

THE SILENT SPEAKER

teleplay by

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based on the novel THE SILENT SPEAKER

by

REX STOUT

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Wolfe is reading a newspaper. As the camera moves around the room it settles on the front page. There is a picture of a large black tie event with a banner headline above. "MURDER AT THE NIA" And below, in smaller type, "CHENEY BOONE BLUDGEONED". Archie is putting things away in the safe.

WOLFE

It is an interesting fact that the members of the NIA have assets of something like 30 billion dollars.

ARCHIE

Yes sir. It is also an interesting fact that the prehistoric mound builders left more traces of their work in Ohio than any other state. In my boyhood days...

WOLFE

Shut up.

ARCHIE

Yes sir.

WOLFE

Archie. Where does the bank balance stand?

ARCHIE

Another interesting fact. We ought to be able to make it till next week, but since you're obviously not worried since you've turned down....

WOLFE

Shut up.

ARCHIE

Yes sir.

WOLFE

Archie. Your notebook. Here are directions for tomorrow.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

In two minutes he had me wide awake.

(MORE)

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It was a complicated plan, but
it showed just how desperate he
was.

WIPE TO: *

2 INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

2

Archie comes through a sea of desks and arrives at an office
at the end of the hall. He knocks and enters without waiting
for a response.

CRAMER
(barely looking up)
I'm busy as hell.

ARCHIE
Sure you're busy and I won't
waste your time. I want to ask
a favor, a big favor, on behalf
of Mr. Wolfe. He wants
permission for me to inspect
that room at the Waldorf where
Cheney Boone was murdered.

CRAMER
(Cramer stares at him
for a second)
For God's sake. As if this
case wasn't enough of a mess
already. All it needs to make
it a carnival is Nero Wolfe,
and by God here he is.
(Cramer regards Archie
sourly)
Who's his client?

ARCHIE
I have no information about any
client. As far as I know it's
just Mr. Wolfe's scientific
curiosity.

*

CRAMER
You heard me, who's his client?

ARCHIE
No sir. Rip me open, remove my
heart for the laboratory, and
you'll...

CRAMER
Beat it!

ARCHIE

Certainly Inspector. I know you're busy, but Mr. Wolfe would...

*

CRAMER

Nuts. You don't need any permission to inspect and you know damn well you don't. This is the first time Wolfe has ever asked permission to do anything, and if I had time I'd try figure out what the catch is. But I'm too busy. Beat it.

ARCHIE

Gosh. Suspicious. Always Suspicious. What a way to live.

WIPE TO:

3 INT. WALDORF HOTEL DRESSING ROOM - DAY

3

Archie is surveying the room - a little. Hotel security stands in the door.

JOHNNY DARST

What are you really after?

ARCHIE

Nothing whatever. Mr. Wolfe sent me here to take a look and here I am. The carpet's been changed?

JOHNNY DARST

There was a little blood, not much, and the cops took some things. Who's Wolfe working for?

ARCHIE

There is never any question about that. First, last and always, Mr. Wolfe. Come to think of it, so am I.

With that Archie turns and leaves.

WIPE TO:

4 INT. FBI OFFICE - DAY

4

Archie sits opposite G.G. Spero. A plaque nearby says "G.G. Spero, FBI Special Agent in Charge"

SPERO

Well, Archie what can we do for you?

*

ARCHIE

A request from Mr. Wolfe. It's a little question about the Boone murder case. We've been told the FBI is mixing in and Mr. Wolfe would like to know if there is something about the FBI angle that would make it undesirable for a private detective to take any interest?

*

*

*

SPERO

The Boone case?

ARCHIE

That's right. The Cheney Boone case.

SPERO

Putting aside for the moment the FBI angle, what would Mr. Wolfe's angle be?

ARCHIE (V.O.)

He went at me from forty different directions. I left half an hour later with what I expected - nothing. Of course, we were relying on his sub par lip tightness, not for what he might tell me, but what he might tell *about* me.

*

*

As Archie leaves, Spero watches him thoughtfully.

WIPE TO:

5 INT. BIA HEADQUARTERS - DAY

5

Archie follows a very officious secretary down a very expensive looking hall. He is shown into an office where Hattie Harding moves to shake his hand.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

The hurdles I had to make, you might have thought Hattie Harding was a Temple Goddess instead of merely the the Assistant Director of Public Relations for the NIA.

*
*

MISS HARDING

This is a pleasure. To meet *the* Archie Goodwin coming direct from *the* Nero Wolfe. Really a great pleasure. At least, I suppose you do? Come direct, I mean?

ARCHIE

On a beeline, Miss Harding. As the bee from the flower.

MISS HARDING

What! Not to the flower?

ARCHIE

I guess that's nearer the truth, at that, because I have come to get a load of nectar. For Nero Wolfe. He thinks he needs a list of the members of the NIA who were at the Waldorf Tuesday evening, and sent me here to get it.

MISS HARDING

(all business)

Why don't we sit down?

She moves back behind her desk and Archie adjusts a chair on the other side. As he sits we see him slightly remove then replace a piece of paper from his side pocket as if to confirm that it is still there.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

With the corner of the desk between us, the operation would be simple.

MISS HARDING

This is very interesting. What does Mr. Wolfe want the list for?

ARCHIE

I can only tell you an honest lie. He wants to ask them for their autographs.

MISS HARDING

Look, Mr. Goodwin. You understand of course that this affair is in the highest degree inconvenient for my employers. Our guest for the evening, our main speaker, the Director of the BPR, murdered right there just as the dinner was starting. Our public relations have been set back 10 years in just ten seconds.

ARCHIE

How do you know it happened in ten seconds?

MISS HARDING

(Startled)

Why - it must - the way...

ARCHIE

Not proven. He was hit four times on the head with the monkey wrench, and...

MISS HARDING

What are you doing? Just trying to see how objectionable you can be?

ARCHIE

No, demonstrating what a murder investigation can be like. If you made that remark to the police, that it happened in ten seconds, you'd never hear the last of it. With me, I'm not interested, since I'm only here to get what Mr. Wolfe sent me for.

She presses both her hands to her eyes as if she were going to weep. Seeing this opportunity, Archie slips the paper from his jacket and lets it drop to the floor.

MISS HARDING

I'm sorry.

(MORE)

MISS HARDING (CONT'D)

I haven't slept for two nights
and I'm a wreck.

(she stands up)

I'll have to ask you to go.
There's another meeting in Mr.
Erskine's office in ten minutes,
and anyway, you know perfectly
well I couldn't give you that
list without approval from higher
up.

(she moves around the
desk closer to Archie)

There is one thing you might
tell me, who has engaged Mr.
Wolfe to work on this?

ARCHIE

(he stands up)

I'm in the same fix you are,
Miss Harding. I can't do
anything important either without
approval from higher up. Good
luck at your conference.

*

She watches him go. When she turns back to her desk she
sees the paper on the floor. She picks it up, reads it, and
rushes out of her office.

WIPE TO:

6 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

6

Archie waltzes in from his day about town. Wolfe is at his
desk reading and doesn't stop.

*

ARCHIE

The hooks are baited.

*

*

WOLFE

(marking his page and
putting his book down)

You must have been uncommonly
transparent. Mr Cramer has
phoned. Mr. Travis of the FBI
has phoned. Mr. Rhode of the
Waldorf has phoned. It's time
for lunch.

*

*

*

Wolfe heads to the dining room. Archie starts to follow
when the phone rings. Archie picks it up. INTERCUT AS
NECESSARY, including Wolfe eating alone in the dining room.

*

*

*

ARCHIE
Nero Wolfe's office, Archie
Goodwin speaking.

SECRETARY
Miss Harding calling Mr. Wolfe.
Put Mr. Wolfe on please.

ARCHIE
Nothing doing. Mr. Wolfe is
engaged with a pork roast so
I'll have to do.

*

SECRETARY
This is quite irregular. Just
one moment.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
In the Land of the Secretary,
"one moment" can mean anything
from 10 seconds to 10 minutes.

MISS HARDING
Good morning, Mr. Goodwin.
Hattie Harding here. Mr. Erskine
would like to see Mr. Wolfe.
How soon can Mr. Wolfe be here?

*

ARCHIE
As you probably know, Mr. Wolfe
seldom leaves the house for any
purpose whatever, and never
merely on business.

MISS HARDING
I know that! But this is Mr.
Erskine!

ARCHIE
To you, he is all of that. To
Mr. Wolfe he is nothing but a
pest. Mr. Wolfe hates to work,
even at home.

MISS HARDING
Please hold.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
This time I waited the full ten
minutes

IRIS OUT AND IN

7 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - LUNCHTIME - TEN MINUTES LATER - 7 *

Archie waits, bored.

MISS HARDING
Mr. Goodwin?

ARCHIE
Still here. Older and wiser,
but still here.

MISS HARDING
Mr. Erskine will be at Mr.
Wolfe's office at 4:30 this
afternoon.

ARCHIE
Listen Public Relations, if he
comes at 4:30 he'll wait an
hour and a half. Mr. Wolfe is
up in the orchid rooms from
4:00 to 6:00 in the afternoon,
and nothing has ever changed it
or ever will.

*
*

MISS HARDING
That's ridiculous!

ARCHIE
Sure it is. So is this ring-
around-the-rosy method for a
man communicating with another
man, but I stand for it.

MISS HARDING
Hold the wire.

*

WIPE TO: *

8 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY 8

Archie enters. Nero is eating.

*

ARCHIE
Operation Payroll in under way.
Mr. Frank Erskine, President of
the National Industrial
Association, with outriders,
will be here at ten minutes
past three.

WOLFE
Satisfactory Archie.

We hold on Archie, trying not to beam.

WIPE TO: *

9 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

9

Four men are seated in Wolfe's office. One of them is speaking.

FRANK ERSKINE

This may be a waste of time for you, Mr. Wolfe. It seemed impossible to get any satisfactory information on the telephone. Have you been engaged by anyone to investigate this matter?

*
*

WOLFE

What matter, Mr. Erskine?

FRANK ERSKINE

Uh - this - the death of Cheney Boone.

WOLFE

Let me put it this way. I have agreed to nothing and I have accepted no fee. I am committed to no interest.

BRESLOW

In a case of murder, there is only one interest, the interest of justice.

ED ERSKINE

(he's Frank's son)
Oh, for God's sake..

FRANK ERSKINE

(turning to the others)
If necessary the rest of you can leave and I'll do this alone.
(back to Wolfe)
What opinion have you formed about it?

WOLFE

Opinions from experts cost money.

FRANK ERSKINE

We'll pay you for it.

*

WINTERHOFF

A reasonable amount.

WOLFE

It wouldn't be worth even that unless I did some work and, I don't like to work. Did you come here with the notion of hiring me?

*
*
*

FRANK ERSKINE

Well - that has been discussed as a possibility.

*

WOLFE

For you gentlemen as individuals, or on behalf of the NIA?

*

FRANK ERSKINE

It was discussed as an Association matter.

*

WOLFE

I would advise strongly against it. You might be wasting your money.

FRANK ERSKINE

Why? Aren't you a good investigator?

WOLFE

I am the best. But the situation is obvious. What you are concerned about is the reputation and standing of your association. In the public mind the trial has already been held and the verdict rendered. Nine people out of ten are confident that they already know who murdered Mr. Boone. The NIA.

*

*

*

(turning to Archie)

Archie, what was it the man at the bank said?

ARCHIE

Oh, just that gag that's going around. That NIA stands for Not Innocent Atall.

FRANK ERSKINE

But that's preposterous!

WOLFE
Certainly, but there it is.

The NIA men exchange gloomy looks.

*
*

WOLFE (CONT'D)
I admit it would be worth almost
any amount to your Association
to have the murderer exposed,
but I would tackle the job only
with the greatest reluctance.
Archie?

*
*

Archie stands up as if to escort them to the front door, but
the men don't rise. Instead, they exchange glances, as if
consulting each other.

WINTERHOFF
I would go ahead, Frank.

BRESLOW
What else can we do?

FRANK ERSKINE
(as he gets out a check
book and writes)
We are businessmen, Mr. Wolfe.
We understand that you can't
guarantee anything. But if we
ask you to undertake this matter,
I suppose we had better tell
you all we know about it.

*
*
*

WOLFE
Not right now. It would be
better for you to return this
evening, say at nine o'clock.

None of the men like this and they all ad lib protests.

WINTERHOFF
And I have an appointment I
can't break.

WOLFE
As you please, sir.
(he turns to Archie)
Archie, your notebook. A
telegram. "You are invited to
join a discussion of the Boone
murder at the office of Nero
Wolfe at nine o'clock, this
(MORE)

WOLFE (CONT'D)

evening." Sign my name and send it at once to Inspector Cramer, Mr. Spero, Mr. Kates, Miss Gunther, Mrs. Boone, Miss Nina Boone, and perhaps others, we'll see later.

(he turns back to the NIA men)

Will you gentlemen be here? *

Archie starts banging the typewriter. The men take a beat and get up to leave, exchanging remarks under... *

ARCHIE (V.O.)

I'm compelled to admit that Wolfe had earned my admiration, not for conceiving Operation Payroll, not for his obvious variation of the old hard-to-get finesse, not even for the gall of those telegrams; No. What I admired was his common sense. He wanted to get a look at those people and he knew that they couldn't afford to stay away. *

CUT TO:

10 INT. WOLFE'S FRONT DOOR -- AFTERNOON

10

The doorbell is ringing as Archie steps into frame to answer.

MAN AT DOOR

Hello. I'll bet your Archie Goodwin. You came to see Miss Harding yesterday. She told me about you. Aren't you Archie Goodwin?

ARCHIE

Yep.

MAN AT DOOR

I thought so. May I come in? I'd like to see Mr. Wolfe. I'm Don O'Neill. President of O'Neill and Warder, and a member of that Godforsaken conglomeration of antiques, the NIA. *

WIPE TO:

11 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

11

Tight on Wolfe's face, he's angry at Archie for interrupting him.

WOLFE
Well, sir?

O'NEILL
I admire your office.

WOLFE
Thank you. But I assume that wasn't what you came for.

O'NEILL
Oh no. Being Chairman of the Dinner Committee, I'm in the middle of this thing whether I like it or not - I wouldn't say I'm involved, but I'm certainly very concerned.

*
*

WOLFE
Has anyone suggested you are involved?

O'NEILL
Suggested? That's putting it mildly. The police are taking the position that everyone connected with the NIA is involved. Don't get me wrong Mr. Wolfe, but this idea of spending our own money to investigate a murder, that's unrealistic and I told them so.

WOLFE
(bored)
Admirable. For the purpose of persuading me to call it off?

O'NEILL
Oh, no. I saw that was hopeless. You wouldn't do that. Would you?

WOLFE
I'm afraid not without some excellent reason. I need the money. Then what did you come for?

*

O'NEILL

I came to ask you if Erskine hired you to protect NIA members by getting attention shifted elsewhere. Erskine said, "no", but ten thousand for a straight inquiry job is way above the clouds.

WOLFE

I also say no, Mr. O'Neill. But I'm afraid that won't help you much. What if Mr. Erskine and I are both lying?
(he shifts subjects)
We have invited some people to meet here this evening and talk it over. Why don't you come and keep an eye on us?

O'NEILL

Oh, I'm coming. I told Erskine and the others I'm coming.

WOLFE

Good. Then we won't keep you now. - Archie?

Nero picks up his book and starts to read. O'Neill stares at him for a beat, then Archie is at his elbow and he gets up and leaves.

DISSOLVE TO:

12 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

12

Wolfe is leaning back in his chair with his eyes half closed. There are thirteen people in the room. The four NIA guys plus O'Neill and Harding, Inspector Cramer, Purely Stebbins, G.G. Spero and, from the BPR side, Mrs. Boone, Nina Boone, Alger Kates, and Solomon Dexter. Wolfe is not happy with the progress of the meeting. Cramer isn't either, since he long ago realized that Wolfe has no insight into the case and is just surveying the human landscape.

CRAMER

(to Wolfe)

Everyone in this room has an alibi. As far as is known, Phoebe Gunther, who isn't here, was the last person to see Boone alive when she delivered the props for his speech, including

(MORE)

CRAMER (CONT'D)

the monkey wrench that was used to kill him. Kates over there discovered the body at 7:45. Boone had arrived late and gone straight to the reception room carrying a little leather case he had with him.

MRS. BOONE

That was the case that Miss Gunther says she forgot about and left on a window sill, but...

*

MISS HARDING

And Miss Gunther is absolutely wrong, because four different people saw that case in her hand as she left the reception room.

SOLOMON DEXTER

(snorting)

It's amazing what...

WOLFE

(wiggling a finger at Dexter)

Please sir.

(back to Cramer)

What was this case? A brief case? A vanity case?

CRAMER

No. It was more like a doctor's case, and it contained cylinders from a dictating machine. Boone brought the cylinders with him from Washington for Miss Gunther to transcribe. After she left Boone, she says she took the case to the reception room and left it there on the window sill.

WOLFE

What was on the cylinders? Letters? What?

CRAMER

Miss Gunther didn't know. Boone didn't tell her.

*

WOLFE

Did anyone see the case in the reception room?

*
*
*

SPERO

Nobody will say so. The head NIA man from Washington was the last person in there... .

*
*
*

BRESLOW

By God, there it is! It's always an NIA man! That's damned silly, Spero, and don't forget where FBI salaries come from.

They all go at each other. It's bedlam.

*

ARCHIE (V.O.)

From that point on the mud was flying more or less constantly. Finally, Wolfe silenced them with a bellow.

WOLFE

Enough! The constant reference to the NIA is unfortunate, sir, but it can't be helped. Mr. Boone had many enemies, and you can not deny that a large number of them were members of the NIA.

WINTERHOFF

But it certainly isn't always an enemy, Mr. Wolfe. For an illustration, Mr. Dexter here wasn't Boone's enemy. Quite the contrary, they were friends. But if Mr. Dexter had been filled with ambition to become Director of the BPR, and that's what he is at this moment - he might conceivably have taken steps to make the office vacant.

SOLOMON DEXTER

Are you preferring a charge, Mr. Winterhoff?

WINTERHOFF

Not at all. As I said, merely an illustration.

FRANK ERSKINE

Mr. Winterhoff has made an obvious point.

*

BRESLOW

One of several. There are others. The talk about Boone and his secretary, Phoebe Gunther, has been going on for months.

*

ALGER KATES

(standing up, outraged)
I want to protest that this is utterly despicable and beyond the bounds of common decency!

O'NEILL

You keep out of this Kates!
Sit down and shut up!

FRANK ERSKINE

Surely, Mr. Kates, you are aware that personal emotions such as jealousy and revenge often result in violence. It would be proper to ask you, for example, whether it was true that you wanted to marry Boone's niece, here, and were aware that Boone opposed it and intended to prevent....

*

*

NINA

Why, you big liar!

ALGER KATES

Whether it is proper or not, it is certainly not proper for you to ask me anything, whatever!

(turning to Wolfe)

Mr. Wolfe. You are in the pay of the NIA. Did you invite us here for a typical NIA inquisition?

CRAMER

(standing up)

I'll tell you why you were invited. You were invited because he wanted to learn all he could as quick as he could, without leaving his chair.

(MORE)

*

CRAMER (CONT'D)
I don't know about the rest of
you, but I was a sucker to come.
(he turns to Spero)
You coming Spero?

Everyone watches as they head for the door and out.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Of course, that ended it. The
BPR didn't want anymore anyhow,
and though the NIA showed an
inclination to stay and make
suggestions, Wolfe used his
veto power on that.

WIPE TO:

13 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT - SEVERAL MINUTES LATER 13

Archie comes back into the office after having seen the last
of them out.

ARCHIE
Too bad Cramer bolixed it up
like that. If we had kept at
them for awhile, say another
two weeks, we might have got
started somewhere.

*

WOLFE
It was not too bad.

ARCHIE
Oh. Ok. Then it was a screaming
success. Of all our guests,
which do you think is the most
interesting.

WOLFE
The most interesting was Miss
Gunther.

ARCHIE
Yeah? Because?

WOLFE
Because she didn't come. You
have her address?

ARCHIE
Sure, I sent the telegram....

WOLFE
Go and bring her here.

ARCHIE
It is now twenty minutes past eleven.

WOLFE
The streets are less dangerous at night, with the reduced traffic.

Archie just stares at Nero who pours the beer which Fritz has just brought and opens his book.

CUT TO:

14 INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY -- NIGHT

14

The elevator doors open revealing Archie. He exits and finds the right door. All of this under...

ARCHIE (V.O.)
It is not my custom to make personal remarks to young women during the first five minutes after meeting them. But when I pushed the button and she opened the door, the ceiling light right above her was shining on her hair, and what popped out was: Golden Bantam.

*

PHOEBE
Yes, that's what I dye it with.

FOLLOWING THEM:

15 INT. KATES APARTMENT - NIGHT

15

PHOEBE
Let me take your coat.

She hangs the coat on a nearby hook and leads Archie into the living room where she turns around to him.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
You know Mr. Kates?

All but hidden, sitting off in a corner, is Alger Kates.

ARCHIE
Hello.

ALGER KATES
Good evening.

PHOEBE
Sit down. Mr. Kates came to
tell me what happened at your
party this evening. Will you
have a drink? *

ARCHIE
No, thanks.

PHOEBE
Well. Did you come to see what
color my hair is or was there
something else?

ARCHIE
I'm sorry to bust in on you and
Mr. Kates.

PHOEBE
That's all right. Isn't it,
Al?

ALGER KATES
It is not alright with me. It
would be folly to trust him.
As I told you, he's in the pay
of the NIA.

PHOEBE
So you did. But since we know
enough not to trust him, all we
have to do is be a little smarter
than he is in order to get more
out of him than he gets out of
us.

(turning back to Archie)
I have a theory about Mr. Kates.
He must read old fashioned novels
because of the way he talks. I
wouldn't suppose a research man
would read novels at all. What
would you suppose?

ARCHIE
I don't discuss people who don't
trust me. And I don't think
you are.

PHOEBE
Are what?

ARCHIE

Smarter than me. I admit you're prettier, but I doubt if you're smarter. I was spelling champion of Zanesville, Ohio, at the age of twelve.

PHOEBE

Spell "snoop".

ARCHIE

That's just childish. I don't imagine you're hinting that catching people who commit crimes is work to be ashamed of, since you're smart, so if what....

Archie stops talking because she is "possibly" laughing at him. He's been had.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Okay, you got a poke in and made me blink. Round one for you. Round two. Here's a free tip: If you think a BPR man did it, and don't want him caught, bounce me out immediately and keep as far away from Mr. Wolfe as possible. If you think an NIA man did it and you'd like to help, get your coat and come to Mr. Wolfe's office with me.

(he turns to Kates)

If you did it yourself, you might as well come along and confess and get it over with.

ALGER KATES

I told you! See how he led up to that?

PHOEBE

Don't be silly. I'll explain it to you. Finding that I am smarter than he is, he decided to pick on you, and he certainly got evidence that you're a sap. In fact, you'd better get going. Leave him to me. I may see you at the office tomorrow.

ALGER KATES

No! He'll go on that way!

*
*

*
*

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Kates lost the argument, of course. Within minutes the door was closed and Miss Gunther was back on the couch among the cushions smiling at me.

*
*

PHOEBE

Alright. Go ahead. Teach me the multiplication tables.

ARCHIE

(getting up, ignoring the question)
May I use your phone?

PHOEBE

What am I supposed to do? Ask who You want to call?

ARCHIE

No, just say yes.

PHOEBE

Yes. It's right over there.

ARCHIE

I see, thanks.

Archie picks up the phone and dials. After a beat he speaks.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Mr. Wolfe? Archie. I'm up here with Miss Gunther in her apartment, and I don't think it's a good plan to bring her down there as you suggested. In the first place she's extremely smart, but that's not it. She's the one I've been dreaming about the last ten years. I don't mean she's beautiful, that's merely a matter of taste, I only mean she is exactly what I've had in mind. Therefore it would be much better to let me handle her. You go on to bed and I'll get in touch with you in the morning.

*

Archie hangs up the phone and turns back to Phoebe, but she is now standing in the doorway with her coat and hat on.

PHOEBE
All right, come on.

ARCHIE
Come on where?

PHOEBE
Don't be demure. You worked hard trying to figure out a way of getting me down to Nero Wolfe's office, and you did a good job. I'll give you round two. By the way, I'm glad you don't think I'm beautiful. Nothing irritates a woman more than to be thought beautiful.

ARCHIE
I didn't say I didn't think you were beautiful. I said.....

PHOEBE
I heard what you said. It stabbed me clear through because it just happens I do think I'm beautiful.

ARCHIE
So do....

He stops himself as they exchange glances.

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Just in time I saw the corner of her mouth moving and bit it off. If you think I was muffing everything she threw my way, I won't argue. The hell of it was that she was beautiful.

As they exit we....

*

WIPE TO:

*

16 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT - SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

16*

Wolfe is staring at Phoebe Gunther.

PHOEBE
When I got to the Waldorf I learned that Mr. Boone had asked for privacy and been taken to that room.

(MORE)

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

General Erskine took me there with the baby carriage and the rest of the props.

WOLFE

General Erskine?

PHOEBE

He's a B.G. One of the youngest generals in the Air Force.

WOLFE

Do you know him well?

PHOEBE

No, I have only seen him once or twice. But naturally I hate him. I hate everybody connected with the NIA.

WOLFE

Naturally. Go ahead.

PHOEBE

I stayed no more than two minutes. As I was leaving he handed me the leather case. I went to the reception room to get a drink and then joined the others in the ballroom. I was eating my fruit cocktail when I remembered about the leather case, that I had left it on the window sill in the reception room. When I returned there to retrieve it, it was gone.

WOLFE

Had you looked in the case?

PHOEBE

No. Mr. Boone had told me the case contained cylinders he had dictated in Washington that afternoon.

WOLFE

Four people say that you took the case with you from the reception room to the ballroom

PHOEBE

You believe them or you believe me.

WOLFE

What did Mr. Boone rely on you for?

PHOEBE

To do what he told me to.

WOLFE

Of course, but what did he get from you? Obedience? Loyalty? Companionship? Ecstasy?

PHOEBE

Oh, for the Lord's sake. You sound like a congressman's wife. What he got was first class work. I'm not saying that during the two years I worked for Mr. Boone I was always fresh out of ecstasy, but I never took it to the office with me, and anyway I was saving it up until I met Mr. Goodwin.

WOLFE

Since the NIA is being blamed for Mr. Boone's murder, you must understand that it is very desirable, from the standpoint of the NIA, that the murderer be caught?

*

PHOEBE

Yes. That's why I agreed to see you.

WOLFE

Then, doesn't it follow that you and the BPR would prefer not to have him caught?

PHOEBE

It may follow, but I'm afraid I'm not that logical, so I don't feel that way.

WOLFE

But in that case, why didn't you accept my invitation to

(MORE)

WOLFE (CONT'D)
come and discuss it earlier
this evening?

*

PHOEBE
Because I didn't feel like it.

WOLFE
But you came with Mr. Goodwin.

PHOEBE
Certainly. Any girl who needed
a rest would go anywhere with
Mr. Goodwin, because she wouldn't
have to use her mind. However,
I didn't intend to stay all
night, and what about my turn?

*

*

WOLFE
Very well, Miss Gunther. I
agreed to answer your questions.

*

PHOEBE
Who approached you from the NIA
and what have you agreed to do?

WOLFE
Erskine, Winterhoff, Erskine
Jr. Breslow and, later, O'Neil.
They hired me to catch the
murderer. What....

*

*

PHOEBE
No matter who it is?

WOLFE
Yes. Don't interrupt. What
they pay will depend on what I
charge. It will be adequate.
I don't like the NIA. I'm an
anarchist.

PHOEBE
Did they try to persuade you
that the murderer is not an NIA
member?

WOLFE
No.

PHOEBE
Do you think one of those five
murdered him?

WOLFE

No.

PHOEBE

This is silly. You say nothing but no.

WOLFE

I'm answering your questions. And so far I haven't told you a lie. I doubt if you could say as much.

PHOEBE

Why? What did I tell you that wasn't true?

WOLFE

I have no idea. Not yet. I will have. Go ahead.

PHOEBE

Do you think that the use of the monkey wrench, which no one could have known was there, proves the murder was unpremeditated?

WOLFE

No.

PHOEBE

But it might have been unpremeditated?

WOLFE

Yes.

PHOEBE

Has any NIA man said anything to you that indicated who took that leather case?

WOLFE

No.

PHOEBE

Or where it is now?

WOLFE

No.

PHOEBE
Have you any idea who the
murderer is?

WOLFE
No.

PHOEBE
This is a lot of nonsense. How
do I know that a single thing
you tell me is the truth?

WOLFE
I am under the same handicap as
you.

PHOEBE
But I have nothing to lie about!

WOLFE
Phui. Everybody has something
to lie about. Go ahead.

PHOEBE
No. It's perfectly useless.
I'll go home and go to bed.

She gets up and looks at Archie who rises as if on command.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Would you show me which way to
go for a taxi?

ARCHIE
I'll run you up. I have to put
the car away anyhow.

She waits for Archie and they head out of the office.

CUT TO:

17 INT. WOLFE'S FRONT DOOR -- NIGHT -- CONTINUOUS

17

As they head toward the front door.

ARCHIE
(as if to a stranger)
So you took Nero Wolfe on..

PHOEBE
Don't be aloof.
(She takes Archie's arm)
Don't pay attention to that.
(MORE)

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
It doesn't mean anything. Once
in a while I like to feel a
man's arm, that's all.

ARCHIE
Ok, I'm a man.

PHOEBE
So I suspected.

ARCHIE
When this is over I'd be glad
to teach you how to play pool
or look up words in the
dictionary.

PHOEBE
Thanks. When this is all over.

Phoebe takes the lead as Archie opens the door and they go
out.

WIPE TO:

18 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT - TWENTY MINUTES LATER 18*

Archie enters. Wolfe is standing at the elevator door waiting *
for Archie.

WOLFE
Do not communicate further with
Miss Gunther except on my order.
A woman who is not a fool is
dangerous. In the morning get
Saul and Fred here. Good night.

Wolfe exits. Archie's left standing.

ARCHIE
Yeah, Good night.

DISSOLVE TO:

19 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - MORNING 19

Fred and Saul are standing near Nero's desk. Archie is at
his desk.

WOLFE
Saul you will take the Waldorf.
Cover everything and everybody.
(MORE)

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Spend as many hours or days as necessary. Fred, you will proceed to the NIA offices and start compiling lists as instructed. Report to me. Take no action on your own. You understand?

*
*

Saul and Fred acknowledge Wolfe and get up and leave. As soon as they are out the door Archie turns to Wolfe.

ARCHIE

Is it really as bad as that?

WOLFE

As bad as what?

ARCHIE

You know darned well. Fifty dollars a day for Saul and Fred to chase the dregs. Where is there any genius in that?

WOLFE

Genius? What can genius do with this confounded free-for-all? A thousand people, all with motive and opportunity, and the means at hand. Why the devil I ever let you persuade me....

ARCHIE

No, sir. Don't try to blame it on me! If you want to admit you're licked you can wiggle out. Just sign a check for ten thousand, and you can dictate a letter to them saying on account of you having caught the mumps...

WOLFE

Shut up! How can I return money I haven't received?

ARCHIE

But you have. The check was in the morning mail and I've deposited it.

WOLFE

Good God. It's in the bank?

ARCHIE
Yes, sir.

Wolfe rings for beer savagely.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
So you have nothing, nothing
whatever?

WOLFE
Certainly I have something.

Not what Archie expected to hear.

ARCHIE
Yeah? What?

WOLFE
Something Mr. O'Neill said
yesterday afternoon. Something
very peculiar.

ARCHIE
What?

WOLFE
Not for you. I'll put Saul or
Fred on it tomorrow.

Archie just stares at Wolfe as Fritz delivers the beer and
two newspapers.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
(picking up the paper
and sitting at his
desk)
I didn't believe a word of it.
I remembered everything Don
O'Neill said, and believed it
less than ever....
(He is now focusing on
something in the
newspaper. He looks up
and sees that Wolfe is
also)

WOLFE
Indeed.

ARCHIE
Indeed. Indeed.
(MORE)

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

(we see a headline:
"Murderer Returns
Victim's Wallet")

The murderer takes Boone's wallet
and then returns it with
contents. I understand returning
the wedding photograph, but why
return the car registration but
not his driver's license?

*
*

WOLFE

This is the first finger that
has pointed in any direction at
all.

ARCHIE

Sure, now it's a cinch. All we
have to do is find out which of
those thousand plus people is a
sentimentalist and we've got
him.

Fritz enters from the hallway carrying a little tray with
what looks like an envelope.

FRITZ

Telegram, sir. From Mr. Breslow.

WOLFE

Thank you, Fritz.

Archie looks on as Wolfe opens and then reads the telegram.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

"Circumstances make it impossible
to continue surveillance of
O'Neill, but believe it essential
this be done. Can guarantee
nothing."

(Wolfe turns to Archie,
witheringly)
Perhaps, you will be good enough
to tell me what other
arrangements you have made for
handling this case?!

ARCHIE

No, sir, not me.

WOLFE

You know nothing of this?

ARCHIE
No, don't you?

WOLFE
Get Mr. Breslow on the phone.

WIPE TO:

20 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT - SEVERAL MINUTES LATER 20

Wolfe has the phone to his ear. Intercut as necessary.

BRESLOW
Yes, Wolfe? Have you got something? Well? Well?

WOLFE
I have a question to ask....

BRESLOW
Yes? What is it?

WOLFE
I am about to ask it. That was why I had Mr. Goodwin call your number and ask for you, so you could be on one end of the telephone and me on the other end, and then I could ask you this question. Tell me when you are ready, sir.

BRESLOW
I'm ready! Damn it, what is it?

WOLFE
Good. Here it is. About that telegram you sent me....

BRESLOW
Telegram? What Telegram? I haven't sent you any telegram!

WOLFE
You know nothing about a telegram to me?

BRESLOW
No! Nothing whatever. What.....

WOLFE
Then it's a mistake.
(MORE)

WOLFE (CONT'D)

I suspected as much. I was expecting one from a man named Bristow. My apologies, sir, for disturbing you. Good-by.

We can hear Breslow trying to prolong the conversation but Nero hangs up on him.

ARCHIE

Do we have it traced? Or do we assume that whoever sent it knows about phone booths?

WOLFE

Confound it! We can't afford to ignore it. You had better get him in the morning as he leaves. Call Orrie if you need help

CUT TO:

21 EXT. O'NEILL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - THE NEXT MORNING

21

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Tailing someone in New York can be almost anything. You can wear out your brain and muscles in s strenuous ten hour stretch, or you can lose him in the first five minutes. A little after eight in the morning I sat in a taxi fifty paces North of O'Neill's apartment house. At ten o'clock I saw O'Neill emerging to the sidewalk. That's him.

*

Archie's Taxi starts to roll as we see O'Neill flag his own taxi, get in and take off. We see a few shots of Archie following O'Neill.

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

With the thin traffic on Sunday, it took some skill to avoid discovery, but it wasn't long before O'Neill's cab stopped at the entrance to Grand Central Station and O'Neill hopped out and started in. Didn't I tell you? He's hopping it. See you in court.

*

Archie is quickly across the street and following O'Neill on foot. Inside the building O'Neill appears to know exactly where he's going and very shortly arrives at the Parcel Room on the upper level.

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He gave no sign of suspecting that anyone had an eye on him and where he finally wound up was not one of the train entrances, but the main parcel room on the upper level. He handed in a ticket and was given an object that even from where I stood, thirty feet off, looked as if it might be of interest.

O'Neill is handed a little rectangular leather case which he promptly slides under his top coat and heads back out of the building. Archie follows at a discreet distance, but when O'Neill hails a cab back on the street.... *

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I followed him back to the street where he took a left and snared a cab almost immediately. I decided that would not do.

Archie closes the gap quickly and just as O'Neill is trying to shut the door Archie steps in and sits down. *

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
Hello there, Mr. O'Neill! Going uptown? Mind giving me a lift?

Archie is on the seat beside O'Neill before he can answer.

O'NEILL
(Flustered, but handling it pretty well)
Why, hello, Goodwin! Where did you come from? I'm - well, no, the fact is I'm not going uptown.

CAB DRIVER
Make up your mind.

ARCHIE
It doesn't matter. I just want to ask you a couple of questions about that leather case under your coat.
(to the driver)
Head to West 38th Street.

CAB DRIVER

It's not your cab. What is this, a hard touch?

O'NEILL

No. It's alright. We're friends. Go ahead. But turn North on Fifth Avenue.

ARCHIE

All right if you want to, but I thought we would save time by going straight to Nero Wolfe's place. He will be even curiouser than I am about what's in that thing.

O'NEILL

(to the cabby)

The address is 350 Park Avenue.

ARCHIE

Lookit. I don't like the idea of your apartment, and if we go there, I'll display a license to the doorman, put my arms around you, and make him call the nineteenth precinct. That would create quite a hubbub with Inspector Cramer. Also, I saw the look in your eye and don't try it. I'm more than 20 years younger than you and it wouldn't take much.

O'Neill face registers resignation.

WIPE TO:

22 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

22

Ten hollow black cylinders, about 3 inches in diameter and 6 inches long stand on end on Nero's desk. The leather case, stamped "Cheney Boone, Property of the BPR" stands nearby. O'Neill is pacing while Archie and Nero are at their desks.

WOLFE

Mr. O'Neill. That tramping back and forth is extremely irritating.

O'NEILL
I'm not going to answer any
questions until I've heard those
cylinders.

*
*
*

ARCHIE
Shall I tie him up?

*
*

WOLFE
Do you want to explain how you
got that case?

*

O'NEILL
I'll explain it when I feel
like it.

WOLFE
Nonsense. I didn't take you
for a nincompoop.

O'NEILL
Go to hell.

WOLFE
If that's the best you can do,
you are a nincompoop. When
that machine gets here Mr.
Goodwin will carry you out and
set you on the stoop. Then he
and I will listen to the
cylinders.

O'NEILL
You wouldn't do that.

WOLFE
I won't. Mr. Goodwin will.

O'NEILL
Damn you! What do you want?

WOLFE
I want to know where you got
those things.

O'NEILL
All right. Last evening I got
a call at home. It was a woman.
She said her name was Dorothy
Unger and she worked at the
BPR. She said she had made a
bad mistake.

(MORE)

O'NEILL (CONT'D)

She was sending me a flyer and had accidentally enclosed a baggage claim tag from the parcel room at Grand Central Station and would I return it as soon as possible. This morning I received the envelope and the tags were in it and you know what I did since you arranged it.

WOLFE

I see. You think I arranged it?

O'NEILL

No. I know you arranged it. And I fell for it. No wonder that you think I'm a nincompoop!

WOLFE

Do you have the envelop with you?

O'NEILL

Yes.

WOLFE

Give it to Mr. Goodwin.

O'NEILL

No. I'm going to have some detective work done on that envelop and not by you.

WOLFE

Then you won't hear what those cylinders have to say. Must I keep repeating myself?

O'NEILL

But I must hear it. I have reason to suppose, and so do you, that those cylinders contain confidential dictation by Cheney Boone which may have something to do with his murder, and if so I want to know it.

Nero says nothing. O'Neill looks from Archie back to Nero and realises he has lost this round. He takes the envelope out of his pocket and hands it to Archie who looks it over quickly.

ARCHIE

The post office employees get more careless all the time. Only one out of the five stamps is cancelled.

O'NEILL

What? What of it?

WOLFE

Nothing. Mr. Goodwin likes to brag. It proves nothing.

Fritz enters from the hall.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Yes, Fritz?

FRITZ

The machine is here.

Fritz stands aside as a technician wheels a stenophone machine * into Wolfe's office.

WIPE TO:

23 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT - SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

23

The machine has been plugged in and the technician has explained it's use.

TECHNICIAN

Will that be all?

ARCHIE

Yes. Thank you.
(motioning to Fritz)
Fritz.

Fritz leads the man out and shuts the door behind him. Nero turns to Archie.

WOLFE

Now, Archie, if you'll get Mr. O'Neill's hat and coat.

O'Neill stares at Wolfe for a second, then laughs. He turns to Archie who takes several steps toward him. O'Neill takes several steps backwards, suddenly very angry.

O'NEILL

So that's how it is. You think you can double cross Don O'Neill. You'd better not.

WOLFE

Phui. I have given you no assurance that you would be allowed to hear these things. It would be manifestly improper to permit an official of the NIA to listen to confidential dictation of the director of the BPR. Well, sir? Do you prefer to be self-propelled?

O'NEILL

I'm not leaving this room!

WOLFE

Archie?

ARCHIE

(closing the gap)
Come on, come with Archie.

O'Neill actually starts a right for Archie's jaw. At least it seems that that was what he thought he was doing.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

That's too slow to hit anything that isn't nailed down.

Archie spins him around in order to carry him out but O'Neill kicks him. It doesn't actually hurt Archie, but it makes him mad. Archie plugs him and he goes down. Archie grabs his ankles and drags him to the front door which Fritz opens obligingly. O'Neill is deposited on the front stoop. Fritz drops his coat and hat on top.

CUT TO: *

24 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY - IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARD

24

Archie is tinkering with the machine. Several cylinders stand nearby.

WOLFE

I dislike commotion. I didn't tell you to hit him.

ARCHIE

He tried to kick me. He did kick me. Next time you do it.

WOLFE

Start that machine going.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

It took more than an hour to
run off all ten cylinders.

We see Archie changing cylinders, Nero drinking beer, Archie
being bored, replacing cylinders in the leather case. Etc.

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

There was nothing spectacular
anywhere in the lot, and by the
time we finished I couldn't
blame Wolfe for being depressed.
The only item worth mentioning
was that at least four of the
cylinders contained evidence
that they had been dictated
prior to the day of the murder.
Had Boone picked up the wrong
case when he left Washington?

WOLFE

Take the cylinders down to Mr.
Cramer and tell him how we got
them.

*
*

ARCHIE

Tell him everything?

WOLFE

Yes.

*

ARCHIE

Cramer will have a fit.

*
*

WOLFE

No doubt. Then bring Miss
Gunther here.

*
*

ARCHIE

Her? Phoebe Gunther?

WOLFE

Yes.

ARCHIE

That's dangerous. Isn't it too
risky to trust me with her?

WOLFE

Yes, but I want to see her.

ARCHIE

Ok. It's on you.

25 INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT 25*

Archie sits in front of Cramer's desk. The leather case sits on the desk. *

CRAMER *
I'll be damned, this sounds *
like something.

As they talk we hear.... *

ARCHIE (V.O.) *
Obviously, Cramer was desperate. *
If he had had any start on the
Boone murder he would have waved
his prerogative in front of my
nose and cussed Wolfe and me up
one side and down the other for
withholding evidence. *

WIPE TO: *

26 INT. APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT 26

An elevator door opens and Archie comes out and crosses to Phoebe's door.

ARCHIE (V.O.) *
When I left Cramer for the far *
more dangerous task of Phoebe,
he still didn't know that the
cylinders weren't going to help. *

Phoebe opens the door, smiles at Archie and motions him in.

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
As I followed her into the room,
there was Alger Kates again,
over in the corner where the
light was dim.
(to Kates)
Do you live here?

KATES
If it's any of your business,
yes, I do.

ARCHIE
(turning to Phoebe)
Has Mr. Cramer's office called?

PHOEBE
No. Does he want me? What
for?

ARCHIE

He either wants you now or he soon will. I just took him that case of cylinders that you left on a window sill Tuesday evening.

PHOEBE

That case? With the cylinders in it? *

ARCHIE

Yes. Ma'am.

PHOEBE

Did you --- what's on them?

ARCHIE

Well, that's a long story.....

PHOEBE

Where did you find it?

ARCHIE

That's another long story, and we've got to step on it because Cramer has it now and he may send for you any minute. *

PHOEBE

Then you don't know what's on them?

ARCHIE

Sure, I know. They're interesting but not helpful since they weren't dictated on Tuesday, but before that. *

PHOEBE

But that's impossible! *

ARCHIE

Nope. Possible and true. I'll....

PHOEBE

How do you know?

ARCHIE

I'm getting restless. As I say, Mr. Wolfe wants to see you before Cramer gets to you. *

(MORE)

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
Kates, here, can come along to
protect you if you.....

The doorbell rings, interrupting Archie. He leans over and
whispers in Phoebe's ear.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
Are you expecting anybody?

Phoebe shakes her head, no. Archie motions for silence as
the doorbell rings again. After a beat, we hear....

PURLEY STEBBINS
Come on, Goodwin, what the hell!

Archie shrugs his shoulders and opens the door. Purley walks
straight over to Phoebe.

PURLEY STEBBINS (CONT'D)
Good afternoon, Miss Gunther.
Good afternoon Mr. Kates.
(back to Phoebe)
Inspector Cramer would be much
obliged if you would let me
drive you to his office. He's
got some stenophone cylinders
there he wants you to look at.

ARCHIE
You come right to the point,
don't you Purley, huh?

PURLEY STEBBINS
Oh. You still here? I supposed
you was gone.

ARCHIE
Nuts.
(turning to Phoebe)
Of course you know, Miss Gunther,
that you may do as you please.
Some people think that when a
city employee comes to take
them somewhere they have to go.
That's a fallacy, unless he has
a document, which he hasn't.

PHOEBE
Is that true?

ARCHIE
Yes, that's true.

PHOEBE

You know, you have a way of suggesting things that appeal to me even if your boss has been hired by the NIA. So you decide for me. I'll go with you to see Mr. Wolfe, or I'll go with this oversized sergeant, whichever you say.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Whereupon I made a mistake.

He looks at Purley and back to Phoebe.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

I deeply appreciate your confidence, which I deserve. For the moment, I hate to say it, but it would be better to accept Mr. Cramer's invitation. I'll be seeing you.

*

Archie heads out the door and we....

WIPE TO:

27 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

27

Archie comes into the office. Nero's at his desk.

ARCHIE

Purley Stebbins arrived at Miss Gunther's before I could get her away, and she likes him better than she does me. So not only had I made a mistake, but also I was lying to the boss.

*

*

WIPE TO:

28 INT. KITCHEN - MORNING - THE NEXT DAY

28

Fritz comes in from serving Nero his breakfast. Archie is listening on the kitchen phone at the little table where he eats breakfast.

*

FRITZ

Why he must serve breakfast to Saul and Fred in his room, I do not know.

ARCHIE

Oh, that's simple. He's pretending that's he's working and he wants us to believe it as well.

FRITZ

Miss Gunther is not answering, you should hang up.

CUT TO:

29 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY 29

Archie is at his desk, now listening on his office phone.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

After seven tries throughout the day I was still unable to find Phoebe.

*
*

CUT TO: *

30 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT 30*

Nero sits at the table, Fritz serves, Archie comes in from the hall. As he sits..... *

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Dinner took longer than usual. Mr. Wolfe does that when he is completely at a loss. He uses up energy keeping thoughts out and trying to keep me quiet, and that makes him eat more.

*

CUT TO:

31 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT 31

Archie, frustrated, is stretched out on the couch. Nero is drinking beer and reading a book, the picture of contentment.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

After dinner I failed again to reach Phoebe so I stretched out on the couch trying to work out an attack that would make Wolfe explode into some kind of action when the doorbell rang.

The doorbell rings. Archie hops up and heads for the door.

WIPE TO:

32 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARD -- NIGHT

32

Archie comes sweeping back in, short on his heels are....

*

ARCHIE

Inspector Cramer and Mr. Solomon
Dexter.

Before Nero can speak Dexter marches up to his desk.

DEXTER

I don't understnd it all! I've checked on you with the FBI and the Army, and they give you a clean bill and speak of you very highly! And here you are tied up with the dirtiest bunch of liars and cutthroats in existence! What the hell is the idea?

WOLFE

Your nerves are on edge.

DEXTER

What have my nerves got to do with it? The blackest crime in the history of this country, with that unscrupulous gang behind it, and any man, any man whatever, who ties himself up....

WOLFE

Please! Don't shout at me like that. You're excited. Justifiably perhaps, but Mr. Cramer shouldn't have brought you here until you had cooled off.

(Nero turns to Cramer)

What does he want? Does he want something?

CRAMER

Yeah. He thinks you fixed that stunt about the cylinders. So it would look like the BPR had them all the time and tried to plant them on the NIA.

WOLFE

Phui. Do you think so?

CRAMER

I do not. You would have done a better job of it.

WOLFE

If that's what you want, Mr. Dexter, to ask me if I arranged some flummery about those cylinders, the answer is I didn't. Anything else?

DEXTER

Yes. There is no one by the name of Dorothy Unger employed by the BPR, either in New York or Washington.

WOLFE

Good heavens. Of course there isn't.

DEXTER/CRAMER

(simultaneously)

What do you mean of course there isn't?

WOLFE

I mean it's obvious there wouldn't be. Whoever contrived that hocus pocus about the claim check, whether O'Neill himself or someone else, certainly Dorothy Unger had to be invented.

DEXTER

You ought to know.

WOLFE

Nonsense. Mr. Dexter, if you're going to sit there and boil with suspicion you might as well leave. You accuse me of being tied up with miscreants. I am tied up with no one. I have engaged to do a specific job, find a murderer and get enough evidence to convict him.

CRAMER

How far have you got?

WOLFE

Well.

(MORE)

WOLFE (CONT'D)

(Wolfe smirks.)

Further than you, or you wouldn't be here.

*

CRAMER

Yeah. Here the other evening, I didn't quite understand why you didn't pick him out and let me take him.

WOLFE

Neither did I. For one moment I thought I might, when one of them said something extraordinary, but I was unable
.....

CRAMER

Who said what?

WOLFE

I'm having it looked into. You broke it up and chased them out. If you had acted as an adult investigator instead of an ill-tempered child I might have got somewhere.

*

CRAMER

Of sure. I bitched it for you. I'd do anything to square it, anything you say. Why don't you ask me to get them all in here again, right now?

WOLFE

An excellent idea. Excellent. I do ask it. Use Mr. Goodwin's phone.

CRAMER

By God! You thought I meant it?

WOLFE

I mean it. You wouldn't be here if you weren't desperate. Get those people here and I'll see what I can do.

*

*

DEXTER

Who the hell does this man think he is?

Cramer, not replying and scowling at Wolfe, heads over to Archie's desk where Archie has already dialed a number.

CRAMER

Purley? Anything from on high?
Yeah. Yeah. File it under "C"
for crap. No. You've got a
list of the people who were
here at Wolfe's Friday evening.
Get Rowcliffe to help you on
the phones and tell them to
come to Wolfe's office
immediately. You'd better
include Phoebe Gunther.

(he listens a second)

Yeah, I know all right. But
what's the difference how I
lose my job if I lose it?

(heads for the red
leather chair, takes
out a cigar.)

There. I never thought I'd
come to this.

*
*
*
*
*

DEXTER

I have some phone calls to make.
I'll use the booth on the corner
and return later.

Archie gets up to see him out.

CRAMER

We're worse off than we were
before. No fingerprints
anywhere. The cylinders were
dictated by Boone on the 19th
and typed by Miss Gunther on
the 20th. If Boone picked up
the wrong case when he left
Washington, then the cylinders
he dictated on the day he was
murdered should have been in
his office, but they weren't.
There's one other possibility:
Phoebe Gunther flew down there
the day after the murder and
returned that afternoon. She
had a suitcase with her.

*
*
*

WOLFE

She has no difficulty explaining
her movements?

Archie returns.

CRAMER

Miss Gunther has no difficulty explaining anything.

WOLFE

I believe Archie agrees with you.

Fritz enters with beer and Cramer takes a draught right away.

CRAMER

The commissioner has got St. Vitus's dance. The Mayor is having nightmares, and it's all my fault. I mustn't get tough with any refined citizens, but on the other hand, I must realize that public sentiment absolutely demands that the murderer of Cheney Boone shall not go unpunished, and here, by God, I sit beefing to you. That's the situation my fat friend, as Charlie McCarthy said to Herbert Hoover.

*

*

*

The doorbell rings. Archie goes.

CRAMER (CONT'D)

And, I know damn well no client of yours has ever been convicted of murder.

WOLFE

No man is my client. My client is an association.

CRAMER

Well, here it comes.

*

Archie enters with Hattie Harding.

MISS HARDING

(out of breath)

What is it? Have they---what is it?

Nero shuts his eyes pretending she isn't there in his office, Cramer rolls his eyes and looks as if things couldn't get worse. Archie steers her to one of the yellow chairs.

ARCHIE

No, no, calm down.
(MORE)

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
 We've just decided to have these
 affairs twice a week, that's
 all.

WIPE TO:

33 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

33

The room is now full: Purley Stebbins, G. G. Spero, Mrs. Boone, Solomon Dexter, Don O'Neill, Alger Kates, Nina Boone, father and son Erskine, Breslow, and Winterhoff.

ARCHIE
 (to Nero)
 It's the same as last time.
 Miss Gunther just doesn't like
 crowds.

Nero looks to Cramer who turns to Purely.

PURLEY STEBBINS
 I got Miss Gunther at her
 apartment over an hour ago and
 she said she'd come.

WOLFE
 We won't wait. Go ahead.

CRAMER
 (standing up)
 First, you got the request to
 come here from my office, but
 from here on it is not official.
 I am responsible for getting
 you people here....

The camera has picked up Archie as he surveys the guests. He eyes suddenly focus, and we see that he is staring at Fritz who is making faces at him through the first door to the office. Archie is perplexed. Finally, Fritz gestures for Archie to come. Cramer continues speaking in the background (p.117 of the paperback edition continues the speech as needed). Archie works his way around the back of the group and moves into the hall.

CUT TO

34 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

34

Archie approaches Fritz.

ARCHIE
 Something biting you?

FRITZ

It's, it's.... Come I'll show
you.

They head down the hall and pass through the front door to the stoop, where Fritz points down to the service vestibule five steps below street level. It dark and hard to see anything.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

Look. I came to see if the
service gate was locked, the
way I always do....

ARCHIE (V.O.)

The light was dim, but I could
see well enough to tell what
the object was, though not for
certain who it was.

(back to Fritz)
Get a flashlight.

Archie heads down the stoop and then down the five steps leading to the gate to the service vestibule. He squats next to the object and reaches out with both hands just as Fritz returns with the flashlight which he points at the object which turns out to be ... Phoebe Gunther, and from the look on her face, she is quite dead.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

(to Fritz)
You stay right here.

Archie rushes back in, grabs a pencil and paper from the hall phone, writes a quick note and hurries back into the office, Wolfe is speaking as he enters and quietly pads up to Wolfe's desk where he hands Nero the note. Wolfe scans the note briefly, then, without changing his tone...

WOLFE

Mr. Cramer. If you please.
Mr. Goodwin has a message for
you and Mr. Stebbins. Will you
go with him to the hall?

Behind Archie as he exits with Cramer and Stebbins, we can hear Nero continuing..

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Now, the question which confronts
us is whether it is credible,
under the....

His voice fades away as we....

CUT TO:

35 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

35

Archie, Cramer and Stebbins move into the hall. Archie turns and starts to explain to Cramer what's happened under Archie's voice over. Suddenly, Cramer and Stebbins run off toward the front door.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

The working assumption was that Phoebe had come and mounted the stoop and that the murderer had joined her on the stoop and struck her before she had pushed the bell button, stunning her and knocking her off the stoop into the areaway.

IRIS OUT AND IN

36 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

36

Wolfe's office is full. Cramer, Stebbins, the Police Commissioner Hombert, the District Attorney Skinner, Spero and Travis of the FBI., several uniform cops, Wolfe, Archie and, of course all of the suspects.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

A piece of 1 1/2 inch iron pipe had been found lying next to her. Phoebe Gunther had been hit on the head with it four times.

CRAMER

....so the piece of pipe she was killed with has been examined for fingerprints and we haven't found any that are any good. So listen closely so you'll know what we're asking next. The piece...

BRESLOW

This is outrageous. We've all answered questions! We've let ourselves be searched! We've told you everything we.....

CRAMER

(pointing at one of the
uniform cops)

Go and stand by him and if he
doesn't keep his trap shut,
shut it.

(back to the group)

For six days I've been handling
you people as tender as babies
because I had to, but now it's
different. One of you killed
that woman and it's a fair guess
that the same one killed Boone.
So here's what I came in here
to say. The piece of pipe that
was used to kill her was old
and flaking, and would have
left microscopic flakes on hands
and clothing. So before you
leave, we are going to check
your hands and clothes with a
microscope.

*
*
*
*
*
*

(Cramer turns to Purely)

Take them out and get started,
Purely.

A collective rumble, but no one is ready to tangle with Cramer
right now. The suspects are escorted out. The phone rings
and Archie answers it. A beat then to Travis....

ARCHIE

Mr. Travis. For you.

Travis takes the phone and listens while everyone stares at
him. After a beat he hangs up.

TRAVIS

Our men have completed their
search of Miss Gunther's
apartment in Washington. Miss
Gunther was lying to us. In a
hat box in a closet they found
nine stenophone cylinders.

WOLFE

Confound it! Nine?

TRAVIS

Nine. A BPR man was with them
and has identified them as the
ones Boone recorded the day he
was murdered. What's wrong
with nine?

WOLFE

For you, apparently, nothing.
For me, nine is no better than
none.

*

TRAVIS

(to Wolfe)

That's a damn shame. I
apologize. They should have
found ten.

(back to the others)

They're making a transcription
and will call as soon as they
get something we might use.

WOLFE

Then they won't call.

Everyone turns to Wolfe for an explanation when the door
opens, and Purely enters followed by a new guy, who is
carrying some clothes.

CRAMER

(to the new guy)

Well?

PHILLIPS

This scarf was in the right
hand pocket of this coat, and
on its surface are between 15
and 20 particles which came
from that pipe.

*

*

CRAMER

Whose coat is it?

PHILLIPS

Alger Kates, sir.

WIPE TO

37 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARD -- NIGHT

37

Kates stands in front of Wolfe's desk. The scarf is not to
be seen. The DA, the commissioner, etc., are positioned
around the room.

WOLFE

You and I have hardly spoken,
have we Mr. Kates?

ALGER KATES

Enough to satisfy me.

WOLFE

If I were in your position,
innocent or not, I would feel
the same. But what do you say?
Shall we have a talk?

ALGER KATES

I'm listening.

WOLFE

I know you are. Why?

ALGER KATES

Because if I don't the inference
will be made that I'm frightened,
and the further inference will
be made that I'm guilty of
something.

WOLFE

Good. Then we understand each
other.

Wolfe brings the scarf up from behind the desk and casually
puts it in front of Kates.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Were you a close friend of Miss
Gunther's?

ALGER KATES

Not a close personal friend,
no. I've see her frequently in
connection with our work.

*

WOLFE

What do you think of her?

ALGER KATES

I thought well of her.

WOLFE

Do you admire her?

ALGER KATES

Yes, as a colleague.

WOLFE

Did she dress well?

ALGER KATES

Considering Miss Gunther's
striking appearance and her
(MORE)

ALGER KATES (CONT'D)
voluptuous figure, I thought
she dressed extremely well.

WOLFE
Then you did notice what she
wore. In that case, when did
you last see her wearing this
scarf?

ALGER KATES
I don't remember ever seeing
her wear that.

WOLFE
This is important, Mr. Kates.
Are you sure?

ALGER KATES
I've never seen it before. On
Miss Gunther or anyone else.

WOLFE
That's a disappointment, because
clinging to this scarf are many
tiny particles which came from
the piece of pipe that was used
to murder Miss Gunther, and
also because the scarf was found
in the pocket of your overcoat.

ALGER KATES
Whose overcoat?

WOLFE
Archie.
(Archie hands Wolfe the
coat, Wolfe turns back
to Kates)
This is your coat, isn't it?

ALGER KATES
(turning around and
yelling at the top of
his lungs)
Mr. Dexter! *Mr. Dexter! Come
in here!*

Cramer grabs Kates by the arm.

CRAMER
Cut it out. Cut out that
yelling. What do you want Dexter
for?

ALGER KATES

I told him something like this would happen. I told Phoebe to have nothing to do with Nero Wolfe. I told her not to come here tonight!

CRAMER

When did you tell her not to come here tonight? When?

ALGER KATES

Let go of me. Let go!

Cramer lets him go and Kates sits down on a side chair and doesn't move, clearly breaking off relations with everyone in the room.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

So began the great scarf hunt. One after another, Stebbins marched our guests in and asked them if they had ever seen the scarf before. First Mrs. Boone. Then Thomas Erskine. And the performance was repeated four more times before Mr. Winterhoff was led in.

*

*

CRAMER

(to Winterhoff)
Mr. Winterhoff, please look....

WINTERHOFF

Where did you get that?
(referring to the scarf,
of course)
That's my scarf!

CRAMER

Did you wear it here tonight?
Or have it in your pocket?

WINTERHOFF

Neither. That's the one that was stolen from me last week.

CRAMER

Where and when last week?

WINTERHOFF

Right here. When I was here Friday evening.

CRAMER
Here at Wolfe's house?

WINTERHOFF
Yes.

CRAMER
You wore it here?

WINTERHOFF
Yes.

CRAMER
When you found it gone who did
you complain to? *

WINTERHOFF
I didn't - what's this about?
Where did you get it? *

CRAMER
I'm asking the questions. You
mentioned it to no one at all?
You didn't phone here the next
day to ask about it?

WINTERHOFF
I mentioned it to my wife and
no I didn't call here. Why
would I? I've got dozens of
scarves. And I insist that....

CRAMER
Ok insist, but there is evidence,
good evidence, that your scarf
was wrapped around the pipe
that killed Miss Gunther. Have
you any comment? *

Off Winterhoff's shocked expression we hear Archie's V.O.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Winterhoff had things to say,
but he was shooed out because
none of them seemed important.
When the door was closed behind
him, Cramer sat down and pulled
in a deep breath, then let it
out. *

CRAMER
Jee-zuss--Christ.

POLICE COMMISSIONER
Winterhoff's a damn liar.

*

DISTRICT ATTORNEY
For God's sake, we're not after
a liar. We're after a murderer!

WOLFE
I would like to go to bed.
It's four o'clock and you're
stuck.

Wolfe is tired, but gets up to leave.

CRAMER
Oh, we are. We're stuck. The
way you put it, I suppose you're
not stuck?

WOLFE
Me? No, Mr. Cramer. No, indeed.
But I'm tired and sleepy.

Cramer glowers at Wolfe.

*

WOLFE (CONT'D)
Archie, please see our guests
out. I'm going to bed.

*

*

ARCHIE
Instructions for the morning,
sir?

WOLFE
Yes. Let me alone!

CUT TO

38 INT. KITCHEN - THE NEXT MORNING

38

ARCHIE (V.O.)
From there on I had the feeling
that I was out of it.

We see Fritz bringing Nero's breakfast tray back from
upstairs. There is a note on it which he hands to Archie.

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The next morning Fritz brought
Wolfe's breakfast tray down and
there was a note instructing me
to get Saul, Fred and Del Bascom,
(MORE)

*

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
to report at the office at eleven
o'clock.

*
*

CUT TO

39 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

39

Saul, Fred and Del Bascom, owner of the largest detective agency in NY, are listening to Nero.

CUT TO

40 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

40*

ARCHIE (V.O.)
He had chased me out and sent
me to the kitchen to help Fritz
pluck the squabs.

*

(We could see feathers flying around if we want.)

CUT TO:

41 INT. DINING ROOM - A MINUTE BEFORE LUNCHTIME

41

Archie comes in from the kitchen. Maybe one or two feathers are still clinging to him. Nero is already seated.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
When I came in for lunch, Wolfe
told me.....

WOLFE
(raising an eyebrow at
the feathers)
Archie, any envelopes from Bascom
are to reach me unopened.

ARCHIE
(noticing, cleaning
them off)
Hah. Reports? Big operations?

WOLFE
Yes. Twenty men. One of them
may be worth his salt.

ARCHIE
(Indignant)
Do you want me to move to a
hotel so I won't hear anything
unfit for my ears?

WOLFE

(Ignoring him)
Archie, you've been with me a long time now.

ARCHIE

Yeah. How shall we do it?
Shall I resign or shall you fire me?

WOLFE

Find out how willing you can make Miss Boone.

ARCHIE

You know, I didn't think that kind of thought ever got within a million miles of you. Make Miss Boone? If you can think it you can do it. Make her yourself.

WOLFE

I am speaking of an investigating operation by gaining her confidence. I need to know how intimate she was with Miss Gunther. Why don't you telephone after lunch?

He stares at Archie a second then turns his attention back to his salad.

WIPE TO

42 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING -- DAY 42

Archie is talking on the phone. Intercut as necessary.

ARCHIE

Thank you for coming to the phone Miss Boone. I'm calling about something someone else wants. Am I keeping you from something important?

NINA

No, I have a minute. What is it that somebody else wants?

ARCHIE

I'll come to that later.
(MORE)

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

I would like to use some NIA expense money to buy you dinner, with the understanding that it is strictly business and I am not to be trusted.

NINA

You sound really dangerous. Is that what someone else wanted you to do, kid me into having dinner with you?

ARCHIE

The dinner was my idea. It popped out when I heard your voice again. So, how do you usually say no? Blunt? Or do you zigzag to avoid hurting people's feelings?

NINA

Oh, I'm blunt.

ARCHIE

All right, wait till I brace myself. Shoot.

NINA

I couldn't go tonight, no matter how tricky you are. I'm eating here with my aunt.

*

ARCHIE

Then lunch tomorrow at one?

NINA

I may be a little late. I'm usually a little late.

ARCHIE

I should hope so. You look perfectly normal to me. See you tomorrow.

Archie hangs up with a satisfied grin on his face.

WOLFE

This evening would have been better.

ARCHIE

My dear sir, try getting her to meet you anytime whatever, even at Tiffany's to try things on.

Wolfe chuckles. After a beat he chuckles again. Irritated, Archie leaves.

CUT TO

43 INT. WOLFE'S FRONT DOOR - MORNING 43

Under Archie's Voice Over we see the stenograph machine arrive...

ARCHIE (V.O.)

I was being entrusted with nothing but the little chores. For example, I was asked for a second time to have the Stenophone Company deliver a machine and leave it on a daily rental basis, though it was clear over my head since we had nothing to play on it.

*

*

CUT TO

44 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY - IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARD 44

Archie and Wolfe are at their desks and Erskine senior is in the red leather chair. With him are Breslow, Winterhoff, Hattie Harding, Erskine junior and Don O'Neill.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Erskine and company showed up to try and get from Wolfe some kind of progress report.

ED ERSKINE SENIOR

For God's sake, when? Twenty four hours? Forty eight? Each days delay means untold damage to the most vital interests of the Republic and the American people.

YOUNG ERSKINE

You're breaking my heart pop.

ED ERSKINE SENIOR

Shut up!

ARCHIE (V.O.)
They scratched and pulled hair
right in front of us. The
pressure was too much for them
and the NIA was no longer a
united front.

Under Archie's V.O. we see them quarreling angrily with each
other.

ERSKINE SENIOR
(to Wolfe)
So we've decided to offer a
reward of one hundred thousand
dollars to anyone furnishing
information leading to the arrest
and trial of the murderer.

This gets Wolfe's attention.

WOLFE
You wouldn't expect conviction?

ERSKINE SENIOR
No, of course not, arrest and
trial would be enough.

Off Wolfe's curious look we hear Archie's V.O. *

ARCHIE (V.O.)
I missed Wolfe's answer to that
since I was leaving for my lunch
with Nina Boone.

And.... *

WIPE TO

45 INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

45

Archie sits at a table with Nina Boone.

NINA
You'll have to be patient with
me, Mr. Goodwin, we've had no
rest since my uncle's murder
and I must look like a wreck.

ARCHIE
I admit, Miss Boone, it's a bad
time to judge.
(MORE)

*
*
*

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Your eyes are puffy and you've been clamping your jaw so much that your chin juts. But you are not actually unsightly. Seeing you from behind on the sidewalk, one man out of three would walk faster to get a look at you from the side or the front.

*
*
*
*

NINA

Oh? And the other two?

ARCHIE

My Lord, what do you want? One out of three is tremendous. I was piling it on, merely because your hair happens to appeal to me and I might go so far as to break into a trot.

*

NINA

Then next time I'll sit with my back to you.

She waits to let the waiter deliver their salads.

NINA (CONT'D)

So, what would you like to ask me?

ARCHIE

Not yet. My rule with a girl is to spend the first fifteen minutes discussing her looks. If I'm any good, I'll have you in a frame of mind to let me even copy down your social security number.

NINA

I would hate to miss that. But I promised my aunt I would be back by 2:30.

*

ARCHIE

Then we'd better start without taking time to break down your resistance.

*
*

NINA

I like this. Go on and drag things out of me.

ARCHIE

My technique is a little unusual. For instance, there are probably a hundred men - no, more than that - investigating your people's pasts, to find out, for example, if Mrs. Boone was having secret trysts with Frank Erskine or if you and Breslow are champing at the bit until he can get his wife to give him a divorce. My technique is different. I prefer to ask you and settle it. Are you?

*

NINA

Am I what? Champing?

ARCHIE

At the bit.

NINA

No. I'm champing shrimps. Look, this seems perfectly silly.

*

*

ARCHIE

Then let's get it over with. Did you know any of those NIA people personally?

NINA

Maybe a few, but if we went over every conversation we wouldn't find anything even remotely resembling an angle.

ARCHIE

How about your aunt? Those trysts with Erskine. Did she have trysts?

NINA

Ask her? Maybe that's what she wants to see you about.

ARCHIE

Do you accept Breslow's suggestion that Mrs. Boone killed her husband on account of jealousy of Phoebe Gunther, and later, at Wolfe's house, finished the job?

NINA
No, does anybody?

ARCHIE
But wasn't Phoebe Gunther
special?

NINA
She was indeed, she was extremely
special.

ARCHIE
Was she going to do anything as
trite as having a baby?

NINA
Oh, good Lord. You pick up all
the crumbs don't you?

ARCHIE
Did you like Miss Gunther?

NINA
I - yes, I guess I liked her.
Of course I envied her. I would
have liked to have her job, but
I wasn't foolish enough to think
I could fill it. She was very
important and very busy. And
she had BPR fever.

ARCHIE
Yeah? Bad?

NINA
One of the most severe cases on
record. It was her firm belief
that whatever the BPR does is
right. She was a born fighter.
She was actually more dangerous
to the NIA than my uncle.

ARCHIE
What about Dexter or Kates?

NINA
To assume that Dexter would
have done anything to hurt Uncle
Cheney is absurd. As for Mr.
Kates, good heavens, look at
him! He's just an adding
machine!

ARCHIE

He is in a pig's eye. He's
sinister.

NINA

Alger Kates sinister? Really.
No matter what Nero Wolfe charges
the NIA, you're certainly trying
your best to clear them
completely - and it looks as if
you don't care how you do it!

*

ARCHIE

When your face is flushed like
that it makes me feel like
refusing to take any money from
the NIA. Some day I'll tell
you how wrong you are to suspect
us of wanting to frame one of
your heroes like Dexter or Kates.

A waiter carrying a plug in phone interrupts.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

What is it, Carlos?

CARLOS

Telephone, for you, Mr. Goodwin.

Carlos plugs the phone in and gives the handset to Archie.

ARCHIE

Goodwin talking.

NERO

(very upset)
Archie. Get down here at once.

ARCHIE

What for?

NERO

Without delay!

ARCHIE

But listen. We're just leaving,
to see Mrs. Boone. I've got
her.....

NERO

I said get down here!

WIPE TO

46 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

46

Archie comes striding in.

WOLFE

What the devil took you so long?

ARCHIE

Now just a minute. Aware that you were having a fit, I made it as fast as I could. Is it a pinch?

WOLFE

It is insufferable. Who is Inspector Ash?

ARCHIE

Ash? You remember him. He was a captain under Cramer. Now in Homicide out in Queens. No sense of humour. Why, what has he done?

WOLFE

Is the car in good condition?

ARCHIE

Certainly, Why?

WOLFE

I want you to drive me to Police Headquarters.

ARCHIE

My God.

Archie drops into a chair.

WOLFE

Mr. Cramer has been removed from the Boone-Gunther case and relieved of his command. He has been replaced by Inspector Ash who has issued a warrant for my arrest as a material witness. That's the situation. It is unacceptable.

ARCHIE

Cramer got the boot?

WOLFE

So Mr. What's-his-name said.

ARCHIE
Who, Hombert? The Commissioner?

WOLFE
Yes. Confound it, must I repeat
the whole thing for you?

CUT TO

47 INT. COMMISSION HOMBERT'S OFFICE - DAY

47

Inspector Ash, Police Commissioner Hombert, and District Attorney Skinner are there with Wolfe, uncomfortably seated in a chair too small for him, still with his outdoor clothes on. Archie leans against a nearby desk.

INSPECTOR ASH
(in an insulting tone)
You are not a lawyer. Nothing
that has been said to you by
anyone has the status of a
privileged conversation.

*

WOLFE
(objectionable tone is
his own right)
That remark is childish. Would
I admit I know something that I
don't want you to know about
and then refuse to tell you
about it on the grounds that it
was privileged? Phui!

*

INSPECTOR ASH
The trouble with you, Wolfe, is
that you've been spoiled by my
predecessor, Inspector Cramer.
He didn't know how to handle
you. With me in charge you'll
see a big difference.

*

*

WOLFE
Mr. Ash, you are both a numskull
and a hooligan.

INSPECTOR ASH
So, you're going to try it on
me.
(moving closer to Wolfe,
in a menacing way)
I don't see.....

HOMBERT
That will do for that.

INSPECTOR ASH

Yes sir, I only wanted....

HOMBERT

I don't give a damn what you wanted. It was your idea that Wolfe was holding out and it was time to put the screws on him. Go ahead. I'm all for that.

INSPECTOR ASH

Yes sir. I only know this, that in every case where Wolfe horned in and got within smelling distance of money he has always managed to get something that no one else gets and he always hangs on to it until it suits his convenience to let go.

D.A. SKINNER

You're quite right Inspector. You might add that when he does let go the result is usually disastrous for some lawbreaker.

INSPECTOR ASH

Yes? And is that a reason for letting him call the tune for the Police Department?

WOLFE

I would like to ask if I was hauled down here to listen to a discussion of my character. This babbling is frivolous.

INSPECTOR ASH

You were hauled down here to tell us everything you know, about these crimes. I wouldn't be surprised if you know something that gives you a good clear idea of who it was that killed Cheney Boone and the Gunther woman.

*

WOLFE

Certainly I do. So do you.

Ash, Hombert, and Skinner react visibly, not happy to confirm their suspicion that Wolfe is holding out on them.

ARCHIE

(trying to calm them
down.)

He doesn't mean that we've got
the murderer down in our car.
There are details to be attended
to.

But Ash has moved within two feet of Wolfe where he stands
looking down at him with his hands behind his back.

INSPECTOR ASH

You either mean it, or you don't.
If it's a bluff, you'll eat it.
If it isn't, for once in your
life you're going to be opened
up.

(turning to Hombert)

Let me take him, sir. Here in
your office it might be
embarrassing.

WOLFE

Imbecile. Hopeless imbecile.
(Wolfe levers himself
up out of the chair)
This is farcical. Take me home,
Archie.

INSPECTOR ASH

No you don't.
(he grips Wolfe's arm)
You're under arrest, my man.
This time you....

In a lightening stroke, Wolfe slaps Ash in the face. Ash is
so surprised it takes a moment for him to react. Then his
fist heads toward Wolfe viciously, only to be interrupted by
Archie.

WOLFE

Hit him Archie! Knock him down!

By this time Hombert and Skinner have arrived and the two of
them are separated. Archie straightens his jacket as Wolfe
turns to him.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

I am under arrest. You are
not. Telephone Mr. Parker to
arrange for bail immedi....

INSPECTOR ASH
Goodwin is staying right here.
Or rather you're both going
with me.

*

D.A. SKINNER
Now listen. This is ridiculous.
We all want....

WOLFE
Am I under arrest?

D.A. SKINNER
Oh, forget that! Technically,
I suppose....

WOLFE
Then I am. You can go to the
devil. If you want me to discuss
anything with you, if you want
a word out of me, vacate those
warrants and get rid of Mr.
Ash. He jars me.

INSPECTOR ASH
I'll take him. He struck and
officer.

Skinner and Hombert exchange looks, then Hombert turns to
Ash.

HOMBERT
Inspector, I think you had better
leave this to the District
Attorney and me.

INSPECTOR ASH
It's up to you, sir. If you
want him to get away with....

HOMBERT
At the moment I don't care what
he gets away with. I care about
just one thing. Getting this
case solved.

INSPECTOR ASH
Yes sir.
(He turns to leave but
turns to Wolfe before
he leaves)
Some day, I'll help you loose
some weight.

He strides out of the room.

HOMBERT

All right, you got away with it, now what do you know?

WOLFE

First, I would like to learn something. Why was Mr. Cramer demoted and disgraced.

HOMBERT

He wasn't.

WOLFE

Nonsense. Whatever you call it, why?

HOMBERT

Officially, for a change of scene. Off the record, he lost his head. You can't treat some people like a bunch of waterfront hoodlums.

WOLFE

Who brought the pressure?

HOMBERT

It came from everywhere. I've never seen anything like it. But that wasn't the only reason. Cramer was muffing it. He had got his mind fixed on one aspect of the case, one little thing, and that was all he could think of or talk about - that missing 10th cylinder.

*
*
*
*

WOLFE

Mr. Cramer was concentrating on that?

HOMBERT

Yes. He had fifty men looking for it and he wanted to assign another fifty!

WOLFE

And that was one of your reasons for removing him?

HOMBERT

Yes. Actually the main reason.

WOLFE

Hah. Then you are an imbecile too. I didn't know Mr. Cramer had it in him to see that. Finding that cylinder, if not our only chance, is beyond all comparison, our best one.

*

*

D.A. SKINNER

(snorting)

That's you all right, Wolfe! I suspected it was only fireworks. You said you've already got him.

WOLFE

I said nothing of the sort. I said I know something that gives me a good clear idea of the murderer's identity, and also that you people know it, too.

Hombert and Skinner exchange looks.

D.A. SKINNER

You impervious bastard.

HOMBERT

In effect, then, you are saying that you have nothing to tell us, that you can't help us in any way..

WOLFE

I'm helping all I can. I'm paying a man \$20 a day to explore the possibility that Miss Gunther broke that cylinder into little pieces and threw it in the rubbish.

*

HOMBERT

Suppose you tell us what gives you a good clear idea of who the murderer is, including the who? Off the record.

WOLFE

No, sir.

HOMBERT

Why not?

WOLFE

Because of your idiotic treatment of Mr. Cramer. If my ideas seemed to make sense to you, you would pass them on to Mr. Ash, and he might even, by pure chance, do something that would result in his solving the case, and I would stop short of nothing to prevent that. Help Mr. Ash to a triumph? God forbid!

*

D.A. SKINNER

How about this, do you think Miss Gunther knew who killed Boone?

WOLFE

Certainly she did.

D.A. SKINNER

Naturally you'd like that since it would eliminate your clients.

WOLFE

You're missing the whole point. What has been the outstanding fact about this case? This, that the public, the people, have unanimously convicted - not an individual, but an organization, the National Industrial Association - of the murder of Cheney Boone. Now what if you were Miss Gunther and knew who had killed Boone? Would she have exposed him? Of course not. She was a zealot, and she was intelligent enough to calculate that if someone was arrested for the murder of Cheney Boone the resentment against the NIA would end. If she had evidence that pointed to someone - anyone - she would suppress it, but she wouldn't destroy it because she wouldn't want the murderer to go free. She would put it where it wouldn't be found, but where she could retrieve it once the NIA had been sufficiently damaged.

*

*

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*

(MORE)

WOLFE (CONT'D)

She was a remarkable young woman,
but she made the mistake of
permitting the murderer to learn
that she knew who he was, and
she paid for that.

HOMBERT

You're as bad as Cramer. What
makes you so damn sure about
that cylinder? Have you got it
in your pocket?

WOLFE

No. If I had!

HOMBERT

I think that it is conceivable
that you would like to sell a
bill of goods. I don't say
you're barefaced liar.

WOLFE

I don't say I'm not, Mr. Hombert.
We all take those chances when
we exchange words with other
people. So I might as well go
home.

(he turns to Archie)
Come Archie.

*

Archie and Wolfe head for the door off Skinner and Hombert's
astonished looks.

WIPE TO

48 INT. WOLFE'S FRONT DOOR -- AFTERNOON

48

Fritz lets Nero and Archie in.

WOLFE

(he's in a good mood, a
beer now, dinner
shortly, the warrants
are vacated)
Fritz, are the squabs in the
oven yet?

FRITZ

No sir. It is too early.

WOLFE
(Wolfe eyes Fritz, but
decides not to argue
with him.)
Beer please, Fritz.
(he starts off to the
office)

FRITZ
Sir, you have a visitor in the
office.

WOLFE
(stopping in his tracks,
demanding.)
Who is it? *

FRITZ
Mrs. Cheney Boone.

WOLFE
Good heavens. That hysterical
gammer?

WIPE TO:

49 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY - IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARD

49

WOLFE
I have ten minutes to spare,
madam.

MRS. BOONE
Naturally, you're wondering why
I'm here.

WOLFE
Naturally.

MRS. BOONE
I phoned my cousin this morning
and he told me about you.

WOLFE
Do I know your cousin?

MRS. BOONE
General Carpenter. He told me
not to believe anything you
said but to do whatever you
told me to do.

WOLFE
And?

MRS. BOONE

So, I came to see you to get some advice. Do I have to tell you why I prefer not to go to someone in the FBI or the police?

WOLFE

You are under no compulsion, madam, to tell me anything at all.

*

MRS. BOONE

My cousin warned me that you would be incredibly rude. --I might as well come right out and say that I think I am responsible for the death of Phoebe Gunther.

WOLFE

That's an uncomfortable thought. Where did you get it?

MRS. BOONE

That's what I want to tell you. But I don't know what to do. I don't want to go to the police or the FBI because I may have committed a crime but it seems silly to tell you on account of the way my husband felt about the NIA, and you're working for them.

*

*

*

*

WOLFE

What was the crime you committed? What did you do?

MRS. BOONE

I didn't do anything. That's the trouble. What happened was that Miss Gunther told me what *she* was doing and I promised her I wouldn't tell anyone, and I didn't.

Wolfe frowns in silence for a moment, then

WOLFE

Archie.

ARCHIE

Yes, sir?

WOLFE

Your notebook. Take a letter.
To the National Industrial
Association: Gentlemen: The
course events have taken obliges
me to inform you that it will
be impossible for me to continue
to act on your behalf with regard
to the murders of Mr. Boone and
Miss Gunther. I enclose herewith
my check for \$30,000, returning
the retainer you have paid me
and ending my association with
you in this matter.

*

ARCHIE

Do I draw the check?

WOLFE

Certainly. You can't enclose
it if it hasn't been drawn.

(Wolfe's eyes move to
Mrs. Boone)

I am now a neutral. What did
Miss Gunther tell you?

MRS. BOONE

(she takes a moment,
making up her mind,
then)

She knew who killed my husband.
My husband had dictated something
on one of those cylinders that
told about it, so the cylinder
was evidence, and she had it.
She intended to give it to the
police, but she was waiting
until the talk and the rumors
had done as much damage as
possible to the NIA .

*

WOLFE

Why did she tell you?

MRS. BOONE

Because I went to her and told
her I knew she wasn't telling
the truth about the leather
case, I knew she had it with
her at the table in the dining
room. She told me so I wouldn't
go to the police.

*

WOLFE

Did she tell you who the murderer was?

MRS. BOONE

No. She didn't. She said it would be too dangerous for me to know. That's where I now think I did wrong - why I'm responsible for her death. If I had broken my promise to her and told the police about it she wouldn't have been killed. As you can see, I have broken the law as well.

WOLFE

That part of it's all right. Or it will be, as soon as you tell me, and I tell the police, where Miss Gunther put the cylinder.

*
*

MRS. BOONE

But I can't. I don't know. She didn't tell me.

WOLFE

Nonsense! Of course she told you!

MRS. BOONE

She did not. That's one reason I came to see you. She said I didn't need to worry about the man who killed my husband being punished. But if the missing cylinder is the only evidence...

*
*

(Wolfe's eyes are shut and she is momentarily confused by it. She looks to Archie for help, then back to Wolfe, continuing anyway)
So you see why I need advice.

*

WOLFE

(his eyes opening slightly)
I regret, madam, that there is nothing I can do for you.

(MORE)

WOLFE (CONT'D)

You should go home and telephone the police immediately and tell them everything you have told me. I agree that if you had broken your promise Miss Gunther would not have been killed, but it was she who asked you for the promise, so the responsibility is hers.

*
*
*

Nero is standing.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Good afternoon madam.

Nero exits and Archie shows the startled Mrs. Boone out.
We...

WIPE TO

50 INT. KITCHEN - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

50

Archie comes in. Fritz is standing while Nero inspects the sweetbreads.

*
*

WOLFE

(to Archie)

That letter and check. We'd better get that done.

*

ARCHIE

What, to the NIA?

WOLFE

Yes.

(to Fritz)

10 minutes at the most.

ARCHIE

My God. You don't mean you're actually going to send it?

WOLFE

Certainly. Didn't I tell that woman I would?

FRITZ

They won't chill properly in less than 12.

ARCHIE

This is not being eccentric.

(MORE)

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

This is plain loony. What about Operation Payroll? And where do you suddenly get a scruple? I regret to report, sir, that the checkbook is lost.

WOLFE

(to Fritz)

It would turn delicacy to mush.

(to Archie)

Draw the check and type the letter. In time for the evening mail.

*
*
*
*

Fritz is steaming.

ARCHIE

Statistics show that forty-two and three tenths per cent of all geniuses go crazy sooner or later.

Archie starts out.

WOLFE

(regarding Archie
contemplatively)

Sit down a moment Archie. Dr. Vollmer is coming to see us later, and you need instructions.

Archie sits at his breakfast table and Nero starts talking under...

ARCHIE (V.O.)

At least his mind was still functioning enough to send for a doctor.

CUT TO

51 INT. WOLFE'S BEDROOM - EVENING

51

Archie is in Wolfe's chair by the window and Nero is in bed. There is a knock at the door and Fritz opens it and stands aside as Doc Vollmer enters and moves to shake Nero's hand.

WOLFE

No. Thank you. What's the ceiling on it? I don't want any.

ARCHIE
(to Vollmer)
I should have explained....

WOLFE
Do you want to pay two dollars
a pound for butter? Fifty cents
for shoe strings? A dollar for
a bottle of beer? Well, confound
it, answer me!

ARCHIE
I don't know whether it's the
willies or what.

WOLFE
You accuse me of wanting to
borrow money from you. Let me
tell you sir, you will be next!

He is shaking his finger at Vollmer.

VOLLMER
(turning to Archie with
a gleam in his eye)
Who wrote this script for him?

ARCHIE
He's been like this for several
hours, ever since I brought him
back home.

VOLLMER
Oh, he's been out of the house?

ARCHIE
Yes. From 3:15 till 6:00.
Under arrest.

VOLLMER
Well, the first thing is to get
some nurses. Where's the phone?
Either that or take him to the
hospital.

ARCHIE
That's the ticket. It's urgent.
We must act.

WOLFE
(his eyes opening)
Nurses? Phui. Aren't you a
physician?
(MORE)

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Don't you know a nervous breakdown when you see one?

VOLLMER

Yes.

WOLFE

What's the matter with it?

VOLLMER

It doesn't seem to be - uh, typical.

WOLFE

Faulty observation, or a defect in your training. Specifically it's a persecution complex.

VOLLMER

Who's doing the persecuting?

WOLFE

Tell him Archie.

ARCHIE

Look Doc, the situation is serious. As you know, we are investigating the Boone/Gunther murders for the NIA. Also, the high command didn't like the way Inspector Cramer was handling it and booted him, and replaced him with a baboon named Ash.

VOLLMER

For God's sake, why?

ARCHIE

I'm telling you. They are convinced Mr. Wolfe knows more than he's letting on. But, it gets worse. Mr. Wolfe has broken off relations with the NIA. When they get his letter, check enclosed, all hell will break open. The police know that Mr. Wolfe has never had a murderer for a client and they will, therefore, conclude that one of the NIA boys is guilty and that Mr. Wolfe knows all about it.

*

*

VOLLMER

Who is it?

ARCHIE

I don't know, and since Mr. Wolfe's a raving lunatic you can't ask him. But it's a cinch to read the future. The wagons will be at our door, with all the papers ready, first thing in the morning. All I can do is meet them, with a proper certificate signed by a reputable physician, certifying that in Mr. Wolfe's present condition it would be dangerous either to move him from his bed or to permit anyone to converse with him.

*
*
*
*

VOLLMER

This is absolutely fascinating. How long will the certificate have to last?

ARCHIE

I have no idea.

VOLLMER

If he's bad enough to prohibit visitors, I'll have to insist on calling on him at least twice a day.

*

ARCHIE

Call as often as you want. But make that certificate as strong as they come.

*
*

VOLLMER

It will be worded so as to serve its purpose.

(he turns to Wolfe)

I don't suppose you will say thank you?

*

WOLFE

They come in hordes, in chariots with spiked wheels....

VOLLMER

I'd better be going.

CUT TO

52 INT. VARIOUS HOUSE LOCATIONS

52

Under Archie's V.O. we see the activities described.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

It didn't get lonely during the two and a half days - Thursday, Friday and part of Saturday - the certificate worked. Newspapermen, cops, FBI's, NIA's -

We see Archie holding up the certificate and then shutting the door on each of these groups.

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

- they all appreciated that I was holding the fort under trying circumstances.

*

The onslaught is exasperating.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Throughout the siege Wolfe stayed put in his room, with the door locked. This led to several disputes.

CUT TO

53 INT. WOLFE'S BEDROOM -

53

Wolfe is in his pajamas eating breakfast. Archie is at the door.

WOLFE

Have Theodore come down at 9:00.

ARCHIE

No. You're putting on an act. Since it requires you to be out of circulation that leaves it strictly up to me and I make the rules. I am already handicapped enough by not knowing one single god damn thing about what you're up to.

*

WOLFE

Nonsense. You know all about it. I have twenty men looking for that cylinder. It must be found and it will be. I simply prefer to wait here in my room.

ARCHIE
Nuts. What if it's never found?

WOLFE
It will be found. It was not
destroyed, it exists, therefore
it will be found.

Archie stares at Wolfe suspiciously, then leaves.

WIPE TO

54 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

54

Archie comes in from upstairs. He sits down and stares at
the rented stenophone machine standing in the corner.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
My chief reason for admitting
that Wolfe really meant what he
said about the cylinder was
that we were paying a dollar a
day rent for that machine.

The house phone disrupts Archie's contemplation.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
Yes sir.

WOLFE
(intercut as necessary)
I wish to have a telephone
conversation with Inspector
Cramer. Please arrange it.

ARCHIE
No sir. No matter how bitter
Cramer might be he's still a
cop. And your voice sounding
natural and making sense would
tend to cast doubt on Doc
Vollmer's certificate.

WOLFE
Then find out where he is and
how to reach him.

Wolfe hangs up. Archie looks at the phone, and starts to
dial.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Finding Cramer was easy.
(MORE)

*

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 He had taken a two week leave
 of absence, for sulking. When
 I dialed his home Cramer answered
 himself. He kept the
 conversation brief and to the
 point.

*

Archie jerks the phone away from his ear reacting to a very
 loud noise. Archie picks up the house phone and buzzes Wolfe.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
 Cramer's on leave and is home
 licking his wounds. He can be
 reached there anytime, but he
 is not affable. I have a notion
 to send Doc Vollmer to see him.

*

*

*

WOLFE
 Good. Come up here. I'm having
 trouble with this window again.

ARCHIE
 Damn it, you stay in bed and
 stay away from the windows.

The door bell rings. Archie looks up.

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Naturally, the siege continued.

WIPE TO

55 INT. WOLFE'S FRONT DOOR -- MOMENTS LATER

55

ARCHIE (V.O.)
 The NIA came, all six of them.

They are clearly very disturbed and having at Archie before
 they even get to the office.

WIPE TO

56 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

56

ERSKINE SENIOR
 We *must* see him, and see him
 now. His resignation is an act
 of treachery and betrayal.

*

BRESLOW
 Do you realize that in the two
 days and three nights since
 (MORE)

*

BRESLOW (CONT'D)
 Phoebe Gunther's murder, the
 damage to the NIA has been
 incalculable and irretrievable.

ERSKINE SENIOR
 Our attorneys believe, and we
 do too, that Wolfe's abandoning
 the case without notice vastly
 increases the damage to us and
 is, therefore, actionable.

They continue carrying on at Archie

ARCHIE (V.O.)
 Through the years I have seen a
 lot of sore, frantic people in
 that office, but this aggregation
 of specimens was second to none.

CUT TO

57 INT. WOLFE'S BEDROOM -- LATER

57

ARCHIE
 ... and I did not see fit to
 inform them that you have kept
 the cylinder hounds on the job
 at your own expense.

WOLFE
 It doesn't matter. They'll
 learn it when the time comes.

ARCHIE
 Yeah. The scientific name for
 the disease you've got is acute
 malignant optimism.

CUT TO

58 INT. COMMISSION HOMBERT'S OFFICE - DAY

58

Hombert is on the phone with Archie, who appears in an semi-
 open iris on the other half of the screen. Hombert isn't
 happy either.

HOMBERT
 Yeah, I'm sorry Wolfe collapsed
 under the strain, and I'll tell
 Inspector Ash to conduct himself
 diplomatically when he gets
 there.

ARCHIE

Sorry. Doctor's orders, no one at all to see Mr. Wolfe, not even insurance salesmen.

HOMBERT

Look Goodwin, by dropping the NIA as his client, it puts it beyond argument that Wolfe knows the identity of the murderer, and is probably in possession of evidence against him. I want it, and I want it now.

*

ARCHIE (V.O.)

So it went for the next two days. Doc Vollmer got more of it than I did.

CUT TO

59 EXT. DOC VOLLMER'S OFFICE - DAY

59

Vollmer is shaking his head solemnly at another officer.

*

ARCHIE (V.O.)

The police were pestering him hourly about the state of Wolfe's health, but he enjoyed it.

When the officer turns away, Vollmer smiles behind his back.

CUT TO

60 INT. WOLFE'S BEDROOM

60

Nero is reading at his breakfast table, Archie and Vollmer stand at the door.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

At first, we visited Wolfe's bedroom, but when Wolfe started to enjoy himself....

WOLFE

(suddenly shaking a finger at the wall)
There, big black worms covered with dollars signs, crawling down from the ceiling....

*

Archie and Vollmer just turn around and leave as Wolfe raves on.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
.....we got out of there.

CUT TO

61 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

61

Archie is in the office working on papers.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
I never did understand why they
didn't try quicker to break it
up. Saturday noon the blow
fell.

*

The phone rings. Archie picks it up and listens.

*

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I was alone in the office when
the phone rang, and I was even
more alone when it was over and
I hung up.

*

Archie gets up and heads out.

WIPE TO

62 INT. WOLFE'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

62

ARCHIE
Okay Pagliaccio. You are booked
for the big time. An eminent
neurologist named Green, hired
by the City of New York and
equipped with a court order,
will arrive to give you an
audition at a quarter to six.
Now what?

WOLFE
So. This is what we've been
fearing. Why the devil did you
agree on an hour?

ARCHIE
Because I had to! Who do you
think I am, Joshua? They wanted
to make it right now. Damn it,
I got an extra five hours and I
had to fight for it!

WOLFE
Quit yelling at me.
(MORE)

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Go back downstairs. I'm going to have to think.

ARCHIE

Do you actually mean you haven't got it figured out what to do?

WOLFE

Archie, get out of here. How can I put my mind on it with you standing there bellowing?

ARCHIE (V.O.)

For the next two minutes, from 12:30 to 12:32, my state of mind was really not fit to be recorded for family viewing.

CUT TO

63 INT. HALLWAY - STAIRS - DAY

63

Archie comes down the stairs.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

The hell of it was, as I saw it, that we were being bombed out of a position that no one but a maniac would ever have occupied in the first place.

Just as he turns right to the office the doorbell rings. He about faces to the door, looks through the mirror, sees Breslow and barks:

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

No admittance. This is a house of mourning. Beat it!

He bangs the door and starts back down the hall but stops short. Wolfe, covered with nothing but eight yards of yellow silk pajamas, is descending. Archie goggles at him.

WOLFE

Get Fritz and come to the office at once.

Archie heads to the kitchen as Nero continues non-stop to the office.

WIPE TO:

64 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

64

Archie and Fritz hurry in. Wolfe is sitting up straight at his desk.

WOLFE

I am a brainless booby.

ARCHIE

(not missing an opportunity to be cordial)

Yes sir.

WOLFE

So are you Archie. Neither of us has any right, henceforth, to pretend possession of the mental processes of an anthropoid. I include you because you know how important that missing cylinder is and yet, by heaven, it hasn't occurred to either of us that Miss Gunther was alone in this room for a good four to five minutes when you brought her here that first evening. Phui! I have the brain of a mollusk!

*
*
*

*

ARCHIE

Yeah. So you think....?

WOLFE

No. I am through pretending to think. Fritz. A young woman was in here alone for four minutes. She had in her pocket a black cylinder, three inches by six inches. On the assumption that she hid it in this room, find it!

FRITZ

What do we do, divide it in sections?

ARCHIE

Divide hell, just start looking. There was no more conversation, we were too busy.

*

We see them searching everywhere. In the desks, under the couches, in the filing cabinets etc.

Wolfe sits up, having finished the search of his desk, exasperated.

WOLFE
Confound that woman.

Nero surveys the room, Archie is in the corner turning over cushions, Fritz by the bookcase.

FRITZ
Is this it, Mr. Wolfe?

Fritz is on his knee with several books on the floor in front of him, holding up the black cylinder. Archie is astounded. *

WOLFE
Ideal. She really was extraordinary. Archie, roll that machine out. Fritz, I congratulate you. You tried the bottom shelf first, which was sensible.

Archie has the machine plugged in and is inserting the cylinder.

ARCHIE
Well, this may do it. Or it may not.

WOLFE
What's the matter? Won't it go?

ARCHIE
Certainly it will go. Don't hurry me. I'm nervous. I have the brain of a mollusk.

Archie flips the switch and almost immediately we can hear Cheney Boone's voice:

BOONE
Miss Gunther. Tomorrow we must discuss something of the.....

ARCHIE (V.O.)
For five minutes neither of us moved a muscle. Wolfe was leaning back with his eyes closed, and I stared at the
(MORE)

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
grill on the loudspeaker
attachment.

WIPE TO

65 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

65

ARCHIE (V.O.)
When it came to the end, I
reached and turned the switch
off.

WOLFE
Our literature needs some
revision. For example, "dead
men tell no tales". Mr. Boone
is dead. Mr Boone is silent.
But he speaks.

*

ARCHIE
Yep. The silent speaker.

WOLFE
You have Mr. Cramer's phone
number?

*

ARCHIE
Sure.

WOLFE
Good. Get him.

*

DISSOLVE TO:

*

66 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY - LATER

66

Inspector Cramer is seated in the red leather chair watching Wolfe like a hawk. Seated around the room are Don O'Neill, Alger Kates, Henry Warder, and Saul Panzer. We see each of them under Archie's voice over:

ARCHIE (V.O.)
By four o'clock our guests were
seated. Inspector Cramer was
in the red leather chair. In
yellow chairs nearby were our
former client, Don O'Neill, his
Vice-President, Henry A Warder,
Alger Kates from the BPR, and
Saul Panzer was sitting over in
the corner by the globe.

WOLFE

This is going to be disagreeable gentlemen, for all three of you, so let's make it as brief as we can. We have found the tenth cylinder. It was hidden in this room by Miss Gunther last week.

O'NEILL

She wasn't here!

*

WOLFE

So you don't want this to be brief.

O'NEILL

You're damn right I do! The briefer the better!

WOLFE

Then don't interrupt.
(he turns back to the group)
We shall now listen to that cylinder. Do not, I beg you, interrupt. Archie, turn it on.

Archie flips the switch and Boone's voice comes on:

BOONE

Miss Gunther, this is for no one but you and me. I have just had a talk with Henry A Warder and he told me the following...

Warder catapults out of his seat and starts for the machine.

WARDER

Stop it!

Archie blocks his way.

ARCHIE

Nothing stirring.
(Archie pulls a gun)
Back up and sit down. All three of you are going to like it less and less.

WARDER

That was under a pledge of confidence

CRAMER

Can it! Go ahead Goodwin.

Archie starts the machine again.

BOONE

Warder has known for several months that the president of his company, Don O'Neill, has spent at least sixteen thousand dollars bribing a member of the BPR staff. O'Neill has not only admitted it, but bragged about it. Warder strongly disapproves of bribery, especially bribery of government officials, and he claims that his only purpose is to acquaint me with the facts so I can put a stop to it by getting rid of the corrupted subordinate. Now this will be a surprise to you - I know it was to me - the man O'Neill has bought is Alger Kates. For a miserable sixteen thousand dollars. I don't think I would mind quite so much being betrayed for something up in the millions, but for sixteen thousand dollars? If I were to face Kates right now, I think I'd get my fingers around his throat and choke him to death.

*
*

Archie stops the tape. There is dead silence.

WOLFE

What about it, Mr. Kates? When you entered that room and Mr. Boone found himself face to face with you, did he get his fingers around your throat?

KATES

No.

O'NEILL

You keep out of this, Kates!
Keep your mouth shut!

Wolfe chuckles.

WOLFE

That's marvelous, Mr. O'Neill.
It really is. Almost verbatim.
That first evening you were
here you admonished him in the
same manner. Like an employer
to an employee, as indeed it
was. It led to my having a
good man spend three days trying
to find a link between you and
Mr. Kates.

KATES

(trembling with
indignation)

The police were utterly
incompetent! They should have
found out where that piece of
pipe came from in a few hours!
It came from a pile of old pipes
in the the NIA basement.

CRAMER

For Christ sake, listen to him!
He's sore!

O'NEILL

He's a fool. He's a contemptible
fool.

(turning directly to
Kates)

Good God, I never thought you
were capable of murder!

KATES

Neither did I. But she wouldn't
even promise to destroy that
cylinder. She wouldn't even
promise! I should have killed
you too, that same evening. I
could have. You were afraid of
me. You're afraid of me right
now. You say you never suspected
me of murder when you knew all
about it.

CRAMER

How did he know all about it?

KATES

I told him.

O'NEILL

That's a lie!

CRAMER

Okay, let him finish it. When did you tell him?

WOLFE

Mr. Cramer. Isn't this a waste of time. You're going to have to go all over it again downtown. He seems ready to co-operate.

O'NEILL

He is ready, to get himself electrocuted.

WOLFE

I wouldn't worry about that if I were you. Bad as he is, he has the grace to accept the inevitable with a show of decorum. You, on the contrary, try to wiggle.

*

*

O'NEILL

I'm seeing this through. I'm not going away.

WOLFE

Oh, but you are. You're going to jail.

(he turns to Warder)

What about it, Mr. Warder? Are you going to try to discredit this message from the dead? Are you going to repudiate your interview with Mr. Boone, or are you going to show that you have some sense?

WARDER

I am going to tell the truth.

WOLFE

Did Mr. Boone tell the truth in that cylinder?

WARDER

Yes. He did.

WOLFE

(back to O'Neill)

There you are, sir. Bribery is a felony.

(MORE)

WOLFE (CONT'D)
(turning to Cramer)
Mr. Cramer, get them out of here, won't you. I'm tired of looking at them.
(to Archie)
Archie, pack up that cylinder. Mr. Cramer will want to take it along.

CRAMER
Hold it Goodwin, while I use the phone.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Cramer didn't ask for the homicide office but instead went straight to the top.

CRAMER
(on the phone)
Commissioner Hombert? Inspector Cramer. Yes sir. No, I'm calling from Nero Wolfe's office. No sir, I'm not trying to horn in but...Yes sir, I'm quite aware that it would be a breach of discipline, but if....Certainly I'm here with Wolfe....I didn't break in, and I've got the man, I've got the evidence, and I've got a confession.... That's exactly what I'm telling you, and I'm neither drunk nor crazy. Send three cars and six men....Yes, sir, I'm telling you, the case is finished.

*
*
*

He hangs up and surveys the room. Is that a smirk?

*

KATES
You won't have to put handcuffs on me, will you?

O'NEILL
I want to phone my lawyer.

DISSOLVE TO:

67 INT. WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

67

We see the action as described by Archie's V.O.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Skipping a thousand details,
Cramer phoned for an appointment
at eleven o'clock the next day.
When he arrived he had a package
wrapped in brown paper which he
set on the floor beside the red
leather chair when he sat down.

WOLFE

Will you have some beer?

CRAMER

No, thanks, I guess I won't. I
just dropped in. I suppose
you've heard that I'm back at
my desk. Inspector Ash has
been moved to Staten Island.

WOLFE

Yes, sir. I congratulate you.

CRAMER

Much obliged. So with me back
at the old stand you'll have to
continue to watch your step.
Try pulling any fast ones and
I'll still be on your neck.

WOLFE

I wouldn't dream of trying to
pull a fast one.

CRAMER

Okay. Just so we understand
each other.

(Cramer stands up and
hesitates. He picks up
his package and puts
it on Wolfe's desk)

Oh, I almost forgot, this is
for you, Wolfe, hope you like
it.

Cramer leaves and we can hear the door shut behind him.
Archie and Wolfe exchange looks, then Wolfe undoes the
wrapping. It is a not so good looking orchid specimen in a
bland pot.

ARCHIE

My God, he bought you an orchid.

WOLFE
Brassocattleya Thornoni.
Handsome.

ARCHIE
Nuts. You've got a thousand
better ones. Shall I throw it
out?

WOLFE
Certainly not. Take it up to
Theodore.
(he wiggles his finger
at Archie)
Archie. One of your most serious
defects is that you have no
sentiment.

ARCHIE
Nuts again. I'm sentimental
about this \$100,000 reward from
the NIA. *
(he holds up the check)
I should have known you would
never return \$30,000 if you
didn't have your eye on a
suitable replacement.

WOLFE
That was satisfactory and
businesslike, paying the reward
without delay.

ARCHIE
Yeah? Little do they know.

WOLFE
Little do they know what? What's
wrong now?

ARCHIE
There are several ways of doing
this. But I prefer to simply
ask questions, only I'll supply
the answers.

WOLFE
What the devil are you talking
about?

ARCHIE
Question number one: when did
you find the cylinder?
(MORE)

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Saturday afternoon when you waddled in here in your pajamas and belittled your brain? Not a chance. You knew where it was all the time, for at least three or four days. I say you found it either Tuesday morning or Wednesday.

*
*
*

WOLFE

You shouldn't leave things teetering like that.

ARCHIE

Number two: Why, if you knew where the cylinder was, did you pester Mrs. Boone to tell you? Answer: because you wanted to make sure she *didn't* know. If she knew where the cylinder was and told the cops before you were ready, she'd have gotten the hundred thousand dollar reward. Number Three: What was the big idea? When you found the cylinder, why didn't you just let go? Answer: because you don't like NIA, and you knew the stink about the murders was raising Cain with them, and you wanted to prolong it as much as possible.

*
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*

WOLFE

How long is this going on?

ARCHIE

Well. I guess that's about all. I just wanted you to know that I resent your making contemptuous remarks about your brain.

*

WOLFE

You've left one thing out.

ARCHIE

What?

WOLFE

Look back at me last Tuesday, when - by hypothesis - I found
(MORE)

WOLFE (CONT'D)
the cylinder. What actually
would have taken precedence in
my mind.

ARCHIE
I've been telling you.

WOLFE
But you left one thing out.
Miss Gunther.

ARCHIE
What about her?

WOLFE
She was dead. As you know I
detest waste. She had displayed
remarkable tenacity, audacity,
and even imagination, in using
the murder of Mr. Boone for a
purpose he would have approved.
Surely she deserved not to have
her murder wasted. I found
myself in an ideal position to
see that that was taken care
of. That's what you left out.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
First Cramer's orchid, and now
Phoebe Gunther, when would all
this sentiment end?