

= Son of a Gun (Homicide : Life on the Street) =

" Son of a Gun " is the third episode of the first season of the American police drama television series Homicide : Life on the Street . It originally aired on NBC in the United States on February 10 , 1993 . The teleplay was written by James Yoshimura based on a story by executive producer Tom Fontana , and the episode was directed by Nick Gomez . In the episode , recurring character Officer Thormann (Lee Tergesen) is shot while on duty , and his close friend Crosetti takes the investigation personally .

" Son of a Gun " was originally supposed to be the fourth episode of the first season , but was broadcast third when the episode " Night of the Dead Living " was moved to the end of the season . The shooting of a police officer , as well as other aspects of the script , were directly inspired by real @-@ life events chronicled in David Simon 's non @-@ fiction book , Homicide : A Year on the Killing Streets . The episode included guest appearances by actors Luis Guzmán , Paul Schulze and Edie Falco , who played Thormann 's wife . It also marked the first of five appearances by Washington Bullets team sports announcer Mel Proctor , and the first appearance by actor Walt MacPherson , who would later be cast as recurring character Detective Roger Gaffney .

" Son of a Gun " was seen by 6 @.@ 52 million households in its original broadcast , continuing a downward trend in ratings since the premiere of Homicide : Life on the Street . " Son of a Gun " lost viewership in part due to competition from a live Oprah Winfrey 90 @-@ minute interview with pop singer Michael Jackson on ABC . The episode , along with the rest of the first and second seasons of Homicide : Life on the Street was released on DVD in the United States on May 27 , 2003 .

= = Plot summary = =

Gee (Yaphet Kotto) informs the detectives that Officer Thormann (Lee Tergesen) has been shot in the head , and he orders an immediate investigation . Lewis (Clark Johnson) and Crosetti (Jon Polito) arrive at the hospital to find the doctors working frantically on Thormann ; Crosetti , a close friend of Thormann , becomes very emotional . Crosetti comforts Thormann 's wife Eva (Edie Falco) , but is privately told by Dr. Eli Devilbiss (Sean Whitesell) that Thormann may be blind or mentally disabled , even if he survives . Crosetti begs Gee to give him the case and , even though Gee believes he is too emotionally involved , he gives in when Crosetti tries to make him feel guilty by showing him his previous gunshot wounds . When an investigation at the crime scene turns up nothing , Lewis catches Crosetti praying with a rosary in the locker room . Crosetti convinces a skeptical Lewis to pray with him for help in the investigation .

Meanwhile , Bayliss (Kyle Secor) and Pembleton (Andre Braugher) continue their investigation into the murder of 11 @-@ year @-@ old Adena Watson . They repeatedly comb through the crime scene and conduct arrests and interrogations throughout the neighborhood , but they fail to find anything new . A frustrated Bayliss snaps at Pembleton , prompting Pembleton to request a new partner , but Gee refuses and remains confident Bayliss will solve the Watson case . Elsewhere , while Bolander (Ned Beatty) prepares for a date with medical examiner Blythe (Wendy Hughes) , he complains to his neighbor Lorenzo Molera (Luis Guzmán) about noise he is making while doing his carpenter work . The two end up bonding over beers , with both confiding in each other about their ex @-@ wives . Inside Molera 's room is a coffin he built for a customer , which Bolander insists is bad luck . Bolander 's date with Blythe goes well , but he nervously rejects an invitation back to her apartment when he receives a call about a murder . The call brings him back to Molera , who has been found dead inside his coffin . Bolander tells the investigating police that Molera died of " a broken heart " . Inspired by his deceased neighbor , Bolander returns to Blythe and asks to come inside after all .

While investigating a murder involving a hitman , Howard (Melissa Leo) and Felton (Daniel Baldwin) question Miles Stradinger (Paul Schulze) , who serves as an arbitrator between hitmen and their customers . Stradinger gives up several of his clients , including Calpurnia Church (Mary Jefferson) , a woman suspected of murdering five husbands for insurance money . Although Church denies killing anybody , the detectives find enough evidence to close many outstanding cases .

Lewis , who had previously been investigating the Church case , believes his prayer with Crosetti led to her arrest . This is further upheld when Crosetti receives an anonymous call claiming a man named Alfred Smith shot Thormann . While searching for Smith , Crosetti meets a man named Charles Flavin (Larry E. Hull) who said he saw Smith shoot Thormann and will testify to it in court . The episode ends with Crosetti sitting with an unconscious Thormann in the hospital and listening to jazz music , which the two friends used to discuss frequently .

= = Production = =

" Son of a Gun " was written by James Yoshimura based on a story by executive producer Tom Fontana , and was directed by Nick Gomez . It was the first Homicide : Life on the Street episode written by Yoshimura , who would serve as a writer and eventually supervising producer throughout the entirety of the series . The episode featured a blending of hard @-@ edged emotion and amusing character comedy , the combination of which would become common in future Yoshimura @-@ penned episodes . It was originally supposed to be the fourth episode of the first season of Homicide : Life on the Street , but was broadcast third when the episode " Night of the Dead Living " was moved to the end of the season . NBC programmers were worried that the latter episode , which takes place entirely within the detective 's squad room , was too deliberately paced for a series still trying to win viewers . However , as a result of the move , the Adena Watson investigation has suddenly advanced far further than it last stood in the previous episode , " Ghost of a Chance . "

The episode continues the story arc of the Adena Watson murder case , which was introduced in the final scene of series premiere " Gone for Goode " and dominates much of the Homicide : Life on the Street first season . The Watson case was based on the real @-@ life 1988 Baltimore slaying of Latonya Kim Wallace , which is chronicled in Homicide : A Year on the Killing Streets , the 1991 David Simon non @-@ fiction book about a Baltimore Police Department , which was adapted into the Homicide series . The investigation into Calpurnia Church was inspired by the real @-@ life case of Geraldine Parrish , which was featured in Simon 's book . Parrish was accused of killing five husbands for insurance money and was eventually convicted for three of their deaths . The shooting of Officer Thormann was also adapted from true @-@ life events in Simon 's book , although Homicide writers added the twist of Crosetti taking the case personally based on his close friendship with the victim .

Edie Falco made a guest appearance in " Son of a Gun " as Officer Thormann 's wife Eva . Fontana cast Falco after watching her performance in Laws of Gravity , a 1992 film also directed by Nick Gomez . Fontana said of her , " She 's an actress who 's unadorned by any embroidery . She does everything with such simplicity and honesty , it 's breathtaking . " Falco was a struggling actor at the time , and said her salary from one Homicide episode paid for one month 's worth of rent . Fontana cast Falco as a regular in his HBO series Oz based on her work in the Homicide episodes .

" Son of a Gun " was also the first of five Homicide : Life on the Street episodes featuring Mel Proctor , then the home team sports announcer for the Washington Bullets , as recurring reporter character Grant Besser . Actor Walt MacPherson made a brief appearance as a uniformed police officer who finds an earring at the Adena Watson crime scene and offers it to Bayliss as possible evidence . MacPherson would return in the third season as the recurring character Detective Roger Gaffney , but there is no indication whether or not the beat cop he played in " Son of a Gun " was the same character . The line spoken by Lewis , " Murderers lie because they have to , witnesses lie because they think they have to , and everyone else lies for the sheer joy of it " , is almost a verbatim line from Homicide : A Year on the Killing Streets . The line represents a three @-@ rule theorem about police work Simon created after following a Baltimore Police Department homicide unit for one year while writing his book .

= = Cultural references = =

" Son of a Gun " continues a common motif repeated throughout the first season of Crosetti

discussing various conspiracy theories about the assassination of Abraham Lincoln , the 16th president of the United States . Crosetti said he believes the killing was arranged by the highest ranks of the Confederate States of America . Crosetti 's fascination with the Lincoln assassination was based on Tom Fontana 's real @-@ life obsession with it . A number of songs are featured throughout the episode , including " Going ' Around in Circles " by Jules Taub , " Telephone Blues " by Sam Ling and George Smith , " Something I Dreamed Last Night " by Sammy Fain , Jack Yellen and Herbert Magidson , and " It 's So Hard to Say Goodbye to Yesterday " by Freddie Perren and Christine Yarian .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Son of a Gun " was seen by 6 @.@ 52 million viewers , ranking third in its time slot among major television networks . The episode received a 7 rating / 10 share , which continued a downward trend in Homicide ratings since the January 31 post @-@ Super Bowl series premiere , " Gone for Goode " . " Son of a Gun " lost ratings in large part due to a live Oprah Winfrey 90 @-@ minute interview with pop singer Michael Jackson , which aired on ABC and was seen by 36 @.@ 59 million people , the fourth @-@ highest total recorded by an entertainment program at the time since 1960 . Yaphet Kotto said of the scheduling , " " Heck , on that night , even I was watching Oprah instead of our show . " Homicide also lost in its time slot to a cast reunion of The Andy Griffith Show , which aired on CBS and attracted 11 @.@ 36 million viewers .

Lon Grahne of the Chicago Sun @-@ Times called the episode " outstanding " and gave it his highest possible rating of four stars . Nicholas Read of The Gazette praised " Son of a Gun " for its realism ; regarding the episode 's portrayal of Thormann 's injuries , Read said , " For U.S. network television , it 's pretty disturbing stuff The series isn 't afraid to show (it) in as graphic a way as network television will allow . " Alex Strachan of The Vancouver Sun said it was among the " sharpest , most gruelling episodes " of Homicide . Bruce Dancis particularly complimented the performances of Jon Polito and Edie Falco , who she said " played brilliantly " in her guest role .

= = DVD release = =

" Son of a Gun " and the rest of the first and second season episodes were included in the four @-@ DVD box @-@ set " Homicide : Life on the Street : The Complete Seasons 1 & 2 " , which was released by A & E Home Video on May 27 , 2003 for \$ 69 @.@ 95 .