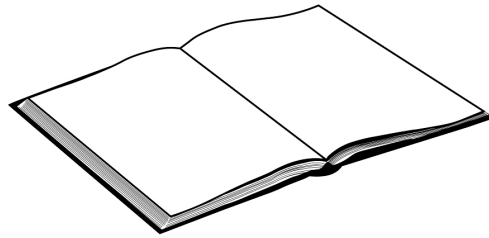


**The Silver Archive #1A**  
**SAPPHIRE & STEEL**  
**Assignments One and Two**



**By David and Lesley McIntee**

THE SILVER ARCHIVE

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL - ASSIGNMENTS ONE AND TWO

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A CIP catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

For Lesley's father, William Rhodes, and his interest in mathematics and clocks.

## 2018 Titles

The Silver Archive #1a: **Sapphire & Steel** *Assignments 1 & 2*

- David and Lesley McIntee

The Silver Archive #1b: **Sapphire & Steel** *Assignments 3 & 4*

- Cody Schell

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## OVERVIEW — Assignment One

**Serial Title:** Assignment One

**Writer:** P.J. Hammond

**Director:** Shaun O'Riordan

**Original UK Transmission Dates:** 10 July 1979  
12 July 1979  
17 July 1979  
19 July 1979  
24 July 1979  
26 July 1979

**Running Times:** Episode 1: 25m 40s  
Episode 2: 24m 30s  
Episode 3: 24m 00s  
Episode 4: 25m 40s  
Episode 5: 24m 40s  
Episode 6: 24m 40s

**UK Viewing Figures:** Episode 1: 23%  
Episode 2: 22%  
Episode 3: 22%  
Episode 4: 22%  
Episode 5: 22%  
Episode 6: 21%

[As percentage of the viewing audience]

**Regular cast:** Joanna Lumley (Sapphire), David McCallum (Steel)

**Guest Cast:** Steven O'Shea (Rob), Tamasin Bridge (Helen), Val Pringle (Lead), Felicity Harrison (Mother), John Golightly (Father), Charles Pemberton (Policeman), Ronald Goodale (Countryman)

**Antagonists:** Unspecified creatures from within the 'corridor' that is Time, and "Visual Refractions" (Ghosts of Roundhead soldiers and a plague-ridden Countryman)

### **Critical Responses:**

'The atmosphere they conjure up really is outstanding, though. It's a simple setting, but lonely and spooky in all the right ways. Frankly I wouldn't expect even a feature film to be able to improve on what's being conjured up here. Apparently, this was a low-budget series, which makes its achievements all the more impressive.'

[Finn Clark, 'Sapphire and Steel: Assignment 1', *Finn Clark's Reviews*, August 2010]

'The production budget of Sapphire and Steel leaves a lot to be desired. Sets are minimal and appear as if they were borrowed from other productions being filmed at the same time. The main villains of the story are circles of light seemingly projected by flashlights off camera. To the best of my knowledge even the British series Dr. Who, which was renowned for its cheap rubber-suited monsters and villains, never stooped so low as to resort to flashlights for its characters.'

[Steve Phillips, 'Sapphire and Steel', *Andy's Anachronisms -- Time Travel Television Reviews*, July 2003]

## OVERVIEW — Assignment Two

**Serial Title:** Assignment Two

**Writer:** P.J. Hammond

**Directors:** Shaun O'Riordan (Except Episodes 5 & 6) and David Foster (except Episode 8)

**Original UK Transmission Dates:** 31 July 1979  
2 August 1979  
7 August 1979  
9 August 1979  
30 October 1979  
1 November 1979  
6 November 1979  
8 November 1979

**Running Times:** Episode 1: 27m 00s  
Episode 2: 25m 40s  
Episode 3: 24m 50s  
Episode 4: 25m 30s  
Episode 5: 27m 40s  
Episode 6: 25m 40s  
Episode 7: 24m 50s  
Episode 8: 25m 30s

**UK Viewing Figures:** Episode 1: 22%  
Episode 2: 21%  
Episode 3: 18%  
Episode 4: 20%  
Episode 5: 19%  
Episode 6: 20%  
Episode 7: 19%  
Episode 8: 20%

[As percentage of the viewing audience]

**Regular cast:** Joanna Lumley (Sapphire), David McCallum (Steel)

**Guest Cast:** Gerald James (George Tully), Tom Kelly (Pvt. Sam Pearce), David Woodcock (Submariner/voices), David Cann (Pilot/voices)

**Antagonists:** The Darkness.

### Critical Responses:

'With just a handful of sets it achieves an extraordinary sense of claustrophobia, melancholy and at times stark terror. It is an exceptionally clever and unconventional ghost story, of ghosts who have been cheated.'

['Sapphire and Steel, Assignments One to Four', *Cult TV Lounge*]

'Sapphire & Steel's finest hour...a classic piece of television.'

[Richard Callaghan, *Assigned! The Unofficial and Unauthorised Guide to Sapphire & Steel*]

## INTRODUCTION: SAPPHIRE AND STEEL HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED

All irregularities will be handled by the forces controlling each dimension. Transuranic heavy elements may not be used where there is life. Medium atomic weights are available: Gold, Lead, Copper, Jet, Diamond, Radium, Sapphire, Silver and Steel. Sapphire and Steel have been assigned.

Thus opens the first episode of this seminal otherworldly TV series. There are many reasons for using 'otherworldly' as a descriptor, and one of them would be because the series transcends any other. Is it science fiction? Well, some of its themes are, but it sits equally well in the genres of horror, fantasy, and psychological drama. It's not a children's series but started as one; everything about it is slightly other than it appears to be, and other than the labels that culture likes to apply to creative works, whether in the 1970s or today.

That opening narration seems simple enough, to equate the lead characters with atomic elements. It sounds science-fiction-ish, yet this, from the very beginning, is an illusion. These words are going to mean something other than what they mean in our world. They may be called elements, but, as we'll see, this isn't quite right. There's a slightly longer, similar, word, for which 'elements' is but a shorthand here.

Yet in the sense of atoms being building blocks, the basic elements that form the structure of matter are a fitting comparison, because we were about to meet archetypes who represent the alchemy of storytelling and the continuance of knowledge through history. Stories have always conveyed knowledge and memory; it's one of the reasons why it's very important that history happens in the right order, as the show would seem to agree.

What of the 'forces controlling each dimension?' The idea of dimensions as different levels of reality is a long-established science fiction trope, in the form of parallel or mirror universes, but the 1970s was also the decade in which folklorists and Ufologists came together in common purpose, to suggest that other-worldly beings, whether aliens, Faeries, or element spirits such as Djinn or poltergeists, originated from layers of dimensions in our own world, but beyond the four which we can normally perceive.

The prime mover in advancing this theory was Jacques Vallée, a French computer scientist, in his 1968 book *Passport to Magonia*. In this book he put forth the idea that many elements of UFO sightings were similar to descriptive elements in historical reports for Faeries, incubi, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the like. In fact, Vallée became so well known that Francois Truffaut's character, Claude LaCombe, in the movie *Close Encounters of The Third Kind* (1977) was based upon him<sup>1</sup>.

At the same time, the emerging science of quantum mechanics was postulating that the universe did in fact have more than four dimensions of measurement, and that we could not perceive the others. It's simple enough to see how it could be hinted at that ghosts, spirits, and other beings could be hidden in those dimensions, or for the dimensions to be used as a means of concealment or transition. In this respect, **Sapphire & Steel** was well up to date with what was then brand new thinking, albeit not widely known in the public or media consciousness. These were very niche subjects, of interest and awareness to only Fortean, folklorists, Ufologists, and a small subset of physicists and mathematicians, but – whether deliberately or coincidentally – the series fitted tonally very well with the developments of the time in this rather esoteric field of research.

This brings us back to that E-word: Elements (or Elementals). It's a common magical belief in many cultures that names have meaning, and words have power. One should, in Celtic myth, never give one's name to one of the Fair Folk, because the ownership of that word can be transferred, giving over control of what it represents.

We can safely assume that Sapphire, Steel, Lead and Silver are not the agents' real names. By calling something out of the shadows and naming it, so we hope to neutralise it – that's very old magical, irrational, thinking,

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<sup>1</sup> Umland, Samuel J, and Rebecca Umland, *The Use of Arthurian Legend in Hollywood Film: From Connecticut Yankees to Fisher Kings*, p.27



though it mirrors scientific thought which says that we change the state of things simply by observing them. And, as a species, we can never resist naming anything we can observe.

The choice of the characters' names is clearly meant to create among the audience certain expectations of their personalities, which can later be played upon or challenged. Steel, who dresses in sombre grey is expected to be humourless and stern. Cold and hard, even, resilient to attack, but also sharp and cutting.

'Cold steel' evokes the warrior and the weapon, ruthless and intractable, who does not break – though, of course, when steel is repeatedly heated and cooled, when steel blades don't have enough flex (if the proportion of carbon isn't high enough), they can and do snap. We see this in *Assignment One*, when his insistence on dropping his temperature renders Steel vulnerable and in need of rescue. He also ignores Sapphire's advice in *Assignment Two*, refusing to be flexible in his intent to have a face to face meeting with the Darkness, and so walks straight into a trap.

In many ways, Steel's strengths are in fact also his weaknesses, reflecting both the resilient and brittle aspects of his metallic nature. Yes, he can lower his temperature to absolute zero – but he needs a chemical reaction and the assistance of Lead to warm back up, because he can't do it himself. This demonstration that he needs others – this emphasis on teamwork – to perform best is an important one to the young viewers of the first story.

This also correctly reflects how alloys and mixing elements works in the physical world; combining lead with steel makes it more machine-workable, though it doesn't affect the steel's tensile strength. If you want to change the temperature at which a metal can be worked, mixing it with others is a good way to do it.

Sapphire, on the other hand, like a jewel, scintillates in appearance, wit and conversation, constantly revealing new facets and new talents in a variety of settings. Applying anthropomorphism of this kind to inanimate objects is not new, in fact is part of a general Western cultural awareness of, and fascination with, the Other and the Otherworldly.

As far back as a couple of centuries BCE, Graeco-Roman alchemists, and later the Arabs of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century onwards, and then the alchemists of the medieval and Renaissance eras, codified their ideas in texts which personified the metals as agents in a drama of transformation. The sequence of transformation, usually runs as follows: lead, tin, iron, copper, silver, gold, and finally the 'philosopher's stone.' This last was not an actual stone – as in the Harry Potter novel – but a type of metal with the ability to transform all other metals by use of the smallest part of it. Or, if you prefer, transforming the alchemist's psyche and understanding by means of knowledge, history, and types of thought.

Pictorial allegory and references to classical myth were used both to illustrate these alchemical secrets to adepts, and to conceal their meanings from unsympathetic authorities and anyone else. Illustrated alchemical allegories feature antagonisms, relationships, duels and even marriages leading to births among the anthropomorphised metals and their astronomical and mythological representatives.

All the alchemical elements have revealing appearances and physical characteristics which relate to their real-world chemical properties. Mercury, quicksilver, is neither solid nor liquid, is fleet of foot and winged, and has a trickster nature; lead is ponderous and heavy, silver is bright and noble, and so on.

This symbolism runs as an undercurrent of reference in much of European literature from Shakespeare to Joyce, and onward to Carl Jung, who saw in it a correlation to the symbols of the human unconscious thrown up in dreams. Sapphire and Steel are a perfect representation on screen of this sub-current of images and allegories (which Yeats called 'the golden chain'). Their partnership's repartee, occasional disputes, and its undertones of at least a close friendship, (though the word 'love' is used once) matches the alchemical metals as they are depicted in love and war in old texts. A balance is established between them, exactly as in the texts, where the relationships somehow remain distant and stilted, never acquiring an overtone of crudeness.

The metals in the texts do not only interact with one another. Many alchemical texts are medieval meta-texts, in which the alchemist himself has conversations with the metals and elements. These conversations become Platonic dialogues in which the alchemist tries to bend nature – the personae of the metals – to his will by

persuasion, and nature inevitably resists and tries to persuade *him*. Steel, when talking to the mortal characters he meets in the series, has much in common with the Mercury of such dialogues. As the alchemical catalyst, Mercury is tricky, querulous, rude, provocative, wily, cunning, know it all, and arrogant by turns. If this sounds like **Star Trek's** Q, or certain incarnations of the Doctor in **Doctor Who**, as well as Steel, that's not likely to be a coincidence.

The exchanges between ghost hunter Tully and Steel in *Assignment Two* are especially reminiscent of dialogues between alchemists and Mercury. The latter intrudes on the former's area of expertise, a constant antagonism and point scoring ensues, and neither will give an inch; in Tully and Steel's case leaving Sapphire stuck in the middle. (Steel's point-scoring later leads to some serious errors of judgement, which place himself, Sapphire, and, of course, poor Tully, in extreme danger.)

Cold steel and the old adage about revenge being best served cold are not perhaps unrelated; can we discount an element of such very human and unpleasant emotion when Steel finally feeds Tully to the Darkness, in an ironic reversal of the alchemist's finally 'fixing' – and often, in so doing, 'killing' – his annoying metal interlocutor?

The pair clearly have a severe cultural and ideological clash. To Steel, human belief in a higher power is essentially irrelevant, and foolish, and Tully's use of Christian symbols and prayer at best a nuisance to his work. It is also very noticeable that when Tully appeals for deliverance to 'upstairs' it is the Darkness that lets him go as part of its plan. In the 1970s when Christian-oriented Religious Education was an often emphasised part of the Secondary School curriculum, **Sapphire & Steel** – in the person of Steel – is effectively exposing its viewers to a very rationally argued atheism, and to a universe of almost mystical physics and intellect. It can also be read as suggesting that a benevolent god does not seem to have a place in a universe where Time devours and makes deals for people's remaining years on Earth. And if God does not have a place, then what price morality? (A common but specious argument among the evangelically religious, who believe that morality derives from fear of a celestial Big Brother.)

Steel's morality in *Assignment Two* certainly seems to have some interesting variations from traditional modern western values. Literature and folklore have similarly used the characteristics of organic nature as jumping off points for anthropomorphised characters, as well as storylines that display such characters with that variation from the western norm: Elementals.

Common to both European and Middle Eastern folklore are stories of Elemental spirits who resemble and interact with mankind, be they called Elves, Faeries, Djinn, or whatever. These first appear in alchemy in the 16th Century work of the philosopher known as Paracelsus and evolve towards their more modern literary form in the works of the Romantics, and other 19th century writers, looking for inspiration in creating a 'new mythology' out of established elements. These Elemental beings inhabit and share traits with earth, air, water, and fire. Their folklore interacts with that of the Elves (Sidhe, shining ones, faery or in middle eastern terms Djinni), who can also form relationships, marry and even bear children to humans. These folkloric future staples of fantasy fiction are said by Lord Dunsany in *The Kith of The Elf-Folk* (1908) to recognise God, but to not have souls (though in some cases they can gain one by marrying a mortal), and their character is very much determined by the element they inhabit and are associated with.

The four elemental categories, based on Aristotelian elements, include the likes of gnomes and chthonic spirits in the Earth; and Kelpies, Selkies, and the eponymous Undine of German Romanticism in Water. Sylphs inhabit the air, and the Salamanders are Fire spirits. The latter category cannot, by their fiery nature, interact too closely with man, at least according to Paracelsus in *Ex Libro de Nymphis, Sylvanis, Pygmaeis, Salamandris, et Gigantibus*, published posthumously in 1566, who counts Man's spirit as the fifth element. As with the metals in alchemy – with an adjunct of medieval ideas of the humours, the essences of health or illness – these beings' physical characteristics are influenced by the element with which they're associated. Stoic, short and crafty for Earth (hello to Tolkien's Dwarves), slim and ethereal and beautiful for the Sylphs of the Air, temperamental for the fire spirits, and so forth.

Elementals do not die like us, they are reabsorbed into their elements, and are, as such, immortal, though these myths feature individual distress when the elementals are rejected; a water spirit cursed three times on water for example, must leave its mortal lover.

The concept of a parallel being to ourselves, born out of the elements, but soulless, immortal and possibly amoral, hovers on the edge of those interchanges of myth, folklore, and psychology that characterise western literature, especially from the Romantic period onwards. It's not unreasonable to imagine that a wisp of the Sylph, the booming voice of the Earth spirit, or the wild contempt of the Kelpie luring men to their doom, may have influenced the personalities and appearances and actions of Sapphire and Steel and their fellows.

Sapphire's particular allure, the choice to cast her as a tall blonde, white woman is perhaps not just a pandering to the patriarchy and to received privileged western ideals of beauty of the 1970s. It is also the subliminal bequest of the western canon and everything of the older, oral, tradition of stories that has gone into it: the fascination with the otherworldly female, goddess, bride, seducer, mother, and nemesis. Such figures are necessarily problematic in our age with regard to gender and racial politics, but they are there among the archetypes.

Finally, in her briefly glimpsed red-headed persona, Sapphire echoes another otherworldly seducer, guardian, assister – and abductor of entirely willing mortals – popular in Celtic and European mythology, the Queen of the Elves. The Elves, subject of probably hundreds of tales in Irish and Scottish myth, as well as in Scandinavian and Eastern European, are notoriously amoral, by our modern Western standards, although they do sometimes punish indolence and reward honesty.

They also replace gold and food with leaves or stones, lead travellers astray, and, although they will sometimes seek mortal help (as in many tales of midwives carried off to assist at births), they are generally oblivious to mortal issues, or to the mental and physical cost to mortals who interact with them.

The ambivalence of these female characters in myth is a noted feature; they can also be sexually voracious and dominant, in a slightly transgressive – and in other cases threatening and warning – inversion of patriarchal norms traditionally imposed on the feminine. This is, on a safe level for a sometime children's series, visible in Sapphire's often precocious rejection of Steel's automatically assumed authority. It is only a flash but Sapphire should take her place among the feminist figures in SF.

One of the most prominent themes in the lore of Elves and their ilk is that mortals who encounter them or enter their realms do not return unchanged and that these risks have to do with both time and mortality<sup>2</sup>.

The biggest clash of 'elvish' alien (or at least, non-human and non-western) and largely Christian morality occurs between Tully and Steel in *Assignment Two*. Tully's brand of Spiritualist Christianity, as noted above, is anathema to Steel's knowledge that the ghosts summoned by the Darkness are not redeemable, but his antagonism only drives Tully on and leads him to be manipulated by that force. The Darkness clearly manipulates both, feeding on their antagonism to put Steel in the position of having to use Tully's method – the séance – and paving the way for Sapphire's possession.

Tully's crisis of faith, and his relapse into cowardice, is a bleak point in the story, but not as bleak as where his principles lead him, a lamb to the slaughter. Again, this is no children's tale and a stark one for adults also.

Sapphire and Steel possess an odd bag of talents drawn from, and comparable to, characters from multiple points on the science fiction, speculative, and fantasy fiction spectrum. She is both empathic and telepathic, and exercises psychometry by 'reading' objects. She can freeze time locally, and even rewind it back, but her power is limited by some unknown facet of her nature and amounts to only a few hours' worth of time. Both she and Steel can influence matter at a distance.

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas the Rhymer, for example, meets with the Faery queen in the hills of Eildon is abducted for seven years and returns with 'the tongue that can never lie', others, like the Irish poet Oisín, are gone for a moment to find hundreds of years have passed and they have very suddenly grown very old.

Their abilities combine the traditional magus/magician with the alien telepath so familiar from science fiction. Those abilities are also a mixed bag of those claimed by a whole gaggle of New Age TV psychics such as Uri Geller (a frequent face on TV at the time). Remember, after all, that this series was contemporary with the ITV documentary series **Arthur C Clarke's Mysterious World** (1980). In mythic terms their appearance and disappearance at will, their power over men's minds – as when Steel convinces the local policeman that he's a family friend – and over inanimate objects, feeds also into the Magus myth, a subset of Joseph Campbell's hero myth or monomyth as subsequently developed by Professor Elsie Butler. The Magus is the direct ancestor of those marvellous men of science who appear as heroes, and anti-heroes, in 19th century literature (extending, of course, to our most famous Doctor). Patterning our two protagonists onto the Magus myth as Butler perceived it, the following correlations occur in the established stages of the traditional Magus story:

- *Undisclosed or mysterious parentage or origins.* Beyond the vague mention of Elements, we know little of either Steel or Sapphire. Are they born naturally? How old are they? Where do they come from? Who sends them? All we know – from *Assignment Three* – is that Steel has 'very positive' and 'impeccable' origins, but even he admits that these origins are 'inexpressible.'
- *Mysterious powers.* Our heroes have plenty of psychic ability on show.
- *Distant wanderings.* They seem to travel in both space and time, as they refer to historical cases such as the *Mary Celeste*<sup>3</sup>, but also talk about humans as if they are but one species among many they have encountered. In *Assignment One*, Steel refers to needing 'a nursery rhyme and a human' to lure the entity they're up against, while in *Assignment Two*, when asked by Steel what the entities look like, she replies 'humans'. They are sent where there is life, not simply to Earth.
- *Tests, trials and tribulations.* These occur in each story and include possession, entrapment, physical threat or danger, physical pain, fear and isolation.
- *Death and rebirth* (or near misses). Steel's freezing himself almost solid and having to be brought back is an immediate example in *Assignment One*. Sapphire's being taken over by the Darkness in the second story makes it clear that both can be killed, or at least destroyed in some fashion<sup>4</sup>.
- *A decisive magical battle.* This happens several times in *Assignment Two*, when both characters are displaced in time. They are also frozen into photographs by Shape in *Assignment Four*.
- *Death and defeat due to hubris.* The final story of the series springs to mind, and of course Tully's fate in *Assignment Two*, while presented as a victory for our heroes, is really a damage-limitation bodge-job resulting from Steel's arrogantly jumping to conclusions and acting upon them, before finding out what's really going on.

There are a couple of other types of entity that have influenced the creation of these two 'time agents' (as the original script intended them to be called). One which would have an influence throughout the series, always subverting the usual expectations, is the ghost.

Understandably, both Rob in *Assignment One* and then Tully in *Assignment Two* first assume that both Sapphire and Steel are ghosts, as they appear and disappear at will. Steel is clearly aware that this is a common line of approach for humans, as he makes ironic reference to it when he greets Tully with 'I come from the other side – the down platform.' That the pair are emphatically not ghosts is indicated by their characterisation of what humans call 'ghosts' as 'visual refractions' and by the clear use of the (unnamed in the serial) Stone Tape hypothesis<sup>5</sup> as an explanation for some of the phenomena they encounter.

The duo also have some very human characteristics, or at least can fake them perfectly well. They eat, (though it's unclear whether they require it, or get any nutrition from it), and are clearly not immune to physical harm, as mentioned when Sapphire is attacked by the 'ghost' Roundheads and threatened with execution. They seem to have no *need* for sleep, though, as Steel states on the one occasion in which they do. Devoid of their supernatural abilities, their role falls into the realm of detectives and policing. After all what do police do but

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<sup>3</sup> Not Marie Celeste, contrary to popular belief, as that name was coined by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle for his fictionalised telling of the tale in 'J. Habakuk Jephson's Statement', in 1884.

<sup>4</sup> 'Destroyed' being the term Sapphire uses when worrying about what the swan in *Assignment Three* might do to him.

<sup>5</sup> The theory, most famously put forward in Nigel Kneale's 1972 teleplay **The Stone Tape**, that ghosts are recordings of past events made by the natural environment.

handle and sort irregularities and transgressions in the body social? The same principle applies here. Steel refers to his 'investigations' which are to be conducted and their first actions, once across the threshold of Rob and Helen's house, are to establish a framework of time and place of their 'crime' scene, and a motive. Witnesses are interviewed and suspects interrogated (starting with the child Helen in *Assignment One!*), usually with Sapphire as the Good Cop and Steel as the Bad Cop. They make alliances or enemies depending on their handling of the case and its current direction. As they investigate, it becomes clear that there are rules within which they operate, even if they bend or even break them. They also set up traps, plant or destroy evidence, negotiate for the rescue of hostages (such as Rob's parents), and so on.

As in the buddy-cop show, both make ironic jokes about previous cases) or about insider knowledge which they don't share with the 'civilians' – mortals who can be an out and out nuisance or a tolerated presence.

Although from a feminist perspective we should note that Sapphire's challenging of Steel's authority is progressive - as late as the 1990s in **The X-Files** the showrunners deliberately had Gillian Anderson's Scully positioned in shots a pace behind Mulder to reinforce the idea that she was the sidekick<sup>6</sup>. Here each takes the lead in turn and though she listens she doesn't always follow his lead.

Sapphire and Steel are pretty far from, say, **Stargate & Hutch**, but the tensions and loyalties between partners, their different skills sets, their hunches, their attitude to the 'perp' and their interactions, (friendly or otherwise) with colleagues from their own side, civilians, or higher authorities, let alone the perpetrators of trouble, means a lot of the characterisations tropes from the cop show applies here. We see it many times here, particularly in those moments where Sapphire gives a long-suffering smile at Steel's overbearing authority, goes off investigating on her own, takes charge, or makes Steel aware that his methods are unorthodox or they don't see eye to eye in treating witnesses.

Steel also gets tetchy at Lead and Silver's working on 'his' cases, whereas Sapphire welcomes them. One wonders if the series had gone on, whether we would have seen more of these tropes. Perhaps, covering the mythic and detective bases, one where Steel 'loses his badge' and is forced to live as a mortal. Sadly, in the context of a cop show, the ending, with the two detectives outwitted trapped by their Moriarty-like Nemeses, the Transient Beings (mortality itself, perhaps?) and imprisoned for eternity makes stark sense – and echoes their own entrapments of their opponents throughout the series, such as the patch-of-light entity in *Assignment One*, and perhaps (depending on your interpretation of what the Darkness actually does to people) Tully in *Assignment Two* as well.

Whether Elementals, cops, scientific anthropomorphisms, ghosts, or something else, Sapphire and Steel pattern themselves onto distinct and recognisable figures. With a nod to Jungian psychology, they are Archetypes.

The cunning man and the wise woman are long-established archetypes, appearing in order to lead lost travellers, to educate, or to protect. In terms of traditional monomyth, they are in some ways threshold guardians to the realm of adventure and the unknown. Joseph Campbell, whose studies of the monomyth analysed the discrete units of western folklore, refers to the sometimes loathly, often frightening or intimidating, but always entirely fascinating, appearance of the guardian. He may well appear fearsome – after all he has come to take the hero over the threshold into manhood – but eventually he will prove of aid. In *Assignment One* in particular, intended for children's television, they play as the maternal and paternal – or at least in loco parentis – wise woman and cunning man.

One thing the audience is never allowed to forget is that, however strange the Operators (as they occasionally refer to themselves) appear to be, there is always a bigger fish. The opposition and threat may be mysterious and unknown, be it Time or unknowable creatures, but the thought that anything could be a danger to two such archetypal supernatural beings is something that should – and

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<sup>6</sup> Anderson spoke about this in a January 2016 interview. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/gillian-anderson-i-was-offered-half-duchovnys-pay-for-the-x-files-revival>