

# IN BAD TASTE

Teleplay by

WILLIAM RABKIN & LEE GOLDBERG

based on the novellas:  
"Poison a la Carte" and "Murder is Corny"

by

REX STOUT

JAFFE BRAUNSTEIN FILMS LTD  
Nero Wolfe Production Services  
3585 St. Clair Avenue East  
Scarborough, ON M1K 1L8  
416-269-4888 Tel

**OFFICIAL WHITE DRAFT**  
**November 27, 2001**  
**PINK DRAFT**  
**December 4, 2001**  
**BLUE DRAFT**  
**December 7, 2001**  
**GREEN DRAFT**  
**December 15, 2001**

FADE IN:

- 1 INT. LEWIS HEWITT'S HOUSE - MONTAGE 1
- VARIOUS TANTALIZING SHOTS of BEAUTIFUL WOMEN fit their perfect, young bodies into rich purple STOLAS. (The tunic worn by noble Roman matrons)
- The stolas are slippery, they need help
- They practice walking in them
- They continue as we see a montage of sensual delights, alternating between...
- 1A INT. HEWITT HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY 1A
- FRITZ BRENNER and FELIX carefully preparing one elegant, visually delicious entree after another...pheasant, caviar, blini and sour cream, mussels.
- 1B INT. BROWNSTONE - PLANT ROOMS - DAY 1B
- NERO WOLFE delicately and lovingly selecting orchids (phalaenopsis Aphrodite, to be exact), cutting them, and arranging them with exquisite care
- 1C INT. HEWITT HOUSE - NIGHT 1C
- Nero Wolfe arrives presents them to LEWIS HEWITT

ARCHIE (V.O.)

When Lewis Hewitt, the millionaire owner of even more orchids than Nero Wolfe, asked Wolfe to loan him Fritz Brenner to cook the annual dinner of The Ten for Aristology, a society devoted to perfection in food and drink, Wolfe not only allowed it, he agreed to attend himself.

(more)

1C CONTINUED:

1C

ARCHIE (V.O.) (Cont'd)  
But he might have balked if  
Hewitt had mentioned one detail.

2 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

2

ARCHIE approaches a young lovely.

ARCHIE  
I'm Archie Goodwin and I'm a  
friend of the cook. Which one  
of you will be my server?

Things are soon to begin. Fritz and Zoltan prepare the plates  
of blini and caviar. THREE KITCHEN HELPERS do various jobs.

The women, wearing loose-fitting STOLAS, are gathered around  
FELIX, the maitre d'hotel of Rustermans, being given their  
assignments. FELIX uses a seating chart to show where each  
guest is to be. Archie hovers on the sidelines with his  
notebook.

FELIX  
Miss Peggy Choate. You are  
assigned to Vincent Pyle. Here.

The girls make comments: Don't get too close. Uh-oh.

FELIX  
Quiet, please. Miss Iacono,  
your diner will be Nero Wolfe.

More noises, Felix continues as Archie stands in front of  
NORA JARET, notebook out, pen poised.

ARCHIE  
My reason for wanting your phone  
number is purely personal.  
It's your dimples.

NORA  
They often make men swoon.  
Nora Jaret, without an H,  
Stanhope five, six, six, two,  
one. Now go away, I'm nervous  
enough about spilling the soup.

2 CONTINUED:

2

Archie smiles and obediently moves to CAROL ANNIS who is watching Fritz and Zoltan add the caviar to the blini plates.

ARCHIE

I'm conducting a sociological experiment, Miss--?

CAROL

Annis. Carol Annis.

ARCHIE

I've been seized by an impulse to ask you for your phone number, and I'm no good at fighting impulses. We'll have to humor it.

CAROL

I have no sense of humor.

ARCHIE

Different kind of humor but maybe I can guess it. Socrates, one, oh-oh-oh-oh?

She turns away, seemingly fascinated by whatever Zoltan is doing. A red-headed server, PEGGY CHOATE, tags Archie, clearly amused.

2 CONTINUED: (2)

2

PEGGY

You like yourself, don't you?

Archie turns to her and flashes her his most winsome grin.

ARCHIE

Certainly. I string along with the majority.

(to all the ladies:)

We'll take a vote.

How many of you like yourself, raise your hands?

A hand goes up, then two more, then all the rest.

ARCHIE

Okay, that's settled. But now the real problem: I decided to ask the most irresistibly beautiful girl for her phone number, but I'm stalled. You are all it. Beyond the wildest dreams of any poet.

PEGGY

Archie, have your eyes examined. Sure, we're all beautiful, but not in the same class as Helen Iacono. Look at her.

2 CONTINUED: (3)

2

Archie does. HELEN has deep, dark eyes, dark velvet skin, and wavy, silky hair darker than either eyes or skin. She's making a point of ignoring him.

ARCHIE

It may be I am so dazzled by the collective radiance that I am blind to the glory of any single star. Say, maybe I am a poet after all. Perhaps if I'd better have all of your phone numbers...

A WELL-DRESSED MAN enters and tugs on Archie's sleeve. This is LEWIS HEWITT.

HEWITT

I hate to interrupt you at your work, Archie. But we're ready. Will you join us?

ARCHIE

Ladies...

Archie smiles, gives the women a half-bow, and exits to:

3 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - PANTRY - NIGHT

3

The Pantry is a long hallway between the dining room and the kitchen, lined with shelves and full of dishes.

ARCHIE

You realize, Mr. Hewitt, mixing Wolfe, food and women is not a good idea.

HEWITT

Don't be ridiculous.

ARCHIE

I can't be responsible for his conduct when the orgy begins. He will stamp out of the house the first time one squeals.

HEWITT

Good Lord. It's not like that at all. The way Felix has drilled them all afternoon? Not only won't they squeal, but you won't even see their faces unless you're impolite enough to turn around and stare. It's about the food.

CONTINUED

3 CONTINUED:

3

As they exit, Fritz, Felix and Zoltan come into the pantry.  
Felix is about to have a heart attack.

FELIX  
I cannot endure.

FRITZ  
Courage, mon vieux.

FELIX  
I cannot! I am the maitre  
d'hotel of Rusterman's!

Zoltan growls, annoyed.

ZOLTAN  
They are women.

FELIX  
They know nothing. Nothing.  
They cannot conceive of what  
service is.

ZOLTAN  
Is not so bad. We will make  
the plates of blini beforehand  
and then they carry them in. We  
will dish up the bowls of soup  
for their little hands...

FELIX  
They will have to carry the  
bowls. What if they spill the  
soup.  
(the men contemplate the  
horror)  
What is wrong with my waiters?  
Why must they be women. Why  
must be they be actresses.

FRITZ  
It seems last year, they hired  
real waiters and they tripped  
on their stolas. It was a  
disaster.

FELIX  
Are they dining or looking?

FRITZ  
I agree; it is not pure.

CONTINUED

3 CONTINUED: (2)

3

FELIX

And Mr. Wolfe...he will...he...

He and Fritz shudder at the thought.

ZOLTAN

Ahww, don't be such old women.  
You must take the good with the  
bad and enjoy.

FRITZ

They are not true gourmets.

FELIX

Fritz. It is you who must  
suffer. They will not know.  
They will not taste.

FRITZ

I have been deceived.

4 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

4

A richly paneled room decorated with pictures of geese, pheasants, fruits, and other assorted edible objects. The tablecloth is white as snow. The polished silver and the wineglasses glisten in the soft light. In the center of the table is a low gilt bowl, two feet long, filled with clusters of orchids we saw cut by Nero Wolfe, who sits uncomfortably in a chair, his fundament lapping over both sides. Archie enters with Hewitt. Nero Wolfe is listening to the lawyer, LEACROFT, expound the mysteries of corporate law.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Wolfe was miserable Not only  
was there no chair to accomodate  
his fundament, he dislikes eating  
with strangers. But if he had  
stayed home, there would have  
been no one to cook his dinner.

WOLFE

I still do not understand, sir,  
why the heads of corporations  
should be immune to prosecution.

LEACROFT

Ah, but Mr. Wolfe.  
(more)



4 CONTINUED:

4

LEACROFT (Cont'd)

There's a term of art for it - we say the government cannot pierce the corporate veil. The only justification the government can use to strip away the limitation on personal liability is if they are defrauding the minority shareholders. Taking trips to the Bahamas and buying ski lodges or funding revolutions in South America with the shareholders money. When they can prove fraud, of course, they can go after the man's house. But if heads of corporations were not so protected, who would take on the enormous responsibility of guiding a major corporation?

WOLFE

Pfui. They take it on so they may rob and pillage in the name of commerce.

LEACROFT

Don't be foolish. They are responsible to the shareholders...

WOLFE

Shareholders? Bah! Sharecroppers is more accurate. It is the corporation that takes the share by stealing the souls of its worshippers. And what do they worship, what do they send their prayers to - a legal fiction. A piece of paper.

Archie and Hewitt take their seats among the TEN OTHER ARISTOLOGISTS at the table.

HEWITT

(intervening)

My compliments, Mr. Wolfe. I have never seen Phalaenopsis Aphrodite better grown.

Wolfe acknowledges the compliment with a barely perceptible nod. VINCENT PYLE, a theatrical producer who wears a dinner jacket with a dark green tie to match. He eyes the orchids with his head cocked and his mouth puckered.

CONTINUED

4 CONTINUED: (2)

4

PYLE

I don't care for flowers with spots and streaks. They're messy.

LEACROFT

Don't be foolish, man. They are incredibly expensive.

HEWITT

I would not attempt to breed them. They are to regular blossoms as beluga is to salmon roe.

ADRIAN DART, a good-looking stage actor, laughs good-naturedly.

DART

I'm completely ignorant of them but I love them. They are lusty and barbaric. Such flowers adorn the carriage of Queen Mab when troubles our dreams. Such flowers drove Ophelia mad and made Tatiana swoon for Bottom. Oh brave new world, that has such flowers in it.

WOLFE

You have managed to mangle four plays in one paragraph.

DART

I'm a mere player, Sir. I don't write the words, I speak them.

WOLFE

Then let the rest be silence.

That's when the women make their entrance in their stolas, each girl carrying a plate -- with the blini already on it -- and pose. Felix bustles around pouring Montrachet. Wolfe, reacting to the girls, glares at Archie, who tries his best to look innocent.

WOLFE

What is this flummery?

CONTINUED

4 CONTINUED: (3)

4

HEWITT

We went to ancient Greece not only for our name but for other precedents. The goddess of youth was cupbearer to the Gods, so our custom is to be waited on by maidens in appropriate dress.

WOLFE

"Aristology" means the "science of dining, therefore you gentlemen are wittlings. Dining is not a science, it is an art.

DART

Then as an actor, a man who lives to embody art, I agree. We must change our name. We'll appoint a committee right after dessert -- but until then, let us indulge ourselves!

His fellow Aristologists join in a chorus of agreement. The parade of women carrying plates of blini begins.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Wolfe had begun to boil. I only hoped that Fritz's blini and caviar would keep him under control.

Archie's attention is caught as a SERVER tilts her plate, and one of the blini slips onto the table. She starts to put it back on the plate with her fingers, but Felix hisses and quickly remedies the situation, adroitly using a fork. The rest of the plates are served.

4A TIGHT ON A PLATE

4A

And the *blinis*, sprinkled with chopped chives, piled with caviar, and topped with sour cream. It's looks amazing.

And so begins our montage, no, our *symphony*, of fine dining...

WIPE TO:

4B THE SAME PLATE

4B

Now empty, being taken away and replaced by a soup plate.

5 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT 5

The girls are now taking the empty blini plates, replacing them with soup bowls full of green turtle soup, which Zoltan ladles from the sideboard. Felix watches carefully. As Pyle takes his last bite of blinis, and his plate is taken away, he complains loudly.

PYLE

A new idea, putting sand in caviar. Are we chickens that we need grit?

EMIL KREIS, who is sitting beside Archie, speaks up:

KREIS

What does he know? He backed three flops on Broadway this season.

And as they all begin to eat the soup,

We WIPE TO:

5A TIGHT ON A SPECIAL DISH 5A

It's flounder poached in a dry white wine, with the mussel-and-mushrooms sauce. It also looks wonderful.

6 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT 6

We pan around the room, as each aristologist enjoys the culinary pleasure of each bite, savoring every morsel of fish. The girls head back for the kitchen. Fritz has come in to bring more wine.

DART

Superb!

HEWITT

I must have the recipe!

Fritz reacts to that, leaves with dignity. The Aristologists applaud. Archie turns to Pyle, who is devouring his meal with obvious delight.

ARCHIE

Any sand?

Almost in response, Pyle suddenly drops his fork on his plate with a clatter, his head droops, and he clutches a hand to his mouth.

CONTINUED

6 CONTINUED:

6

PYLE

You must excuse me. I'm sorry.

And with that, he rushes out. Archie and Wolfe share a look. Hewitt rises and follows him. There's a moment of awkward silence, then:

DART

Well, that's a damn shame, but still - I'm going to finish this.

Dart continues eating, and soon so do the others, including Wolfe, who nonetheless glowers.

7 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

7

Zoltan arranges the pheasants on a platter. Fritz appears from the dining room to deal with the sauce for the pheasants thickening on the stove. He tastes it, measures its readiness by dripping it from a spoon, and then adjusts the seasonings. A big deal.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Fritz is a true artist. He doesn't need applause. He does however, require money. As the bookkeeper of the old brownstone on West 35th Street, I can certify that keeping Fritz and his kitchen costs Wolfe only slightly less than keeping his plant rooms bulging with orchids. At first, Fritz refused to cook for the Aristologist's banquet. He and Wolfe believe that more than six at table spoils a meal. But when he read that the they had publicly denounced the use of horseradish on oysters, he reconsidered. When Hewitt gave him carte blanche with the menu, he accepted. Occasionally, it helps to be a millionaire.

ZOLTAN

The sauce. It is smelling wonderful. Come. Girl. Smell.

Nora giggles and comes close and takes a sniff. Ah.

NORA

Ohh. That's better than french kissing. How do you make it?

CONTINUED

7 CONTINUED:

7

Fritz conceals his horror, ever the gentleman.

FRITZ

The pheasant is larded in pork strips and soaked for twenty hours in a Tokay from the alps. with lemon, cloves, bay leaf, onion and celery. Then the marinade is reduced over a very low flame, not even a simmer, very very slow, almost no heat until it turns a golden brown, which shines like a...

ZOLTAN

No pepper?

FRITZ

Peppercorns.

NORA

Can I taste? Oh please, please please, Mr. Brenner.

(more)

7 CONTINUED: (2)

7

NORA (Cont'd)  
 Before the fusty old  
 Aristologists get a chance,  
 give a girl a taste.

Fritz sighs. He takes the small spoon and gives her a taste of the sauce.

NORA  
 Oh. Oh. Oh my god. This is  
 better than kissing, this is  
 better than...are you married?

FRITZ  
 Ah. It is time to present the  
 next course.

And we

WIPE TO:

8 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

8

Zoltan enters bearing an enormous silver platter. Felix lifts the cover off with a flourish, revealing gleaming pheasants. Fritz hovers modestly in the background. There are Ooo's and Ahhh's that die as Hewitt enters.

HEWITT  
 Vincent is in considerable pain,  
 and a doctor has come. There  
 is nothing we can do, so let us  
 proceed.

Hewitt sits, but the life is definitely out of the party.

Felix and Zoltan go to dish up from the sideboard. The girls line up to get plates from them.

Fritz sighs and tries to maintain his calm. Seeing this, Wolfe's glower deepens.

ARCHIE(V.O.)  
 The aristologists all resumed  
 with the pheasant, but the spirit  
 wasn't the same. The annual  
 dinner of the Ten for Aristology  
 was a flop.

WIPE TO:

9 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

9

Vincent Pyle still hasn't returned. The gentlemen are finishing their croquettes and cheese. Hewitt gets up and leaves again. Wolfe follows.



9 CONTINUED:

9

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Hewitt left the banquet three more times, and when he rose from his chair for the fourth, Wolfe went, too. I figured he was at a rolling boil now, and wanted to glower at Vincent Pyle for spoiling Fritz's dinner.

10 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

10

Wolfe lumbers down the corridor to an open doorway and peers inside.

WOLFE'S POV

Vincent Pyle lies on a bed, clearly near death, Hewitt and a DOCTOR at his side. The doctor looks grim.

Wolfe gestures and Louis Hewitt comes out.

WOLFE

Has he said anything.

HEWITT

He keeps repeating "Jack in the Pulpit."

WOLFE

Jack in the pulpit. The wildflower?

HEWITT

No, no. It was that complete flop he backed last spring. He lost a small fortune.

WOLFE

What does he complain of?

HEWITT

The money, of course.

WOLFE

His symptoms, sir.

HEWITT

Oh, well, it's food poisoning. Clearly. He vomited and fainted. His throat is very sore, his mouth is dry, but his skin is cool, and...

(more)

CONTINUED

10 CONTINUED:

10

HEWITT (Cont'd)  
(on Wolfe's look)  
Oh. Wolfe. I'm sorry. I can't  
believe that Fritz could be  
responsible...I...I...

WOLFE  
Preposterous.

HEWITT  
But what else could it be?

WOLFE  
Pfui.

Wolfe pads away.

HEWITT  
Wolfe, where are you going.  
What are you up to? This is  
just...an unfortunate incident.  
What are you going to do in my  
house? Wolfe! Wolfe!

WIPE TO:

11 OMITTED

11

12 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

12

The twelve maidens are scattered around on chairs and stools  
at tables and counters, eating. Archie is schmoozing. A  
woman is busy at the sink. Zoltan is busy at the  
refrigerator, Fritz is pouring a glass of wine for himself  
as Wolfe enters.

WOLFE  
Fritz, I should have known  
better. I beg your pardon.

FRITZ  
But it is not to pardon, only  
to regret.

CONTINUED

12 CONTINUED:

12

WOLFE

I permitted Mr. Hewitt to cajole you.

FRITZ

The man got sick and that is a pity, but it was not my cooking, I assure you.

WOLFE

You needn't. I repeat that I am culpable, but I won't dwell on that now. There is an aspect that is exigent.

(to Archie)

Archie, bring all of the women to me. They can stand - over there.

Archie glances at the women, who are working on the leftovers.

ARCHIE

They're eating.

WOLFE

Collect them. And then get Felix with his chart.

Archie absorbs this, turns and calls out:

ARCHIE

Ladies. Mr. Wolfe wants to see you.

The ladies respond - or don't. Archie gathers them.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

For Wolfe to interrupt a man, or even a woman, at a meal was unheard of. Boiling was no name for it now. Clearly, the pot was about to explode.

{END: ACT ONE}

WIPE TO:

13 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

13

Archie opens the door and sticks his head in. Felix is handing out brandy and cigars. The gentlemen are departing for the parlor. Archie gets Felix's attention, although, being a maitre d', Felix doesn't betray much.

CONTINUED

13 CONTINUED:

13

FELIX

Gentlemen. Brandy and cigars  
will be served in the parlor.

Felix walks towards him.

13 CONTINUED: (2)

13

ARCHIE (V.O.)

When Wolfe's oldest friend, Marko Vukcic died, he left his restaurant, Rusterman's, to the members of the staff in trust, with Wolfe as the trustee. In the exalted position of maitre d'hotel, Felix knew how to control his face and managed to be both bland and commanding at once. He was soon to be neither.

14 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

14

Wolfe is surrounded by female pulchritude. Felix hands him his chart.

WOLFE

I have gathered you for a purpose. My conclusions may be proven wrong, but I must act on them in any case. I remind you that the first course brought to the table was caviar. The portion served to Mr. Vincent Pyle contained arsenic. Mr. Pyle is upstairs, attended by doctors, and will probably die within the hour.

There is an outburst. There are GASPS, EXCLAMATIONS of surprise - They are, after all, actresses - several clutch their throats, one slumps. Wolfe speaks softly.

WOLFE

I am speaking.  
(they quiet down)  
I speak not of facts, of course, but of conclusions formed by me.

NORA

Arsenic. Arsenic?!

PEGGY

How do you know?

WOLFE

From the symptoms. A burning throat, faintness, dry mouth.  
(more)

14 CONTINUED:

14

WOLFE (Cont'd)

I concluded it was in the first course, one, because of the amount of time it takes arsenic to act; and two, that Mr. Pyle complained of sand in the caviar.

Fritz is now clearly affected, biting his lips, first the lower, then the upper.

FRITZ

I must assure you--

WOLFE

I repeat: I need no assurances from you, Fritz. Who prepared the plates?

FRITZ

Zoltan and I--  
(points across the room:)  
At that table.

WOLFE

They were taken from that table by the women?

ZOLTAN

I watch them Mr. Wolfe. And I see nobody put any arsenic--

WOLFE

Of course not.  
(then, to the women:)  
Which one of you took that plate to Mr. Pyle?

No reply. No sound. No movement.

WOLFE

Pfui. If you didn't know his name, you do now. The man who left during the fish course and who is now dying. Who served him?

No reply. Archie fixes his eyes on the RED HEAD, PEGGY CHOATE.

ARCHIE

Speak up, Red.

PEGGY

I didn't!

CONTINUED

14 CONTINUED: (2)

14

ARCHIE

I heard Felix assign you to him. And I looked right at you while you were serving him his soup.

PEGGY

But I didn't take him that first thing! He already had some!

WOLFE

But you were supposed to?

PEGGY

Yes. I took the plate from the table there...

15 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

15

We watch Peggy start to go to Pyle; she sees that he has a plate already, and serve Wolfe instead, who is at Pyle's right. In the b.g. Felix is mending the blini-gaffe.

PEGGY'S VOICE

I started to serve him, saw he already had some, and thought I'd made a mistake. So I gave the plate to you.

16 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

16

WOLFE

Indeed. Who was assigned to me?

Helen Iacono speaks up:

HELEN

I was. Helen Iacono.

WOLFE

Did you bring me the first course?

HELEN

No.

17 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

17

Helen sees Peggy serving Wolfe, so she gives her plate to someone else, MR. KREIS.

17 CONTINUED:

17

HELEN

Since Peggy was serving you, I thought I shouldn't make a fuss. So I gave mine to a man next to the end.

18 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

18

**MONTAGE:**

WOLFE

Who was assigned to him?

-A series of women pointing fingers first at the chart and then at another girl.

- Felix tracing the chart

- Archie writes names down in the book next to guest names.

- We hear in overlapping cues:

NORA (V.O.)

Mr. Kreis was mine.

CAROL (V.O.)

I was assigned to Leacraft.

LUCY (V.O.)

When she gave her plate to Mr. Dart, I served Lewis Hewitt.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

It was so simple. All Wolfe needed was to get one girl to admit she hadn't delivered her caviar. But it turned into a game of ring a ring a rosie - although a better name would be passing the buck.

END MONTAGE

Archie looks at a FERN FABER, a tall self-made blonde.

WOLFE

And finally to you, Miss Faber. You were assigned to Mr. Hewitt, correct?

FERN

I sure was.

CONTINUED



18 CONTINUED:

18

WOLFE

But you didn't serve him since  
he was served by  
(consults Archie's list)  
Miss Morgan.

FERN

I sure didn't.

WOLFE

What did you do, Miss Faber?

FERN

Nothing. There wasn't any caviar  
left when I got there.

WOLFE

Nonsense. There were twelve of  
you, and there were twelve at  
table, and each received a  
portion. How can you say there  
wasn't any?

FERN

Because there wasn't. I went  
to the john to fix my hair, and  
when I come back, Lucy's taking  
the last one from the table. I  
ask Zoltan where mine is, he  
says he don't know so I go to  
the dining room and everybody's  
got some.

WOLFE

How long were you in there?

FERN

My God, I don't know, what do  
you think - I timed it?

Wolfe takes in enough air to fill his middle and begins  
surveys them all for a moment, not amiably.

WOLFE

When I came here I thought it  
would be a simple matter to  
learn who had served the poisoned  
food.

(more)

CONTINUED

18 CONTINUED: (2)

18

WOLFE (Cont'd)

But you -- and now I speak to the poisoner -- you must have extraordinary faith in your attendant angel. For you took great risks.

19 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - KITCHEN/ PANTRY /DINING ROOM - NIGHT {FB} 19

As Wolfe lays out his SCENARIO, we SEE IT ENACTED... though only from about WAIST-HIGH...we DO NOT SEE THE WOMAN'S FACE, just her actions as described:

WOLFE (V.O.)

You took a plate from Zoltan's table and on your way to the dining room you put arsenic in the cream using a device, perhaps a paper spill. You served Mr. Pyle, came back immediately, to get a second plate, and gave it to one who had not been served.

20 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

20

The women are clearly unsettled by his chilling scenario.

WOLFE

You may be fleering at me inwardly, for it was a remarkably adroit stratagem, but you can't possibly be impregnable.

(then, to the men:)

Archie. You have the skill. Make sure none of these women leave. Gentlemen, please.

As the ladies surround Archie to protest, Wolfe motions to Fritz, Felix, and Zoltan, and walks out, the men following him.

21 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - PANTRY - NIGHT

21

Wolfe leads the men to the dining room.

WOLFE

Miss Faber is the only one eliminated. She would not dare claim not to have been in the dining room if in fact she was. Someone would have seen her.

(to Zoltan:)

You say you watched as the plates were taken.

(more)

CONTINUED

21 CONTINUED:

21

WOLFE (Cont'd)  
Which one came back and took a  
second plate?

21 CONTINUED: (2)

21

ZOLTAN

I am thinking, Mr. Wolfe, but it doesn't help. I didn't look at their faces, and they're all dressed alike.

WOLFE

Fritz?

FRITZ

I was at the range with the flounder.

WOLFE

Felix. I have neglected you purposely, to give you time to reflect. You were in the dining room. I must look to you for the fact itself. I must ask you to point her out.

FELIX

I can't.

WOLFE

Pfui! You are trained to see everything.

FELIX

True. I knew you would ask me this, but I cannot answer. I can only explain.

WOLFE

I have always found you worthy of trust, but it's possible that in your exalted position, maitre d'hotel at Rusterman's, you would rather dodge than get involved in a poisoning. Are you dodging, Felix?

FELIX

Good God, Mr. Wolfe. I *am* involved. I didn't see anything but that stupid girl, Marjorie Quinn - it was a terrible gaffe.

22 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

22

The server tilts her plate, losing her blini. Felix goes to the rescue when he sees her try to put it back on with a finger and deftly puts it back on the plate with a fork.

CONTINUED

22 CONTINUED: 22

FELIX (V.O.)

When I saw her start to put it  
back with her fingers, I had to  
act.

23 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT 23

The three men look at Wolfe, who is shaking his head.

WOLFE

Incredible. The wretch has  
incredible luck.

Wolfe marches out.

24 INT. HEWITT HOUSE - PARLOR ROOM - NIGHT 24

The men -- all but Hewitt, Shriver, and Pyle -- relax with  
brandy and cigars as Wolfe enters.

KREIS

Oh, there you are. Our custom  
is to ask the chef to join us  
with champagne, which is  
barbarous but gay, but of course,  
under the circumstances...

WOLFE

Mr. Pyle is still alive?

KREIS

We hope so, we sincerely hope  
so.

DART

There's been no word for an  
hour.

KREIS

I suppose I should go up.  
(more)

24 CONTINUED:

24

KREIS (Cont'd)  
It's so damned unpleasant.

Wolfe takes a seat, sinking into it heavily.

WOLFE  
I have discovered the artifice  
the culprit used, but not her  
identity.

DART  
The artifice? What do you mean?

WOLFE  
I have been interviewing the  
women to find out who served  
him the caviar. I have asked  
Mr. Shriver, Mr. Hewitt, Mr.  
Goodwin and Mr. Brenner. I am  
still at a loss to identify  
her.

LEACROFT  
Aren't you a bit premature?  
there may be no culprit. An  
acute and severe gastric  
disturbance.

WOLFE  
Nonsense. I am too provoked  
for civility, sir. The symptoms  
are typical of arsenic and you  
heard Mr. Pyle complain of sand.

LEACROFT  
Not one of them would admit  
serving him the caviar?

WOLFE  
I am not a tyro of inquiry, Mr.  
Leacroft. I'll ravel it for  
you later but now I want to get  
on.

He stands - a remarkable event.

WOLFE  
By a remarkable combination of  
cunning and luck she has so far  
eluded identification, so I  
appeal to you, all of you.  
(more)

CONTINUED

24 CONTINUED: (2)

24

WOLFE (Cont'd)

I ask you to close your eyes  
and recall the scene. Who served  
Vincent Pyle. Which one was  
it?

Everyone closes their eyes. Adrian Dart, stands with his eyes closed, his chin up, his arms folded, posing for concentration, he takes a deep breath and holds it. His eyes flash open dramatically.

DART

It's gone. I must have seen  
it, but it's gone. Utterly.

KREIS

I didn't see it. I simply  
didn't.

All the men now voice their "I don't know" and "I didn't see anything." Wolfe puts his hands on the table and says grimly:

WOLFE

Then I'm in for it. I am your  
guest, gentlemen, and would not  
be offensive, but I am to blame  
that Fritz Brenner was enticed  
to this deplorable fiasco. If  
Mr. Pyle dies, as he surely  
will--

That's when Hewitt and Shriver enter, followed by the familiar burly frame of SGT. PURLY STEBBINS.

HEWITT

Vincent Pyle is dead. Half an  
hour ago. Dr. Jameson called  
the police. He thinks that it  
is practically certain--

STEBBINS

(interrupts:)

Hold it, I'll handle this, if  
you don't mind.

And on Wolfe's glower, we DISSOLVE TO:

25 INT. POLICE STATION - BULLPEN - NIGHT

25

A COP guides two of SERVERS, still in their stolas down the hall, pass Felix, Fritz and Zoltan, who sit on a bench, see no evil, hear no evil, say no evil. The three kitchen helpers also wait. They all are preoccupied.

CONTINUED

25 CONTINUED:

25

FELIX

This is a tragedy. When word gets out...

ZOLTAN

It cannot be a woman.

FRITZ

Why not?

FELIX

...You realize this...The restaurant will suffer. The restaurant will suffer.

FRITZ

We must be strong. We must be clear and face our interrogators with cool vision.

ZOLTAN

I don't believe one of those girls...I cannot. Arsenic. In caviar.

FRITZ

She must have had a great hatred.

ZOLTAN

Beluga!

FELIX

A woman's hatred. A secret festering no man can understand.

ZOLTAN

It could not be the blonde. Perhaps the red head?

FELIX

How could she do this to the restaurant. Did she think?

ZOLTAN

She is a woman.

FRITZ

We might as well accept it.

A STOLA CLAD SERVER emerges from a room, guided by a POLICE OFFICER. Needless to say, the party provides a contrast to the normal denizens of a late-night police station. The SOUND OF SHOUTING makes everyone turn.

CONTINUED



25 CONTINUED: (2)

25

CRAMER (V.O.)  
Quit twisting my words around!

26 INT. POLICE STATION - CRAMER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

26

We are TIGHT ON INSPECTOR CRAMER, who is standing in front of Wolfe, furious and roaring:

CRAMER  
I didn't charge you with complicity! I merely said you're concealing something, and what the hell is that to scrape your neck? You always do!

Archie Goodwin and Purley Stebbins sit and watch their bosses.

WOLFE  
Everyone omits something, if only because to include everything is impossible. May we go home now or do you wish to show us the sunrise?

CRAMER  
You witnessed the commission of a murder and you didn't notify--

WOLFE  
(interrupts:)  
It wasn't a murder until he died.

CRAMER  
All right, a felony. You not only failed to report it, you--

WOLFE  
(interrupts:)  
That a felony had been committed was my conclusion, not a fact.

CRAMER  
Then why did you start an investigation, questioning suspects--

WOLFE  
(interrupts:)  
Merely to test my conclusion. I would have been a ninny to report it before learning--

26 CONTINUED:

26

CRAMER

(interrupts:)

Damn it, will you let me finish a sentence? Just one?

WOLFE

Certainly. If it has import.

CRAMER

You knew Pyle was dying. You said so.

WOLFE

Also my own conclusion. The doctors were still trying to save him.

Cramer turns to look at Archie, sees nothing inspiring, turns back to Wolfe.

CRAMER

Those three men -- Fritz Brenner, Felix Courbet and Zoltan Mahany - we can forget Brenner but it's hard to believe the other two don't know who served Pyle.

WOLFE

It is indeed. They are highly trained men.

CRAMER

Then I want to ask your opinion of a theory. In the trash container in the kitchen, we found a roll of ordinary white paper that had been rolled into a tube, held with tape, smaller at one end. The laboratory has found particles of arsenic inside.

WOLFE

As I surmised, a paper spill.

CRAMER

And the only two fingerprints on the spill were Zoltan's. He claims he saw it on the floor after the meal was started, picked it up, and threw it out.

(more)

CONTINUED

26 CONTINUED: (2)

26

CRAMER (Cont'd)

What's wrong with the theory that Zoltan poisoned one of the portions and saw that it was taken by a certain girl?

He gets up pacing.

CRAMER

No, no don't bother. I'll answer that myself. Despite what you think, other people in this town are capable of reason. There are two things wrong with it. First, Zoltan claims that he didn't know which guest any of the girls were assigned to. But Felix knew and they could have been in collusion. Second, the girls all deny that Zoltan indicated which plate they were to take, but you know how that is. He could have done it without her knowing it. Suppose they meant to poison you and it went to the wrong man?

WOLFE

That's not only untenable, it's egregious. Why then did one girl come back and get a second plate?

CRAMER

She was confused. Nervous. Dumb. And now she's too scared to admit it.

WOLFE

I suggested to Mr. Stebbins that the lab check the girls' pockets for traces of arsenic.

CRAMER

The lab did and they all came out clean. So only Zoltan is tied to the arsenic. And he could have had help from Felix. You know these men, Wolfe.

WOLFE

I know them, but I do not answer for them.

(more)

CONTINUED

26 CONTINUED: (3)

26

WOLFE (Cont'd)

They may have a dozen murders on their souls, but they had nothing to do with the death of Mr. Pyle and I shall unmask the conniving wretch who is responsible. Have you established the order in which the plates were served?

CRAMER

All we got is contradictions. We got the last five, but the first seven - we can't pry it out of them.

Wolfe rises with difficulty from his chair.

WOLFE

You have your army. Put them to work on it. I am going home.

Archie opens the door for Wolfe and shoots a look at Cramer.

ARCHIE

Always a pleasure.

And on Cramer's scowl, we WIPE TO:

27 EXT. BROWNSTONE - STOOP (STUDIO) - DAWN

27

An exhausted Wolfe, Archie and Fritz mount the stairs.

28 INT. BROWNSTONE - ENTRY HALL - DAY

28

ARCHIE

Well, it wasn't so bad. I had Rowcliffe stuttering in eight minutes flat.

FRITZ

Shall I cook breakfast?

WOLFE

You will forget about breakfast until further notice. Archie. Take a note up to Theodore that I will not appear at nine. I may not come at four. Have all of them here at six o'clock tonight.

ARCHIE

All of whom?

(more)

CONTINUED

28 CONTINUED:

28

WOLFE (Cont'd)

The women. Dealing with them singly would be interminable.

Wolfe heads straight for the elevator, his back to Archie.

ARCHIE

I have a suggestion: postpone operations until your wires are connected again. Or aspirin. Do you want some aspirin?

WOLFE

I want *them*.

The DOORBELL RINGS. Archie goes to the window.

ARCHIE

Well, here's one right now. Helen Iacono. She must have read your mind. Shall we keep her until we gather the rest?

WOLFE

Confound it. Bring her in.

He marches to his office. Archie goes to answer the door.

ARCHIE

Miss Iacono.

HELEN

I want to see Nero Wolfe. I haven't had any sleep.

ARCHIE

You do look a might puffy. Are you looking for a place to take a nap?

HELEN

I can't go home and I wouldn't get any sleep if I did. My mother will start in on me again about being in show business.

(more)

CONTINUED

28 CONTINUED: (2)

28

HELEN (Cont'd)

She doesn't want me to be an actress. She didn't want me to go there last night, even if I was making fifty dollars just for serving food to a bunch of finickers. She'll call my father and insist that he come home and talk to me about what a mistake I'm making being an actress.

ARCHIE

Mr. Wolfe doesn't give out career advice.

HELEN

I don't want career advice. I'm afraid.

{A&amp;E: END ACT TWO}

WIPE TO:

29 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - LATER

29

Helen Iacono is seated in the red leather chair. From the look on Wolfe's's face, she's been talking for a long time, and doesn't seem inclined to stop soon.

HELEN

I came because you're a detective and you're very clever and I'm afraid they'll find out something I did and if they do, I won't have a career. So I decided to tell you my secret and then if you'll help me I'll help you.

WOLFE

I can't keep a secret if it's a guilty one. Is it a crime?

HELEN

No.

WOLFE

Then proceed, madam.

HELEN

I stabbed Vincent Pyle and got blood on me.

CONTINUED

29 CONTINUED:

29

Archie stares. Wolfe waits for her to continue. And waits. Then, when it's apparent she's not going on:

WOLFE

Ordinarily, Miss Iacono, stabbing a man is considered a crime.

HELEN

That's why I wanted to tell you.

WOLFE

When and where did this happen?

HELEN

Three months ago in his penthouse. Of course I knew about him. Everybody does. But they were about to start casting *Jack in the Pulpit* and I didn't know it was going to be a flop. If a girl wants to have a career she has to be sociable.

30 INT. PYLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

30

They are barely in the door when Pyle makes a pass at her... and aggressive one. She tries to get away, but he pins her against his desk.

HELEN (V.O.)

He turned into a beast. So I grabbed a knife from the table and stabbed him with it.

She stabs him in the shoulder. He staggers back, shocked, blood on his shirt and on her dress.

31 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

31

HELEN

When I got home I tried to get the blood out of my cardigan but it left a stain. It cost 46 dollars.

\*

WOLFE

But Mr. Pyle recovered.

HELEN

Oh, yes. I don't know if he backs shows just so he can get girls, but it might as well be.  
(more)

CONTINUED

31 CONTINUED:

31

HELEN (Cont'd)

I don't mean just taking them out, I mean the last ditch. We say that on Broadway. You know what I mean?

WOLFE

I can surmise.

HELEN

Sometimes they say the last stitch. What if the police find out about it?

WOLFE

The police are not simpletons. You wouldn't be arrested for murdering Mr. Pyle last night, let alone convicted, merely because you stabbed him in self-defense last January.

HELEN

But if they find out right away who did it, that would end it and I'd be all right. Only I'm afraid they won't find out right away, but I think you could if I helped you. I can't offer to help the police because they'd wonder why.

WOLFE

I see. How do you propose to help me?

HELEN

Well, if you're right and one girl went back twice, it must be one of the last five, right? Peggy Choate or Nora Jaret or Carol Annis or Lucy Morgan.

WOLFE

Or you.

HELEN

No, not me.  
(more)

CONTINUED



31 CONTINUED: (2)

31

HELEN (Cont'd)

See, there's a lot of talk about the girls he gets, but nobody really knows because he's always very careful about it. So I can talk to those girls and find out which one went to the last ditch with him and then tell the police I saw her going back to the kitchen for another plate.

(off their looks)

And you didn't think a 20 year-old girl could help, did you? I saw your face when I said it.

WOLFE

It's possible you're over simplifying the problem. Mr. Pyle was in agony, but he could speak. Why didn't he denounce his poisoner? Surely when he saw her serve him, he was put on his guard.

HELEN

But he didn't see her. She came up behind him. And he didn't know she wanted to kill him. Men don't know how a girl feels. Look at me. Pyle thought I would give up my honor and my virtue just to get a part in his play, and it was a flop.

WOLFE

Miss Iacono. We are dealing with malign and crafty harpy and I will not be a party to your peril.

HELEN

What?

WOLFE

I don't think you should talk to these women alone. Let me propose an alternative. Arrange for Mr. Goodwin to see them with you. In a group.

HELEN

Like a party?

CONTINUED

31 CONTINUED: (3)

31

WOLFE

Like a party. He is a trained  
investigator and knows how to  
beguile.

31 CONTINUED: (4)

31

Helen looks at Archie, who does his best to look beguiling. Helen objects. Wolfe counters. They agree.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

When Wolfe made it plain that he would accept her as a colleague only if she accepted his alternative, Helen gave up and gave in.

She gets up to go:

32 INT. BROWNSTONE - ENTRY HALL - DAY

32

Archie leads her out the front door, locking it behind her.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

I was busy congratulating myself that I hadn't gotten her phone number. I don't say a girl must have true nobility of character before I'll buy her lunch, but you have to draw the line somewhere.

He goes back to:

33 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

33

To find Wolfe sitting with his eyes closed and his fists planted on the chair arms. Is he dozing or thinking?

ARCHIE

Even money.

WOLFE

On what?

ARCHIE

On her against the field. It was getting too hot for comfort and she decided that the best way to duck it was to wish it on some dear friend.

Wolfe's eyes open.

WOLFE

She would, certainly.  
(more)

33 CONTINUED:

33

WOLFE (Cont'd)

A woman whose conscience has no sting will stop at nothing.  
But why come to me?

ARCHIE

For a guess, she was afraid the cops would find out how she had saved her honor and virtue and tell her mother and father and her father would spank her.

That image is it for Wolfe. He rises and heads for the door, passing Archie.

WOLFE

Do your feeble attempts to provoke me amuse you?

ARCHIE

Endlessly.

(V.O)

Wolfe slept through two sessions with the orchids. My own attempts to nap were interrupted by calls from Helen to let me know how she was getting on with the party.

34 INT. CAB - NIGHT

34

Archie, in fresh clothes but not quite refreshed himself, opens the door and lets Helen in.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Yes, I was now calling her Helen. I didn't feel like it, but in the detective business, you have to be sociable, of course preserving your honor and virtue.

HELEN

This isn't going to work. Pyle was too careful. The only way we'll find out is if one of girls opens up. But if one of them did that, she'd practically be confessing to murder.

34 CONTINUED:

34

ARCHIE

Not if she doesn't realize what she's saying when she tells us.

HELEN

I can't do that. And neither can you. I have a better idea.

ARCHIE

I'm relieved.

HELEN

After tonight, you and I decide which one is the most likely, and I'll tell Wolfe I saw her bringing a second plate and Wolfe will call the police, and that will do it.

Helen beams. Archie leans back against the seat.

ARCHIE(V.O.)

No, I didn't feel like calling her Helen. I would just as soon have been too far away from her to call her at all.

35 INT. NORA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

35

Nora Jaret, Carol Annis, and Helen Iacono are scattered on the couches around the room. Lucy Morgan is sprawled on the floor. Archie perches precariously on a wobbly-legged chair with a glass of milk, Peggy Choate comes up to him, she carries two bottles of BUBBLE-PAGNE and glasses.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Nora Jaret's apartment was on the fourth floor of an old walk-up near Amsterdam Avenue. It was furnished and had the kind of homeyness that places get when they're used by a lot of different people for fifty or sixty years. Our hostesses were Peggy Choate, the redhead, and Nora Jaret with the dimples.

NORA

I'm pretty beat for a big meeting. Or even a party.  
(more)

CONTINUED

35 CONTINUED:

35

NORA (Cont'd)

I spent the whole day at the District Attorney's office.

PEGGY

Me, too. After all, I was supposed to have served Mr. Pyle.

HELEN

Well, you see I thought we could ease our minds if we could find out from Archie what Nero Wolfe has found out and what the police are doing, so we could know where we stand. I've gotten him to loosen up a bit and it turns out, he's very nice and sympathetic.

PEGGY

As long as you came all the way down here to tell us what the police are doing, we thought we'd try to make it a little festive.

She thrusts a bottle at him. Archie studies the label.

ARCHIE

Bubble-Pagne. Registered Trademark.

PEGGY

Ten cents a bottle.

ARCHIE

Thanks, I'll stick with the milk.

Peggy shrugs and goes to fill the other glasses. Carol Annis waves her off.

CAROL

So what do the police think?

ARCHIE

They think one of you here killed Pyle because you were the last five to serve a plate.

LUCY

I thought you were nice.

CONTINUED

35 CONTINUED: (2)

35

NORA

How do you know what they think?

ARCHIE

I'm not at liberty to say. \*

CAROL

I know what I think. I think it was Zoltan. He's a chef at Rusterman's and Nero Wolfe is the trustee there and so he's the boss there, and I think Zoltan hated him and tried to poison him but he gave the poisoned plate to the wrong girl.

ARCHIE

I doubt very much if the police would buy that. \*

PEGGY

What would they buy? \*

ARCHIE

Anything that would fit. \*

PEGGY

They think one of us served two plates and poisoned Pyle. \*

LUCY

They're a bunch of dopes. They get an idea and then they haven't got room for another one.

PEGGY

There's no proof any of us went back for another plate.

NORA

Or even if she did, there's no proof it wasn't just a mistake.

ARCHIE

There is, but it's tricky. Look. Here's Felix's seating chart. And here are twelve pieces of paper.

He unfolds the seating chart and produces 12 colored pieces of paper.

CONTINUED

35 CONTINUED: (3)

35

HELEN

(overly bright)

Oh. So we write the names of  
the girls on them?

ARCHIE

Well, that's a great idea, Helen.

As they write...

ARCHIE

Try to move the girl pieces so  
one of them either takes in two  
plates at once or goes back for  
a second plate but doesn't give  
one to Pyle. It can't be done.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

NORA

Why not?

ARCHIE

Because if either of those things  
happened, there wouldn't have  
been one mix up - there would  
have been two.

\*  
\*  
\*

PEGGY

I don't believe it.

ARCHIE

Then show me.

MONTAGE

As the five girls try to work out the puzzle. Archie has set out the seating chart. Nora kneels facing him, Lucy props herself on her elbows, Carol squats on side of Archie, Peggy on the other, while Helen stands behind them. Their voices and comments come and go and overlap....

ARCHIE(V.O.)

My memory has had a long stiff training under the strains and pressures Wolfe has put on it, but I wouldn't undertake to report all the combinations they tried, even if I thought you cared.

CONTINUED



35 CONTINUED: (4)

35

HELEN

Peggy served mine and I served  
Nora's and Nora served Carol's  
and Carol served Lucy's so that  
means...that means...uhm...

\*

LUCY

Wait, wait, she gave the second  
one to that actor...no, Carol  
got him...she gave it to Hewitt  
because Fern didn't...no, I  
served him...she gives it to  
Quinn?

PEGGY

I don't believe this.

NORA

That's what he's said. You can't  
leave out Pyle. Nobody could  
take two plates in and not serve  
Pyle.

PEGGY

I just don't believe it!

CAROL

And when she realizes she's not  
supposed to have a second plate  
like she just puts it down  
somewhere...like right next to  
her guy.

It almost looks like a game of Twister. The girls try every  
possible combination, their faces registering excitement,

then confusion and irritation,

And then finally defeat as none on their combinations proves  
their point.

CONTINUED

35 CONTINUED: (5)

35

Finally, one by one, the girls give up, until only Peggy Choate is left, frowning and biting her lip, propped first on one hand then the other. Then:

PEGGY

Nuts.

And she sweeps all the papers into a pile with her arm and we END MONTAGE.

36 INT. NORA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

36

As the girls go back to their seats, unsettled by the demonstration.

CAROL

It's just a trick.

NORA

I still don't believe that one of us deliberately poisoned a man. Point at her! Point her out, I dare you to!

ARCHIE

If I could, I wouldn't be bothering the rest of you. \*

There is a long beat. The girls look at each other anxiously.

ARCHIE

All right. One by one.  
(to Carol)  
Did you know Pyle?

CAROL

Of course. Everybody in show business does. I met him at a party. He came backstage at the Coronet once.

ARCHIE

Miss Morgan?

36 CONTINUED:

36

LUCY

You call this helping us?

(on his look)

I danced with him at the Flamingo once. That was the closest I had ever been to him.

ARCHIE

Miss Choate?

PEGGY

I never had the honor. I just moved from Montana.

ARCHIE

Miss Jaret?

NORA

Oh sure. At Sardi's all the time. But that's the only place I ever saw the great Pyle and I wasn't with him.

ARCHIE

Helen?

HELEN

I never met him.

ARCHIE

So you said. Well. If one of you poisoned Pyle, and I hate to say it but I don't see any way out of that, one of you is lying.

The girls exchange glances, now suspicious of each other.

LUCY

Archie Goodwin, a girl's best friend.

CAROL

Now you've got us suspecting each other.

(more)

\*  
\*  
\*

CONTINUED

36 CONTINUED: (2)

36

ARCHIE (Cont'd)

Look, if you don't want to tell the cops about going to the last ditch with Pyle, tell me now. If one of you saw a girl serve Pyle and don't want to tell the cops, tell me now. I'll tell the cops I wormed it out of you.

\*

Nothing. Silence. Archie gets up.

ARCHIE

Then let's go down to Nero Wolfe's office. I don't say he can sort this out just by snapping his fingers, but he might surprise you.

\*

NORA

All right. All right. This is getting too damn painful. Come on.

She gets up, followed by the other girls. But before he can get them out, a door in the back of the room swings open, revealing Purlly Stebbins.

STEBBINS

I'm surprised at you, Goodwin. These ladies need their sleep.

If Archie is surprised -- and he is -- he won't show it.

ARCHIE

Greetings. And welcome. I've been wondering why you didn't join us instead of skulking there in the dark.

STEBBINS

I'll bet you have.  
(to the girls)  
You can relax, ladies.  
(to Archie)  
You're under arrest for obstructing justice.

ARCHIE

No cuffs?

STEBBINS

Clown if you want to.  
(more)

CONTINUED

36 CONTINUED: (3)

36

STEBBINS (Cont'd)

Let's go.

ARCHIE

In a minute. We've got all night. Of course, Peggy and Nora knew this hero was in there, but I'd like to know who else did.

HELEN

I didn't.

CAROL

Oh stop pretending. It's contemptible. Of course he knew.

(to Archie)

You got us all up here to talk and got us all so we would talk with a policeman listening.

HELEN

Don't be stupid. Why is he arresting Archie then.

CAROL

It's just an act.

HELEN

Peggy, Nora. You knew. Did he?

NORA

No. I promise you. I called the police station this afternoon after you called. I thought...I thought..

HELEN

Why didn't you tell us?

PEGGY

He said not to. Mr. Stebbins.

They all start talking at once.

HELEN

Well, you better think about everything you said, because he's not your friend.

CONTINUED

36 CONTINUED: (4)

36

PEGGY

You're the one who brought Archie Goodwin up here. He's not our friend either.

NORA

I can't believe this. I can't believe this.

ARCHIE

Well, Stebbins, you certainly spoiled the party.

STEBBINS

And you interfered with a homicide investigation. You told them what the police think and what they are going to do. So you get to go downtown and explain yourself.

Archie knows better than to fight. They head for the door.

37 INT. POLICE STATION - BULLPEN - NIGHT

37

Purley and Archie come in. Archie stops.

ARCHIE

I've been thinking about laws and liberties and so on.

PURLEY

I'm happy for you.

ARCHIE

If a man is arrested for obstructing justice, and it turns out he didn't obstruct any justice, does that make the arrest false?

STEBBINS

You tried to get them to tell you things instead of telling the police.

ARCHIE

I guess I'll have to ask a lawyer.

STEBBINS

I heard you and I took notes, Goodwin.

CONTINUED

37 CONTINUED:

37

ARCHIE

Nathaniel Parker would know.

STEBBINS

You haven't even got the excuse  
that Wolfe is representing a  
client.

37 CONTINUED: (2)

37

ARCHIE

Wrong.

STEBBINS

Who is she?

ARCHIE

Fritz Brenner. He's seeing red because food cooked by him was poisoned.

STEBBINS

Awww, cripes.

ARCHIE

It's convenient to have a client living right in the house. You do admit that a licensed detective has a right to investigate on behalf of a client?

STEBBINS

I admit nothing.

ARCHIE

That's sensible. When you're on the stand, being sued for false arrest, it would be bad to have it thrown up to you, you could get hooked for a year's pay.

STEBBINS

You think I'm crawling, but you're wrong. I know damn well that you're going to clam up. Lt. Rowcliffe is expecting you. It was him Nora Jaret called and he sent me.

Archie nods, understanding Purely's situation.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

He's a proud man, Purley is. And I wouldn't go so far as to say he has nothing to be proud of.

(more)



37 CONTINUED: (3)

37

ARCHIE (Cont'd)  
(out loud)  
One will get you five that I  
can get him stuttering in ten  
minutes.

Stebbins stifles a smile

ARCHIE (V.O.)  
It only took me eight minutes  
to get Rowcliffe stuttering, a  
personal best, so I got home at  
2 am.

WIPE TO:

38 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

38

Archie stifles yawns as he relates last night's occurrences  
to Wolfe.

WOLFE  
What are you conclusions from  
this episode?

ARCHIE  
My basic conclusion is I came  
up with nothing.

WOLFE  
You are saying it must be left  
to the police? That I can expose  
her only by a stroke of luck.

ARCHIE  
Right. Or genius. I make no  
conclusions about genius.

WOLFE  
Then why the devil were you  
going to bring them to me at  
midnight? Don't answer. I  
know. To badger me.

That's when Fritz comes in, a grave look on his face.

WOLFE  
What is it?

FRITZ  
I am sorry to disturb you, sir,  
but the watercress we have been  
delivered is at least a day  
old.

CONTINUED

38 CONTINUED:

38

WOLFE

Again?

FRITZ

Yes, sir.

Wolfe's eyes narrow in anger.

WOLFE

I must see this abomination for myself.

He gets up. Fritz does not follow. Wolfe stops.

WOLFE

What?

FRITZ

There's another matter, sir.

WOLFE

Yes.

FRITZ

Felix and Zoltan would like an appointment with you after lunch, and I would like to be present.

WOLFE

Is something wrong with the restaurant?

FRITZ

No, sir. Concerning the misfortune of Tuesday evening.

WOLFE

What about it?

FRITZ

It would be better for them to tell you. It is their concern.

Archie swivels for a view of Fritz's face. Wolfe studies Fritz for a long moment.

WOLFE

Would half-past two be convenient?

Fritz nods and leaves. The moment he's gone, Archie swivels back to look at Wolfe.

CONTINUED

38 CONTINUED: (2)

38

ARCHIE

You want me to go pry it out of  
him?

38 CONTINUED: (3)

38

WOLFE

No.

ARCHIE

But suppose Felix and Zoltan  
have been holding out on us?

WOLFE

I assume we will learn that at  
half-past two.

ARCHIE

So this isn't urgent.

WOLFE

It may be. But while there is  
no one more obliging than Fritz,  
but also there is no one more  
immovable when he has taken a  
stand. We shall not press him.

Archie settles back into his seat with a sigh and we WIPE  
TO:

39 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY

39

The doorbell is ringing. Fritz comes down the hall. He wears  
a suit, not his usual uniform. He admits Felix and Zoltan.  
They are all very nervous.

FRITZ

Felix. Zoltan.

FELIX

What did he say?

FRITZ

He asked if half past two would  
be convenient.

ZOLTAN

Nothing else?

FELIX

You will be quiet. Nothing  
else?

FRITZ

Nothing else.

FELIX

I took a collection at the  
restaurant. The whole staff  
has contributed.

(more)

CONTINUED

39 CONTINUED:

39

FELIX (Cont'd)

In a proper ratio, of course.  
You can't expect a bus boy to...

FRITZ

I have...

ZOLTAN

No. You cannot.

FELIX

I told you to be quiet.  
(to Fritz)  
You cannot.

FRITZ

If that's how it must be.

They stare down the hall at the office door. Felix checks Zoltan's cuffs and tie. Fritz checks Felix. Felix checks Fritz. All right. They begin to march, full of trepidation, towards the door.

40 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - LATER

40

Felix is in the red chair, Zoltan in one of the yellow ones, and Fritz stands. Archie and Wolfe are at their desks.

FELIX

For the maitre d'hotel and one of our chefs to assist at a dinner where a guest is served poison, that is not pleasant. A few of our most desirable patrons make jokes, but most do not, and some of them do not come.

WOLFE

Confound it, Felix. I have avowed my responsibility. Are you here for the gloomy pleasure of reproaching me?

FELIX

No, sir. Of course not.

ZOLTAN

Of course not.

FELIX

We wish to engage your professional services.  
(more)

CONTINUED

40 CONTINUED:

40

FELIX (Cont'd)

We know it wouldn't be proper to pay you from restaurant funds, since you are the trustee, so we'll pay you with our own money. We appeal to you.

Zoltan stretches out a hand, arm's length.

ZOLTAN

We appeal to you.

WOLFE

Pfui.

ZOLTAN

He said "pfui".

FELIX

I heard him. I have ears.

FRITZ

I wished to be present so I could add my appeal to theirs. I offered to contribute, but they said no.

WOLFE

Gentlemen. I said "pfui" not in disgust but astonishment. I am solely to blame for this mess, and you offer to pay me to clean it up. Preposterous. You should know that I have already bestirred myself. Archie?

ARCHIE

Yes, sir. At least you have bestirred me.

WOLFE

Your coming is opportune. Before lunch I concluded that the only way to manage the affair is to provoke the wretch into betraying herself. I have conceived a plan for which I need your cooperation, Zoltan. Will you give it? I appeal to you.

ZOLTAN

But yes! But how?

CONTINUED

40 CONTINUED: (2)

40

WOLFE

The plan requires that you telephone five of those women this afternoon. You will begin with Helen Iacono and ask her to meet you at Rusterman's. You will say that you saw her return for a second plate, but that --

ZOLTAN

But I didn't. I told --

FELIX

*Tais-tois!*

WOLFE

-- because you...desire her, you do not wish to go to the police. The only requisite is that she must be convinced that if she refuses to meet you, you will go at once to the police.

ZOLTAN

Then if she agrees, she is guilty?

WOLFE

No. An innocent one may agree for several reasons, depending on her temper. Let us rehearse.

{A&E: END ACT THREE}

AND WE SMASH CUT TO:

41 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE/KITCHEN - LATER

41

Zoltan is on the phone at Archie's desk. Archie is listening in the KITCHEN.

ZOLTAN

(into phone:)

--I have stayed silent until now because I couldn't believe anyone as beautiful and charming as you could be guilty of such a crime.

ARCHIE

How can you be so cruel?

CONTINUED

41 CONTINUED:

41

ZOLTAN

But now that the notoriety is hurting the restaurant, I have to reveal what I saw. Of course, if we were to become friends, that would change everything.

ARCHIE

Oh, Zoltan.

We PULL BACK to REVEAL Wolfe on the extension at his desk. He hangs up.

WOLFE

Exemplary.

ZOLTAN

Is that good?

Archie entering from the kitchen, chimes in.

ARCHIE

Good? I've never rated above satisfactory. Are you ready for a real woman on the line?

Zoltan hesitates.

ZOLTAN

Yes. I am ready to face them.

And on Archie, pivoting on his heels to return to the kitchen, we DISSOLVE TO:

42 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - LATER

42

As Zoltan speaks nervously into the phone. Archie listens at Wolfe's desk and takes notes.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Wolfe went up to the plant rooms and Zoltan began by calling Helen while I listened in on the extension.

ZOLTAN

(into phone:)

--of course, if we were to become friends, that would change everything. I could never betray an intimate --

(then:)

She hung up.

CONTINUED



42 CONTINUED:

42

Archie scratches a name off a list.

ARCHIE

Next up -- Lucy Morgan.

And as a flustered Zoltan starts to dial...In a series of wipes we see Zoltan importune the women.

ARCHIE(V.O.)

We offered the girls different appointment times, just in case one of the innocent ones decided to meet Zoltan. We also told Cramer about the scheme, which was a good thing, because when Helen Iacono hung up on us, she immediately called the district attorney.

WIPE TO:

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Lucy Morgan coaxed him along, but it was hard to tell why...

ZOLTAN

But I did see you. It breaks my heart because I cannot pretend any longer it didn't happen...

LUCY (V.O.)

Isn't there anything I can do?

ZOLTAN

My feelings for you are so great that I...

LUCY (V.O.)

Keep talking, handsome.

Zoltan smiles. Archie shakes his head at him.

WIPE TO:

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Nora Jaret was equally charming.

ZOLTAN

I saw you take the second plate...

CONTINUED

42 CONTINUED: (2)

42

NORA (V.O.)

You are a liar and four flushing  
ham handed swine who can't think  
about a girl without undressing  
her in his mind.

ZOLTAN

No, I....

NORA (V.O.)

I know why you had me taste  
that sauce, because you wanted  
to get me to go to the last  
ditch!

She hangs up.

ZOLTAN

She did not say she wouldn't  
come.

WIPE TO:

Zoltan is cooing into the phone.

ZOLTAN

My petit fleur, my sweet redhead,  
I watched you all evening. I  
know you had good reason to  
come back for the second plate.  
If you could just explain it to  
me...

PEGGY (O.S.)

All right, all right. I'll be  
there. 10:30.

She hangs up. Zoltan and Archie look at each other. That's  
one.

WIPE TO:

Zoltan is on the phone with Carol Annis.

ZOLTAN

I do not want money, I will not  
betray you for mere dollars. I  
only want you to be with me.  
As a man is with woman. I have  
dreamed of you since that night.  
Always sweet, always sad.

CAROL (V.O.)

Where can I meet you?

CONTINUED

42 CONTINUED: (3) 42

Zoltan and Archie exchange looks. That's two.

43 INT. RUSTERMAN'S RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - NIGHT 43

Archie sits with Cramer at a small table in the corner. There's a metal case between them, with cords extending to the earphones both men wear, and down into the wall. Wolfe, Stebbins, Fritz and Felix are also there. Cramer glances at the clock on the wall. It's nearly eleven.

CRAMER

Peggy Choate isn't coming.

ARCHIE

We have to hang on. You never can tell with a redhead.

Cramer glares at him, then draws a line in his notebook. Archie slides the book away from him and glances at it. A list of names and times: Helen Iacono 9:30 pm. Peggy Choate 10:15 pm. Carol Annis 11:00 pm. Lucy Morgan 11:45 pm. Nora Jaret 12:30 am. Helen and Peggy have been crossed out. Archie slides the notebook back to Cramer.

ARCHIE

If I had to write it down, I would have made do with one "pm," but policemen are trained to do things right.

CRAMER

Can it.

WOLFE

Preposterous!

CRAMER

Who? Me or Goodwin?

Archie looks over to see Wolfe standing over a cutting board, staring down angrily. Fritz and Felix hover anxiously.

WOLFE

They have the temerity to sell this horse fodder as *watercress*?

FELIX

Why is it so bitter.

FRITZ

It was harvested after the flower buds appeared. See they are pinched off - here and here.

(more)

CONTINUED

43 CONTINUED:

43

FRITZ (Cont'd)

If you wait, the leaves become  
too rank to be edible.

FELIX

The supplier should be banned.

WOLFE

He should be horsewhipped.

CLOCK WIPE TO:

44 INT. RUSTERMAN'S RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - LATER 44

Now the clock reads 10:58.

ARCHIE

Shall I do a countdown?

STEBBINS

You'd clown in the hot seat.

That's when a SOUND comes from the EARPHONES. Wolfe sees Archie and Cramer react.

CRAMER

She's here.

INTERCUT WITH:

45 INT. RUSTERMAN'S RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT 45

Carol Annis enters the restaurant. Zoltan stands up and she walks over to his table. She's wearing a veil.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

So it was Carol Annis with the corn silk hair. But there was still no salt on her tail yet. She could claim she thought she was being framed and came to get goods on Zoltan. It was up to him to get the goods on her.

ZOLTAN

Good evening.

She sits, ignoring the LARGE FLOWER ARRANGEMENT on the table.

ZOLTAN

Will you have a drink?

CAROL

I don't want anything.

ZOLTAN

It is more friendly if we eat. The spaghetti with anchovy sauce is excellent. I had some.

CAROL

You've already eaten?

Archie bites his lip, waiting to see if Zoltan can recover.

CONTINUED

45 CONTINUED:

45

ZOLTAN  
But I only taste. Come. Eat.

CAROL  
All right.

Zoltan snaps his fingers and a WAITER scurries over.

ZOLTAN  
Hans, two spaghettis anchovy  
for us.

45A INT. RUSTERMAN'S RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

45A

The waiter rushes into the kitchen, where Felix places two orders of SPAGHETTI on a tray, then adds a dish of FRESHLY-GRATED PARMESAN.

CRAMER  
How is he going to trap her  
into admitting she's a killer?

ARCHIE  
He'll find a way.

Cramer is skeptical, to say the least.

CRAMER  
He's a cook. He's not you,  
Goodwin.

Hans heads back to the dining room, but before he reaches the door, Wolfe grabs the Parmesan off the tray. Felix shrugs and motions to the waiter to go.

45B INT. RUSTERMAN'S RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

45B

ZOLTAN  
You are more lovely with a veil,  
but the veil is good too. It  
makes me want to see behind it.  
Of course, I...

CAROL  
You have seen behind it, Mr.  
Mahany.

ZOLTAN  
Ah. You know my name.

CAROL  
It was in the paper.

CONTINUED

45B CONTINUED:

45B

ZOLTAN

I am not sorry that you know it. I want you to know my name, but it will be nicer if you call me Zoltan.

CAROL

I might some day. It will depend. I certainly won't call you Zoltan if you go on thinking what you said on the phone.

The waiter delivers the spaghettis. They fall dumb. Then when he's gone

CAROL (Cont'd)

You're mistaken, Mr. Mahany. You didn't see me go back for another plate, because I didn't. I can't believe you would tell a vicious lie about me like that, so I just think you're mistaken.

ZOLTAN

I am not mistaken, my dear. That is useless, I know. How could I be mistaken, when the first moment I saw you I felt, but I will not try to tell you how I felt. If any of the others had come and taken another plate, I would have stopped her, but before you I was dumb.

CAROL

I see. So you're sure.

ZOLTAN

I am, my dear. Very sure.

CAROL

But you haven't told the police? Or Nero Wolfe or Archie Goodwin?

ZOLTAN

I have told no one. How could I? It's terrible for me to say you killed a man. If you weren't wearing that veil, I would look into your beautiful eyes and I know I would see suffering and sorrow.

45C INT. RUSTERMAN'S RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

45C

CRAMER

He's overdoing it.

ARCHIE

He's perfect. You ought to  
take notes.

45D INT. RUSTERMAN'S RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

45D

Carol doesn't even look up as the waiter puts the food on  
the table.

CAROL

That's why I'm wearing the veil,  
Mr. Zoltan, because I know it's  
in my eyes.

ZOLTAN

He made you suffer.

CAROL

He ruined my life.

He covers her hands with his.

ZOLTAN

No, my dear, your life is not  
ruined. No matter what he did.

CAROL

(withdrawing her hands)  
I didn't think I'd ever let a  
man touch me again. But the  
way you...I'm glad you know I  
killed him because it will be  
better now that somebody knows.  
I had to kill him, *had to*, or I  
would have had to kill myself.

Archie nods. They've got her. But:

ZOLTAN

Wait! Don't eat that! The  
cheese, where is the...

(then:)

Forgive me. The spaghetti with  
anchovy sauce is not served  
without cheese. This is an  
outrage. Unforgiveable. Wait.  
When I return, we can talk about  
our future.

CONTINUED



45D CONTINUED:

45D

Zoltan gets up and goes into the kitchen. Carol looks around to make sure no one's watching, then slips a CONE OF PAPER out of her dress and sprinkles the contents on Zoltan's plate. A hand reaches out and stops her.

CRAMER

I'll take that.

Carol looks up to find Zoltan has returned... with Wolfe, Archie, Cramer, Fritz, Felix and Stebbins in tow. Cramer takes the paper spill out of her hand. Wolfe takes the stage.

CAROL

You tricked me.

WOLFE

And you injured and humiliated Fritz Brenner, one of my most valued friends.

CAROL

You lie.

WOLFE

And I wished him to witness your humiliation, contrived by me, in my presence.

CRAMER

That's enough of that.

WOLFE

I admit the puerility of the reason.

CAROL

Then you're no better than Pyle.

WOLFE

You may have been intolerably provoked by Mr. Pyle, but not by Zoltan. He presented himself not as a nemesis or a leech, but as a bewitched and befuddled champion. He offered you his homage and your counter offer was death.

CAROL

You lie. And he lied. He said he saw me, but he didn't. He couldn't. He threatened me.

CONTINUED

45D CONTINUED: (2)

45D

WOLFE

Then you haven't been told.  
(he reveals the microphone  
in the flowers)  
Your conversation was overheard.

CAROL

You lie.

WOLFE

This isn't the trap. It has  
already been sprung and you are  
caught in it. My rancor is  
appeased. Of course, I would  
prefer...

CRAMER

That's enough. I didn't agree  
to let you preach at her all  
night. Bring her along,  
Sergeant.

They close on Carol.

FRITZ

May I say something.

They look at him. Cramer nods.

FRITZ

Mr. Wolfe said you injured me,  
and that is true. It is also  
true I wanted him to find you.  
I can't speak for Felix and you  
tried to kill Zoltan and I can't  
speak for him, but I can speak  
for myself. I forgive you.

CAROL

You lie.

So much for pathos. Stebbins leads her out. Wolfe and Archie  
share a look and then follow.

46 INT. BROWNSTONE - ENTRY HALL - NIGHT

46

The boys return home. They silently remove their outerwear.  
Fritz heads for the kitchen. Wolfe looks after him and  
follows.

47 INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

47

Fritz stares at his kitchen. Wolfe comes into the kitchen.  
He goes to the cupboard and gets out a glass.

CONTINUED

47 CONTINUED:

47

He gets out a napkin. Fritz stirs. What is going on? Wolfe picks a bottle of red wine, which has a cork already pulled perched on the top. He takes the wine and pours a glass. He sets it down in front of Fritz with grace. Fritz starts to get up. On Wolfe's glare he sits down. He goes to get himself some beer while Fritz blinks at his wine. Wolfe comes and sits.

WOLFE

The sturgeon you bought yesterday  
is good. I have a taste for it  
Fume a la Muscovite.

(Fritz does not reply)

But I am tired of bay leaf.

(Fritz does not react)

What would you say to juniper  
berries.

FRITZ

In sturgeon?

WOLFE

Five. No six.

FRITZ

You are mad.

WOLFE

Too sweet?

FRITZ

We could just pour maple syrup  
all over it.

WOLFE

There is no way to balance the  
sweetness.

FRITZ

Let me think.

Wolfe pours his beer. Fritz drinks his wine. They continue  
discussing as we....

FADE OUT

{A&amp;E: END HOUR}

48 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

48

Archie is doing the book-keeping. Wolfe enters.

WOLFE

Not yet?

ARCHIE

No. Sorry.

Wolfe paces anxiously, staring up at the clock, then looking away, scowling.

WOLFE

Time?

ARCHIE

You just glared at the clock.

WOLFE

What is the time?

Archie sighs, glances at his watch.

ARCHIE

Six twenty-nine.

WOLFE

One minute.

He resumes his pacing. The clock lets out a small CHIME, indicating it's half past the hour.

ARCHIE

Of course, I could be a couple seconds slow.

Wolfe stops pacing. He storms from the room.

49 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

49

Fritz prepares the rest of dinner.

WOLFE

It's late. Too late. It will be five hours picked when we cook it.

FRITZ

Mais, il y a rien a faire.

Wolfe waves him away, his despair beyond words. Fritz proffers two EGGPLANTS.

CONTINUED

IN BAD TASTE

12-6-01

PINK

66A.

49 CONTINUED:

49

FRITZ  
I will stuff them.

CONTINUED

49 CONTINUED: (2) 49

Wolfe gazes at him dolefully.

50 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT 50

Wolfe guides a forkful of stuffed eggplant to his lips. It is, of course, good. It is not the same.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Normally Nero Wolfe comes the closest to being human at dinner. The conversation can be anything from women's shoes to the importance of the new moon in Babylonian astrology. But tonight there was only silence. The summer corn had not come.

Fritz sighs and leaves the room.

51 INT. OFFICE - NIGHT 51

Fritz brings coffee. Archie sits at his desk. Wolfe twirls the globe. The DOORBELL RINGS. Archie gets up. Wolfe growls.

WOLFE

Send it back.

52 INT. BROWNSTONE - ENTRY HALL - NIGHT 52

Archie opens the door and is surprised to see Inspector Cramer carrying a carton. It's clearly marked: NERO WOLFE in blue pencil and is full of corn.

ARCHIE

I'm sorry. We take deliveries in the rear.

Cramer tramps past him, down the hall to the office.

53 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - NIGHT 53

Cramer drops the box on Wolfe's desk.

CRAMER

If you were going to have this for dinner, I guess it's too late.

WOLFE

Where did you get it?

53 CONTINUED:

53

CRAMER

Outside the service entrance at Rusterman's restaurant. Inside we found the body of a dead man.

54 INT. STAIRS DELIVERY ENTRANCE (RUSTERMANS) - DAY (FLASHBACK) 54

A DEAD BODY lies on the stairs, an IRON PIPE next to the victim's head. Corn is everywhere.

CRAMER (V.O.)

Kenneth Faber, 28-years-old. His driver's license and eighty-some dollars in cash were still in his wallet. He had been hit in the back of the head with a piece of iron pipe.

A POLICE PHOTOGRAPHER FLASHES the body, then turns to the splattered carton of CORN.

CRAMER (V.O.)

The station wagon he had come in was still parked outside and in the station wagon were nine cartons of corn, including yours.

55 INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

55

Cramer takes out a knife, and cuts the cord, opens the flap, takes out an ear of corn, and holds it up.

CRAMER

He'd been delivering corn at the restaurant the past five weeks and then coming here with yours, right?

WOLFE

I don't know.

CRAMER

The hell you don't. Don't start with me, Wolfe...

Cramer drops the ear of corn on the desk. Wolfe reaches for it.

ARCHIE

(cutting in:)

Hold it, stay in the buggy.

(more)

CONTINUED

55 CONTINUED:

55

ARCHIE (Cont'd)

As you know, Mr. Wolfe is up in the plant rooms from four to six every day except Sunday. The corn usually comes before six, and either Fritz or I receive it; so Mr. Wolfe doesn't know Kenneth Faber, but I do.

Wolfe feels the ear, grips it from the middle, and then starts shucking it. Wolfe frowns at it.

WOLFE

I thought so.

Wolfe puts it down, reaches for the carton.

WOLFE

You will help, Archie.

WIPE TO:

56 INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

56

There are now THREE PILES of corn on the table in the kitchen. Two ears are too young, six are too old, and eight are just right. Fritz is appalled. Wolfe shakes his head. Cramer is about to blow.

WOLFE

This is preposterous.

CRAMER

Stop stalling.

WOLFE

No. Shall I expound it?

CRAMER

If you can.

WOLFE

Since you have questioned men at the restaurant, you know that the corn comes from a man named Duncan McLeod, who grows it on a farm north of here. He has been supplying it for four years, and he knows precisely what I require. It must be nearly mature--

FRITZ

But not quite.

CONTINUED



56 CONTINUED:

56

WOLFE

And it must be picked not more than three hours before it reaches me. Do you eat sweet corn?

CRAMER

Yes. Stop stalling.

WOLFE

No. Who cooks it?

CRAMER

My wife. I haven't got a Fritz.

WOLFE

Does she cook it in water?

CRAMER

Is yours cooked in beer?

WOLFE

Millions of American women, and some men, commit that outrage every summer day. They are turning a superb treat into mere provender.

CRAMER

Is that so.

WOLFE

Shucked and boiled in water, sweet corn is edible and nutritious; roasted in the husk in the hottest possible oven for forty minutes, shucked at the table, and buttered and salted, nothing else, it is ambrosia. No chef's ingenuity and imagination ever created a finer dish. American women should themselves be boiled in water--

CRAMER

Maybe you have all night, Wolfe but...

WOLFE

My point is that Mr. McLeod knows what I require and he knows how to choose it without opening the husk.

(more)

CONTINUED

56 CONTINUED: (2)

56

WOLFE (Cont'd)

He is supposed to be equally meticulous with the supply for the restaurant, but I doubt if he is.

(to Fritz)

Dispose of this garbage.

He leaves.

CRAMER

Balls.

Cramer and Archie follows Wolfe out. Fritz looks at the pile of good corn, debating.

57 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

57

Cramer is about to go into the office and then turns to Archie. Wolfe is sitting at his desk and can see them.

CRAMER

Wait a minute, Goodwin. Where were you at 5:15 this afternoon?

ARCHIE

Ball game with Saul Panzer.

CRAMER

What happened in the ninth inning?

(waves him off:)

To hell with it. You'd know all right, you'd see to that. And you're the only one Panzer would lie for.

58 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

58

Cramer plops down in the red leather chair.

ARCHIE

Not that I'm interested, but why do you care?

CRAMER

There was a notebook in Faber's pocket. One page had the names of four men written in pencil. Max Maslow, Peter Jay, Carl Heydt and Archie Goodwin. The first three names has checkmarks in front of them. The last one, Archie Goodwin, did not.

(more)

CONTINUED

58 CONTINUED:

58

CRAMER (Cont'd)

Will that do?

ARCHIE

Heydt designs clothes for women.  
I don't know Maslow or Jay.

CRAMER

How long have you been intimate  
with the farmer's daughter -  
Susan McLeod?

Archie is now thoroughly confused.

ARCHIE

There are several definitions  
for intimate. Which one?

CRAMER

You know damn well which one.

ARCHIE

If you mean the worst, or the  
very best, depending on how you  
look at it, nothing doing.  
She's a model and has points.  
But she's a lousy dancer.

CRAMER

When did you find out that  
Kenneth Faber had shoved you  
out and taken Sue over?

ARCHIE

Nuts.

(turns to Wolfe:)

Your honor, I object to the  
question on the grounds that it  
is insulting, impertinent and  
digusticulous. It assumes not  
only that I am shovable, but  
also that I can be shoved out  
of a place I have never been.

WOLFE

Objection sustained. You will  
re-phrase the question, Mr.  
Cramer.

CRAMER

The hell I will. You got her  
her first modeling job. You  
helped her find an apartment  
not six blocks from here.

(more)

CONTINUED

58 CONTINUED: (2)

58

CRAMER (Cont'd)

What passed between you and Faber when he was here a week ago today?

ARCHIE

The corn. It passed from him to me.

CRAMER

Okay. You got one minute to get a toothbrush.

Cramer gets up. So does Archie.

ARCHIE

Now listen, I can throw sliders in a pinch and do, but this is no pinch. It's close to bedtime.

CRAMER

The minute's up.

ARCHIE

No. You have to make it good.

CRAMER

Fine. You're under arrest as a material witness. Move!

Cramer leads him out to:

59 INT. BROWNSTONE - ENTRY HALL - NIGHT

59

Cramer lets Archie get his jacket. Wolfe follows them into the hall, still carrying the corn.

ARCHIE

If you want me back tomorrow, you might give Mr. Parker a ring.

WOLFE

I shall. Mr. Cramer. Knowing your considerable talents as I do, I am sometimes dumbfounded by your fatuity. You were so bent on baiting Mr. Goodwin that you completely ignored the point I was at pains to make.

Wolfe waves the ear of corn at him.

CONTINUED

59 CONTINUED:

59

WOLFE

Who picked the corn?

CRAMER

That's your point. Mine is who  
killed Kenneth Faber. Move,  
Goodwin.

And out the door they go.

WOLFE

Pfui!

And on Wolfe's frustration, we:

60 INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

60

Archie stares down at a thoroughly unappetizing plate of  
bacon and eggs -- essentially congealed grease in a variety  
of decorator colors. PURLEY STEBBINS grins at him, gestures  
for him to eat.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Cramer took me to his place,  
where we made a night of it.

STEBBINS

Whatsa matter, Goodwin? Not  
gourmet enough for you?

ARCHIE

Edible would have been enough.

Archie looks up as NATHANIEL PARKER comes in.

STEBBINS

Looks like you're a free man.

He leaves. Parker closes the door.

PARKER

Archie. Bail is set at twenty  
thousand dollars.

ARCHIE

Quite a compliment.

PARKER

They argued for 50. They  
actually think you may have  
killed that man. A crime of  
passion inspired by that woman.

CONTINUED

60 CONTINUED:

60

ARCHIE

Well, from what I gathered from their questions, Susan made a statement. But they wouldn't let me see it.

PARKER

I told the judge that that amount is justified only if they had enough evidence to charge you with murder. He agreed with me - and then let it stand.

ARCHIE

But they don't. They can't.

PARKER

As your counsel, I must advise you: prepared to be charged at any moment.

Parker opens the door and leads Archie into:

61 INT. POLICE STATION - BULLPEN - DAY

61

PARKER

And one more thing. Mr. Wolfe told me to send the bill to you, not him.

ARCHIE

The bond for 20 thousand is not peanuts, but I can't expect to pass the buck.

PARKER

He said this is your affair, not his. He is not concerned.

ARCHIE

He's never even seen Faber or Susan.

That's when Archie spots DUNCAN MACLEOD, a hick dressed for town, coming down the hall.

ARCHIE

Good morning, Mr. McLeod.

MCLEOD

It's not a good morning, it's a bad one, a day lost and no one to leave to see to things. I haven't done the milking.

CONTINUED

61 CONTINUED:

61

And he's goes down the hall.

ARCHIE

Mr. Wolfe wants to know who  
picked the corn.

No answer.

{A&E: END ACT ONE}

62 INT. BROWNSTONE - ENTRY HALL - DAY

62

Archie opens the door, but the chain bolt is on. Archie  
pushes the buzzer. Fritz opens the door for him.

FRITZ

Archie, you look terrible.

Archie sits.

ARCHIE

Excuse my manners, Fritz. I've  
had a night.

(Fritz hovers)

Is something stirring?

FRITZ

A woman to see you. Miss Susan  
McLeod. She's in the office.

ARCHIE

Has he talked with her?

FRITZ

No. He would not.

Archie heads for the kitchen.

63 INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - DAY

63

Wolfe is at the center table with a glass of beer in his  
hand, as Archie enters.

WOLFE

Have you eaten?

Archie gets a glass from the cupboard, goes to the  
refrigerator, gets some milk, and takes a sip as:

CONTINUED

63 CONTINUED:

63

ARCHIE

If you could see the bacon and eggs they brought in for me and I paid two bucks for, let alone taste it, you'd never be the same. They think I killed Faber. For your information, I didn't.

WOLFE

Have you slept?

ARCHIE

No.

(pouring himself more milk)  
I understand I have a caller. May I take her to the front room? I'm not intimate enough with her to take her up to my room.

WOLFE

Confound it.

ARCHIE

As you told Parker, this is my affair.

WOLFE

How much of what you told Mr. Cramer is flummery?

ARCHIE

None. All straight. But he's on me and so is the DA and I've got to find out why.

WOLFE

You will see Miss McLeod in the office.

ARCHIE

The front room will do. It may be an hour. Two hours. You would be away from your chair.

WOLFE

You may need the telephone. The office.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

If I hadn't been pooped I would have given that offer a little attention.

CONTINUED



63 CONTINUED: (2)

63

Archie takes another sip and we WIPE TO:

64 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

64

As Archie enters, still holding his half-empty glass of milk, Susan McLeod goes to him, tilting her head up to him, gripping his arms. Archie has no choice but to kiss her - a long kiss.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

If it hadn't been for the milk  
I would have used my arms for  
one of their basic functions.  
It wouldn't have been polite  
for me to quit, so I left it to  
her.

She steps back.

SUSAN

(sits down:)

Archie, I don't know what you're  
going to do to me.

Archie crosses to his desk, sips his milk, and sits down.

ARCHIE

Neither do I.

SUSAN

It just came out. You remember  
you explained it for me one  
night about my just saying things  
and not having a checking  
station.

ARCHIE

I said with ordinary people,  
when words start on their way  
out they have to go through a  
checking station for an okay.  
You seem to have a loose  
connection, as it often gets  
bypassed.

SUSAN

I'm just plain dumb. It just  
came out about my going to meet  
you there yesterday.

ARCHIE

Meet me where?

64 CONTINUED:

64

SUSAN  
At the delivery entrance at  
Rusterman's.

65 INT. STAIRS DELIVERY ENTRANCE (RUSTERMAN'S)- DAY (FLASHBACK) 65

Susan, checking her watch, enters the stairwell, out of breath  
from running.

SUSAN (V.O.)  
I said I was going to meet you  
there at five o'clock and we  
were going to have a talk with  
Kenny. But I was late, I didn't  
get there until a quarter past  
five, and you weren't there, so  
I left.

Susan doesn't leave. She stops cold, staring at something  
on the stairs.

66 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

66

ARCHIE  
And you said that to...?

SUSAN  
Several people.

ARCHIE  
Detectives, cops...

SUSAN  
Uhuh. And it was in the  
statement they had me sign.

ARCHIE  
It's just possible that you are  
dumb. Didn't you realize they  
would come to me?

SUSAN  
Well, of course. And you would  
deny it, and you could probably  
prove you were some where else,  
so it wouldn't matter.

ARCHIE  
Okay, you're not dumb. But if  
got there at a quarter past  
five, you *did* see Kenny. Didn't  
you?

In a whisper.

CONTINUED

66 CONTINUED:

66

SUSAN

Yes.

67 INT. STAIRS DELIVERY ENTRANCE (RUSTERMAN'S)- DAY (FLASHBACK) 67

Susan steps forward and sees Faber's dead body on the stairs.

SUSAN (V.O.)

I ran away. I didn't stop to think until I was several blocks away how dumb *that* was.

68 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

68

ARCHIE

Why was it dumb?

SUSAN

I couldn't say I hadn't been there, because Felix and the doorman saw me arrive.

ARCHIE

What was it we wanted to talk to him about?

SUSAN

We were going to talk to him about what he told you, that I thought I was pregnant and he was responsible.

Archie goggles at her.

ARCHIE

He told *me* that? When?

SUSAN

You know when. Last Tuesday when he brought the corn.

ARCHIE

Ken Faber told you that he had told me that you thought you were pregnant and he was responsible.

SUSAN

He told me he told Carl, too -- you know, Carl Heydt. And Peter Jay and Max Maslow, too. That was when I told him I would like to kill him.

CONTINUED

68 CONTINUED:

68

ARCHIE

And that's what you told the cops we wanted to talk to him about?

SUSAN

Yes.

ARCHIE

For a frame, it's close to perfect, but I'm willing to doubt if you meant it.

SUSAN

Don't you see? It's my word against yours. They told me last night you denied that we arranged to meet there.

ARCHIE

Because we didn't.

SUSAN

I thought you might change that. The way it is now, they think either I'm lying or you're lying.

ARCHIE

I haven't got an alibi. Not one that works.

SUSAN

But if you tell them that you agreed to meet me but changed your mind because...

ARCHIE

Shut up!

She gawks at him, then all of a sudden she breaks into tears, dropping her head and covering her face with her hands. Archie gets up, goes over to Wolfe's desk, gets the vase of orchids, removes the flowers, and goes back to her... gently lifts her head up by the chin, and... DUMPS THE WATER OVER HER HEAD. And on her SQUEAL, we

WIPE TO:

69 INT. BROWNSTONE - BATHROOM/DINING ROOM - LATER

69

Susan is drying her face with a towel. Archie watches her.

SUSAN

You didn't have to do that.

CONTINUED

69 CONTINUED:

69

ARCHIE

The hell I didn't. Whether you meant to or not, I am out on a very rickety limb.

SUSAN

But Archie, you--

ARCHIE

Did you kill Ken?

SUSAN

Archie. No!

ARCHIE

Then I either wriggle off by selling the cops on you, which is not my style, or I do a job that is my style. First I see Mr. Wolfe and tell him I'm taking a leave of absence, I hope a short one, and then you start telling me...

Wolfe comes into the dining room.

WOLFE

(to Archie:)

"A job that is your style?"

ARCHIE

I should have known.

(to Susan)

He was at the peephole.

Wolfe's been on his feet too long and sits on the closest chair.

WOLFE

Miss McLeod, I eavesdropped on your conversation in the office, without Mr. Goodwin's knowledge. Do you wish to complain?

SUSAN

Why?

WOLFE

Why did I listen?

WOLFE (Cont'd)

To learn how much of a pickle Mr Goodwin was in. And I learned.

(more)

CONTINUED

69 CONTINUED: (2)

69

WOLFE (Cont'd)

I have intruded because the situation is intolerable. You are either a poisonous cockatrice or a witling and you have brought Mr. Goodwin to a desperate pass. That is--

ARCHIE

(breaking in:)

You said it's my affair.

WOLFE

(ignoring him:)

It was your affair until it threatened me.

(to Susan)

I can't function properly, let alone comfortably, without Archie Goodwin. I depend on him and thanks to you, he is in grave jeopardy.

(to Archie:)

Archie. This will now be our joint affair. By your leave.

ARCHIE

Retroactive? Parker and my bail?

WOLFE

Very well. Intimate or not, you have known Miss McLeod for three years. Did she kill that man?

ARCHIE

Yes and no.

WOLFE

That doesn't help.

ARCHIE

Yes. Chiefly because she came here to ask me to change my story and back hers up.

SUSAN

I didn't kill him.

ARCHIE

The 'no,' is less direct.  
(more)

CONTINUED

69 CONTINUED: (3)

69

ARCHIE (Cont'd)

When a man gets a girl pregnant, her normal reaction is to make him marry her, not kill him. What she wants most is a father for the baby, and a dead one is no good.

SUSAN

That's silly. I'm not pregnant. There's only one way a girl can get pregnant and it couldn't have been that with me because it's never happened.

Wolfe looks at Archie.

WOLFE

Archie?

ARCHIE

Uh. I believe her.

WOLFE

Let us return to the office.

As they go down the hall...

ARCHIE (V.O.)

It's possible every man alive has a feeling down below that an unmarried girl who knows she can't be pregnant is less likely to commit murder than one who can't be sure.

WIPE TO:

70 OMITTED

70

71 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - MONTAGE

71

ARCHIE (V.O.)

But that didn't stop Wolfe from questioning her as if she was.

Various shots, alternating between: Archie filling page after page of his notebook... Wolfe pouring, and finishing, several glasses of beer...Susan talking... and talking... and talking.

71 CONTINUED:

71

ARCHIE (V.O.)

On the other hand, it was hard to believe that a girl with so much born come-on wasn't using it. She'd dated 30 men since we last went dancing and 10 had asked her to marry them.

SUSAN

Well, I had narrowed it down to Maslow and Heydt when I met Ken Faber at a party at Peter Jay's. Kenny was really fast and so determined that I told him I might marry him when I gave up modeling provided he could support a family.

72 INT. BARN (FLASHBACK) - DAY

72

Susan comes into the barn, looking for a bridle. Ken is waiting for her and surprises her.

SUSAN (V.O.)

He asked me to get him a job on my father's farm. I spend every weekend in the summer out there and on the first weekend it was easy to see he thought things would be different than in town.

Faber puts his hands on Susan. All over Susan. She shoves Faber away.

73 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

73

SUSAN

He accused me of letting other men do to me what I wouldn't let him do. Then he told me he told you and Carl and Peter and Jay that I was pregnant by him and that if I denied it, no one would believe me, and the only thing to do was get married right away.

WOLFE

(to Susan:)

You know these men quite well.

(more)

CONTINUED



73 CONTINUED:

73

WOLFE (Cont'd)

If one of them, enraged beyond endurance by Mr. Faber's conduct, went there and killed him, which one?

SUSAN

They didn't.

WOLFE

Not 'they,' one of them. Which?

SUSAN

None of them.

Wolfe wriggles a finger at her.

WOLFE

That's twaddle, Miss McLeod. You may be shocked that someone close to you committed murder, but you may not reject it. I must see those three men. Will you get them here this evening?

SUSAN

No. I won't.

WOLFE

Miss McLeod, I do not accuse them but my only possible path to the murderer is the motive and one of those men - or possibly your father - may start me on it.

SUSAN

You can't...you said identify him. How can you?

WOLFE

Perhaps I can't. But I must try. By your foolish subterfuge, there is only one way to satisfy the police that neither you nor Mr. Goodwin killed that man: demonstrate that someone else did.

SUSAN

Oh. Oh. All right.

Archie takes Susan to the door of the office.

CONTINUED

73 CONTINUED: (2)

73

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Susan went home and Wolfe went to his orchids. I went to eat. I tried to tell my brain to lay off until it caught up, but it kept buzzing around trying to find a place to land.

WIPE TO:

74 INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - DAY

74

Archie is reading the paper and finishing a breakfast of corn fritters.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

It finally shut up when I started in on Fritz's corn fritters, made from the unacceptable ears of corn. My next big plan was bed, but fate had other plans.

We hear the DOORBELL RING, Archie rises and we CUT TO:

75 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

75

Wolfe glares up as Archie sticks his head in the door.

ARCHIE

Duncan McLeod.

Wolfe GROWLS. Archie steps aside to let in McLeod, who marches in to the room.

WOLFE

Good afternoon, sir.

Wolfe motions to the red leather chair.

MCLEOD

No need to sit. I've come to apologize. I didn't pick the corn; Kenneth Faber did.

WOLFE

Wasn't that heedless? You know what I require.

MCLEOD

I showed him how and thought he understood.

(more)

CONTINUED

75 CONTINUED:

75

MCLEOD (Cont'd)

A man was coming with a bulldozer to work on a lot I'm clearing, and he could only come that day, and I had to dynamite the stumps before he came.

WOLFE

It was vexacious, Mr. McLeod. Sit.

MCLEOD

No need to sit.  
(to Archie)  
I just want to know what that young man told you about my daughter.

WOLFE

She has told you what he said?  
(he nods)  
She has also told Mr. Goodwin and me. She came here this morning.

Now McLeod sits in the red chair.

MCLEOD

My daughter Susan? Came here? What for?

WOLFE

You have it wrong side up. That tone is for us, not you.

MCLEOD

My daughter...

WOLFE

The young man you permitted to pick my corn has been murdered, and because of false statements made by your daughter to the police.

MCLEOD

My daughter doesn't make false statements.

WOLFE

Anyone lies when the alternative is intolerable. I do not believe she killed that man. Did you?

CONTINUED

75 CONTINUED: (2)

75

MCLEOD

No, but I would have if I had known what he was saying about her. He was a bad man. An evil man.

WOLFE

Until what hour, did you dynamite stumps yesterday?

MCLEOD

Nearly dark. I was late with the milking. I don't resent you thinking I mighta killed Kenny Faber cause I mighta. I'm an old fashioned man; a righteous man.

WOLFE

And a righteous man may wink at murder?

MCLEOD

I didn't say that. I don't wink at murder, but that don't mean I have to want whoever killed Faber to suffer for it, do I?

WOLFE

If you knew who killed him, you would not tell me or the police?

MCLEOD

I would not.

WOLFE

Then good afternoon, sir.

MCLEOD

No. Not until you tell me why my daughter came here!

WOLFE

Confound it, after sending me inedible corn you presume to make demands on me? Go!

MCLEOD

I don't think it's right.

(getting up)

I guess then you won't be wanting more corn from me.

CONTINUED

75 CONTINUED: (3)

75

WOLFE

Why not? From whom else would I acquire it? Mr. Goodwin can't go scouring the countryside with this imbroglio on our hands. I want corn this week. Tomorrow?

MCLEOD

I might. Yes, I guess so. The restaurant, too?

WOLFE

I'll tell them to expect it.

76 INT. BROWNSTONE - ENTRY HALL - DAY

76

Archie ushers McLeod out the door, then goes into:

77 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

77

To find Wolfe leaning back, frowning at the ceiling.

WOLFE

Pfui. Call Felix and tell him to expect a delivery on Friday.

ARCHIE

Yes, sir. Good. The corn is provided for. Everything's jake.

WOLFE

There is good slang and bad slang. That's bad slang. How long will it take you to type a full report of our conversation with Miss McLeod, yours and mine, from the beginning?

ARCHIE

Altogether, say four hours. Do you want it to remember me by?

WOLFE

No. It may be useful.

ARCHIE

Useful how? As your employee I'm supposed to do what I'm told, and I often do, but this is our joint affair.

(more)

CONTINUED

77 CONTINUED:

77

ARCHIE (Cont'd)  
 (on Wolfe's look)  
 You said so, we're trying to  
 save you from the calamity of  
 losing me. Useful how?

WOLFE  
 Confound it. I said it *may* be  
 useful. *If* I decide to use it.  
 Can you suggest something that  
 may be more useful?

ARCHIE  
 Offhand, no.

WOLFE  
 Then *if* choose to you type it,  
 make two carbons.

And as Wolfe returns his gaze to the ceiling:

{A&E: END ACT TWO}

78 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

78

Archie lets the men in and helps them with their coats: CARL  
 HEYDT, PETER JAY and MAX MASLOW.

ARCHIE (V.O.)  
 By five past nine that evening  
 I had finished my typing and  
 the three men whose names had  
 checkmarks in Kenneth Faber's  
 notebook were seated in the  
 office.

79 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

79

Carl, older, medium and round with quick eyes that keep on  
 the move, gets seated in the red chair. Peter, the something  
 big in advertising who looks like he has the regulation ulcer,  
 and Max, with a twisted smile and dangling string tie, take  
 the yellow chairs. Wolfe prepares to speak.

ARCHIE (V.O.)  
 From the looks they were giving  
 each other they were not friends.  
 (out loud)  
 Carl Heydt. Peter Jay. Max  
 Maslow.

The men nod at Wolfe in turn.

CONTINUED

79 CONTINUED:

79

WOLFE

I think you gentlemen would prefer brevity and so would I. Miss McLeod is not our client; we are acting solely in our own interest. But as it stands right now, we are satisfied that she didn't kill Kenneth Faber.

MASLOW

Damn nice of you. So am I.

JAY

Your own interest? What's that?

WOLFE

Because of statements made by Miss McLeod, Mr. Goodwin is under heavy suspicion, and to lift the suspicion, we must find out where it belongs.

JAY

So that's your interest. To get Goodwin out from under. What's ours?

WOLFE

Your names were in Faber's notebook. You are plainly marked by circumstance.

HEYDT

It's no news that we're targets. We've all seen the police.

MASLOW

But Sue as good as told me the only reason she hadn't married Goodwin was that he hadn't asked her. He's the hero type. He started her on the path of glory. Now you say she's set the police on him. I don't believe it. The police are on his because they have a damn good reason.

WOLFE

I must reserve what the police know but I would suggest you eliminate yourselves from consideration.

(more)

CONTINUED

79 CONTINUED: (2)

79

WOLFE (Cont'd)

All of you had an adequate motive: Mr. Faber had either debased or grossly slandered the woman you wanted to marry.

MASLOW

Who fed you that? I admit I want to marry Miss McLeod, and as far as I know Carl Heydt still does, but not my pal Pete. He's the pay-as-you-go type. I couldn't exactly call him a Casanova --

Peter Jay jumps out of his chair, fists raised, glaring down at Maslow.

JAY

Stand up.

MASLOW

Aw shut up, Pete. I was just...

JAY

Stand up or I'll slap you out of the chair.

Archie could stop it if he wanted, but he's curious, and watches as Maslow gets up, sidestepping. Jay has to turn to aim a fist at Maslow's jaw, and Maslow ducks and lands a punch on Jay's kidneys, then another. Jay crumbles, as Archie rushes over to help steer him back to his chair.

WOLFE

Will you have a brandy, Mr. Jay? Whisky? Coffee?

Jay shakes his head.

MASLOW

I hope you didn't misunderstand me. I wasn't suggesting that I think he killed Faber. You all right, Pete?

Jay nods and lets out a belch.

WOLFE

Very well. If you will not help, we can merely shift the suspicion to Miss McLeod.

They start talking at once.

CONTINUED



79 CONTINUED: (3)

79

MASLOW

Amazing. What do you expect us to do - kick and scream?

HEYDT

You said you were satisfied she didn't do it.

JAY

What did he say?

WOLFE

I doubt she'd be convicted; the police are not blockheads.

JAY

What did he say?

WOLFE

You have told me nothing whatever, but I do not believe that you have nothing to tell. Will you talk to me now or later, to the police, when that woman is in custody?

MASLOW

You're bluffing. I call. Come on guys.

He gets up and goes to the door. The others follow. Archie goes to the door and makes sure they go out.

80 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

80

HEYDT

Archie. He doesn't mean it, does he?

ARCHIE

It's not just a question of what he means; it's a question of what I mean. Damn it, I'm short on sleep, and I may soon be short on life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Pleasant dreams.

He ushers Heydt out and bolts the door.

81 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

81

Archie comes in and sits at his desk.

CONTINUED

81 CONTINUED:

81

WOLFE

Did you finish it?

Archie opens a drawer and hands Wolfe a sheaf of pages. He leafs through it.

ARCHIE

12 pages. Two carbons.

WOLFE

Your notebook, please.

Archie gets his notebook and pen ready.

WOLFE

There will be two, one for you and one for me. First mine. Heading in caps, affidavit by Nero Wolfe. I hereby depose that the twelve foregoing pages are a full and accurate etcetera. Add a space for my signature and, below, the conventional formula for notarizing and--

ARCHIE

All right, it wasn't just to keep me off your neck. But I'm her hero now. And heroes mustn't wiggle. Besides, she as good as told Maslow she'd marry me if I asked her and she makes more than you pay me. So before I sign that affidavit....

(Wolfe growls)

I agree. It's a goddamn nuisance. But will you say it is our joint affair to make sure that she doesn't go to trial?

WOLFE

I would not say that I can make sure of anything whatever.

ARCHIE

Correction, then. That you will be concerned that she doesn't go to trial?

Wolfe takes in air through his nose and lets it out through his mouth.

CONTINUED

81 CONTINUED: (2)

81

WOLFE

Very well. I'll be concerned. Will you bring the notary, Miss Pinelli, to my room at five minutes to nine in the morning?

ARCHIE

No. She doesn't get to her office until nine-thirty.

WOLFE

Then bring her at nine-forty to plant rooms.

Archie is stunned. He studies Wolfe.

ARCHIE

You want me to bring her to the plant rooms.

WOLFE

Yes.

ARCHIE

At 9:40.

WOLFE

Archie, you've had no sleep for forty hours. Go to bed. You can type it in the morning.

WIPE TO:

82 INT. BROWNSTONE - PLANT ROOMS - DAY

82

Wolfe and Archie sign the documents. MRS. PINELLI stamps them.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Signing the affidavit didn't commit me to anything. The question was - what then? But it turned out I didn't have to make up my mind, it just happened.

83 INT. BROWNSTONE - ENTRY HALL - DAY

83

Archie opens the door to let Cramer in.

ARCHIE

Good morning.

83 CONTINUED:

83

Cramer comes in and hands Archie a folded paper. Archie unfolds it.

ARCHIE

What an honor. Anyone can be banged by a bull or a dick. It takes me to be served by an inspector twice in one week.

CRAMER

(grabbing it back)

I haven't served you. I just showed it to you.

He marches down the hall into the office.

84 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

84

Archie comes in as Cramer is lowering himself onto the red chair. He slaps the warrant down on the desk.

CRAMER

When I was here Tuesday night, you were dumfounded by my fatuity. All you cared about was who picked your corn. I came myself to see how you feel now. I know what will happen if I serve this - Goodwin will clam up and a crowbar won't pry him open. But he'll talk if you tell him to.

Wolfe pushes his chair back and rises, going straight for the safe.

CRAMER

Where're you going?

Archie reaches the safe before Wolfe can open it. When Wolfe gets there, it's clear that Archie will have to physically stop him from taking the affidavit. They stare at each other. Then

WOLFE

She made the soup herself. You owe her nothing.

Archie considers this and goes back to his desk and sits. Wolfe gets the papers and hands them to Cramer.

WOLFE

I suggest that you look at the affidavits first.

(more)

CONTINUED

84 CONTINUED:

84

WOLFE (Cont'd)  
The last two sheets.

Cramer does, then turns to the rest of the document.

ARCHIE (V.O.)  
Lieutenant Rowcliff or Sergeant  
Purley Stebbins would have kept  
at us for an hour. Cramer didn't  
ask a question, or even look  
up.

WIPE TO:

Cramer sticks the affidavit in his inside breast pocket and  
he picks up the phone on Archie's desk.

CRAMER  
(into phone)  
Purley? Get Susan McLeod. Go  
yourself, take a man along. If  
she balks, wrap her up and carry  
her.

Cramer gives Wolfe and Archie a long straight hard look,  
then grabs his hat off the stand and marches out.

85 INT. STUDIO - FILM STUDIO/MAKE UP AREA - DAY

85

Susan is getting dooded up for a film shoot when TWO COPS  
burst in with Purley Stebbins and take Susan into custody.

86 INT. POLICE STATION - BULLPEN - DAY

86

Susan is processed by Purley Stebbins, arrested as a material  
witness. She is bewildered and unhappy.

87 INT. BROWNSTONE - ENTRY HALL - DAY

87

The DOORBELL RINGS. Archie opens the door. Carl Heydt, Max  
Maslow, and Peter Jay stand in the doorway.

ARCHIE (V.O.)  
Of all the times I have felt  
like putting vinegar in Wolfe's  
beer, I came closest that day.  
After throwing Susan to the  
wolves, he refused to admit her  
admirers to the house.  
(more)

CONTINUED

87 CONTINUED:

87

ARCHIE (V.O.) (Cont'd)  
(out loud)  
Sorry boys, but he's very busy  
and can't be disturbed. Do you  
want to disturb me instead?

MASLOW  
You let us in, we'll handle the  
disturbing.

ARCHIE  
You were damn fools to think he  
was bluffing.

JAY  
Then he did it?

ARCHIE  
We did it. I share the glory.

HEYDT  
I can't believe you'd do a thing  
like this -- to Sue -- when you  
said she didn't --

ARCHIE  
We're handling this affair  
jointly. Of course, if you've  
changed your minds and want to  
help find Faber's killer, I  
could spare a few hours.

MASLOW  
All right, ask your questions.

He opens the door, they troop in.

ARCHIE  
No. I've decided on another  
tack, because not only did Sue  
lie to the police, she lied to  
me. She told the police we'd  
arranged to meet at Rusterman's  
and have it out with Faber. We  
hadn't.

JAY  
So you say.

ARCHIE  
Don't interrupt. She did arrange  
to meet someone at five o'clock  
to have it out with Faber.  
(more)

CONTINUED

87 CONTINUED: (2)

87

ARCHIE (Cont'd)

But she was late and missed him -  
She found the body instead.

JAY

Yeah, yeah, so you say.

ARCHIE

Shut up. She thought the man  
she was going to meet killed  
Faber, and she couldn't name  
him, so she named me.

JAY

So you s...

ARCHIE

Don't say that again.

MASLOW

Look, pal. Shut up. Go soak  
your head. Who's lying - Sue  
or you?

ARCHIE

Fair question. Until noon today,  
the police thought I was. And  
they liked it fine, having me  
on a hook, they hated to see me  
flop off, so what we gave them  
had to be good.

MASLOW

What was it?

JAY

Yeah.

ARCHIE

No, I prefer questions now.  
Like: Who met Sue there? Say  
it was one of you, and of course,  
that is what I'm saying...

JAY

Why you...

ARCHIE

She would ask one of you to  
help, because you're the ones  
with the little check marks in  
his notebook. The question is -  
which one would she pick?

(more)

CONTINUED

87 CONTINUED: (3)

87

ARCHIE (Cont'd)

(Heydt)

What about it, Carl? Was it you?

HEYDT

Archie, I...

ARCHIE

Just a plain answer to a plain question. Which one would it be?

HEYDT

Maslow. He's tough.

ARCHIE

What? Not Jay?

HEYDT

My God, no. She must know that nobody can depend on him for anything.

JAY

Shut up!

Jay jumps up and swings at Heydt. Archie blocks him, and Jay swings at him. Archie grabs his arm, whirls him, and shoves. Jay stumbles, but stays on his feet. Maslow grabs Archie from behind as Pete goes for Heydt again.

MASLOW

Hold it, hold it. Pete.  
He's the persona non grata.  
(gets up)  
Let's give him the bum's rush.  
Care to help, Carl?

HEYDT

No, thanks, but I'll watch.

MASLOW

It'll be simpler if you just relax, Goodwin.

Archie doubles over and whirls, coming up bumping Jay, then slamming the edge of his hand on the side of Jay's neck. Jay crumples, but Maslow grabs Archie's left wrist and is getting his shoulder in for the lock. Archie ducks down, sliding off his shoulder and bending his elbow into Maslow's belly.

CONTINUED



87 CONTINUED: (4)

87

Maslow reaches for Archie's right wrist, but that opens him up and Archie rolls into him, brings his right arm around, and ends with his knee in Maslow's back. Archie unwinds his arm and stands up and hustles all three of them out the door.

ARCHIE

If you want to play games you ought to take lessons.

He closes the door. Wolfe emerges from the office.

WOLFE

It's time for lunch. You'd better wash up.

And he goes in, leaving Archie, who dusts himself off and follows.

{A&E: END ACT THREE}

WIPE TO:

88 INT. BROWNSTONE - DINING ROOM - DAY

88

As Archie enters the dining room, as Wolfe attacks his appetizer.

WOLFE

I hope you had no plans for the car today. I've sent Saul Panzer on an errand.

ARCHIE

Interesting.

WOLFE

Yes. And I gave him \$100.

ARCHIE

Good.

Beat. Wolfe says nothing. Archie says nothing.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

If Wolfe saw fit to keep Saul's errand private, he could eat wormy corn boiled in water before I'd ask him what it was.

Silence. Fritz comes in with the Shrimp Bordelaise.

WOLFE

This shrimp Bordelaise is without onions but has some garlic.

(more)

CONTINUED

88 CONTINUED:

88

WOLFE (Cont'd)

I think an improvement, but  
Fritz and I invite your opinion.

As Fritz serves him:

ARCHIE

I'd be glad to.  
(voice over)  
I was supposed to explode and  
demand to know why Saul was  
send on an errand instead of  
me. Instead, I ate Shrimp  
Bordelaise without onions but  
with garlic and sided with Fritz.

89 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - LATER

89

Archie ostentatiously reads his Gazette - the headline reads  
"SWEET CORN MURDER". The phone rings.

ARCHIE

Nero Wolfe's office.  
(to Wolfe)  
It's Saul.

WOLFE

If you please, Archie.

Archie grits his teeth and hangs up. He cracks his paper.

WOLFE

Yes. Satisfactory. Of course,  
you must accept the money.  
Very well.

He hangs up the phone. He looks at Archie.

WOLFE

Saul will be returning a portion  
of the expense money as he had  
none. I gave him sixty dollars  
for his six hours.

Archie doesn't look up.

ARCHIE

His daily minimum is eighty.

WOLFE

He wouldn't take it. He didn't  
want to take anything since  
this is our personal affair,  
but I insisted.

CONTINUED

89 CONTINUED:

89

ARCHIE  
Our personal affair.

Wolfe glances at the clock. 3:55. He gets up.

ARCHIE (V.O.)  
Wolfe and I come as close to  
trusting each other two men  
can, on matters of joint concern,  
but apparently this was no longer  
one of them. We were waiting,  
and I didn't know what for.

90 INT. BROWNSTONE - PLANT ROOMS - DAY

90

Wolfe works on the orchids. Then he is struck by a thought.  
He brushes it off, goes back to work. But it won't go away.

WOLFE  
What time is it?

91 INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - DAY

91

Fritz is mixing up a creme anglaise when he hears something.  
It is the SOUND of the ELEVATOR. He looks at the clock.

92 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

92

Archie hears the SOUND as well. He looks at the clock.  
5:30. He checks it against his watch. 5:30.

93 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY

93

Both Fritz and Archie emerge into the hall to observe the  
wonderment. The Elevator stops. Wolfe emerges - still in  
his plant apron.

WOLFE  
Has it come?

ARCHIE  
What?

WOLFE  
The corn. Has it come?

ARCHIE  
Not unless Saul brought it.

WOLFE  
A possibility occurred to me.  
It is remote, but it would be--

That's when the doorbell RINGS.

CONTINUED

93 CONTINUED:

93

ARCHIE

Here it is, good timing.

Wolfe gets to the door before Archie and opens it. A SKINNY MAN, DELBERT PALMER, with pants too big for him and wearing a bright green shirt, stands at the door holding the carton.

DELBERT

Nero Wolfe? Got your corn.

WOLFE

Did you pick this?

DELBERT

Hell no, McLeod did.

WOLFE

Did you pack it in the carton?

DELBERT

No, he did. Oh, I get it.  
You're a detective. You just  
ask questions from habit, huh?

Wolfe ignores that. He bends down, lifts the carton by the cord, and heads for his office. Archie follows.

94 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE -DAY

94

Wolfe sets the carton on his desk then turns to Archie as he enters.

WOLFE

Get Mr. Cramer here without  
delay

Archie goes to the phone and dials.

ARCHIE

For god's sake, being finicky  
about food is all right up to a  
point, but there's a limit.

Wolfe hands Archie a SHEET OF PAPER.

WOLFE

And you might want to glance at  
this while we're waiting.

And we WIPE TO:

95 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

95

Where Wolfe reads a book, ignoring the package that now sits on the red chair. Archie leads Cramer in.

CRAMER

All right. What's so damned urgent.

Wolfe points at the package.

WOLFE

It is supposed to contain corn. Perhaps it does.

CRAMER

Yeah, so?

WOLFE

But it is conceivable that it contains dynamite and a contraption that will detonate it when the cord is cut and the flaps raised...

CRAMER

What is this, a gag?

WOLFE

It may be a bugaboo, but I'm not crying wolf. I can tell you nothing until we know what's in the carton.

CRAMER

The hell you can't. Why do you think it's dynamite?

WOLFE

Will you please notify the proper person without delay?

Cramer hovers.

ARCHIE

If you touch it and it goes off we can sue you for damages.

CRAMER

You couldn't pay me to touch it. I know too many people who would have loved to pack it.

He grabs the phone.

CONTINUED

95 CONTINUED:

95

CRAMER

Clancy? Yeah. Get me the bomb  
squad?

96 INT. BROWNSTONE - ENTRY HALL - NIGHT

96

The DOORBELL is ringing. Archie opens the door. It's the  
BOMB SQUAD guys, three of them, in uniform.

ARCHIE

Right this way.

They thunder in.

97 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

97

The BOMB SQUAD makes their arrangements. They isolate the  
box. The lead guy pulls out a stethoscope.

BOMB SQUAD LEADER

Do you want to clear the room,  
Inspector?

Cramer Wolfe and Archie exchange glances. Wolfe folds his  
hands over his fundament. He's not going anywhere.

CRAMER

It's probably nothing. Just  
check it first.

The Bomb Squad LEADER kneels by the chair, putting his ear  
against the box and then the stethoscope. No ticking. Then  
he checks the string. His two ASSISTANTS get on either side  
of the box and using prongs, they lift the lid of the box  
gently until they feel resistance.

Both Archie and Cramer can't help themselves - they edge to  
the door. Wolfe sighs.

The Bomb Squad assistants brings out wedges and slide them  
under to prop the lid open. The Bomb Squad Leader uses  
magnifying glasses and a flashlight to peer underneath the  
rim of the cover.

He pulls back suddenly, the expression on his face tells it  
all. The assistants remove the wedges very carefully.

CRAMER

Bad news?

BOMB SQUAD LEADER

(to Wolfe)

If you'd opened it, we wouldn't  
have found all the pieces.

CONTINUED

97 CONTINUED:

97

WOLFE

It wouldn't have been me. It would have been Archie or Fritz, or both of them. And of course my house.

The assistants ease their fingers under the box and gently lift it up.

ARCHIE

The guy who brought it in here carried it by the cord.

The bomb squad members, moving as quickly and gently as they can, ignore Archie and leave. Cramer turns to Wolfe. Wolfe, his lips tight, is breathing hard.

CRAMER

You didn't think it was dynamite. You knew it was. Now talk.

WOLFE

The possibility occurred to me and I came down, barely in time. Three minutes later... Pfui. That man is a blackguard.

Wolfe shakes his head, as if getting rid of a fly.

WOLFE

This morning I sent for Saul Panzer. When he came --

CRAMER

Who put that dynamite in that carton?

WOLFE

I'm telling you. When he came I had him type out something and told him to take it to Duncan McLeod's farm this afternoon. Archie. You have the copy.

Archie takes the paper from his pocket and hands it to Cramer.

ARCHIE

Memorandum from Nero Wolfe to Duncan McLeod.

CONTINUED

97 CONTINUED: (2)

97

CRAMER  
(reading:)  
"I suggest you have in readiness  
acceptable answers to the  
following questions if and when  
they are asked:

98 INT. BARN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

98

As a grim-faced McLeod reads the letter...

CRAMER'S VOICE  
"When did Kenneth Faber tell  
you that your daughter was  
pregnant and he was responsible?"

..tosses the letter aside, opens a crate with a crowbar and  
takes out STICKS OF DYNAMITE.

99 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - NIGHT

99

Cramer scans the rest of the document, then looks at Wolfe.

CRAMER  
When did you figure this out?

WOLFE  
It's a question of  
interpretation, not of knowledge.

CRAMER  
So you decided to share your  
interpretation with him, instead  
of me.

WOLFE  
I prefer to put it that I decided  
not to decide.

Cramer snatches up the phone.

CRAMER  
(into phone)  
Purley? Get the sheriff's  
office. Ask him to pick up  
Duncan McLeod and hold him for  
murder. And tell him to watch  
it -- he may be rough.

He hangs up and turns back to Wolfe and reads from the paper  
again.

CRAMER  
"Question two:"



100 INT. BARN - DAY (FLASHBACK) 100

AS McLeod arranges a LARGE PILE of dynamite and wires it all together.

CRAMER'S VOICE

"Where did you get the piece of pipe? Was it on your premises?"

101 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT 101

WOLFE

Any man, sufficiently provoked, might plan to kill. However, few men would choose an iron bludgeon for a weapon and carry it through the streets. Certainly not Mr. Heydt, Mr. Maslow, or Mr. Jay. But a countryman might.

CRAMER

"Question three:"

102 INT. BARN - DAY 102

As McLeod attaches a DETONATOR to the dynamite.

CRAMER'S VOICE

"Did you know that your daughter saw you leaving the alley Tuesday afternoon? Did you see her?"

103 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT 103

WOLFE

You read the affidavit. When I asked Miss McLeod which of the three men might have killed Mr. Faber, how did she answer me?

CRAMER

She said 'they didn't.'

WOLFE

She stated it as a fact. There was only one way she could know they hadn't, with such certainty in her voice and manner. She knew who had.

103 CONTINUED:

103

Cramer crumples the paper in disgust. That's when the PHONE RINGS. Archie answers it.

ARCHIE

Nero Wo....Stebbins?  
(handing it to Cramer)  
Stebbins.

CRAMER

What? What?! All right. All right.  
(slams down the phone.)  
You and your goddamn luck.

104 INT. BARN - DAY

104

As McLeod PRESSES the detonator.

105 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

105

CRAMER

About an hour ago, Duncan McLeod sat or stood or lay on a pile of dynamite. They've got his head and some other pieces.

Cramer waits for the news to sink in, then:

CRAMER

You knew all along it was McLeod, didn't you?

WOLFE

Not certain knowledge.

CRAMER

Your goddamn luck. Any man who got the breaks you get would go down on his knees and thank God. You - you probably thank yourself. I suppose it's too much of a job for you to get down on your knees...

WOLFE

Mr. Cramer. It was a reasoned conclusion. You had all the facts that I did.

CRAMER

Then how did you know?

WOLFE

The corn.

CONTINUED

105 CONTINUED:

105

CRAMER

The corn?

WOLFE

McLeod knows how extremely particular I am. I pay him well, more than well. He told me that he had Faber pick my corn because he had to go dynamite some rocks and stumps. He knew Faber couldn't possibly do the job. So it must have been something far more compelling than stumps and rocks for him to risk losing such a valuable customer.

CRAMER

And the only thing that could possibly be more important than your corn is murder.

WOLFE

Precisely.

Cramer just shakes his head and walks out. Wolfe looks at Archie, who is grinning back at him. Wolfe scowls.

WOLFE

Pfui.

And we FADE OUT.

THE END