



Series 2

Episode 13

Part One: Their Feelings They With Difficulty Smother

NYPD detective Geronimo Botch dropped a stack of files onto his desk, sending a tiny storm of dust into the air.

“Whattaya got, Gerry?” his partner, Detective Joe Wednesday, asked from the other side of their shared desk.

“Cold cases,” Botch said, flopping himself down into his hard wooden chair. “Lieutenant wants us to take a look at them. Again.”

Wednesday was slowly typing a report onto his computer regarding a conversation he had conducted with a B&E suspect earlier that morning. The suspect had walked, thanks to his public defender attorney who had managed to have bail waived at the arraignment because of his client’s “spotless” past. To Wednesday, eleven arrests and no convictions was not exactly a prime example of spotlessness, but the judge had bought it and that was all that mattered. The captain’s office would expect Wednesday’s report before the working day ended.

“What did we do to deserve that?” Wednesday asked. He was sucking one of the eucalyptus drops he was chewing to help him quit smoking. It was hard to say if they were working. He had been chewing them for three years now with little or no diminishing of his smoking habit. The only thing that had changed in that time was that he now smelled like a koala.

Botch shrugged. “It’s spring cleaning, I guess.”

“It’s September, Gerry.”

“So Spring will be a little late this year.”

“Tell me about it.” Wednesday went back to his typing and eucalyptus sucking.

Botch took the first folder off the top of the pile, brushing it with his hand to get more of the dust off of it. Botch was a thick, square-jawed six-footer who looked like he could handle anything the city of New York threw at him, either from the streets or from the Lieutenant’s office. He had been a cop for twenty-two years. If he hadn’t seen it or done it by now, it wasn’t there in the first place.

He opened the first file. The Hester Prynne murder. He remembered that one. Prynne was an A-list quote unquote escort working out of a joint on Park Avenue. They’d found her dismembered body in Central Park, on Houston Street, in Chelsea and, according to the reports, on one of the Staten Island ferries. They had had to hire a jigsaw puzzle expert to put her back together again. Witnesses had tagged a Reverend Dimmesdale as running from the scene, but nothing had ever come from it. There were also some references to a pair of notorious crime-family brothers named Doug and Dinsdale, but that seemed to be merely coincidence.

Botch threw the file down on the desk. The Hester Prynne murder. Yeah, right. No one had ever come close to cracking that one. Word on the street was that Dimmesdale had disappeared completely to work on some kind of shady South American underwear smuggling ring, either in Uruguay or Paraguay, whichever of the two was entirely bounded by land. Botch was never good at geography, so he figured he’d pass on this one. There were plenty of other cases north of the Equator.

The second file wasn’t much better. An entire neighborhood on the West Side, not far from Lincoln Center, had been poisoned by a rogue Mister Softee vendor. Fifty-eight people were sent to the hospital; seven had died. All of the victims had ordered the Brown Bonnet, which is soft ice cream dipped in warm chocolate syrup, which immediately hardens over the cold ice cream. But instead of ordering the usual vanilla ice cream, the victims had all chosen chocolate ice cream, a violation of tradition that did not sit well with the driver of that particular truck. No one was able to identify the driver, or even suggest any distinguishing characteristics because, they said, he kept playing that horrible music and it just drove everyone so crazy that they couldn’t look at him. Botch nodded. Almost the perfect murder. There was a note on one of the pages pointing out that the song was written in E-flat major with 6/8 time. There was also a copy of the city ordinance declaring that the trucks are only allowed to play the jingle while moving, to reduce noise. Playing while not in motion was a Class B felony. They could

throw the book at the guy for that alone. The murders were almost beside the point.

Botch threw that file on top of the Hester Prynne file. He didn't trust himself. If he had to even think about that song...

He picked the third folder off the pile.

The label said: Pat, Lo. Homicide.

Botch closed his eyes. He remembered that one well enough without even opening the file. An old guy in a wheelchair, run through with a samurai sword on Second Avenue during rush hour. No witnesses. No evidence, aside from the sword, bought from a blind salesperson at a discount antiques chain by a purchaser unknown, paid for in cash. Nothing left behind but a grocery bag with a bok choy, a halibut and a box of Halibut Helper. Who in New York didn't know that case? "The Halibut Helper Killer" they called him, or her, or whoever or whatever had done it.

Botch started thumbing through the file. He hadn't worked on the case himself, but the investigation had been run out of his precinct. The school that the old guy worked at was just around the corner from the station house. Manhattan Lodestone. A Magnet School.

Botch himself was a Lodestone grad.

And he actually knew Mr. Lo Pat. Because Botch had been on Lo Pat's debate team almost thirty years ago.

"What?" A voice interrupted Botch's thoughts. The detective looked up. His partner was staring at him across their shared desk. "You look like you've seen a ghost."

Botch nodded. "I think I have."

"You found a case for us?"

Botch nodded again.

"What?"

"The Halibut Helper case. Remember it?"

Wednesday thought for a minute. "Old guy? Killed with a halibut?"

"He was holding a halibut. He was killed with a sword."

"A sword. Right. Yeah, I remember it."

"Good," Botch said. "Because you and I are going to solve it."

"Whatever you say, Partner." Wednesday went back to typing his report.

And Botch started digging in on the old, cold Halibut Helper case.

Part Two: Speaking of Felonious Little Plans...

Tarnish Jutmoll stared at the signup sheet on the Nighten Day team website.

Nope.

He checked the registration on firmguns.com.

Nope.

He looked at his spreadsheet for the hotel.

Yep.

It didn't make sense.

The idea that Hautboy LeMonde was not signed up for the Pup-a-Roni was simply beyond Jutmoll's comprehension. Hautboy was one of those students who signed up for everything, especially when it entailed travel and hotels. To Hautboy, life itself was showbiz, and he didn't want to miss a single performance, especially when he had a chance at a starring role. The Pup-a-Roni was the first big Speech event of the season. That Hautboy had not signed up for it took Jutmoll totally by surprise. He had so assumed that Hautboy would be there that he had automatically included him on his hotel rooming list, even though apparently Hautboy wasn't going. It had been reflex on Jutmoll's part. Big tournament? Assume Hautboy.

Jutmoll clicked through the pages again on his computer.

Still, it didn't make sense. It had to be a mistake.

He could not get himself to erase Hautboy's name from the rooming list, even though if he did, he could pare down the number of rooms at the hotel and save a couple of hundred dollars. He had to confirm this.

He opened his email and sent Hautboy a message: "Please confirm that you are not going to the Pup."

Jutmoll shook his head.

He'd find out soon enough. There was still enough time to get Hautboy registered if he did want to go.

Whatever. He'd find out soon enough.

Hautboy was watching the movie *Mildred Pierce* on his computer. His family was downstairs watching some...family film, which did not hold his interest. Hautboy preferred Joan Crawford to John Lasseter any day of the week. Plus, alone in his room, he could multitask. A little movie, a little Facebook, a little email.

"You think just because you made a little money you can get a new hairdo and some expensive clothes and turn yourself into a lady. But you can't, because you'll never be anything but a common frump whose father lived over a grocery store and whose mother took in washing."

Hautboy paused the film and looked at his gmail account.

A message from Jutmoll. He opened it.

Not going to the Pup?

What???

He wrote back to Jutmoll: “Definitely going. Registered on Day One!!! Please confirm!!!!”

What the hell was that all about? Jutmoll had put a signup sheet on the website and Hautboy had been the first to enter his name. Miss the Pup? That would be like—what? Joan Crawford playing the Virgin Mary in *King of Kings*, or worse, like not using the wooden hangers. It just wasn’t going to happen.

Jutmoll opened Hautboy’s email and nodded. That was more like it. He emailed back: “Okay. That’s what I thought. You’re in. Thanks.”

Hautboy lay on his bed, his laptop beside him, still paused on the rather frightening face of Joan Crawford in her prime.

What the hell was that all about? he wondered. Not going to the Pup? Something wasn’t right about that.

He lay there staring at the ceiling.

He knew he had signed up. He had gone back over some old emails, where Jutmoll had listed who was attending. His name had been there from the start.

And now this.

He had looked at the team website. There was no question his name wasn’t there.

But the registration was closed. The only one who could get it was Jutmoll.

Or, he thought, someone who knew Jutmoll’s password.

Someone who occasionally handled registrations in Jutmoll’s stead.

Someone, like him, who was a team captain.

There were only two. And he knew he hadn’t done it.

Lily, my dear, he thought to himself, you have got some ’splainin’ to do...

Will Geronimo Botch and Joe Wednesday solve the Halibut Helper Murders?

Is it possible to kill someone with a halibut?

Has Hautboy LeMonde uncovered the culprit who removed his name from the Pup-a-Roni registration?

If the Republicans win big in November, how will the nothing Congress is doing now differ from the nothing they'll be doing then?

Will Tron 2 be able to fill the extremely small shoes of Tron 1?

The answers should be in the form of a question anywhere but in our next episode: “Is *Pirates of Penzance*, *The Scarlet Letter* and *Mildred Pierce* too much mental effluvia for one episode, or, Is it possible that Jonathan Frakes is a worse actor than Wil Wheaton?”