

Chapter 4

Dragnet, "The Big Thief" Transcript

This is the city. Los Angeles, California. I work here, I'm a cop. It was Wednesday, June 17. It was warm in Los Angeles. We were working the night watch out of the Robbery Department. The boss is Captain Didion, my partner's, Frank Smith. My name's Friday. We had gotten a call that a doctor had been slugged in a downtown hotel; the assailant had escaped. We had to find him. 8:46 p.m., we reached the hotel at the corner of Pembroke and Columbia Streets. We talked to one of the officers in the radio unit that answered the call. He told us that his partner was out checking the neighborhood. We talked to the ambulance attendant and he told us that the cut on the victim's head was not serious. The victim identified himself to us as Dr. Aaron R. Platt. We asked him what had happened.

Platt: That's hard to answer.

Friday: Sir?

Platt: It's hard to tell you what happened, I'm not too sure about it myself.

Smith: Can you tell us what you do know sir?

Platt: I received a call tonight that a woman was ill.

Friday: Who did the call come from, Doctor?

Platt: It came through my call service.

Smith: What time was this, Doctor?

Platt: It must have been about 7:45. My call service would have a record of it. You can get in touch with Pam.

Friday: You ever seen these people before?

Platt: No.

Friday: So, you want to tell us what happened?

Platt: As I told you, I got a call from my service. It gave me this address and the room number.

Friday: What did your call service tell you?

Platt: Just said that a woman needed a physician, I came right over.

Friday: Alright, why don't you go ahead.

Platt: Well when I came to the hotel, I checked with the room clerk downstairs and asked about Mr. and Mrs. Allen. He told me they were in this room.

Friday: Allen huh?

Platt: A-huh, that's the name they gave me. I came up, knocked on the door, Mr. Allen opened it. Don't suppose that's his real name, do you?

Friday: We'll check on it Doc.

Platt: It'd be a little silly to give the real name and do a thing like this.

Smith: Yeah.

Friday: What happened after the man let you into the room?

Platt: Well I told him who I was, and he said that his wife was ill.

Smith: Where was she?

Platt: Lying on the bed all covered up. I went over to her and asked her what was wrong.

Friday: What'd she say?

Platt: Nothing, she moaned a little. Then her husband, I guess that's who he was, told me that it was her side. Said that she had had a pain all evening.

Friday: Yeah.

Platt: He asked me if I thought it might be appendix. I told him no, a lot of other things cause pain in the side besides the appendix. I went over to the bed to take the woman's temperature, that's when the man locked the door.

Friday: Sir?

Platt: I heard this noise, I turned around and saw the man turning the night latch on the door. I asked him why he was doing that and he told me he didn't want us to be disturbed. At the time I thought it was a little strange, no reason to lock the door, but he had a reason, he had one.

Smith: Yeah.

Platt: After that I went over to the woman again and reached out for the thermometer. All of a sudden, she jumped up out of bed, jumped at me. I turned around and asked what this was all about. And I saw the man, he had a gun standing right behind me. Then I saw him start to swing the gun and then that's the last I remember till I came to. I called the police, that's it.

Smith: You never saw these people before?

Platt: No, no I'd remember it if I did.

Smith: Do you have any idea why they would call you?

Platt: No. No, the man said something to the girl on the board at my call service. You can check with her. Oh, I wonder if I can have a cigarette?

Friday: Sure

Platt: Can I have my coat please? Thanks.

Friday: You're welcome.

Platt: Oh, that's funny. (checking pockets)

Friday: What's that Sir?

Platt: My lighter, its gone. Solid gold, a present from my wife. I'd hate to lose that. Huh, the top opens up when you spin the flint thing, you know?

Friday: How about your other personal effects?

Platt: What was that?

Friday: Your other effects, Doctor. Your wallet, your money?

Platt: Gone. Gone, everything, the thieves they robbed me, that's what they did. I don't mind the money, only 30-40 dollars, but the cards and my wallet. The rotten thieves. Look here.

Friday: What's that Sir?

Platt: My watch, they even took my watch. Automatic, it was a good one. My wife gave me that too.

Friday: Can you give us a description of these valuables?

Platt: I certainly can. I've got the case and movement numbers of the watch at my office. I can give you that.

Friday: We'll want a complete description of the man and woman too Doctor.

Platt: I gave one to the other officers.

Smith: Yes sir, but we'd like to go over it with you.

Platt: Oh, alright. Say wait a minute.

Friday: Yes, sir?

Platt: My bag, do you see it?

Smith: What's that, sir?

Platt: My doctor's bag. It must be in the room someplace, unless they took that too.

Friday: You sit still Doctor, we'll look for it.

Smith: Joe, here it is.

Friday: Badly wouldn't touch that, Doctor.

Platt: Well I want to see what's in it. You mind removing some of those things please?

Smith: Sure.

Platt: Can't say it's all there. That's what they took alright. All of it.

Friday: What's that, Doctor?

Platt: Narcotics.

8:59 p.m. We got a complete description of the pair of suspects and Frank and I called them in to the office. R and I had no record of anyone named Timothy Allen answering the description that we'd been given. 9:03 p.m. We talk to the desk clerk. He is unable to give us any information on the pair. He said that the couple had come in earlier that evening and had paid for the room in advance. He went on to say that they carried one piece of luggage. We looked at the registration card. It was signed with the name Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Allen and gave us an address: St. Paul, Minnesota. The registration card was held as evidence to be checked by Don Meyer in Handwriting. We called the Crime Lab and a crew of men were sent out to go over the hotel room for possible physical evidence.

9:27 p.m. We went back to the office and got out a local broadcast and an APB on the pair of suspects. A radio gram was sent to the police department in St. Paul asking for information on the couple. Dr. Platt was asked to come to the office and go through the mug books. A call was put in to Narcotics Division to see if the officers there had any information on the thieves. Officer Roxy Lucarelli said he'd check their files to see if he could come up with any leads for us. In the meantime, the Stats Office had started a run on the MO using the crime.

Smith: Did you get anything?

Friday: No, Roxy's going to check it. He says he's never heard of the man or woman. They're new to him.

Smith: How about the numbers on the vile?

Friday: Yeah, there's a broadcast out on them. They'll be listed in tomorrow's bulletin. Doctor Platt come in?

Smith: No, he's still checking.

Friday: Well, if he doesn't find it we can take him over to Crime Analysis and maybe have a composite drawn up, huh?

Smith: Yeah.

Friday: (phone rings) Hotshot. I got it. (Listens to caller. Hangs up phone.) Frank.

Smith: Yeah, where are they?

Friday: Hotel on West Seventh. Another doctor slugged and robbed.

10:15 p.m. We arrive at the scene of the latest beating. We talk to the victim, a Dr. Aubrey Baker. The story we got from him was substantially the same as the one Dr. Platt had given us. A call had been put out by a man who gave his name as Allen, saying that his wife needed immediate treatment. Upon the doctor's arrival, the door to the room had been locked and the doctor had been beaten and robbed of his personal affects and supply of narcotics. The description the doctor was able to give us was the same as the one we had gotten before.

10:47 p.m. We talk to the desk clerk at the hotel. The description he gave us of the Allen couple match the one that we had. A check of the registration card showed that the hand writing was the same. We spent the rest of the night running down the leads we had. The Stats Office had come up with 4 possibles. They were checked out, but they netted us nothing. For the next two nights, Frank and I stayed in the field in the hopes of apprehending the pair of thieves. During that time, they hit 3 times. All of the victims were doctors. Each time their entire supply of narcotics was taken.

Monday, June 22, 10:00 p.m., Frank and I check into the office. There was a message that Captain Didion wanted to see us.

Didion: Hi Joe, Frank.

Friday: Heard from St. Paul yet?

Didion: Yeah, I got a radio gram about an hour ago. They got no record of the pair back there.

Friday: How about the operation?

Didion: New to them. How about this deal you set up? You want to go over it?

Friday: Yeah, the way we got this figured, this couple is new. You know they just got into town and also just decided to get a piece of narcotic action in town.

Didion: Where'd you get that?

Friday: We talked with Roxy Lucarelli over at Narcotics. He's talking with other fellas in the office, none of them have heard of this kind of operation before. It's new to them too.

Didion: How about informants? The couple are selling the stuff, there's got to be some rumblings around about it.

Friday: Well it doesn't seem to work out that way, Skipper. Roxy says they haven't heard anything about it. This Allen couple must be building up a supply before they start to unload it.

Didion: Yeah

Friday: We had the artist over in Crime Analysis draw up a composite picture of the couple and sent it out to all the doctors in the area.

Didion: When did it go out?

Smith: Mailed over the weekend, should have it this morning.

Didion: Who'd you send it to?

Friday: All the General Practitioners, Internists, Physicians and Surgeons in the area. Got a list of names from the EMA. They want to give us all the help they can. Sent up about 1500 osteopaths in the area, they're going to cooperate.

Didion: Way Smith tells it, whenever one of these doctors gets a call to a hotel and it's not a regular patient, they're going to call you. Is that it?

Friday: Yeah, that's right, then we can get in touch with the clerk at the hotel and get a description of the people making the call. The doctor waits for us at the desk and if the couple looks like possibles, well, we'll go with them.

Didion: Looks like the long way around.

Friday: That's about the only way we got though.

Didion: How many men you gonna need to help cover?

Smith: One other team should do it.

Didion: You only gonna roll on the calls where the description matches?

Smith: Yeah.

Didion: OK, Rafferty and Murphy will work for you and be a team out of the business office if you need any more help.

Friday: Ok Skipper.

Didion: What are you getting from Narcotics?

Friday: Well, they've got four men on it, running down leads on the dope. They've got the serial numbers on the vials. The way Captain Shy tells it, they try to push a single cap of the stuff and they'll nail 'em.

Didion: Well, it looks good. Hope it works out.

Friday: yeah so do we Skipper.

(phone rings)

Didion: Robbery, Didion. Just a minute. It's for you Friday.

Friday: Friday talking. Yes sir, yes that's right. Who's speaking please? Dr. Adams, yes sir. I see, what's that address again? Yes, I have it. You have a phone number? Fine. 416, yes sir alright, we have it. Yes, we know where that is. Right, that's correct. Right, thank you, bye. (Hangs up.)

Looks like it's started.

Didion: What do you got?

Friday: It's a Dr. Adams, I'll know in a minute here if it means anything. Hello, this is Sargent Friday of the Los Angeles Police Department, yes that's right. You have a name on the couple in 416? Can you describe them for me please? No, no there's nothing wrong. Just give us a description, would you please? And the one...I see...ok, right. Alright, thank you very much. No, that's alright, bye. Bye.

Smith: How about it?

Friday: Names Alden, description matches.

10:46 p.m. After checking with the desk clerk at the hotel and talking with the doctor who had made the call, Frank and I went up to the room. The doctor went into the bedroom to see the woman patient. Frank and I talked to her husband, Kenneth Alden.

Alden: Sure is nice of you fellas to be here, but I don't think there's any reason for it.

Friday: It's alright.

Alden: I should have listened to Helen. She said we shouldn't have come.

Friday: Where you from Alden? ...Alden? I said where you from?

Alden: Carthage.

Smith: Missouri?

Alden: I sure hope everything's alright. Yeah, Missouri. Either one of you know this Dr. Edmundson?

Friday: No

Alden: Sure hope he knows what he's doin. Helen's kinda little you know, frail. Sure hope he knows what he's doin.

Smith: How long you and your wife been here?

Alden: Week, a week tomorrow. I should have listened to Helen. She didn't think it was a good idea to come out here and I talked her into it. I said we should have a vacation. She was right. I don't know what I'll do if it's not alright.

Friday: Don't worry about it.

Alden: You can say that, it's not your wife.

Smith: I went through the same thing.

Alden: You have?

Smith: Yah, twice. Let me tell ya, not a thing to worry about.

Alden: Maybe not in a hospital, but here, a hotel room? I don't know.

Smith: Believe me son, it's gonna be alright.

Alden: I wish he'd let us know what's happening...twice huh?

Smith: Yeah, a boy and a girl.

Alden: Helen wants a girl. Don't make much difference to me either way. Did it make a difference to you?

Smith: Not really. I was kinda glad the first one was a girl.

Alden: Yeah, that'd be nice. Just so long as it's healthy, that's all that really counts. Awful quiet in there. Seems like we should hear something pretty soon.

Smith: Take it easy.

Alden: Yeah, I always thought they had to boil a lot of water. Seems like they always use a lot of hot water.

Friday: All that's to keep the husband busy, give him something to do.

Alden: Yeah, how old are yours?

Smith: Girl's 8, boy's 6.

Alden: Well that's ideal, two years difference. Kinda helps the younger child problem. Helen and I want four.

Friday: That's a nice family.

Alden: Yeah, you see she's from a family of six. I'm an only child, so we both feel that a big family is right.

Smith: Yeah.

Alden: Sure is quiet in there.

Smith: You like to go down and get some coffee?

Alden: No, not for me. I don't want anything. Are we gonna be able to take Helen to the hospital?

Friday: That's up to the doctor, Alden.

Alden: Yeah, I guess so. I guess it's up to him to say or not.

(Baby crying)

Smith: Sounds like you're a father.

Alden: Yeah.

Friday: Congratulations.

Alden: Same to you. Guess my troubles are over now.

Smith: They're just starting.

During the next few days, we got a dozen more calls. All of them proved false. However, during that time the robberies continued. Despite our warnings, doctors continued to answer calls at hotels from people they didn't know. The amount of stolen narcotics grew larger. The outlet for the drugs still hadn't been found.

On Friday, June 26, we got a call from a Dr. Halbert. He told us that he had gotten a call from a couple who gave their name as Allen. He asked us to meet him at the hotel.

Friday: About how long ago did they call you doctor?

Halbert: About 25 minutes ago. Asked me to come right over.

Friday: That's when they gave you their names again?

Halbert: That's right.

Smith: Ever treat them before?

Halbert: No, new to me. Think they'll think you're looking for them?

Friday: Well we don't know. The description we got from the desk clerk matches the suspects.

Halbert: I'd rather you wait out here.

Friday: It'd be better if we went in there with you doctor.

Talbert: That may be your opinion. Your forgetting I'm a doctor and I want to help catch the people you're after, but my first duty is to the patient. I'm not going to embarrass them by having police officers ask questions.

Smith: We're here to take care of you, sir.

Talbert: Then do it from the hall. According to your bulletin, the man always locks the door, doesn't he?

Friday: He has in the past.

Talbert: Then that's how you can tell. He locks the door, then come on in.

Friday: If that's the way you want it doctor.

Talbert: That's the way it's got to be.

Friday: Alright, sir, we'll be right out here if you need us.

Talbert: I hope I won't.

Friday: So do we.

Halbert: (Knock on door) I'm Dr. Halbert. (Enters room)

Smith: (Listening at door) What do you think, Joe?

Friday: I don't know. All we can do is sweat it out.

(Door locks, Friday kicks in door)

Smith: Get down doctor!

(Shots fired. Man stands on open windowsill. Friday shoots man. Man falls into the room.)

Woman: Why'd you do it? Why'd you shoot him?

Halbert: He's dead.

Woman: You killed him.

Friday: We didn't call it lady.

Woman: How can you say that? You shot him in cold blood. He's just a kid. You didn't have to kill him.

Friday: Better call in.

Smith: Yeah.

Woman: He was doing it for me, he was helping me and you killed him. He didn't know, he was just a kid. He didn't know what was going on. I told him what to do, I set it up. You come on in and kill him. I hope you're both proud of yourself, cop.

[Scene changes. Back at precinct]

Smith: Hey, look who's here.

Friday: Hi

Ann: Get tired of waiting at home, decided to put in the time here.

Friday: Glad you did.

Ann: He looks tired, doesn't he?

Smith: He always looks that way to me. You're getting prettier every day, Ann.

Ann: Thanks, so are you. How's Faye?

Smith: Fine. I don't know how you do it Joe, what'd she see in you? I'll get these reports out, then we can go home.

Ann: Long day?

Friday: Yeah.

Ann: You *do* look tired.

Friday: Little bit.

(She lights a cigarette and hands to Friday)

Friday: Thanks.

Ann: When you get through with your reports, I'll buy you both a cup of coffee.

Smith: That's the best offer I've had all day. I'll take care of the shooting. You want to get the dead body report?

(Friday looks at the report sheet. There's a long pause.)

Friday: What was that address?

Smith: 9276 South Pixel.

Friday: 267

Smith: No Joe. 9276 South Pixel.

Friday: Yeah . . . can't remember the DR number.

Smith: 1275460. I asked you this morning, you gave it to me. What's the matter?

Friday: I don't know, I guess I'm just tired.

Smith: Here buddy, I'll finish that.

Ann: I'm sorry I came down here Joe. I didn't think you'd mind.

Friday: No that's alright.

Smith: I'll drop these off at Homicide on the way. (Looks at clock.) Hey, it's quitting time, you going home? I'll see you tomorrow. I'll take a rain check on that coffee, Ann. Good night.

Ann: Good night, Frank. (Friday lights another cigarette.) How many can you smoke at once, Joe?

Friday: I guess I am a little tired.

Ann: How old was he Joe?

Friday: What?

Ann: The person you killed, how old was he?

Friday: Why do you ask that?

Ann: I'm not a policeman Joe, but I heard Careeci and Stewart talking about the robbery car, what Frank said about the dead body report and shooting. How old was he?

Friday: 22. First time I ever killed a man. Not a good thing, you know. You kinda wonder if maybe there wasn't some other way.

Ann: Was there?

Friday: No, we called it.

Ann: Joe?

Friday: What?

Ann: There isn't much I can say, nothing would make you feel better or help you forget about it. But Joe, you're in a special kind of job.

Friday: I've been telling myself that, but it doesn't seem to help much.

Ann: Did he have a gun?

Friday: Yeah.

Ann: Did he use it?

Friday: Yeah.

Ann: Well, doesn't that make a difference? Doesn't it matter that the only reason they're not filling out a report on you or Frank is that you were better at your job than that boy was at his? Remember the time you and I sat in the hospital waiting for Frank to come out of it? Remember?

Friday: Yeah.

Ann: Frank and I could be waiting for you tonight.

Friday: Yeah.

Ann: What's your reading on the pistol range?

Friday: What?

Ann: You get 6 dollars a month extra for marksmanship, don't ya?

Friday: Yeah.

Ann: That's pretty good isn't it?

Friday: Is it?

Ann: Joe, you could have missed if that was the way it was supposed to be. I've read even a 12-dollar-shooter misses sometime.

Friday: I suppose so.

Ann: Joe, I don't know who made the decision, but I'm glad it's the way it is. Now come on, I'll buy you that cup of coffee.

Friday: Alright . . . It's kind of dark, can you find your way?

Ann: Yeah, can you?

(The two leave the scene.)

The story you have just seen was true. The names were changed to protect the innocent. On October 21st, trial was held in Department 98, Superior Court of the State of California, in and for the County of Los Angeles. In a moment, the results of that trial.

The suspect was tried and convicted of robbery of the first degree, which is punishable in the state pen for a term of not less than 5 years. A coroner's jury found that Edgar Cavell was killed while resisting arrest and his death was ruled justifiable homicide. Alice Catherine Cavell is now serving her term in the California Institution for Women, Corona, California.