way ahead of you by now.

(X)

COLUMBO

You mean the lady in your books?

FRANKLIN

That's right. For example, she would have already figured out -- and I'm sorry to have to say this, Joanna -- that we're dealing with a professional killing.

COLUMBO

(baffled)

How would she know that?

CUT TO

CLOSE SHOT - DRAWER

51

as a hand rummages around inside.

INT. FERRIS AND FRANKLIN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

deserted except for Franklin and Columbo. Franklin is methodically going through the desk drawers. Finally he fishes out the same sheet of paper he planted there earlier.

FRANKLIN

Here it is.

He holds it out to Columbo.

COLUMBO

Uh -- would you mind laying it on the desk. Fingerprints, y'know?

FRANKLIN

(amused)

You'll find Jim's prints all over it. And mine.

COLUMBO

(bending over desk)

What is it?

FRANKLIN

A list of names.

(reading)

Musto, Hathaway, Delgado, Westlake...
Sound familiar?

COLUMBO

Yeah...Kind of.

FRANKLIN

They should. These are some of the top men in organized crime on the west coast: Vegas, L.A., San Francisco....

COLUMBO

I don't get it.

FRANKLIN

Isn't it painfully obvious? One of these men had Jim killed.

COLUMBO

Really? Why?

FRANKLIN

How did you get to be a lieutenant, Lieutenant? Mrs. McIvillie would have put it together immediately.

COLUMBO

Well, I'll take any help I can get.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

FRANKLIN

All right. It's very simple. My partner and I agreed to go our separate ways. I'm sure Joanna told you about that, didn't she?

COLUMBO

She said something about it.

FRANKLIN

Did she also mention the fact that Jim wanted to do some serious writing?

COLUMBO

(dawning)

Hey, wait a minute ---

FRANKLIN

You're getting it, aren't you? This list is only the tip of an iceberg. Jim has been researching a complete and factual expose of west coast organized crime. He's been asking embarrassing questions, probing, compiling dossiers...That's why they searched the place.

(taps list)

Apparently they found everything but this.

COLUMBO

And you think one of these fellas put out a contract on him?

FRANKLIN

Congratulations, Lieutenant. You figured it out. The word got around that Jim was collecting information. They knew they couldn't buy him off, so they chose the usual alternative.

COLUMBO

A professional hit, huh? But if that's true, why'd they take the body?

FRANKLIN

Who knows? But without a corpus delecti you can't even prove a murder took place.

COLUMBO

Yeah, but why would a professional killer care? I mean, he'd already

CONTINUED

52

CONTINUED - 2

52

COLUMBO (Cont'd)
be on a plane back to where he
came from.

FRANKLIN
Lieutenant, I can't answer every
question for you. I've given you
a list of the most likely suspects
and a clear-cut motive. Isn't that
enough for the time being?

COLUMBO
Oh, sure, it's plenty. Don't think
I don't appreciate what you've done.

He picks up the sheet of paper very carefully, only touching
the extreme corners.

COLUMBO
Funny....

FRANKLIN
What?

COLUMBO
It's folded lengthwise. Like some-
body was carrying it in his pocket.

FRANKLIN
So?

COLUMBO
Well, if he typed it here on this
typewriter -- and I can run a check
on that -- why would he fold it
before he put it in the drawer?

FRANKLIN
(laughs)
Lieutenant, I'm beginning to like
you.

COLUMBO
Why is that?

FRANKLIN
Because you're finally thinking
like Mrs. Melville. Unfortunately,
Jim has a habit of folding papers
and using them for bookmarks, so
your observation -- though interest-
ing -- leads us astray. However ---

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

52

He crosses to the bookcase, takes down a stack of five or six.

FRANKLIN

-- since you're beginning to emulate the good lady, at least you can read some of our books.

He hands the stack to Columbo.

COLUMBO

Hey, thanks, that's very nice of you. Maybe I can pick up a few pointers.

FRANKLIN

I'm sure you can. Now is there anything else?

COLUMBO

No, not right now. I'd better let you get some sleep.

He crosses to the door, pauses, turns.

COLUMBO

Actually, there is one thing. Not that it makes much difference.

FRANKLIN

What?

COLUMBO

When Mrs. Ferris called and told you her husband had been shot, you jumped in your car and drove back to L.A., right?

FRANKLIN

That's correct.

COLUMBO

Me, I woulda taken a plane. I mean, San Diego's got a big airport. Would've been much faster, wouldn't it?

(X)

FRANKLIN

(beat)

Who thinks clearly at a time like that, Lieutenant? Besides, when you add driving to and from the airport, what do you really save?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 4

52

COLUMBO
 (seems to agree)
 Mmmmm. Well...g'night.

He leaves, Franklin looking after him.

DISSOLVE TO

SERIES OF SHOTS - NIGHT

53

as the car heads up into the hills, say above Beverly Hills, and towards a residential area with a panoramic view of the city.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

53-A
(X)

on Franklin's reflective face.

EXT. FRANKLIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

54

as the car pulls into the driveway. The sense of isolated luxury up here is evident. Franklin's house explains why the San Diego place is considered "the cabin." By comparison, it is.

ANGLE - GARAGE

55

as the car stops in front of it.

THE GARAGE DOOR - SHOOTING PAST FRANKLIN

56

as he hits a switch on the dash and the door automatically opens, activating a light in the garage. Franklin drives in his car and kills the headlamps and engine.

ANGLE - FRANKLIN

57

as he exits his car and turns out the garage light. Everything is dark now, though there is available light from the moon. Franklin goes around behind the car.

CLOSER

58

He unlocks the trunk lid, raises it into camera.

CUT TO

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

59

as Franklin enters, throws on a light, illuminating the entryway and perhaps the living room beyond. The house is elegant, and far more formal than the San Diego dwelling. Franklin

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

59

picks up his mail from the floor, and camera moves with him as he enters the living room, throws on the lights, and heads for the bar to mix himself a drink, shuffling through his mail as he goes. At the bar, he pours himself a shot, adds some soda, then picks up the phone and dials "Operator."

FRANKLIN

(a beat)

Operator? Get me the police,
please....

There's a short wait, during which Franklin lights a cigarette, sips his drink. Then:

FRANKLIN

Yes...Lieutenant Columbo, please...
That's all right, I'll wait....

(another short
wait, then:)

Columbo? Franklin. I think you'd
better get over here right away.
237 Sky View Lane. It's an emergency.

(X)

CUT TO

EXTREME CLOSEUP - FLASHING RED POLICE LIGHT

60

as camera pulls back, revealing:

EXT. FRANKLIN'S FRONT LAWN - NIGHT

61

Several police cars, all with their headlamps on, illuminating the lawn in harsh white light. A meat wagon is also in evidence, as is Columbo's car. There are police personnel milling about, and the center of all this attention is a body, covered now, in the middle of the lawn.

ANOTHER ANGLE

62

A huddle of neighbors stands across the street, most of them in robes and sleeping attire.

ANGLE - COLUMBO AND FRANKLIN

63

at the front door, with all the activity in the b.g.

FRANKLIN

...and when I got here, there it
was. Right in the middle of my
front lawn.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

63

COLUMBO

(sympathetic)

Terrible thing to come home to.

FRANKLIN

The funny thing is, in spite of everything, I've been hoping Jim was still alive. Poor Joanna... As soon as I start feeling sorry for myself, I realize how much she had to lose....

NEW ANGLE

64

as the meat truck pulls away. The watching neighbors buzz with excited comment.

BACK TO COLUMBO AND FRANKLIN

65

FRANKLIN

(scornfully)

Look at those vultures. If it's all right with you, Lieutenant, I'll go inside. I can't stand the sight of them.

COLUMBO

Mind if I come with you? This coat doesn't have a lining and it's kinda chilly out.

Franklin nods and leads the way to the front door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

66

as they enter. The telephone is ringing and Franklin goes to answer it. Columbo glances around, almost intimidated by the lavish appointments.

FRANKLIN

(to phone)

Yes?...Yes, this is Mr. Franklin...

No, I have no comment. Interview?

At a time like this? You must be out of your mind!

(slams down the

receiver; to Columbo)

The gentlemen of the press.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

66

COLUMBO

Afraid you're gonna get a lot of that.

FRANKLIN

I'm forgetting my manners. Would you like something to drink? Or are you always on duty?

COLUMBO

Well...maybe a drop of bourbon.

Franklin goes behind the bar and begins fixing two drinks. Columbo prowls.

COLUMBO

You've really got some place here...
(pauses by a
painting)

What's this, a print?

(X)

FRANKLIN

(amused)

Hardly. It's an original lithograph.

(X)

COLUMBO

I thought they only hung this guy in museums. You own it, though....

FRANKLIN

(handing him a
glass)

Mrs. Melville's been more than kind.

COLUMBO

Quite a house...and then you got the other one down in San Diego. Boy, the upkeep alone....

FRANKLIN

(a smile)

I manage to scrape by.

COLUMBO

Listen, one thing I don't understand about writers. When a guy's partner dies, does he own the other guy's half of the books? The what-d'you-call-'em, the royalties?

FRANKLIN

(ahead of him)

No, Lieutenant. They go into the deceased's estate.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

COLUMBO

Sorta leaves you out in the cold, doesn't it? Or did you have each other insured?

FRANKLIN

Aren't we getting a bit far afield?

COLUMBO

Yeah, probably.

(sips his drink)

So why do you think your partner's body turned up here?

FRANKLIN

You mean you haven't figured it out yet? Lieutenant, I'm disappointed. It was left as a warning.

COLUMBO

Warning?

FRANKLIN

Of course. And it proves my theory about a professional killing. When they dropped Jim's body on my lawn, they were saying: 'This will happen to you if you carry on with your partner's research.' It was a simple act of intimidation.

COLUMBO

So they were tryin' to scare you off.

FRANKLIN

Exactly.

COLUMBO

You gonna go ahead with the book anyway?

FRANKLIN

That's the ironic part. This was Jim's pet project, not mine. I wouldn't even know where to begin.

COLUMBO

I guess they had no way of knowing you two were splitting up.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

66

FRANKLIN

Even if they did, it wouldn't have helped Jim.

(sighs, sets down glass)

Well, Lieutenant, it looks like this is a dead end. You've got your body and you know the motive, but I doubt if you'll find the killer.

COLUMBO

It sure won't be easy.

FRANKLIN

Someone in Las Vegas or Miami picked up the phone and put out a contract. How you'll ever make a case, much less prove it, is beyond me.

COLUMBO

Guess I'll just have to check out all the names on that list.

FRANKLIN

And naturally every one of those men will deny that they even knew who Jim was. I don't envy you.

COLUMBO

I'd better get on it -- I have a lotta phone calls to make. G'night, Mr. Franklin. Sorry about all this.

FRANKLIN

You'll keep me posted.

COLUMBO

Sure.

He starts out, then pauses.

COLUMBO

Listen, there's still one thing I'm not clear on. It can wait, if you'd rather go to bed.

FRANKLIN

I wouldn't be able to sleep anyway. What is it?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 4

66

COLUMBO

Exactly what happened when you got home tonight?

FRANKLIN

(slightly annoyed)

I already told you. I saw Jim's body, I ran inside, and I called you. Pure reflexive action.

COLUMBO

Uh-huh. Okay, thanks.

FRANKLIN

I don't understand the reason for the question.

COLUMBO

Oh. Well, it's just...your mail.

FRANKLIN

(puzzled)

My mail?

Columbo indicates the stack of opened letters on the bar top.

COLUMBO

Isn't it funny how people are different? Now me, if I found my partner dead, I wouldn't even think of opening letters.

FRANKLIN

(a beat)

I needed something to distract me, Lieutenant. Remember, I had quite a shock.

COLUMBO

That's understandable. Bills are very distracting. Well...I'll give you a call if anything comes up. Good night....

(X)

He goes out.

ON FRANKLIN

67

drinking, disturbed. Then he angrily picks up the letters and hurls them into a basket.

FADE OUT

ACT THREE

FADE IN

EXT. STREET - DAY

68

Close on a hot dog being lathered with mustard.

ANOTHER ANGLE

69

Columbo is with Mike Tucker, a smooth and dapper insurance salesman. Both of them are at an open-air vendor's stand balancing their frankfurters and paper cups of coffee. Tucker digs for money to pay for it, but Columbo waves the cash away.

COLUMBO

My treat.

(hands over a
bill to the
hot dog man)

Can you give me a receipt on that?

The Vendor looks at Columbo as if he's crazy, but digs out a pencil and scrawls a receipt.

NEW ANGLE

70

as Columbo takes it and he and Tucker start to walk.

TUCKER

(munching)

All right, Lieutenant, you're bribing me with a handsome lunch. What can I do for you?

COLUMBO

Well, it's about an insurance policy.

TUCKER

(face lighting up)

Excellent! It's about time you came to me. I can give you a package within your means that --

COLUMBO

Uh -- no, it's about a policy you've already written.

TUCKER

(disappointed)

Oh. Then this is official business.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

70

COLUMBO

(nods)

Hal Franklin and James Ferris. They were insured by your company.

TUCKER

Now wait a minute, Lieutenant. We like to cooperate with the police, but if you want confidential information --

COLUMBO

Look, I don't want to cause any problems for you.

(helpfully)

Maybe I should just get a court order....

TUCKER

(quickly)

No need to go to all that trouble, Lieutenant. Let's see now... Ferris and Franklin. I sold them a policy about six or seven years ago....

COLUMBO

Much money involved?

TUCKER

Quite a bit. It was a quarter-million dollar reciprocal.

COLUMBO

No kidding? Y'mean either fella dies, the other one collects?

TUCKER

Basically right, yes.

COLUMBO

(impressed)

Two-hundred-and-fifty-thousand dollars...What would the premiums be on a policy like that?

TUCKER

Not as much as you'd think, actually, It was straight term and that kept the cost down.

COLUMBO

I guess you'll be writing Mr. Franklin out a check.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

70

TUCKER

We have a solid-gold reputation for making good on our claims, Lieutenant. Mr. Franklin will get every penny that's coming to him.

COLUMBO

(thoughtfully)

Mmmmm.

TUCKER

Which is why I think you should give us some consideration.

COLUMBO

Uh?

Hold as they walk slowly away from camera. Tucker's arm manages to steal around Columbo's shoulder.

TUCKER

(happily explaining)

For your insurance needs. Frankly, Lieutenant, most of us are under-insured. We never provide that extra measure for the wife and the kids....

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. MUSIC CENTER - NIGHT - STOCK

71

ESTABLISHING.

EXT. AHMANSON THEATRE - NIGHT

72

A crowd of theatre-goers is exiting. We see from the billboards that the play was called "The Last Rite," obviously a mystery-thriller type of show. The crowd is chattering happily about how much they enjoyed it, and we hear ad libs such as "Absolutely diabolical!" or "Never guessed it would be him!"

It's apparent from the remarks that an exciting time was had by all. All, that is, except Hal Franklin, accompanied by a Beautiful, Willowy Thing. Camera picks them up as they exit the theatre.

BWT

(hanging on his arm)

Oh, Hal, wasn't it wonderful? I was terrified!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

72

HAL

Really? I had the whole thing figured out by the end of the first act.

BWT

You've got a devious mind. I was completely fooled.

HAL

(slight smile)

My dear, remember this -- when a man says he has a long-lost twin brother, you can count on the fact that you're in for an impersonation. Actually it's an old plot. We even used it ourselves.

From o.s. we hear:

MISS LA SANKA'S VOICE

Yoo hoo, Mr. Franklin!

Hearing his name, Franklin glances around, finally sees:

HIS POINT OF VIEW - MISS LA SANKA

73

She's standing near the fountain, considerably more dolled up than the first time we saw her. She waves, beckons to him.

LA SANKA

Over here.

BACK TO FRANKLIN

74

as, finally recognizing her, a frown crosses his face for just a moment.

BWT

Who's that?

FRANKLIN

Someone who belongs somewhere else.
Excuse me a moment.

Camera moves with Franklin as he walks over to the fountain where Miss La Sanka stands, beaming.

FRANKLIN

(quickly recovering
his considerable
charm)

Why, Miss La Sanka! What a delight...
What brings you to town?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

74

LA SANKA

I came to do a little shopping, see
a play...

(looking past him)

She's a beauty, Mr. Franklin.

FRANKLIN

Thank you.

LA SANKA

I haven't seen her before, have I?

FRANKLIN

No, I don't think so. Well, nice
seeing you.

As he's about to terminate, she puts a hand on his arm.

LA SANKA

I -- ah -- hope you don't think I'm
being forward, but is there any
chance of our having a drink together?

FRANKLIN

(politely)

No, I'm sorry...The young lady and
I are having a late dinner.

LA SANKA

(still friendly)

I think you may want to cancel it.

FRANKLIN

(warning signals out)

Now why would I do a thing like that?

LA SANKA

Because we really should have a
discussion.

FRANKLIN

Perhaps some other time.

He turns and starts away.

LA SANKA

(sighs)

All right. I suppose I'll have to
find someone else to tell my story
to.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

74

He pauses.

LA SANKA

It's a mystery story. Very interesting, really. It's all about this...witness....

Now he knows she knows something, and he can't afford to let it pass. He studies her for a beat, then:

FRANKLIN

Wait here.

LA SANKA

(sweetly)

Anything you say, Mr. Franklin.

His mind going a mile a minute, he crosses back to the BWT.

NEW ANGLE

75

as he reaches her.

FRANKLIN

Look -- something came up. I'll have to put you in a cab.

BWT

(startled)

A cab? What about dinner?

FRANKLIN

(summoning up
some charm)

Take a raincheck, okay?

BWT

(miffed)

I don't want a raincheck. I want dinner.

FRANKLIN

I'll make it up to you. Come on.

He steers her, protesting, toward a cab stand. Glances back over his shoulder.

HIS POINT OF VIEW - LA SANKA

76

Giving him a little wave.

BACK TO FRANKLIN

77

troubled, apprehensive.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

78

Soft music, the tinkle of fine crystal, an atmosphere of warmth and intimacy. A waiter serves them drinks and a large bowl of strawberries on shaved ice, then blends back into the woodwork, leaving Franklin and La Sanka alone at their small, private table.

LA SANKA

I just can't resist strawberries.

FRANKLIN

Glad you like them.

LA SANKA

(sipping)

I just can't resist fine champagne.

FRANKLIN

Glad you like it.

He looks at her steadily.

LA SANKA

(giggling)

You're making me nervous. That's quite a stare.

FRANKLIN

I can't help it. I've never really seen you outside of your store... You're very lovely. May I call you Lily?

LA SANKA

Yes, please do.

(flirting)

Did you enjoy the play, tonight?

FRANKLIN

It was predictable. You?

LA SANKA

I like your books so much more....

FRANKLIN

Thank you, that's very flattering... But you said something before about a story of your own. Something to do with a...witness.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

78

LA SANKA

Oh, yes. Well, actually, it's a true-to-life story.

(beat)

It concerns your partner.

FRANKLIN

(measuring her)

Jim? What about him?

LA SANKA

Well, I read about his death in the papers and I felt just terrible.

FRANKLIN

That's very kind of you.

LA SANKA

(going on)

I felt terrible because they said he was killed in his office....

FRANKLIN

So they did.

LA SANKA

Well in my story, you see, he couldn't have been killed in an office. Because he was...somewhere else.

A long pause. Then:

FRANKLIN

Suppose we forget your story, Lily, and talk about real life.

LA SANKA

(smiles)

It is simpler, isn't it? I'll tell you honestly, Hal, I was very confused when I read the papers. Because when you were in my store making your phone call the other day, I wandered over to the side window to see if you had brought a lady with you.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

78

FRANKLIN

You didn't believe me when I said
I was alone?

LA SANKA

Oh, I believed you. It's just that
I'm very...interested in you, Hal...
Anyway, you can imagine my surprise
when I saw your partner. There he
was, big as life...

(slight smile)

Sitting there in the front seat of
your car.

FRANKLIN

(a beat)

And this disturbed you?

LA SANKA

Oh, not at the time. Only later.
And then I debated with myself for
days whether to come and see you
or not.

FRANKLIN

Why didn't you go to the police?

LA SANKA

Oh, Hal...I wouldn't want to get
you into any trouble.

Franklin says nothing for a few moments, thinking. Finally,
having made a decision, he smiles.

FRANKLIN

All right, Lily. How much?

LA SANKA

(flustered)

Oh, I hope you don't think that ---

FRANKLIN

I don't think anything. I'm
grateful you came to me, and I'm
sure we can reach an equitable
agreement.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

78

LA SANKA

I do so admire your candor. This isn't easy for me. A widow, running a small country store, trying to make ends meet....

FRANKLIN

I quite understand. And I also know you're a woman of some breeding, not a common blackmailer.

LA SANKA

I'm so glad you're understanding.

FRANKLIN

Well, then. How much for your silence?

LA SANKA

Fifteen thousand dollars?

(then, rushing on)

I know it's a lot, but that's all I'll ever ask for. Honestly. And I'm a woman of my word.

FRANKLIN

I know you are, Lily, and I respect you for it.

(raising his
glass to her)

And in that spirit, I'll accept your terms. Agreed?

LA SANKA

(raising her
own glass)

Agreed...And I know you won't take offense if I say it's a pleasure doing business with you.

Franklin smiles at her and we:

DISSOLVE TO

INT. FRANKLIN RECEPTION HALL - DAY

79

Close on an expensive, pigskin attache case. Angle widens to show two bottles of very expensive champagne. Over this, the sound of the front doorbell chiming.

WIDER ANGLE

80

as a maid goes to the door to answer it. We now see that the case and the champagne are resting on a small hallway table.

ANOTHER ANGLE

81

as the maid opens the door, revealing Columbo. He's loaded down with the Mrs. Melville books.

MAID

Yes?

COLUMBO

Is Mr. Franklin home?

MAID

He's occupied at the moment. Who shall I say is calling?

COLUMBO

Lieutenant Columbo.

MAID

Oh. Well, if you'd like to wait, he'll be with you shortly.

Columbo nods and she disappears. He looks around, glances at his reflection in a mirror, notices the attache case and bottles of champagne. Then he hears, from o.s.

MAN'S VOICE

Just a few more.

There are other voices. Intrigued, he moves down the hallway toward an arch leading into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

82

as a flashbulb explodes its millisecond burst of light. Camera pulls back to reveal Franklin, having just had his picture taken, giving the tail end of an interview to a very attractive lady-reporter-from-Harper's-or-Vogue type, who is probably Gloria Steinem's younger sister. The photographer roves and occasionally snaps a picture through-out.

GLORIA JR.

(closing her tape recorder)

Thanks muchly, Mr. Franklin, I think we're about finished. If you can bear one or two more photographs ---

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

82

FRANKLIN

(to photog)

Fire away.

(to girl)

After all, your magazine was very kind to Franklin and Ferris during the lean years. That's my second reason for granting this interview.

(X)

GLORIA JR.

(puzzled)

What was your first?

FRANKLIN

(turning it on)

Why, the charm of the interviewer, of course.

She laughs, flattered, then Franklin sees:

HIS POINT OF VIEW - COLUMBO

83

standing rather ill-at-ease in the hallway. He's still carrying the stack of books.

BACK TO SCENE

84

A flicker of annoyance moves across Franklin's face.

FRANKLIN

Lieutenant. Did you want to see me about something?

COLUMBO

If you got a minute.

FRANKLIN

That's about all I do have. Wait till I finish here and I'll be right with you.

(to girl)

Is there anything else?

GLORIA JR.

Just one last question. I think our readers will want to know how your partner's death will affect the Mrs. Melville books.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

84

FRANKLIN

I'm afraid that when I buried Jim, I buried Mrs. Melville along with him.

GLORIA JR.

(sympathetic)

I understand. But everyone will miss her so. Can't you write another one?

FRANKLIN

I could, naturally, but what's the point? With Jim gone it wouldn't be the same. No, I think Mrs. Melville solved her last case. In fact, I've been seriously debating if I want to write again at all.

GLORIA JR.

Oh, I hope you do.

FRANKLIN

(slight smile)

How very kind of you to say so. Now, if you don't mind....

(X)

GLORIA JR.

Of course. Let's go, Harvey....

They walk toward the arch where Columbo has been standing. Franklin puts a fatherly arm around the young lady's shoulder.

FRANKLIN

Perhaps, under pleasanter circumstances, I could give you a better interview. In depth....

INT. HALL

85

as they emerge from the living room. She is flushing prettily.

GLORIA JR.

That will be nice. Shall I call you?

FRANKLIN

Next week would be fine....

They exchange smiles and she goes off with the photographer to the front door. Franklin turns his attention to Columbo.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

85

FRANKLIN

All right, Lieutenant, what can I do for you?

COLUMBO

Well, I came to bring your books back.

FRANKLIN

Fine. You can set them over there.

COLUMBO

(putting them down)

I wanted to tell you how much I liked them. That lady detective character, she's really something. Like that case where the football quarterback gets killed while everybody's watching the game ---

FRANKLIN

(interrupting)

Lieutenant, I'd love to discuss literature with you, but I'm on my way out.

COLUMBO

Oh. Well, I won't bother you, then. Going somewhere special?

FRANKLIN

(slightly irritated)

As a matter of fact, I'm driving down to my cabin for a rest. Would you like my itinerary?

COLUMBO

Hey, I'm sorry. I seem to be making a pest of myself asking all these questions. Habit, I guess...I take it you're not going alone.

FRANKLIN

What makes you say that?

COLUMBO

(indicating table)

Well, the two bottles of champagne....

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

85

FRANKLIN

I'm quite capable of drinking a good many more than two. And without help. Now if you'll excuse me ---

COLUMBO

Sure. Unless you want to know how we're progressing with your partner's list.

FRANKLIN

Why? Anything concrete?

COLUMBO

No, so far it's just like you predicted. They all said they never even heard of James Ferris.

FRANKLIN

That's to be expected. Good afternoon, Lieutenant.

He picks up the case and the bottles and leaves.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

86

as Franklin emerges. His car is parked on the drive. Beside it is Columbo's. He tosses the case through his rear window and walks around to the driver's side.

NEW ANGLE

87

as Columbo emerges from the house.

COLUMBO

(calling to him)

Mr. Franklin....

FRANKLIN

Yes?

COLUMBO

One thing I forgot.

FRANKLIN

(exasperated)

Is it important?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

87

COLUMBO

(walking over)

It might be. You see, I was checking with the phone company records in San Diego.

Franklin's annoyance vanishes. Once again he sees Columbo as an adversary to be dealt with.

FRANKLIN

Why would you do a thing like that?

COLUMBO

(shrugs)

Just part of my job. Tying up the loose ends. Anyway, there's a record of a call from your cabin on the day of the murder. A call to the Ferris house in Los Angeles.

FRANKLIN

And naturally you're wondering if I can explain it.

COLUMBO

(innocently)

Well, I'm sure you can.

FRANKLIN

So am I, Lieutenant. But you could have saved me the trouble if you had talked to Joanna Ferris. She would have told you that I spoke to her from my cabin and let her know Jim and I had patched up our differences.

COLUMBO

Differences?

FRANKLIN

Ironing out the difficulties of a separation is never easy. I knew Joanna was concerned, so I thought I'd ease her mind. Now is that all?

COLUMBO

Yeah, sure. Enjoy your trip.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

87

Franklin gets in the car.

COLUMBO

And drive carefully.

FRANKLIN

(meeting his eye)

Oh, I will, Lieutenant. You can count on that.

He pulls away. Columbo stands on the driveway, watching him go.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. LA SANKA GENERAL STORE - LATE DAY

88

as Franklin's convertible pulls up in front of the store next to another car. Removing the attache case and the two bottles of champagne, he heads for the entrance.

INT. STORE - LATE DAY

89

La Sanka is ringing up a sale as Franklin enters the store, jingling the doorbell. Her face brightens, she waves, and finishes up her sale, handing change to the customer with a "Thank you so much." The customer takes his -- or her -- groceries, and exits, giving Franklin a friendly nod on the way out.

LA SANKA

And here you are.

FRANKLIN

(holding up
the case)

Bearing gifts again.

(and then the
champagne)

And still more gifts.

LA SANKA

(beaming)

Why, Mr. Franklin, how lovely.

FRANKLIN

Hal.

LA SANKA

Yes, of course. Hal.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

89

FRANKLIN

Now answer me a simple question.
Are you up to making a quiet
dinner for two this evening?

LA SANKA

(surprised)

You mean -- you want to have
dinner here?

FRANKLIN

A deux, as they say.

She's intrigued by the idea. He's been so pleasant to her
that it seems he hardly minds paying the money.

LA SANKA

(playfully)

Do I dare risk it?

FRANKLIN

Why not? Live dangerously.

LA SANKA

Not too dangerously, I hope.

He puts a hand on her shoulder.

FRANKLIN

Dinner, champagne, candlelight...
Then, who knows?

LA SANKA

It's the 'who knows' part that
worries me.

FRANKLIN

You disappoint me, Lily. I didn't
know you were so...conventional.
(he prepares to
leave)
Maybe some other time....

LA SANKA

No, wait a minute.

(beat)

Very well, monsieur...Shall we
say...nine o'clock?

FRANKLIN

(nods)

Nine o'clock it is.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

89
(X)

FRANKLIN (cont'd)
 (hands her the
 bottles)
 Put these on ice, will you?
 (crosses to door,
 blows her a kiss)
 Till then.

LA SANKA
 Au revoir....

as Franklin exits, camera closes in on La Sanka, as a bit
 of the frivolity is replaced by a more pensive look.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

90

It's closed, but the windows in the rear are illuminated.

INT. LA SANKA'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

91

Improvisational in decor, but nice. Soft lights accentuate
 the atmosphere, and romantic music plays from the stereo.
 Franklin and La Sanka are clinking glasses.

FRANKLIN
 Here's to prosperity.

LA SANKA
And romance.

FRANKLIN
 The daily double.
 (refilling her glass)
 Lily, that was a magnificent
 dinner. Where did you learn to
 cook so well?

LA SANKA
 My late husband, may he rest in
 peace, was a professional chef.
 Wonderful man. He taught me all
 I know.

FRANKLIN
 He taught you well.

LA SANKA
 Thank you, sir... Refill?

Franklin tips the bottle over her glass, but it's empty.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

FRANKLIN

Let's open the other one.

LA SANKA

Dare we?

FRANKLIN

(going to where
the bottle is
cooling)

Dare we not?

He quickly and expertly unwraps the foil on the cork, pulls away the wire, and pops the cork. It flies out of the bottle and the champagne bubbles out.

FRANKLIN

Quick, your glass!

La Sanka offers her glass, and Franklin fills it. She sips.

LA SANKA

Delicious. But I'm afraid I'm getting a little tipsy.

FRANKLIN

What's wrong with that?

LA SANKA

I don't know if I can trust you.

FRANKLIN

You have no reason not to, but if you're uncomfortable, I can always leave.

LA SANKA

No, please...I do enjoy your company....

Franklin moves close to her, takes her in his arms. She offers her lips and they kiss. Finally, as they break:

FRANKLIN

You know what we should do....?

LA SANKA

What?

FRANKLIN

It's a beautiful night...full moon. We should row out to the center of the lake and take a swim....

CONTINUED

LA SANKA

Mmmm...sounds nice.

FRANKLIN

Shall we?

LA SANKA

Better not.

FRANKLIN

Oh?

LA SANKA

I trust you, Hal. Really. But we all have our dark sides, don't we? It just wouldn't be very intelligent of me to be alone with you in a small boat. After all, you might start having second thoughts about the money....

FRANKLIN

(clucking his tongue)

Lily, that kind of talk hurts me very deeply. Let me tell you something -- and I'll only admit this because I trust you. I was prepared to give you considerably more than you asked for. I've lost fifteen thousand in one night just gambling.

LA SANKA

Well, it's certainly a great deal of money to me.

He goes to the attache case nearby and opens it.

FRANKLIN

What'll you do with it?

She comes over, glass in hand.

LA SANKA

I don't know...put it in the bank, I guess. But not right away. I just want to look at it for a while.

And she does, totally immersed in the neat rows of currency. Franklin drops slightly behind her.

FRANKLIN

Be careful. You could be robbed.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

91

LA SANKA
(running her hand
over the greenbacks)
I'll just keep it for a day or
two...I've never seen so much
money in my life.

ANGLE ON FRANKLIN

92

Checking out the two bottles of champagne. He selects the empty
one.

FRANKLIN

Why don't you take a trip somewhere?

BACK TO LA SANKA

93

LA SANKA

I may. I've always wanted to go on
a cruise.

ON FRANKLIN

94

Carefully, not hurrying at all, he takes the cloth towel he's
used to wipe the bottles and wraps it around the one he's se-
lected. Then he grips the bottle by its neck.

LA SANKA'S VOICE

Did you know my late husband was in
the merchant marines?

FRANKLIN

Is that a fact?

LA SANKA'S VOICE

They're the ones who taught him how
to cook...I almost wish he were here
...he could share this with me....

Franklin moves up behind her with the bottle.

FRANKLIN

Well...maybe we can do the next
best thing.

ANGLE - LA SANKA

95

Something in his tone makes her turn. Her eyes widen with
sudden knowledge as we:

CUT TO

- A BLAST OF WATER 96
roaring out of the spigot on the kitchen sink.
- INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT 97
as Franklin finishes washing their dinner dishes and drying them. Using Mrs. La Sanka's rubber washing gloves, he returns the dishes to the kitchen cabinet.
- DISSOLVE TO
- EXT. DOCK - NIGHT 98
A neat pile of clothing lies at the edge of the planking. Franklin peels off his trousers -- he has bathing trunks underneath -- and places them with the rest of his apparel.
- NEW ANGLE 99
as he climbs into a rowboat. We can see that he is not the only passenger -- there is an inert form in the bottom of the boat. He sits down, swings the oars from their locks, and soundlessly begins cutting through the placid water.
- ANOTHER ANGLE 100
Shooting from shore. The rowboat is a dark dot nearing the middle of the lake.
- ON FRANKLIN 101
rowing.
- ON OARS 102
dipping into the water, emerging, dipping again.
- LONG SHOT - LAKE 103
We can hardly see. But we should be able to distinguish the bulk of his silhouette as he rises in the boat, hefting something. A moment later there is an unmistakable "ker-splash."
- CLOSE - FRANKLIN 104
having disposed of Mrs. La Sanka, he tosses both oars overboard. These are followed by the two champagne bottles.

CLOSE - BOTTLES

104-

They float for a moment, slowly fill with water, gurgle, and slowly sink from sight.

BACK TO FRANKLIN

104-

as he swings a leg over the side and eases himself into the water. Then he grabs the side of the boat, yanks, finally manages to capsize it.

ANOTHER ANGLE

105

as Franklin begins a leisurely swim back toward shore.

ON BOAT

106

floating, upside down, on the serene surface of the lake.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO

EXT. LAKE FRONT - DAY

107

A gaggle of excited tourists and early-morning fishermen are standing at the water's edge, looking out toward the middle of the lake. Some of the tourists are snapping pictures.

ANGLE - THE FOCUS OF THEIR ATTENTION

108

Several police boats are moored near the capsized rowboat and divers in tank suits are engaged in a recovery operation.

BACK TO THE GROUP ON SHORE

109

We now see that Franklin is in their midst. He is dressed in standard fisherman's gear, complete with expensive fishing rod in hand. He listens to the buzz of conversation around him.

SPECTATOR #1

Who do you think it is?

SPECTATOR #2

One of the cops said it was a local woman. Some kinda drowning.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

109

WOMAN

(to husband)

Let's stay here for a while. We
can always go to the zoo this
afternoon....

Franklin turns from the group, rod in hand, and moves off.

DISSOLVE TO

OMITTED

110

EXT. FRANKLIN'S CABIN - DAY

111

as he crosses the clearing, whistling. His car is parked
nearby. He goes to the front door, enters.

INT. CABIN - DAY

112

as he comes in and sets down his fishing rod. Then:

COLUMBO'S VOICE

Morning.

Franklin turns sharply.

NEW ANGLE

113

as Columbo ambles in from the kitchen. Franklin is startled,
but he recovers smoothly.

FRANKLIN

Lieutenant Columbo!

(beat)

You turn up at the oddest times,
don't you?

COLUMBO

I hope you don't mind my letting
myself in. The door was unlocked....

FRANKLIN

Did you arrive by magic carpet?
I didn't see your car.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

113

COLUMBO

I pulled around in back. Wanted to park outta the sun.

(X)

FRANKLIN

What brings you into the wilds?

COLUMBO

Well, I'll tell you. You and Mrs. Ferris kept talking about this place. It really sounded great. And since I've got this two-week vacation coming up, I thought I'd check into the area, maybe look into renting a cabin.

FRANKLIN

Are you telling me you drove all the way down here just to find a vacation spot?

COLUMBO

(innocently)

Why else would I come?

The question hangs in the air for a beat. Then:

FRANKLIN

I'm afraid you're wasting your time.

COLUMBO

Oh?

FRANKLIN

The cabins in this neck of the woods are probably out of your price range. Besides, most of them are rented for the season.

COLUMBO

That's too bad. My wife'll be disappointed. Well, it was a nice drive.

FRANKLIN

I'm glad you enjoyed it.

COLUMBO

Except for that bottleneck down the road. What was that all about?

FRANKLIN

There was a drowning.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

113

COLUMBO

Really? Who was it, a fisherman?

FRANKLIN

I don't know...I think I heard someone say it was a local woman.

COLUMBO

Miss La Sanka, something like that?

FRANKLIN

(a beat)

Something like that.

COLUMBO

You know her?

FRANKLIN

Not really.

COLUMBO

Because when I was in your kitchen just now I saw a grocery box with her name on it.

FRANKLIN

I occasionally buy supplies from her -- like everyone else who lives around here.

COLUMBO

Anyway, I think she was the one that drowned. I stopped by her store to get some cigars and it was closed. Couple of police cars in front.

FRANKLIN

If it is her, I'm sorry to hear it. She was always very friendly.

COLUMBO

Oh? Thought you didn't know her.

FRANKLIN

I know a lot of people without really knowing them, Lieutenant. Waitresses, barbers, parking attendants. Don't you?

COLUMBO

Yeah, I see what you mean. Too bad about the lady, though. Imagine, going out in a rowboat, all by yourself, when it's not even light yet.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

FRANKLIN

Nothing unusual about it. A good many of us go out early. It's peaceful and we can plug into nature.

COLUMBO

Well, look, you're here trying to get away from things and I'm taking up your time. Sorry I bothered you.

FRANKLIN

No bother at all, Lieutenant. I'd lend you a bathing suit, but I doubt if you're the athletic type.

COLUMBO

(preparing to leave)

You don't think I'll be able to find a cabin to rent, then.

FRANKLIN

(shrugs)

Try the local real estate people.

COLUMBO

Yeah, okay...Sure would be fun to be neighbors for a few weeks, huh? What kind of night life do you have around here?

FRANKLIN

None.

COLUMBO

No partying?

FRANKLIN

Just crickets and sleep.

COLUMBO

See, the reason I was wondering is because I didn't want to barge in on you today unannounced.

FRANKLIN

(puzzled)

Afraid I don't follow you.

COLUMBO

Well, I called you last night to tell you I was coming...but there wasn't any answer.

And he exits.

EXT. LA SANKA GENERAL STORE - DAY

114

The parking area is filled with cars as Columbo drives up. He pulls to a stop, leaves his car, and ambles up to the entrance. A highway patrolman blocks his way.

CLOSER ANGLE

115

PATROLMAN

You a reporter?

COLUMBO

Uh...no.

(flashing his
credentials after
a brief search
for them)

Lieutenant Columbo.

PATROLMAN

LAPD? What brings you down here,
Lieutenant?

COLUMBO

Case I'm working on. It's not my
jurisdiction, but you mind if I
browse around?

PATROLMAN

Help yourself, Lieutenant. Always
glad to cooperate. Anything speci-
fic you're looking for?

COLUMBO

Not really. If I bump into some-
thing I'll let you know.

The patrolman steps aside and Columbo goes in.

INT. LA SANKA GENERAL STORE - DAY

116

as Columbo comes in. A spit-and-polish highway patrol sergeant is holding forth in front of a group of local and San Diego reporters. As the scene progresses, Columbo wanders around the edges, looking here and there, soaking up the atmosphere.

FIRST REPORTER

...didn't she have a bruise on
her head?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

116

SERGEANT

(eyes narrowing)

How'd you know that, Ben?

FIRST REPORTER

Come on, Sergeant, Doc Webster told us.

(X)

SERGEANT

All right, there was a bruise. Probably a result of the boat capsizing and rendering her unconscious.

SECOND REPORTER

Any indication the lady was under the influence?

SERGEANT

Can't ascertain that information until we see an autopsy report. The doctor's proceeding with that right now.

FIRST REPORTER

Sounds like drinking to me.

SECOND REPORTER

Could she swim?

SERGEANT

(irritated)

Gentlemen, how am I supposed to know a thing like that? I wasn't married to the lady.

THIRD REPORTER

Any living relatives.

SERGEANT

Don't think so. Somebody said she was a widow.

During this spate of officialese, Columbo has come to the curtained alcove in the rear. He pushes through.

INT. ALCOVE - DAY

117

as he looks at the pay phone. Then he moves on into the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

118

as Columbo enters. He continues to look around, nothing definite in mind, when something catches his eye. He walks to a corner of the room, bends over, and picks up a champagne cork. He examines it, then deposits it in one of his pockets.

INT. STORE AREA PROPER - DAY

119

as he ambles back in. The interminable press conference is still unfurling.

THIRD REPORTER

What about the row boat?

SERGEANT

What about it?

THIRD REPORTER

Where'd it come from? Who owned it?

SERGEANT

It was the property of the deceased. We have witnesses who have seen her take it out on the lake, usually after she closed down the store for the day.

FIRST REPORTER

Think she wanted some fresh air last night?

SERGEANT

This is all conjecture, gentlemen. We have no way of telling. Maybe she did. Who knows? It's possible she got dizzy, or had a heart seizure.

SECOND REPORTER

Then you think it's an accident.

SERGEANT

Well it certainly doesn't look like foul play.

Columbo is at the door now, ready to leave. As they continue ad lib, not even noticing him, his eye falls on a bookcase. He crosses to it, intrigued. It contains mostly paperbacks, but there is one hardcover among them. He slides it out. It's the book that Franklin had given Miss La Sanka. He opens the cover, idly flipping through the pages until he reaches the one with the inscription.

INSERT - BOOK

120

Open to the page with the inscription.

COLUMBO'S VOICE

(reading)

To my Lily...Love always, Hal....

MATCH CUT TO

THE OPEN BOOK

121

as the cover is closed. Angle widens to reveal:

INT. FERRIS HOME - DAY

122

as Joanna Ferris closes the book and turns to face Columbo. They sit at the coffee table in the living room; Joanna is dressed to go out.

JOANNA

I'm afraid I still don't know
what this means.

COLUMBO

It means he knew her, Mrs. Ferris.
Not casually, like he told me, but
reasonably well.

JOANNA

(troubled)

All right -- a book with a romantic
inscription and a champagne cork.
What do they prove?

COLUMBO

Nothing, by themselves. But they
fit in if you figure Franklin
killed your husband.

JOANNA

(resisting)

I still can't believe it. I've
known Hal for too many years. He's
not a murderer.

COLUMBO

Even if you knew him for a hundred,
Mrs. Ferris, it doesn't change things.
He took your husband's life.

(X)

Frustrated, he notices his cigar is out. He looks around for (X)
matches. Joanna opens a drawer in the coffee table. Inside
are several scattered matchbooks.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

122

JOANNA

Help yourself. I don't smoke.

(X)

Columbo complies, picks up a matchbook, closes drawer.

JOANNA

It doesn't make sense...Hal has an alibi. And what's his motive?

COLUMBO

(lighting cigar)

I told you how he coulda worked the phone call. And the motive is the insurance money. Man needs a lot of cash for two houses, paintings, women....

(X)

He pauses, looking at the inside cover of the matchbook.

JOANNA

What -- ?

COLUMBO

(reads from cover)

'"Jack and Jill went up the hill."
Did Jack kill Jill? If so, find out why.'

Puzzled, he glances at Joanna.

JOANNA

(sad smile)

Jim. One of his story ideas.

Columbo nods, tosses the matchbook on the table. Joanna fights back memories, composes herself.

JOANNA

Lieutenant ---

COLUMBO

Mmm?

JOANNA

If Hal did kill my husband -- why did he murder this La Sanka woman?

COLUMBO

My hunch is she knew something. Maybe she saw them together and tried to blackmail him.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

122

JOANNA

But that's pure guesswork, isn't it?

COLUMBO

Not quite, ma'am. I checked with his bank. He withdrew fifteen thousand dollars yesterday and today he re-deposited it. Why would he do a thing like that?

A pause. Joanna grows more troubled. Finally:

JOANNA

All right. I'm still not convinced, but let's say I go along. What happens now?

COLUMBO

I don't know. I've got a pretty strong circumstantial case, but it's not enough. If I had one piece of hard evidence, I think I could nail him.

(X)

JOANNA

But you don't.

COLUMBO

No, ma'am. That's why I'm here. Maybe you can give it to me.

JOANNA

(startled)

Me?

COLUMBO

You know both of these men. Tell me about them. Anything...Just talk...Whatever comes into your mind.

JOANNA

(smiles)

Like analysis without the couch. Would you like some coffee first?

COLUMBO

Love some.

She rises, heads for the kitchen.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

122

JOANNA

I don't know what you're looking for, but here goes....

Now she's out of the room. We hear sounds of water running. Her voice continues over scene:

JOANNA'S VOICE

They met in a typewriter shop of all places... Jim had broken a key and Hal needed a ribbon... Does that help?

COLUMBO

Keep talking.

JOANNA'S VOICE

Well, I've told you a lot about Jim. He was brilliant, really. He'd wake up in the middle of the night with ideas. Always throwing off sparks. I remember he even did it on our honeymoon... Funny thing is, Hal didn't even talk about the books, unless he was on television....

During this, Columbo has been listening with half-closed eyes. His cigar has gone out and he picks up the pack of matches again. Then he is suddenly wide awake. He fixates on the scrawled matchbook cover, a thought growing in his mind. Camera moves in on him as Joanna continues to talk....

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. CENTURY CITY OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

123

as Franklin's convertible pulls up in front of the entrance and parks by a large moving van.

ANOTHER ANGLE

124

He sees the driver sitting in the cab reading a newspaper, crosses to him.

FRANKLIN

This the truck that's supposed to pick up my stuff in suite 803?

DRIVER

Yeah.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

124

FRANKLIN

(looks at his watch)
Almost finished?

DRIVER

Haven't started.

FRANKLIN

What do you mean you haven't started?

DRIVER

I'm only the driver, mister. Go talk to the other guys. They been in there half an hour already.

FRANKLIN

(puzzled)
Half an hour?

He turns and heads for the building.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

125

as he comes in, reacts. Two moving men in coveralls are lounging near the elevators, smoking cigarettes and kibitzing.

FRANKLIN

Aren't you men supposed to be upstairs?

MOVER #1

Who are you?

FRANKLIN

Mr. Franklin. The name on your bill of lading.

MOVER #1

Your friend told us to wait.

FRANKLIN

What friend?

MOVER #2

The guy in the raincoat.

Franklin just looks at him. Then, angry, he turns and jabs the elevator button.

CUT TO

375

126

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

126

as the doors slide open and he emerges, striding purposefully down the hall. Then he pauses, seeing:

:37

HIS POINT OF VIEW - UNIFORMED POLICEMAN

127

standing in front of his office door. The door is open.

.:3

BACK TO FRANKLIN

128

He hesitates only a moment, then he moves on again decisively.

.:3

ANOTHER ANGLE

129

as he reaches the policeman, who pays very little attention to him. He goes in.

.:3

INT. OFFICE - DAY

130

as he enters. The room is in a state of semi-chaos. Boxes sitting on the floor filled with books, papers, etc. All the pictures down from the walls and stacked in a corner. The furniture is covered with moving quilts. Everything denuded in stark contrast to earlier.

The first thing Franklin sees is Columbo, sitting behind the desk engrossed in a book.

FRANKLIN

(irritated)

Columbo!

COLUMBO

(glances up)

Hello, Mr. Franklin. Just reading the last Mrs. Melville book. I didn't get a chance to finish it the other day.

FRANKLIN

What are you doing here?

COLUMBO

Waiting for you. I was in the neighborhood and ---

FRANKLIN

You've been in my 'neighborhood' once too often. What right did

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

FRANKLIN (Cont'd)

you have to keep the moving men out of this office?

COLUMBO

Well, I'm sorry about that, but I thought we should talk alone.

FRANKLIN

We have nothing to discuss.

COLUMBO

Yes we do, Mr. Franklin.

The simple way Columbo says it sends out warning signals. He rises from behind the desk.

COLUMBO

I'm here to arrest you for the murder of your partner.

FRANKLIN

What?

COLUMBO

It's my duty to inform you of your Constitutional rights ---

FRANKLIN

Forget that drivel. I've written it enough times so that I know it by heart. Now what's this nonsense about arresting me?

COLUMBO

Come on, Mr. Franklin, why don't you make a statement and save us both some trouble. You see, I've really got you.

FRANKLIN

(laughing)

Have you indeed? Very well, Columbo. I'm your prisoner. Clap me in irons. But give me a dime to call my lawyer so I can sue you and your department for false arrest, defamation of character ---

COLUMBO

(going right on)

I kinda knew it right away. Nothing definite, but a lotta little things. Like not flying back the night of the

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 2

130

COLUMBO (cont'd)
murder. And the open mail. And never showing any emotion about a man you worked with for ten years....

FRANKLIN
Marvelous. Talk about being laughed out of court.

COLUMBO
I don't think they'll laugh about the insurance policy. I got a photostat of that. And the money you withdrew from the bank. And the book you gave to Mrs. La Sanka....

Franklin hadn't expected this. But he parries.

FRANKLIN
You expect to bring in a True Bill of Indictment on these -- trifles. Lieutenant, I was in San Diego ---

COLUMBO
So was your partner.

A beat. Franklin measures him.

FRANKLIN
Quite a provocative statement, Lieutenant. Can you prove that?

COLUMBO
Oh, sure. Not with a witness. I mean, you killed her. But there's another way.

FRANKLIN
Suppose you enlighten me. I enjoy watching a man raise with no cards in his hand.

Columbo begins to pace.

COLUMBO
(reflectively)
Well, I'll tell you. For a while there I never thought I'd get you. I was going around in circles. And then I thought of something. That first murder was really clever. The phone gimmick, the working late at the office idea. Brilliant.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 3

130

FRANKLIN

(sarcastic)

Are you awarding gold stars?

COLUMBO

I guess so. For the first one.
But not for the second. That was
a sloppy job. Mrs. Melville
would've been disappointed.

FRANKLIN

Get to the climax, Columbo. You're
talking to a writer.

COLUMBO

Am I? You see, that was the key.
Mrs. Ferris told me you didn't
contribute much to writing the
books. Matter of fact, her husband
did all the work.

FRANKLIN

That's a lie.

COLUMBO

So I asked myself, how could a man
with no talent for mysteries make
up such a clever murder? I mean,
if you were that ingenious, you
would've been able to write your
own books.

FRANKLIN

Go on. This is fascinating -- in
a boring kind of way.

COLUMBO

And then I got it. You didn't make
up the first murder. The second --
the sloppy one -- that was all yours.
But not the first.

FRANKLIN

Whose idea was it?

COLUMBO

Your partner's.

(beat)

Hadda be. And his wife told me how
conscientious he was, always writing
down his ideas....

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - 4

130

FRANKLIN

(getting it)

That's why you held off the moving men.

COLUMBO

(nods)

I wanted to rummage around through the files.

(he opens the top desk drawer and takes out a sheet of paper)

This your partner's handwriting?

Franklin is completely undone by now and he knows it. He doesn't say a word.

COLUMBO

Well, I think we can prove it is. Maybe I should read it to you. It's the plot you used to kill him. Practically word for word.

(reading)

'Idea for a Mrs. Melville book. Perfect alibi. A wants to kill B. Drives B to a remote house and has him call his wife in city, tell her he's working late at the office... Bang bang...'

(looks up)

Want me to keep reading?

FRANKLIN

(beat)

No.

He sinks down heavily in a chair.

COLUMBO

(calling)

Officer ---

The uniformed cop enters.

COLUMBO

(to Franklin)

With this I think I've got a conviction. Don't you?

Franklin glances over at the police officer, gets to his feet. Then, to Columbo:

CONTINUED

jj5

#33302

78

130

CONTINUED - 5

130

FRANKLIN

I had you going for a while, didn't I?

COLUMBO

Sure did.

This seems to please him in a way. He goes to the door with the cop, turns back.

FRANKLIN

Do you want to know the final irony? That was my idea -- just about the only good one I've ever had. I must've told it to Jim five years ago.

(shakes his head)

Who'd ever guess the idiot would write it down....?

Still shakes his head, he goes out with his escort.

131

ON COLUMBO

131

Re-lighting his dead cigar. He ambles toward the door, pauses, regards the portrait of Mrs. Melville leaning against the wall. He picks it up, studies it. Then he sets it down and leaves the office.

FADE OUT

THE END