The Mother Hunt

teleplay by

Sharon Elizabeth Doyle

based on the novel

THE MOTHER HUNT

by

REX STOUT

PRODUCTION WHITE DRAFT
October 23, 2001

PRODUCTION PINK DRAFT
November 1, 2001

PRODUCTION BLUE DRAFT
November 8, 2001

Production GREEN DRAFT
November 13, 2001

PRODUCTION YELLOW DRAFT
November 16, 2001

PRODUCTION GOLDENROD DRAFT
November 28, 2001
THE MOTHER HUNT

FADE IN:

MONTAGE/CREDITS

1  INT. VALDON   MANSION - LIVING ROOM - DAY

LUCY VALDON, 30-ish, dressed in a peignoir, plays Chopin
passionately on the piano in her formal living room. There's
a Renoir on the wall. The PHONE RINGS. She gets up and
answers it. Before she can say anything, the person on the
other end delivers a message in a strange high voice:

    VOICE (V.O.)
    Mrs. Valdon. Go look on your
doorstep.

And hangs up. Lucy goes to the front door of her castle.
She opens it and is amazed at what is there: A BABY in a
basket wrapped in a blanket. There's a note attached. She
picks it up:

    DISSOLVE TO:

2  INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

INSERT: THE NOTE

It is stamped out with a child's lettering stamp set.

    WOLFE (V.O.)
    "Mrs. Valdon. This baby is for
    you because a boy should live
    in his father's house."

Wolfe looks up from the note at Lucy, elegantly dressed for
venturing outside her castle.

    WOLFE (CONT'D)
    Is this likely or merely
    credible?
    (Lucy doesn't answer; she
    is staring at the morning's
    orchid.)
    Madam? Is it likely?

She reaches across and plucks a flower from the orchid.

(CONTINUED)
LUCY
Your Cypripedium Lawrencianum has an aphid. Oh. No, just dust. Sorry. Pretty though. Who is your florist?

She tucks it in her button hole.

WOLFE
Madam.

LUCY
Yes. It's likely. Dick had a Don Juan reputation when I married him.

WOLFE
How long were you married?

LUCY
11 months. And I know what people said: He's marrying an Armstead. Well, I was marrying a famous author. I was Mrs. Richard Valdon. I still think we were in love. At any rate, for me there was nothing but us.

WOLFE
How old was he when he died?

LUCY
Forty six.

WOLFE
How old are you.

LUCY
(smiling)
Old enough. Plenty old enough.
(on Wolfe's look)
During that last year, before he died, he may have had one woman, or a dozen, I just don't know.

Wolfe glares. First babies and now sex.

WOLFE
Can you get to the problem, madam?

(CONTINUED)
LUCY
Well, the baby, of course. I intended to have two or three. But I put it off. I put it off. But now I do have one, and this note is right: a child should live in his father's house. The problem is: was Dick the father?

WOLFE
Pfui. Never to be solved and you know it.

LUCY
Pfui? You are the best detective in the world.

WOLFE
The best detective in the world may be a rude tribesman with a limited vocabulary. I cannot help you, madam. No one can.

LUCY
You can find the mother. Wait.

She dumps her purse on his desk. Wolfe watches in astonishment as she, without embarrassment, sorts through her filing system. Archie watches, fascinated.

LUCY (CONT'D)
No. No. Huh. No. Ah. Here. I've written the dates down. (she hands him a piece of paper with all the dates.) The doctor said he was five months old, which means he was born last June and conceived last fall.

WOLFE
It could take months. Have you arranged for legal custody?

LUCY
Oh, my lawyer did that.

WOLFE
And he is aware you are consulting me?

(Continued)
LUCY
Yes, and he disapproves. I
don't care. It's my business.
His business is just the law.

Wolfe looks at her, surprised. He couldn't agree more.

WOLFE
It will be necessary to get
information from you. And to
examine the clothes the baby
arrived in. These pinholes.
The note wasn't attached with a
safety pin.

LUCY
No, just an ordinary pin.

WOLFE
What odds, Mr. Goodwin, that a
woman would expose a baby to a
bare pin?

ARCHIE
Not enough data. Roughly ten
to one.

WOLFE
Were you alone in the house
when the call came?

LUCY
Yes. I came back a day early
from the country. The staff
had the weekend off. Why is
that important?

Wolfe checks the wall clock. Noon. He's running out of time.

WOLFE
Whoever did this, madam, is
someone you know.

LUCY
How could you know that?

WOLFE
If you cannot use your own brain,
Mr. Goodwin will explain. Please
excuse me.

(CONTINUED)
LUCY
But isn't there a retainer?

WOLFE
One dollar, a hundred, a thousand. It does not matter.

He crosses to the door and turns left, toward the kitchen. Archie goes after to close the door.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Wolfe's mind was on the shad roe casserole slated for lunch. He and Fritz had a disagreement over the use of onion which had never been resolved.
(out loud)
Why don't we go to your place, Mrs. Valdon. We can get the baby clothes and conduct the interview there.

Lucy hands him a check.

INT. VALDON MANSION - HALLWAY/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Archie follows Lucy into the digs of inherited wealth. He notes a CÉZANNE over the fireplace.

ARCHIE
Nice digs.

LUCY
I love this house. My great grandfather built it. One thing I am sure of, Dick loved this house.

MISS MIMM
Mrs. Valdon.

Lucy's secretary, MISS MIMM, brings her a stack of opened mail - mostly invitations - which Lucy goes through. MISS MIMM is a looker, which Archie can't help but notice.

LUCY
Miss Mimm.
(flipping through them)

(CONTINUED)
ARCHIE
Is there anyone who might have had it in for you, Mrs. Valdon?

LUCY
In for me? No, no, send them regrets.

ARCHIE
Hate you enough to saddle with a loose baby?

LUCY
(to secretary)
No, but write them a note. (Handing the pile back to Miss Mimm; she turns to Archie)
The Armsteads are a very dull responsible family. No one hates us. My only controversial hobby is Killer Fog.

ARCHIE
Fog kills?

LUCY
32 people in 1948. In a little coal town in Pennsylvania.

ARCHIE
What did they do - get lost in it and fall down a mine?

LUCY
There's no humor in this. It's going to happen right here in New York. It's the cars.

ARCHIE
Well, ban them all. The subway too. We can all walk to work.

LUCY
That's what I say. Oh, here he is!

She lights up as THE NURSE appears with the baby. Lucy takes the baby.
CONTINUED: (2)

LUCY (CONT'D)
Hello, there. Hello. Hello.
(to Archie)
I'd introduce you, but I'm not going to name him until I decide to keep him.

She holds the baby out to Archie. He shakes his head.

ARCHIE
Better not. I haven't read the instruction manual.

LUCY
I'm considering Moses. No one knew who his father was either.
(to Miss Mimm)
Miss Mimm, take Mr. Goodwin to the nursery and help him pack up the clothing the baby came in.

She sits to play with the baby. The Nurse and Miss Mimm look at Archie skeptically as they go out.

WIPE TO:

INT. VALDON MANSION - HALLWAY - DAY

Archie returns to the living room carrying a little suitcase. In the b.g, Lucy is playing the piano. The baby is asleep in a bassinet near the piano. Next to her on the piano bench is a small dog. He helps her play.

LUCY

ARCHIE
I need those names now.

LUCY
I told you: his best friends were Leo Bingham, Willis Krug and Julian Haft.

ARCHIE
I mean the female names. Candidates.

She strikes a few chords on the piano.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
I know, ma'am. It's hard to
name women you think Dick might
have played house with...

LUCY
The problem is not that it's
hard, Mr. Goodwin, but that
it's so easy. There's a list.

She gestures over at the table. He sees it.

LUCY (CONT'D)
You know what? I'd like to
have a martini. Would you? Is
it too early. Or what?

ARCHIE
Well, I might as well be
sociable. It's one of my
functions to understand any
woman we're dealing with. Wolfe
is hopeless at it,

LUCY
That's part of your job?

ARCHIE
Sure.

LUCY
Are you an expert?

ARCHIE
Some have said so. You play.
I'll make the martinis. I favor
five to one.

WIPE TO:

Lucy is playing. Archie listens, as he gently swirls and
pours the martinis at the bar. She finishes and goes to the
couch. He hands her a martini. He starts to take a sip.

LUCY
Oh, no. Wait. You can't just
drink it. We have to be
civilized and observe a ritual.
(holding out her drink)
You take a sip of mine; I'll
take a sip of yours.

(continues)
ARCHIE
A fine old Persian custom.
Used to foil poisonings.

He extends his own drink, and steadies her elbow. They sip and their eyes meet. Beat. Then she stands abruptly, knocking his glass away.

LUCY
What am I doing? Why did I do that?

ARCHIE
Mr. Wolfe says we never really get to the why of anything.

LUCY
And earlier, I nearly called you Archie. Are you a hypnotist?

ARCHIE
Archie is my name. Don't call me Svengali.

LUCY
I'm not trying to flirt. I don't know how to flirt.

Archie sips his martini, leans on the piano.

ARCHIE
Well, men and women flirt. Horses flirt. Parakeets flirt. Undoubtedly oysters flirt, but they must have some special...

She abruptly leaves the room, embarrassed.

LUCY
Don't forget the baby clothes when you go, Mr. Goodwin.

And she's gone. Archie blinks in astonishment.

EXT. BROWNSTONE - STOOP (STUDIO) - DAY

Archie lets himself in.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
The Valdon Mansion was only twenty four short blocks away

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
from brownstone, and I'm a
walker. I wanted to be unpacked
and ready for Wolfe.

INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

ANGLE ON BABY CLOTHES

strewn all over Wolfe's desk next to the empty suitcase. There are booties, a t-shirt, a sweater, a hat, overalls, a
blankie, diapers. Archie is inspecting the rubber pants. How do they work? Wolfe comes in, stops just short of his
desk and growls.

WOLFE
What the devil is this?

ARCHIE
Baby paraphenalia. No laundry
marks. No store labels. But
there's one item that might
help. If you don't spot it
yourself, it may not be worth
mentioning.

Wolfe starts inspecting the clothes. Archie looks smug.

WOLFE
Did you get the names?

ARCHIE
Yes. Do you want it verbatim?

WOLFE
Not if you're satisfied.

ARCHIE
I am.

WOLFE
What else?

ARCHIE
There's a Monet and a Munch in
the living room, and an antique
Salor Rug in the hall. I am in
bad with her because I forgot
she's an Armstead and I'm a
peasant. She'll sleep it off.

Wolfe eyes Archie, suspiciously.
WOLFE
You had better report verbatim.

ARCHIE
No, no. Not necessary. I'm satisfied.

WOLFE
Have you any suggestions?

ARCHIE
Yes. Tell her you've discovered it's my baby and if she'll marry me, she can keep it. As for the mother...

WOLFE
Shut up.

Wolfe holds the overalls up to the light. He pulls his magnifying glass out and looks at the buttons closely.

WOLFE (CONT'D)
The buttons on this garment seem inappropriate. The material looks like horsehair, there is considerable variation in size and shape. They couldn't possibly have been made by a machine.

ARCHIE
Congratulations.

WOLFE
Should I apologize for pulling a feather from your cap?

ARCHIE
Nah. We'll split it. The brand label is Little Cherub which is located in the Garment District. I'll go there and see what they know.

{A&E: END ACT ONE}

EXT. GARMENT DISTRICT - DAY

Archie dodges through the frenzy of the garment district.

(CONTINUED)
ARCHIE (V.O.)
The Garment District of New York is no place to go for a stroll. I visited three baby outfitters and four button firms asking about homemade horsehair buttons and nobody knew and nobody cared. Then I saw a sign lettered: MR. LOSSOFF'S DISTINGUISHED BUTTONS. I would have gone there first had I known.

INT. EXCLUSIVE NOVELTY BUTTON COMPANY -- DAY

SPOT SIGN: MR. LOSSOFF'S DISTINGUISHED BUTTONS - Supplier to the Queen. Archie enters, pulling the overalls out of his paper bag.

ARCHIE
Excuse me. I am in search of...

The RECEPTIONIST doesn't even look up from her dime novel. She just rings the reception bell.

NIKOLAS LOSSEFF emerges from the back room. He instantly sees the buttons on the overalls, jerks them out of Archie's hand and squints intensely at each button in turn, using a jeweler's loop.

LOSSEFF
Where did these buttons come from?

ARCHIE
That's my line.

LOSSEFF
Are you a button man?

ARCHIE
No.

LOSSEFF
You listen then. I know more about buttons than any man in the world. I have the most comprehensive collection in existence.

(MORE)
LOSSEFF (CONT'D)
I have sold buttons to the
Duchess of Windsor, to the Queen
Elizabeth, and to Miss Bette
Davis. I have given buttons to
nine different museums in five
different countries. I know
absolutely that no man could
show me a button that I couldn't
place, but you have done so.

ARCHIE
All right, I listened. Now
it's your turn. I know less
about buttons than any man in
the world and I want to know
where these buttons came from.
You can't tell me.

LOSSEFF
I admit I can't!

ARCHIE
But you know about buttons.

LOSSEFF
I know all about buttons!

ARCHIE
Is there any chance that they
were made by a machine?

LOSSEFF
Impossible. Think, man. It's
horsehair! Horsehair! Someone
spent hours on each one. A
technique I have never seen.
(Archie tries to take them;
Losseff won't turn loose)
Sell me one for my collection.

Archie has to yank to get the overalls.

ARCHIE
If I can, I will. I recognize
a button fiend when I see one.

INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

Archie comes in as Wolfe emerges from the office, on his way
up to the plant rooms.

(CONTINUED)
WOLFE

Well?

ARCHIE

Well so far, in fact, perfect. A man who knows as much about buttons as you do about food has never seen anything like them. Somebody spent hours making each one of them.

WOLFE

Satisfactory.

He gets on the elevator, and then stops.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Will there be time to place an advertisement in tomorrow's papers? Times and News and Gazette.

ARCHIE

If I hop to it, all three. If I wait, Gazette only.

WOLFE

Place an ad in each. At the top, in boldface, 36 point type ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS, will be paid to the first person to provide information leading to the maker by hand of white horsehair buttons, irregular in size.

Wolfe ascends. Archie detours to the phone.

EXT. NEWSTAND - DAY

Archie is in conference with BEATRICE EPPS from the secretarial pool. He carries the overalls in a paper bag. She eyes Archie with interest.

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

By 8 am the next morning, the ad had flushed one Beatrice Epps, who only had one thing on her beady little mind.

BEATRICE

How do I know you'll pay me?

(CONTINUED)
You don't. Naturally what you tell me will have to be useful. You could tell me that you knew a man in Singapore who made horsehair buttons but he's dead.

I've never been to Singapore.

Exactly. Where did you see them?

On a girl's blouse. She filled in at the office for a month, from Stopgap Employment agency.

Archie pulls the overalls from his bag.

Anything like these?

Exactly like that! She said her aunt made them out of horsehair.

What was her name?

I suppose I have to tell you.

Do you want the money?

Her name's Anne Tenzer. You'll probably find her attractive. Everybody else did.

He hands it to her.

ANNE TENZER walks into the bar. Archie is waiting for her.
CONTINUED:

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Miss Epps was right. Miss Tenzer probably aroused in many men the feelings necessary for the propagation of the species. Perhaps even Richard Valdon.

WIPE TO:

They have drinks, are sitting in a booth.

ANNE
Of course I recognize them. They're made by my Aunt Ellen. It takes her forever just to make one. Winding horsehair around and around isn't much of a hobby, but there's not much else to do in Mahopac.

She holds the baby overalls up as if trying them on.

ANNE (CONT'D)
But don't tell me someone saw me wearing these. They wouldn't fit.

Archie takes them back.

ARCHIE
How I got them is kind of special. Would you like to hear about it?

ANNE
No. My one fault is that I'm not interested in anything that doesn't involve me.

(changing tones)
Haven't we had enough about buttons?

ARCHIE
Sure. Let's talk about work. I collect buttons. You work for Stopgap Employment Services. How often do gaps need to be stopped?

ANNE
Oh, I'm very very busy.

(MORE)
ANNE (CONT'D)
Very special. When a private secretary to a big executive gets married or gets fired by her boss's wife, I'm the one they ask for.

ARCHIE
Because the boss's wives like you?

ANNE
I'm more like revenge.

ARCHIE
So. You work for big time executives. Ever try a scientist or, say, a famous author?

ANNE
No. They can't afford me.

INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY
Wolfe looks up from his book. He raises an eyebrow. Archie finishes reporting.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
I got home and gave Wolfe the facts. When I finished he said, "Satisfactory."

WOLFE
Satisfactory.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Then he decided that was an understatement.

WOLFE
Very Satisfactory.

ARCHIE
Yes, sir, I could use a raise.

WOLFE
No doubt.

He looks at the wall clock. Five minutes to dinner.

WOLFE (CONT'D)
Can you get Saul now?

(CONTINUED)
ARCHIE
Why? I didn't say I would quit if I didn't get a raise. I merely said I could use one.

WOLFE
And I said, no doubt. You will go to Mahopac. Meanwhile Saul will learn whether Miss Tenzer gave birth to that baby. He can do it without stirring dust.

ARCHIE
Indubitably he is the seventh son of a seventh son.

INT. VALDON MANSION -- DAY

Archie is let in by the Maid and escorted to the living room where Lucy is giving a lecture about Killer Fogs to an attentive audience of bright eyed old geezers in bowties and sensible looking ladies in neckties - not the fashionable crowd, although one or two of Lucy's fluffy friends are there looking puzzled. She has a chart. She and Archie make eye contact and he bows out.

LUCY
Last December, when a thick fog intensified by coal tar smoke covered London for three days, 4703 people died. An analysis of the air shows levels of sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide which increased...

(she continues under. We cannot hear her)

...whenever the temperature rose over a four day period. You could not see across the street. Even though 4000 people is twice the death rate for the same period, London officials deny that the fog had anything...

ARCHIE (V.O.)
I stopped by on my way out of town to brief the client on our remarkable progress, but she was all wrapped up in Fog. On her, it looked good.
14  EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY
Archie zips north on the Sawmill Expressway towards Mahopac.

15  EXT. MAHOPAC GENERAL STORE/FILLING STATION - DAY
Archie gets directions from a LOCAL, who points him up the road.

16  EXT. ROAD -- DAY
The Studebaker pulls up to a mail box reading "TENZER."  He turns into the bumpy road.

        ARCHIE (V.O.)
After conferring with a local sage, I found Aunt Ellen's cottage off the beaten path.

17  EXT. TENZER COTTAGE - DAY
Archie pulls the Studebaker in behind a CAR that sits in the garage.  He goes up to the door.  It opens before he reaches it.  ELLEN TENZER carries a dog who looks familiar.

        ELLEN TENZER
Well, hello there, what brings you out my way?

        ARCHIE
Miss Ellen Tenzer?

        ELLEN TENZER
That's my name.

        ARCHIE
Mine's Goodwin.  I'm in the button business, and I understand you are, too.  I'm interested in the horsehair buttons you make.

        ELLEN TENZER
Buttons?  How did you know I make buttons?

        ARCHIE
You'd like me better if I said it was for art's sake, but I'm in the button business.  I would pay a good price, cash.

(CONTINUED)
ELLEN TENZER
I only have a few. Only seventeen.

ARCHIE
That will do for a start. Do you suppose I could have a drink of water? It's been a long ride.

ELLEN TENZER
Come on in then.

She steps back to let him in.

INT. TENZER COTTAGE - KITCHEN - DAY

As Archie comes, he spies something, on a table under a vase of flowers. He sidles over - just under the vase is the folded up Gazette. Just visible is a PORTION OF WOLFE'S AD: 100 DOLLARS in bold over two columns.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Her knowing about the ad changed the program completely.

She brings him the water, sees that the ad is visible.

ELLEN TENZER
How did you find out that I make buttons?

ARCHIE
The Button man. Good water. Deep well?

She stops being polite and becomes a brusque nurse.

ELLEN TENZER
All right, you've had your drink, Bub, move on.

ARCHIE
But Miss Tenzer, I've driven sixty miles just to-

ELLEN TENZER
I don't care if you've driven six hundred miles. I'm not going to show you any buttons and I'm not going to talk about them.

(MORE)
CONTINUED:

ELLEN TENZER (CONT'D)
Get out!

WIPE TO:

EXT. MAHOPAC GENERAL STORE/FILLING STATION -- DAY
Archie has parked the car next to the filling station and is on the phone in the phone booth.

INTERCUT WITH INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE

ARCHIE
The aunt's not the mother but she knows who put the overalls on the baby. She may be phoning that somebody right now, but that can't be helped. I'm going back and stake her out. We can cover her around the clock if you send Saul and Fred and Orrie.

WOLFE
When will you eat?

ARCHIE
Tomorrow maybe.

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD -- DAY
Archie has parked the Studebaker on the side of the road is taking off towards the house.

EXT. TENZER COTTAGE - DAY
Archie creeps up towards the house. But then he gets far enough to see something's wrong.

SPOT THE GARAGE. It's empty now. Archie breaks from cover and comes out into the yard. He is pissed and kicks a few things to show it.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
She'd left. It called for profanity, and I used some. I don't apologize.

He pounds on the front door. No answer. He tries the doorknob. It's locked. He tries a window. Also locked. He tries another window. Success.
INT. TENZER COTTAGE - DAY

Archie comes in a window. He listens. Not a sound. He starts to search. He opens drawers and looks in cabinets. He's looking for letters, phone numbers, anything to tie Ellen Tenzer to the baby. At the last stop, a cupboard, he digs under a pile and discovers two pair of overalls - just like Baby Valdon's. Both of them have four horsehair white buttons.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Who'd have thought that I could get pleasure looking at baby clothes.

INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

ARCHIE (V.O.)
For the next eighteen hours, Saul Panzer, Fred Durkin and Orrie Cather, in shifts, had Ellen Tenzer's house under wraps. But nobody came.

Wolfe comes into the office, bearing an orchid. Archie is twiddling his thumbs. Wolfe looks at him. Archie holds up his twiddling thumbs. Wolfe puts his orchid in a vase. He sits down and starts to go through his mail.

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD -- DAY

ORRIE CATHER settles in to watch. He starts by filing his nails.

INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY (LATER)

Wolfe searches for another book balanced high on a ladder.

WOLFE
Confound it. That woman has skedaddled.

Archie pulls a quarter from his pocket, tosses it onto the desk, and looked at it.

ARCHIE
Heads, No.

WOLFE
Pfui. I want your opinion.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ARCHIE
You do not. You are reminding me that if I had stayed there instead of going to call you, I would have been on her tail.

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD -- DAY

Orrie is apparently asleep. But he reacts to a sound. His eyes pop open at what he sees. He hunkers down so as not to be seen. Then peers out.

A police car passes him, flashing lights. PURLEY STEBBINS is in the passenger seat.

Orrie turns to watch. The car pulls in to Ellen Tenzer's house and Stebbins gets out.

INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

ARCHIE
Damn it. Are you sure it was Stebbins? No, Orrie, just come in!

Archie stares at the phone, slams it down and turns.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
That was Orrie. I told him to come in because the aunt won't be coming home. She's dead. Three men came in a state police car, and one of them was Purley Stebbins. It doesn't take luck or brains to know that a New York Homicide sergeant doesn't go to Putnam County looking for white horsehair buttons.

WOLFE
A presumption is not a certainty. Invite Lon Cohen for lunch.

Archie starts dialing.

{A&E: END ACT TWO}

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

They have reached dessert - Coupé aux marrons (white ice cream, chesnuts in syrup). Lon shakes his head.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ARCHIE
Do we still have a credit balance?

LON
And here I thought you just enjoyed my company.

ARCHIE
What have you got on a woman named Tenzer? Ellen Tenzer?

LON
Don't be so damned roundabout, Archie. If you want to know what we've got on a murder, just say so.

Archie and Wolfe exchange looks.

ARCHIE.
So.

30 EXT. STREET - DAY

TWO OLD PEOPLE show the COP who's been called to investigate what they saw in a car.

LON (V.O.)
Around six o'clock this morning a cop was called to investigate a car parked on Thirty-eighth Street.

He opens the door and Ellen Tenzer's arm falls halfway out onto the street.

LON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Ellen Tenzer had been strangled. The piece of cord was still around her throat.

30A INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

ARCHIE
But who was she?

LON
A registered nurse.

WOLFE
Ah.

(CONTINUED)
LON
What?

ARCHIE
"Ah".

LON
Ah. Good. She inherited a house in Mahopac and enough to live on, so she quit working and started boarding babies.

WOLFE
She boarded illegitimate children?

LON
One at a time.

WOLFE
Where did they come from?

LON
And where did they go to? Nobody knows.

ARCHIE
In a little town like Mahopac?

LON
Nobody knew anything about her last boarder except it was a boy, it was a month old when it arrived, and she called him Buster.

ARCHIE
Buster. That's something. Thanks.

LON
Wait. I raise. Did you find the buttons you advertised for? Yes or no?

ARCHIE
If you had a trained mind like me, you wouldn't do that. We run an ad for buttons, and then we ask about Ellen Tenzer, so you assume there's a connection.

(CONTINUED)
30A CONTINUED: (2)

LON
Logic is like that.

ARCHIE
Not at all. Mr. Wolfe likes horsehair buttons on his pants.

Lon looks at Wolfe. Wolfe says nothing.

LON
I see.

ARCHIE
For his suspenders.

LON
Nero Wolfe wears suspenders. Now that is news.

WIPE TO:

30B INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

The boys return from lunch.

ARCHIE
Talk about ifs.

WOLFE
Futile.

ARCHIE
If I had stuck with her, she might still be alive. Now we have Cramer and Stebbins on the trail and my fingerprints all over the house.

WOLFE
You can supply no information relevant to the murder.

ARCHIE
The hell I can't.

WOLFE
You were hired to find horsehair buttons, you don't know why.

ARCHIE
Then I'm withholding evidence. Do I name the client?

(CONTINUED)
WOLFE
Certainly not. We are not obliged to disclose a client's name merely so the police can test an assumption.

ARCHIE
I was in her house. She gave me a glass of water.

WOLFE
Archie. Do you think I can identify the mother without learning who killed that woman?

ARCHIE
No.

WOLFE
Then don't badger me. It's bad enough without that.

He reaches for his book: Food from the Sea by Rachel Carson.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Since the genius was not inclined to work, I used my first rate detective skills to find out how much the police knew before they came to haul me away.

INT. CHURCHILL HOTEL - BLUE ACOVE BAR - DAY

Archie waits at the booth as Anne Tenzer comes in. She walks towards him. He's already got the drinks: a Bloody Mary and a glass of milk.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
My first stop was Anne Tenzer, who had been hauled down to headquarters and was sore.

ANNE
You're not a button collector. You're Nero Wolfe's legman, Archie Goodwin.

ARCHIE
I'm really more of an assistant.
ANNE
It's not that you lied, that's your job. And it's not my Aunt Ellen. Whoever killed her, you didn't start it.

ARCHIE
And still you're sore at me.

ANNE
Yes. I'm not sure why. After all, now I'm an heiress. A creaky old cottage in Mahopac and a dog with very bad breath.

ARCHIE
Maybe you just wanted to see my face again and didn't know how to ask.

ANNE

She smiles at him. Archie smiles gamely back, but really has other things on his mind. He reaches for the check.

INT. VALDON MANSION - HALLWAY/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Archie comes in to the living room. Lucy is involved with a guitar. Archie is a little enchanted. She sees him and stops.

LUCY
Mr. Goodwin.

ARCHIE
Mrs. Valdon. I take it you haven't seen the evening edition?

LUCY
I've seen it but I haven't read it.

ARCHIE.
Then I'll brief you. Friday morning I called on a woman named Ellen Tenzer. The baby was at her house for about three months.

LUCY
So she's the mother?
MOTHER HUNT 11-16-01 GREEN 32 29

CONTINUED:

ARCHIE
No.

LUCY
She knows who the mother is!

ARCHIE
Probably she did.

LUCY
You mean she forgot?

What?

LUCY
How could she forget?

ARCHIE
She didn't.

LUCY
The grandmother!

ARCHIE
No.

LUCY
Aunt, uncle, second cousin?

ARCHIE
(cuts her off)
She's dead.

LUCY
Dead?

ARCHIE
An old couple found her in a parked car - here in Manhattan. Strangled...

LUCY
Murdered?

ARCHIE
Right. And it's certain the police will find out I was in her house, and ask me why, and...

LUCY
You're saying it was my fault?

(CONTINUED)
ARCHIE
Listen. If I tell them that you're my client, you'll get invited downtown for a chat...

LUCY
I'm responsible for a murder.

ARCHIE
No. I'm the one who left her alone.

LUCY
I sent you out there.

ARCHIE
The responsibility belongs to whoever left the baby in your vestibule, so don't try to claim it.

LUCY
I don't like this. Murder. It's so...it's just bad. It's...
(realizing)
What do you mean I'll be invited downtown? By the police?

ARCHIE
That was an if, Mrs. Valdon. If we name you as the client.

LUCY
Why don't you call me Lucy?

ARCHIE
You're very giddy for a girl that doesn't know how to flirt. But put it in writing and I will.

LUCY
So you've come here to tell me not to tell anyone that I've hired you? Were you followed?

ARCHIE
Not unless he was very good, Mrs. Valdon.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
ARCHIE. (CONT'D)
(on her look)
If you think we owe you an
apology for letting a mother
hunt hatch a murder, here it
is.

LUCY
No. I owe you an apology.
I was so rude. That's not the
word, Lucy. I was such a...a
jerk, that day.
    (he reacts. Beat. He
starts to go.)
You're going?

ARCHIE
Sure. I've done the errand.

LUCY
Oh. Well, then. Goodbye.

ARCHIE
Goodbye.

They part but it's no longer just business.

INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Archie comes in the door. Voices are being raised in the
office.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
I came home to find Inspector
Cramer and Mr. Wolfe engaged in
a friendly interrogation.

INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Wolfe and Cramer are almost nose to nose.

WOLFE
If you take me, I'll stand mute.
I would sleep under a bridge
and eat scraps before I would
wantonly submit a client to
official harassment.

CRAMER
You eating scraps. Good God.

(CONTINUED)
ARCHIE
Inspector Cramer, fancy meeting you here.

CRAMER
You all packed, Goodwin? We're going downtown.

Archie holds out his hands for handcuffs.

CRAMER (CONT'D)
Awww.

INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

ARCHIE (V.O.)
I was in custody from 10:04 P.M. Sunday to 10:05 a.m. Monday when Nathaniel Parker arrived with my bail.

Cramer and Archie go down the hall and out the door.

WIPE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY

Archie comes back in the door, same clothes, looking tired rumpled and unshaven.

INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

Archie comes in. Wolfe is reading.

ARCHIE
Well, I see you've kept busy. (no response.)
I'm going upstairs. I had a one-hour nap with a dick standing by. What's for lunch?

WOLFE

ARCHIE.
If there is enough left over, you may have some.

He starts to go.

(CONTINUED)
WOLFE
Before you go, arrange for Mrs Valdon to come here at two. As we are under surveillance, she should enter at the back.

ARCHIE
And I should resign on the spot, but I am too tired.

He reaches for the phone.

WIPE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

Lucy tosses her coat across the back of the red leather chair and sits.

LUCY
I told Archie I'm sorry I'm late, I didn't realize he would have to wait at the back gate for me.

Lucy, unaware of Wolfe's reaction to the use of Archie's first name, pulls her notebook out of her purse. Wolfe glares at Archie.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
It was a bad start. No client has ever called him Nero, so her saying "Archie", meant to him that she was taking liberties or that I already had.

WOLFE
Mr. Goodwin and I are in a pickle, Mrs. Valdon. Ellen Tenzer is dead, and for the present we shall leave her to the police, because we know that she didn't put the baby in your vestibule. But we-

LUCY
(writing)
How do we know that?

WOLFE
Inference.
LUCY
A nurse wouldn't use a bare pin.

WOLFE
Yes. The point is that if we assume that Ellen Tenzer was killed to prevent her from revealing the origin of the baby, and continue to conceal her connection to you, Mr. Goodwin and I are withholding evidence of a homicide, which is a felony.

LUCY
So you assume that's why she was killed?

WOLFE
It would be vacuous not to.

LUCY
Why?

WOLFE
Focus on my point, if you can. If we continue to conceal what we know to prevent you from being badgered by the police, it won't do merely to find the mother, we must now find the murderer.

LUCY
Why?

WOLFE
Archie.

LUCY
I don't want to have anything to do with a murderer.

ARCHIE
You don't, Mrs. Valdon, but we do. What he's saying is that if you drop us, we have to open up to the cops.

(MORE)
ARCHIE (CONT'D)
Then cops and reporters will be on your doorstep, asking you and your friends and your family about the baby. But if you stick, the police won't ever have to know about your connection to Ellen Tenzer, provided you don't tell them.

She opens her mouth, and closes it again. She reaches into her purse and pulls out a nicely folded note on a nice lady notecard.

**INSERT NOTE:** MEMO: To Archie Goodwin: Call me Lucy. Lucy Valdon

Archie looks up at Wolfe to see how he is taking it. He is not taking it well.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
Not if you're no longer a client.

LUCY
I am. Of course, I am.

ARCHIE
Mrs. Valdon...Lucy...prefers us to the cops. Good for our self-esteem.

WOLFE
So I proceed?

LUCY
Yes.

WOLFE
Then you'll have to help. We must expand the list of names of women with whom your husband might have consorted last fall. I want to meet with four men who knew more than you of his escapades.

LUCY
That would be Leo, Julian, Willis and I suppose, Manny Upton.
WOLFE
And I have your promise that if you are contacted by the police you will stand mute?

LUCY
Yes.

Wolfe notes the time: 3:55.

WOLFE
One last question: Where were you last Friday evening from eight o'clock on?

LUCY
The night she was murdered? You can't mean that.

WOLFE
You should be gratified I consider it imaginable.

LUCY
You have a strange idea of what gratifies people. I had dinner with the governor to talk about Killer Fog and was home for the ten o'clock feeding.

WOLFE
Are you referring to the London event?

ARCHIE
Yes, it seems Mrs. Valdon suspects the air is poison. I don't know how she sleeps at night.

LUCY
Archie, it's sulphur dioxide. We are going to poison ourselves to get home from the office five minutes sooner.

(to Wolfe)
It's utter nonsense to suspect me.
WOLFE

Nothing is nonsense that concerns the vagaries of human conduct. Good day, Mrs. Valdon.

And he leaves. Lucy looks at Archie, and smiles.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
For the next two hours, we arranged a very different social event from the ones Mrs. Valdon was used to. I called her Lucy once and she called me Archie twice.

WIPE TO:

OMITTED

INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY

ARCHIE (V.O.)
When the time came for Lucy to depart, a major development occurred. Since she was now committed as a client, there was no reason for her to use the back door.

Fritz is dusting. Archie helps her on with her coat. At the door, Lucy turns.

LUCY
Thank you for a lovely afternoon.

She holds out her hand. Archie takes it. They shake but they don't let go. They hold for a moment, just enough to establish the connection and let go at the same time. They smile. He opens the door and ushers her out. Fritz reacts, worried. The SOUND of the elevator. As Archie comes back in, Wolfe emerges from the elevator, returning from the plant rooms. Archie smiles at him.

ARCHIE
The party is arranged for 9:00.

WOLFE
You're aware that I'm not going to ask you what was on that paper that woman handed you.

(CONTINUED)
ARCHIE
It has to be mentioned sooner
or later. She wrote in longhand:
'Dearest Archie, Lizzie Borden
took an ax, and gave her mother
forty whacks. Your loving Lucy.
In case you wonder-

WOLFE
Shut up.

He stalks off. Archie looks at Felix, who dusts
industriously.

ARCHIE
You don't dust, Fritz.

Fritz maintains his dignity and stalks off as well. Archie
checks himself out in the mirror. He can't help it. He's
pleased with what he sees.

{A&E: END ACT THREE}

INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - NIGHT

As Fritz serves the guests, Wolfe sits at his desk studying
3x5 cards that Archie has handed him. He looks up.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
The party began on time. I
profiled them neatly for Wolfe,
and will do so for you.

SHOT OF MANUEL UPTON - taking a pill with a glass of water.

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Manual Upton, the Editor of the
Distaff Magazine, discovered
Dick Valdon and published his
first stories.

SHOT of WILLIS KRUG -

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Willis Krug was Valdon's agent
and anxious to get back to work.

SHOT OF JULIAN HAFT - in his fifties, balding, shaped like a
pear on toothpicks, polishes his balloon-tired cheaters.
ARCHIE (CONT'D)
The distinguished Julian Haft published Mr. Valdon's novels and claimed to be his good friend.

HANDSOME LEO BINGHAM - puts down his glass after a sip of the brandy and looks at Wolfe with astonishment.

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Leo Bingham was Dick Valdon's oldest friend and fellow connoisseur of the female of the species.

BINGHAM
Incredible. Serving this elixir offhand - and to a stranger!

WOLFE
In my house, a guest is a guest, stranger or not. You are a radio producer, are you not?

Bingham gives Wolfe his neon smile.

BINGHAM
And glad of the chance to meet you. I've often thought you'd have enormous possibilities for radio and now that I've heard your voice, my God, it would be stupendous!

HAFT
This is the way it goes, Mr. Wolfe. Mass culture. He's interested in your voice. I'm interested in your mind. Have you ever written a book?

WOLFE
Unthinkable, Mr. Haft. Nothing corrupts a man so deeply as writing a book. I wouldn't presume.

KRUG
Can we get started? I got calls to make.

Wolfe orates; the men listen, ask questions.
ARCHIE (V.O.)
Wolfe spun them a tale about
Lucy hiring him to track down
anonymous letters she had
received from a lover of her
husband. If they wanted to
save Lucy from blackmail, they
had to agree to name every woman
they thought Valdon might have
been with the year before.

WOLFE
More brandy, Mr. Bingham?

BINGHAM
Payola. He pours. A bribe.
He sips. But what a bribe!
The big smile.

UPTON
What exactly does this lover
say?

WOLFE
That would violate a firm
assurance I have given my client.

LEO
Hell, I'm hooked. I've been
bribed.

KRUG
I'm against anyone who sends
anonymous letters, no matter
who. I'll call my list in later.
Can I go now?

UPTON
You should be looking into that
baby she's got up there. If
you don't you're going hash it
up. If Lucy Valdon wants a
favor from me, she can ask me.

Upton heads for the door. The others talk with Wolfe.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Upton was the only one who
refused.
INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON TYPED LISTS

as Archie pulls them from the typewriter.

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And when the lists were gathered and cross-referenced, we had 148 names.

He hands the lists to Saul, Orrie and Fred, along with packets of money.

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And so - conceived by Wolfe, executed by Goodwin and fueled by the client's hard-earned inherited cash - the Great Mother Hunt began,

INTERCUT:

41B
-A CALENDAR PEELING OFF DAYS IN NOVEMBER

41C
INT. BROWNSTONE OFFICE - DAY

A chart with WOMEN'S NAMES - Name after name is checked off by Fritz.

41D
VARIOUS

- Saul questions young couple at the beach.
- Saul questions Mexican woman
- Fat woman slams door in Orrie's face.
- Orrie questions pretty Russian woman.
- Fred talks to kids on the street.
- Fred questions lady of the night

41E
INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

LUCY hands Archie another check.

41F
INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

WOLFE reads a succession of books.

(CONTINUED)
ARCHIE (V.O.)
When the results were in, four
mystery babies had been accounted
for and seven women who had
been away in June had been
tracked down. Orrie had flown
to the Riviera and Fred to
Arizona. When Saul phoned in
to report that he had closed
the last gap twenty six days
and 8670 dollars later, we were
precisely where we had been
when we had started: Nowhere.
There were, however, two
significant developments.

INT. VALDON  MANSION - DAY
Lucy watches as Archie puts a record on a large console record player.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
The first was that my
relationship with the client
had grown increasingly cordial.

They start dancing.

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
When a client is shelling out 3
C's a day and getting nothing
for her dough, the least you
can do is drop in and say hello.

Archie gets fancy and Lucy follows him easily.

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I discovered that as a dancer,
she was no slouch. She was good
enough to take to the Flamingo
Club.

They improvise a bit and end up in a kiss.

IRIS IN/IRIS OUT
ARCHIE (V.O.)
The second development was that
Lucy came within an ace of
quitting as a client. Cramer
put two and two together and
got four and sent Stebbins to
do the counting.

Lucy opens the door to Purley Stebbins. They greet each
other and the SOUND COMES UP on....

STEBBINS
Did you know Ellen Tenzer?

LUCY
What business is that of yours?

STEBBINS
I'm here on the people's
business.

LUCY
Do you have a writ or a warrant
or whatever it is that you need?

STEBBINS
Do you have papers for the
foundling you've taken in?

LUCY
Of course.

STEBBINS
I want to warn you, Mrs. Valdon.
If we make the connection between
you and Tenzer and Nero Wolfe
on our own, our next interview
will be down at headquarters.

LUCY
Good. I've always wanted to
see them. My grandfather's
company poured the foundations.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
After Purley left, the queen
stormed out of her castle and
paid a visit to the peasant.

WIPE TO:
INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - DAY

Archie and Lucy are head to head in the kitchen.

ARCHIE
You want to hold hands, fine.
You want to be a huffy client, fine. But it's not fair for a huffy client to call me Archie.

LUCY
I'm not huffy!

ARCHIE
My point is mixing personal and business relations is bad for both.

LUCY
Don't be silly. We've been mixing personal and business relations for a month.

ARCHIE
Why are you here, Mrs. Valdon?

LUCY
I'm going to tell the police everything. Tell me where to go and who to see.

ARCHIE
You promised Mr. Wolfe you...
CONTINUED:

LUCY
They know about the baby. They
know I'm your client.

ARCHIE
Are you going to keep your mouth
shut?

LUCY
He came to my house! He just
started asking questions!

ARCHIE
Are you?

Impasse.

{END HOUR: A&E}
INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Archie and Wolfe come in after dinner. Wolfe goes to the globe and spins it slowly inspecting the continents. Fritz enters with the coffee.

ARCHIE
I won't join you for coffee. I have a date. Of sorts. I know we are expecting Mr. Cramer but he almost never comes after dinner. He'll probably be here at 11:02 tomorrow morning.
WOLFE
Can I reach you?

ARCHIE
Sure. At Mrs. Valdon's number.

WOLFE
She came here this afternoon.

ARCHIE
Yes. She was shying a little. She wanted some assurance you could stay in the saddle and I supplied it.

WOLFE
Is she, in fact, in a pucker?

ARCHIE
She was afraid that you might pull out. She asked me to come back and report what you said.

WOLFE
Flummery.

ARCHIE
Oh. I'll tell her that.

He leaves. Fritz sighs. Wolfe glowers.

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I was off by three minutes. Cramer arrived at 11:05 the next morning.

INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY
Cramer is about to bounce out of his chair. There is a towering stack of books on the desk and Wolfe is sorting through them.

CRAMER
What's the matter? You blocked?

WOLFE
Yes.
CRAMER
The hell you are.
CRAMER (CONT'D)
Do you deny that there is a direct connection between Goodwin's seeing Ellen Tenzer and the murder?

WOLFE
No. Nor affirm it. I don't know. And neither do you...

CRAMER
Nuts. You can add as well as I can. You're spending Mrs. Valdon's money like water. I don't know what Panzer, Durkin and Cather are doing, but I know what they're not doing. They're not investigating the death of Ellen Tenzer. Therefore, you already know who killed her.

WOLFE
As reasoning, that is admirably specious. Mr. Cramer, I give you my word that I haven't the faintest notion of who killed Ellen Tenzer.

CRAMER
Your word?

WOLFE
My word.

CRAMER
Then what the hell are Goodwin and his monkeys doing?

WOLFE
They're not investigating a homicide.

Cramer growls, chomps his cigar and takes on Archie.

CRAMER
What time did you leave Lucy Valdon's house last night?

ARCHIE
What's that got to do with the price of eggs in Reykjavik?

(CONTINUED)
THE EIGHT-TO-TWO MAN SAYS YOU ENTERED AT NINE AND DIDN'T COME OUT. THE TWO-TO-EIGHT MAN SAYS YOU DIDN'T COME OUT EITHER. YOU SPENT THE NIGHT THERE.

ARCHIE LOOKS FOR SOMETHING TO DO TO AVOID WOLFE'S GLANCE.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
This was all Wolfe needed. First a woman passes a note to me under his nose. Now Cramer was taking notes under my window.
(out loud)
At a quarter to two Mrs. Valdon and I were somewhat high, and went out to dance on the sidewalk. At a quarter past two, she went back in and I left. So they both missed me.

CRAMER
You're a liar.
(to Wolfe)
And you're pigheaded. I want the real reason Mrs. Valdon is spending a fortune on a stray baby, and keeping her lip buttoned, and if I don’t get it from you, by God, I’ll get it from her.

WOLFE
After all this? After I have indulged you to the utmost? You would molest my client?

CRAMER
You're damn right I would. I don't care what her name is.

CRAMER GRABS HIS HAT AND MARCHES OUT. ARCHIE GOES TO THE DOOR AND SHUTS IT.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Cramer's bark was worse than the DA's bite. They only kept Lucy downtown for four hours. For an Armstead, that was enough and she went to recover at her country cottage...
A WOODIE pulls up to the estate, honks, and starts to disgorge its human occupants. TWO GARDENERS are planting a tree. The HOUSEKEEPER and her HUSBAND come out waving.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
She took the baby, the nurse, the maid, and the cook and me.

Archie pulls up just behind in the studebaker. Archie emerges with an overnight bag.

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It was a modest little cottage with just enough room for the Russian army.

Archie emerges, dressed for the country. He takes an appreciative breath of air. Lucy comes out.

LUCY
Won't Mr. Wolfe object to your being here with me? The client.

ARCHIE
Yes, but he can't fire me.

LUCY
Why not?

ARCHIE
Because if I wasn't around he'd be sleeping under a bridge and eating scraps.
(on her look)
He hates to work and half my salary comes from poking him.

LUCY
Sounds dangerous.

ARCHIE
Yeah.

(MORE)
CONTINUED:

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
When I poke hard, he asks for suggestions and then avoids work by dismissing my ideas. So my strategy this weekend has been to prod him along by being unavailable to scowl at.

LUCY
Will it work?

ARCHIE
We shall see in a few hours.

OMITTED

INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE -- DAY

Archie comes in and goes to his desk, still in country clothes.

ARCHIE
Good morning, good morning. Ah, you should have joined us this weekend. Tramping the moors, the fresh air, the late night fires, the beautiful baby...

WOLFE
Get your notebook.

Archie takes his time getting his notebook.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Thus started the second stage of the Mother Hunt. And it was elaborate even by Wolfe's standards.

WIPE TO:

INT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - DAY

Lucy looks out of sorts. Archie looks out of place in city clothes.

LUCY
But I don't want to come back to town. It's not so much going back I object to. It's publicity, period. I'm...

(CONTINUED)
ARCHIE
An Armstead. I thought you were tired of being an Armstead and that's why you'd taken up with a raffish character like me.

LUCY
True. Oh, all right.

ARCHIE
I'll see you tomorrow. I have to go plant a story.

INT. LON COHEN'S OFFICE - DAY
Lon eats at his desk. Archie talks.

LON
I'm listening.

ARCHIE
See it. A Sunday feature. A good wholesome title, WOMEN LIKE BABIES. Mostly pictures. What text there is will tell how Mrs. Lucy Valdon, beautiful widow of Richard Valdon, has taken a baby into her luxurious home. How she has hired a nurse who is devoted to the little lambkin and takes it out every day around Washington Square, so it can enjoy the beauties of nature.

LON
Lambkin?

ARCHIE
Angelpie. You choose, I'm not writing it.

LON
You have the nerve of a one-legged man at an ass-kicking convention.

ARCHIE
That's not only vulgar, it's irrelevant.

(CONTINUED)
LON
Ellen Tenzer got murdered on account of that baby. And you want me to put a spotlight on it? The next day, it gets snatched, and the Gazette gets the blame. I pass.

ARCHIE
Did I mention the nurse will be a detective, Sally Corbett— the best female op around aside from Dol Bonner? Saul Panzer and Fred Durkin and Orrie Cather will be within range.

LON
Who killed Ellen Tenzer?

ARCHIE
Ask the cops.

Lon rubs his nose with his finger. The phone starts ringing again. Another phone starts ringing. He is unperturbed. Then.

LON
All right. The picture deadline for Sunday is Thursday 6 pm.

He chooses a phone.

{A&E: END ACT FIVE}
CONTINUED:

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
Did you ever find my hat?

SALLY (O.S.)
(looking him over)
I don't remember you in a hat.

She turns to a shelf, pulls down the hat. Hands it to him. He pulls a pair of socks out of it. She's into the perambulator.

SALLY (CONT'D)
Here we are. I tried the fish eye lens but the aperture is too big. So I'm trying the 16 millimeter, but I'm concerned about the distortion. The remote cable shutter release works like a charm.

ARCHIE
You say the most poetic things. How soon will you be ready for the shoot?

SALLY
Gotta get glamorous first.

ANGLE ON SALLY as she sits in front of her vanity, leaning in to apply the first prosthetic of her age makeup.

OMITTED

INSERT: NEWSPAPER SPINNING -

It stops. We see the headline: WOMEN LOVE BABIES. Below it are pictures of Lucy and the baby and Sally, looking 50, walking the baby in the park.

MATCHED DISSOLVE TO:

INT. VALDON MANSION - KITCHEN - MORNING

Archie, holding the article in his hand. He is in his shirtsleeves. He folds back the paper and shows it to Lucy who is pouring coffee, dressed in a peignoir.
ARCHIE
WOMEN LOVE BABIES. It's a matter of taste. In my opinion, WOMEN LIKE BABIES would have been more subtle.

LUCY
Lucy Armstead. In the Gazette. I've had calls from three friends, Uncle Wimmie and my sister in Boston.

Lucy shudders at the exposure. Archie steals a kiss.

EXT. UNIVERSITY PLACE PARK - DAY

Sally and the baby cruise the park. They pass FRED DURKIN who looks busy feeding pigeons. TWO WOMEN stop and point. As Sally pauses, they come up to look at the baby from the front of the carriage. Sally smiles and makes a movement on the handle.

CUT TO:

INSERT: BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO OF THE TWO WOMEN

Peering down at the baby.

Sally smiles at the women, and quietly advances the camera. Another WOMAN comes up, from the side. Sally smiles at her and makes a movement adjusting the hood of the carriage.

INSERT: BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO OF WOMAN

Smiling at the baby from the side of the carriage.

Sally extracts herself from the WOMAN and goes down the path. A policeman nods at her. So does Orrie Cather.

AN OMINOUS LOOKING MAN strolls towards the carriage. Fred and Orrie close in behind. Sally turns the carriage in preparation to flee. But when the man gets there, he starts making goofy faces.

INSERT: Beginning with the man, a series of photos of people staring down into the carriage.

DISSOLVE THROUGH TO:
INT. SALLY'S LOFT - DAY
SALLY AND ARCHIE hang up photos to dry.

INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY
A STACK OF PHOTOS

as Wolfe and Archie go through them. Sally hovers in the b.g, dressed in oddly sexy outfit.

ARCHIE
The camera is concealed in the Teddy Bear. See the eye - it's a lens.

WOLFE
And it works by remote control?

SALLY
I got the focusing down pat yesterday. Anyone looking at the baby from a distance of six yards or less is going to get shot in focus. I had a 16 mm lens but because of the distort...

WOLFE
Madam. If you would focus.
(to Archie)
Did Mrs. Valdon recognize any of these?

ARCHIE
Nope. But we're waiting on reports from her husband's friends.

ANGLE ON JULIAN HAFT - DAY
who frowns and opens a packet of pictures.
looks at the stack of picture. Then he smiles his electric smile, and begins to flip through them.

WIPE TO:

pondering a last picture, shaking his head. He reaches for the phone.

WIPE TO:

hanging up the phone. He turns to Wolfe.

Nope. Not one. Let's hope today's crop is better.

Wolfe nods absently as he compares the passages in two books. His desk is covered in books.

Sally strolls past Saul who is reading a paper. He hears a CAR STOP and looks over at the sound.

CLOSE ON A TAXI which has stopped at the curb. A woman, CAROLE MARDUS, gets out and tells the cab to wait. She looks and spies the carriage and walks towards it with purpose. She is a professional woman, walks with brisk assurance.

Saul watches her go past and casually slips in behind her.

Carol Mardus gets near Sally and the baby carriage. She stops dead. Ten yards behind her, Saul notices that his shoe needs tying and stops to tie it.

Carol walks up the baby carriage, stops. Sally smiles and wheels the carriage around so she can take her picture. Carol looks blankly at the baby and turns and goes quickly. Saul watches her go.

She gets in the taxi and takes off. Saul steps into the street and notes the license plate.

Archie is on the phone.
She took a cab there just to see the baby? Let's find that hackie.

He hangs up. Then he jumps up.

INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - DAY

Archie appears as Fritz and Wolfe confer over the newest creation in shad roe.

FRITZ
If you cannot abide onion, we must have something to cut the oil.

WOLFE
Parsley.
(Fritz shakes his head)
Sorrel.

They look at each other - Eureka!

ARCHIE
Congratulations. Your theory that a woman who had a baby six months ago might like to see what it looks like was sound. Two to one, we have hooked the mother.

WOLFE
Satisfactory.

INT. SALLY'S LOFT - DAY

Archie helps Sally take down pictures which have been drying and make a stack. Carol Mardus stares at us - but Archie doesn't know that as he takes her down and adds her to the stack.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Monday mornings's crop was three rolls. Twenty-six exposures altogether, and one of them was worth its weight in rubies.

INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

Wolfe and Saul sit in the couch area. Wolfe has beer and Saul has a bottle of Montrachet. They've been discussing
books and are surrounded by them. Archie waits impatiently as Saul deals the pictures onto the desk deftly, then stops.

SAUL
There. That's her.

Archie takes it, shows Carol Mardus to Wolfe, then puts them in an envelope.

ARCHIE
I'm sorry I had to interrupt you gentlemen. If you need me you know Mrs. Valdon's number. Maybe she knows who this woman is. Stay out of my desk, Saul.

He leaves. Wolfe and Saul look at each other.

SAUL
When he first described her, he said she was too thin for the best curves.

WOLFE
Perhaps it is a variable standard. Where were we?

SAUL
Heart of Darkness, the descent into chaos.

INT. VALDON MANSION - DAY

Close on a picture of Carol Mardus.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
After the strain of appearing in the press, I thought it would cheer the client up to know the Mother Hunt might be over.
LUCY
Carol Mardus. I should have known.

ARCHIE
I have never seen you look beat until now.

LUCY
Dick told me it was all in the past, but...when they were together, you could still see it. They weren't...tame.

ARCHIE
But it ended.

LUCY
Yes, when she got Manny Upton to take Dick's stories. Manny made her fiction editor and then she was with Manny.
LUCY (CONT'D)
She left him to marry Willis Krug. That didn't last either.

ARCHIE
She wasn't on your list.

LUCY
I didn't think of her, not with a baby. She actually told me that when she was married to Willis, she got pregnant and got rid of it.

ARCHIE
But if she didn't want a baby, why...?

LUCY
Because it was Dick's. I am beat, Archie. Carol Mardus.
CONTINUED: (3)

He comforts her.

ANGLE ON JULIAN HAFT - DAY

Opening a packet. He starts looking, frowning.

WIPE TO:

ANGLE ON BINGHAM - DAY

shakes his head as he looks at pictures.

WIPE TO:

ANGLE ON WILLIS KRUG - DAY

Packages up the pictures, frowning. He reaches for the phone.

WIPE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

Archie hangs up the phone and turns to Wolfe. Saul is there, reporting.

ARCHIE
Despite the fact that all of them knew her, probably biblically, not one picked her out of the pile.

WOLFE
She must inspire either great fear or the instinct to protect.

ARCHIE
I think she just got her hooks in deep.

WOLFE
Continue your report, Saul.
SAUL
Carol Mardus was absent from her job at the Distaff for nearly six months last year - on vacation in Sarasota Florida. On June 16th, she was admitted to Sarasota General Hospital, under the name of Clara Waldron, and gave birth to a baby boy.

WOLFE
Satisfactory.

ARCHIE
So the mother hunt is over.

WOLFE
It is not. It could be over. But for that woman. The dead one. The one who gave you a drink of water.

ARCHIE
Well, if Carol Mardus is the mother, she either killed her or knows who did.

WOLFE
How much of Mrs. Valdon's money have we spent?

ARCHIE
Around fourteen grand.

WOLFE
Pfui. You will see Carol Mardus.

ARCHIE
No, sir, I won't. You will. I saw Ellen Tenzer. I saw Anne Tenzer. I have seen Mrs. Valdon twenty times to your once.

WOLFE
Was this not as you preferred it?

The PHONE RINGS. Archie picks up.

ARCHIE
Nero Wolfe's office...
74A CONTINUED: (2)

CAROL (O.S.)
You're Archie Goodwin?

ARCHIE
Right.

CAROL (O.S.)
You may have heard my name.
Carol Mardus.

ARCHIE
Carol Mardus?
(on Wolfe's look)
Yes, I have.

WIPE TO:

{A&E: END ACT SIX}

75 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

Carol sits seductively in the red leather chair. Wolfe leans back, regarding her. Saul is gone.

CAROL
When Leo told me the great Nero Wolfe was making inquiries about me, I had to come and hear them for myself.

WOLFE
You went to a lot of trouble to keep the baby strictly private...

CAROL
Baby? What baby?

WOLFE
Archie?

Archie gets the pic and hands it to her.

CAROLE
What is this? Where...

WOLFE
There was a camera attached to the baby carriage in Washington Square. We used it to trace you to Sarasota General Hospital.

She tears the print into little pieces.

(CONTINUED)
CAROL
My God! That's why she did that. I knew she couldn't have thought of it herself. You did it.

WOLFE
Do you know Mr. Leo Bingham?

CAROL
Of course. And he loves me because I'm a tramp.

WOLFE
Mr. Julian Haft?

CAROL
We dine together occasionally.

WOLFE
Are you intimate?

CAROL
He's the only man in New York I can eat with and then go home and read manuscripts.

WOLFE
Mr. Willis Krug.

CAROL
So? I thought I wanted to go tame for awhile and tried marriage.

WOLFE
All of the pictures taken were shown to those three men. Yet none of them identified you.

CAROL
Yeah? What touching loyalty.

WOLFE
Is one of them the father of your baby?

CAROL
No.
WOLFE
Was Richard Valdon the father?
(No reply.)
Will you answer me, madam?

CAROL
No.

WOLFE
Did you leave the baby in the vestibule of Mrs. Valdon's house on Eleventh Street?
(No reply.)
Will you answer?

CAROL
No.

WOLFE
Where were you the night of Ellen Tenzer was killed? Will you answer?

She gets up and walks out. Archie jumps to open the door for her. Then he looks at Wolfe.

WOLFE (CONT'D)
Grrrr.

ARCHIE
That last question. It may have been a little — uh — direct?

WOLFE
If she's the killer, it is as well to inform her that we have connected the baby with the death of Ellen Tenzer. Is Mrs. Valdon in danger? Or the baby? Is Miss Mardus on her way there now with murderous intent?

ARCHIE
No. I can't see it. But if Leo Bingham told Carol about you, he may get the bright idea to call Cramer. And if Cramer connects Carol to Aunt Ellen, we lose our licenses, which won't matter cause you can't detect anything from jail.
CONTINUED: (3)

WOLFE
Tell Mrs. Valdon to return to the country. Escort her. Come back this evening. Tomorrow we'll do something, I don't know what.

ARCHIE
What about checking on Carol Mardus for the night in question.

WOLFE
No! A jackass could do that. Have I no imagination? No wit? Am I a dolt?

ARCHIE
Don't ask me. I might answer.

INT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - NIGHT
Archie and Lucy lie side by side and watch a fire.

ARCHIE
So there I was, all tied up while the killer slips a cord around my neck, trying to convince her two goons that she wasn't a man.

LUCY
What else did Carol say?

ARCHIE
I've given it to you word for word. Twice.

LUCY
Well, what was she wearing?

ARCHIE
Does that have some bearing on the question of whether Richard Valdon is the father?

LUCY
I just want to know. I just...

She trails off. Archie starts to speak. Doesn't.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ARCHIE (V.O.)
I let it slide. No man with any sense assumes that a woman's words mean to her exactly what they mean to him.

INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN -- DAY

Fritz is placidly making breakfast and Archie comes in.

ARCHIE
No word from upstairs?

FRITZ
No, Archie.

ARCHIE
I guess I am going to have to poke him.

FRITZ
Courage, mon vieux.

The PHONE RINGS. Archie grabs it.

ARCHIE
Nero Wolfe's kitchen.

SAUL (V.O.)
Archie. It's Saul. Are you listening to the radio?

ARCHIE
The radio? No. I was brooding.

SAUL (V.O.)
Then I'm bad news.

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Wolfe is knotting his tie and has just picked up his jacket when Archie knocks and comes in. Wolfe is ruffled by this.

WOLFE
Yes.

Archie sighs. Wolfe glares.

ARCHIE
Saul just phoned an item from the eight-thirty news.

(MORE)
CONTINUED:

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
The body of Carol Mardus was found in an alley by a cop. Strangled with a cord around her neck, just like Aunt Ellen.

WOLFE
No.

ARCHIE
Yes.

Beat. Then Wolfe throws his jacket at Archie. Archie is so surprised he doesn't catch it. He stares at Wolfe, who paces, agitated. Wolfe goes to the house phone, lifts the receiver.

WOLFE
Theodore. Good Morning. I won't be with you in the plant rooms this morning.

He slams it down. He paces again. After half a dozen turns, he picks up the jacket and stuffs his arms into it.

ARCHIE
Where are you bound for?

WOLFE
The plant rooms, of course.

He heads for the door. Archie gets in his way.

ARCHIE
If Cramer shows up here, we can no longer say we have no evidence of a murder, because our mother hunt has now caused two.

WOLFE
Pfui.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Wolfe went to his plants. I phoned Lon Cohen for details.

EXT. STREET - DAY

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Carol Mardus was murdered less than a block from her exhusband's apartment.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Manny Upton is brought to see the body. A COP pulls back a tarp for him to see.

CAROL MARDUS

Is not lovely in death. Strangled with a cord around her neck.

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

Her employer came to identify her.

EXT. BROWNSTONE - STOOP (STUDIO) - DAY

Archie leaves.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

As soon as I knew the facts, I headed for the cottage. I didn't want Lucy to find out from the radio.

EXT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - FRONT - DAY

Lucy bolts out of house. Archie comes after her.

LUCY

No. No!

ARCHIE

Okay, it's tough. It's damn tough. All the ifs. But now there are risks. So if you want to turn loose...

LUCY

I don't want to turn loose.

ARCHIE

You don't?

LUCY

The man who killed them, he put the baby in my vestibule, didn't he?

ARCHIE

Yes.

(Continued)
LUCY
Then I want Nero Wolfe to get him.

ARCHIE
The cops will get him sooner or later.

LUCY
I want Nero Wolfe to get him.

ARCHIE
All right. He will. I'll go back to help him.
(he turns to go. Then he stops.)
I just had an idea. I have one a year. I might possibly be walking past the house and feel like dropping in. May I have a key?

Lucy reaches in her pocket and produces a key.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
Nine hundred and ninety-nine women out of a thousand would have asked me "Why?".

She hands it to him. They try hard to smile at each other.

ARCHIE
All right, boss. I call you "boss" because I know it irritates you, but that's part of my job.
WOLFE
Archie.

ARCHIE
Either get your genius to work or call Cramer and empty the bag.

WOLFE
Impossible. This murderer has dared me with flagrant impudence and I, not the police, will be the instrument of his doom!

The DOORBELL RINGS. They look down the hall.

INSPECTOR CRAMER works a cigar on the other side of the glass. Their heads jerk back and their eyes meet. They skedaddle to the kitchen.

INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - DAY

Archie and Wolfe make their way past Fritz who is sprinkling sorrel with ice water. He sees something is up. The DOORBELL RINGS again. Wolfe turns at the back door.

WOLFE
Mr. Cramer is at the door and I cannot talk with him without revealing that which I do not want him to know. Put the chain bolt on. Archie and I have left and you don't know when we'll return. If he returns with a search warrant you'll have to admit him, but tell him nothing.

The DOORBELL RINGS. Fritz is frozen on the spot.

FRITZ
But the shad roe...

WOLFE
Go.

FRITZ
You realize this is the last day of the season? There will be no more until next year?

Wolfe growls and goes out. Archie follows.
EXT. STREET - DAY

Wolfe and Archie emerge from the alley. Wolfe takes to the street. Archie follows.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
He didn't know where he was going, but he did it with style.

WOLFE
Are we followed?

ARCHIE
We wouldn't be followed, we'd be stopped.

WOLFE
Must it be a hotel?

ARCHIE
(pulling out key)
No. I had an idea we might need a dugout, so I asked Mrs. Valdon for a key to her house. It's two miles that way.

WOLFE
We will stop on the way for accouterments.

They walk on.

WIPE TO:

ARCHIE.
Four cheeses, corned beef, sturgeon, anchovies, radishes, scallions, lemons, peaches, plums, crackers, cream, butter, olives, and twelve bottles of beer. Just enough to make it through the night.

(CONTINUED)
WOLFE
Is this the Salor rug?

ARCHIE
I doubt if you'll find any clues there.

Wolfe gets down with a rug in the hall.

WOLFE
Archie. This is not a Salor. It's an Agra using Salor designs.*
Late 18th Century. With an an asymmetrical knot. Not a Salor!*

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Wolfe spent the next two hours making a tour of every rug in the house. He knew there was only one way to get home to his orchids and his chair and his unfinished book. Why wasn't he working?

INT. VALDON MANSION - KITCHEN - DAY

Archie waits as Wolfe fusses over an elaborate platter of cold cuts and crackers.

ARCHIE
You're playing house.
(Wolfe ignores him)
Look, sir. There are times to be eccentric...

Wolfe seats himself. He doesn't want to spoil the meal with business, but he does.

WOLFE
Archie, tomorrow is Sunday, and we are boxed up here. We can't even change our socks. Despite this, I have been considering Mrs. Valdon. Please ask her to come this evening, alone. And - since you're fuming - get Saul here tomorrow morning.

ARCHIE
Right. What for?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

WOLFE
I am considering Ellen Tenzer's niece. Anne, is it? If I properly understood her métier, she replaces office workers who are temporarily absent?

ARCHIE
Right. It was called Stopgap...
(then)
I'll be damned. I should have thought of it myself.

WOLFE
You were too busy fuming.

Wolfe returns to his coldcuts.

{A&E: END ACT SEVEN}

WIPE TO:

OMITTED

INT. VALDON MANSION - PARLOR - NIGHT

Wolfe reads a book by Dunne. Archie is listening to a ball game on the radio, much to Wolfe's annoyance. Lucy comes to the door and watches them. Archie sees her.

ARCHIE
You're astonished that your house is not a mess with two men loose in it.

LUCY
You are conceited, but I like you anyway.

WOLFE
(taking over)
Madam. I thank you heartily for this haven.

LUCY
I hope, Sir, you have been comfortable.

WOLFE
I have never been more uncomfortable in my life.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
WOLFE (CONT'D)
No reflection on your hospitality is intended; but Mr. Goodwin and I are in a pickle.

LUCY
Again?

WOLFE
I need to see your husband's friends. Can you get them here tomorrow - without revealing that I am here? Mr. Upton may need persuading, but he is essential. And Mr. Cramer. If you would invite him as well. Do you like eggs?

Lucy laughs at the incongruity. Wolfe scowls.

WOLFE (CONT'D)
Confound it, are eggs comical? Do you know how to scramble eggs, Mrs. Valdon?

LUCY
Yes, of course.

WOLFE
To use Mr. Goodwin's favorite locution, one will get you ten that you don't. I'll scramble eggs for your breakfast in the morning and we'll see. Tell me forty minutes before you're ready.

LUCY
Forty minutes?

WOLFE
Yes. I knew you didn't know.

Archie stretches and yawns. They exchange a look.

LUCY
(to Wolfe)
Mr. Wolfe. You must be exhausted.
WOLFE


Wolfe's not leaving. They can't either.

INT. VALDON MANSION -- MORNING

Archie and Lucy come down the stairs. She stops. They kiss lightly. She sits. He holds up three fingers. She nods. He goes ahead. He comes back and kisses her again.

INT. VALDON MANSION - KITCHEN - DAY

Archie enters the kitchen. Wolfe is watching the eggs as they cook in the top of a double boiler. He acknowledges Archie's presence. Lucy comes in. It's all very proper, except for the fact that the men haven't shaved.

The three of them eat. But Archie and Lucy are aware that Wolfe is watching them.

ARCHIE

Boss. I gotta admit: these are fully up to Fritz's very best.
I'm going to tell him.

LUCY

I guess I didn't know how to scramble eggs.

If Wolfe could beam, he would.

WOLFE

Of course, forty minutes is more time than you could expect a housewife to spend scrambling eggs, but it is impossible to do it to perfection in less.

The DOORBELL RINGS. Archie gets up and leaves.

ARCHIE

Saul.

Wolfe and Lucy share a moment.

(CONTINUED)
WOLFE
I read something that might interest you. A monograph by R.P. Armstead on the acidic effect of the London fog on the leaves of flowering plants?

LUCY
Yes. My uncle published it under his name.

WOLFE
R.P. Armstead didn't write it?

LUCY
No. I did.
(on his look)
I wanted it to be taken seriously.

Saul and Archie enter.

WOLFE
Well, Saul?

SAUL
I spoke with Fritz. Two Homicide dicks are camped out in your office, smoking cigars.

Wolfe sighs mightily.

WOLFE
Archie. Give him Miss Tenzer's address.

WIPE TO:

EXT. VALDON MANSION - DAY

Manuel Upton approaches the door. Lucy answers with Saul Panzer assisting.

LUCY
Hello, Manny. Won't you come in? The others are here.

UPTON
Others? What is all this, Lucy. Who is this man?
LUCY
He works with Nero Wolfe.

UPTON
You're still involved with that fat fool?

He turns to leave. Saul grabs him. They struggle and then Saul propels him inside.

SAUL
This way, sir.

CUT TO:

INT. VALDON MANSION – UPSTAIRS HALLWAY/BEDROOM

Archie waits for his cue. He turns back to look through the door of a bedroom. We can see Wolfe and Anne Tenzer sitting stiffly, one on the bed, one in a chair.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
In all my years with Wolfe that was the only time to my knowledge that he was alone with a woman in a bedroom. I'm merely reporting, not insinuating. After all, he was only acquainting her with the script.

Lucy appears from downstairs.

LUCY
They're all here.

Archie looks back at Wolfe and signals. Wolfe and Anne Tenzer get up and pass between them on their way downstairs. Archie and Lucy pause before following.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I keep thinking. This time tomorrow, I will no longer be a client. No more business relations.

ARCHIE
That's why I've made reservations at the Flamingo Club for tomorrow night. It's time the world knew you could dance.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LUCY
Are you flirting with me, Archie.

ARCHIE
(he smiles and gestures)
Mrs. Valdon.

LUCY
Mr. Goodwin.

They go down.

INT. VALDON MANSION - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cramer chomps on his cigar and glares at Bingham, Upton, Haft and Krug, who mutter complaints. Saul stands near Upton.

CRAMER
Panzer. What are you doing here? Whose little party is this?

WOLFE
Mine.

Cramer's opens his mouth to shout as Wolfe parades in with Archie and Lucy. On a look from Wolfe, he controls himself.

UPTON
Arrest them! That's a formal demand. They have me here against my will.

WOLFE
Don't be an ass. I'm going to name a murderer, and Mr. Cramer knows it.

Wolfe goes to his chair. Cramer knows how to cover.

CRAMER
Yeah. Yeah.

Cramer sits. Archie sits next to Upton. On a look from Wolfe, Saul goes out to be with Anne Tenzer.

WOLFE
When Carol Mardus needed to get rid of her baby, she enlisted the help of a friend, a man. Let us call him "X".

(CONTINUED)
UPTON
Make it Z. X has been overworked.

WOLFE
(ignoring him)
It was a fatal mistake. For X was one of the few who had been denied her intimate favors and he resented it.

UPTON
Such purple prose.

WOLFE
When she told him that Richard Valdon was the father, he indulged himself in a prank. He left the baby and a note in Mrs. Valdon's vestibule.

BINGHAM
God. What a story this is. Is anyone getting it down?

WOLFE
When Ellen Tenzer communicated to X that we were on his trail, he strangled her. The prank was permissible. But the threat of its disclosure was not. After her talk with me, Miss Mardus did what Ellen Tenzer had done; she was probably scornful.

UPTON
OH BLAH. Blah, blah, blah, blah.

CRAMER
Wait a minute. You're saying this is the same baby that was boarded by Ellen Tenzer?

WOLFE
Yes. I see this won't do. I must name him. Archie.

Archie goes to the door and signals. Saul Panzer enters with Anne Tenzer.
WOLFE (CONT'D)
This is Anne Tenzer, the niece of Ellen Tenzer. She works for an Employment Service and fills temporary vacancies at the senior executive level.
(to Anne)
Look around, Miss Tenzer. Is there anyone in this room you have ever worked for?

ANNE
Oh. Hello, Mr. Haft. He's the president of Parthenon Press.

Overlapping cues.

HAFT
What? Is this one of your famous dramas, Mr. Wolfe?

ANNE
Don't you remember me, Mr. Haft? It was the last two weeks in June and the first week in July.

HAFT
I've heard of your tactics and I'm not putting up with them.

WOLFE
Did you discuss your Aunt Ellen's work with Mr. Haft?

ANNE
Well, I must have. Because when he called me last January, it was to find out if Aunt Ellen still boarded babies. Did it work out, Mr. Haft?

HAFT
She's lying. I've never...

Mr. Haft can't keep his hands still.

WOLFE
Do you contradict her? Do you say she lies?

(CONTINUED)
HAFT
I don't say she lies. I say she's mistaken. She mistook me for someone else.

WOLFE
Puerile. Either acknowledge the facts and call her a liar, or...

HAFT
I call you a liar.

WOLFE
And you are a dunce. Mr. Cramer. Ask Mr. Upton if Carol Mardus told him who helped her dispose of the baby. He was her employer. He would not allow her a six month vacation without asking why.

UPTON
Julian. I'm sorry. You can't expect me to...

Haft keeps trying to take the cheaters off, but his hands are trembling so, he can't manage it.

HAFT
Oh God. Oh god, oh god, oh god.

WOLFE
Mr. Haft. You are a malignant impudent worm, but now that I have exposed you, I offer advice: go prepare your defense. There must be traces - letters, canceled checks, a stray hair in your car - it is a simple matter to produce evidence when you know whom you are looking for. Well, go. Aren't you going?

CRAMER
You know damn well he's not going. Nobody is.

BINGHAM
Good god, this is brutal.

(CONTINUED)
CRAMER
All of you - I'm sending for cars and I'm taking you all to the District Attorney's office.
(to Wolfe)
Especially you. You never leave your house, huh? Now that you've left it you'll go back when I say so.

Wolfe ignores him and goes to Lucy.

WOLFE
Mrs. Valdon. You have indulged me and I am beholden to you.
Go to your room and bolt the door, In Mr. Cramer's present mood, he will insist that you accompany us, and there is no reason for that.

Lucy, who is not dumb, nods and leaves the room.

CRAMER
All right. We've had our little triumph, Wolfe. Let's go!

He herds Wolfe to the door. Archie grabs Haft.

ARCHIE
Mr. Cramer. I realize that this is now your moment of triumph, but don't you think you should take the murderer along with you?

EXT. VALDON MANSION - DAY

Two police cars are there, lights flashing. Cramer comes down the steps, leading Nero Wolfe. He signals, and several NEWSMEN with FLASHBULBS come and follow them to the car. Wolfe looks neither to the right or to the left but heads to a car and gets in. Cramer enjoys every moment of it.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
It took eight hours to sort things out. But as soon as he made the case, Wolfe returned to the Brownstone, got into bed and didn't emerge for four days.
INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - DAY

Archie takes a piece of scrapple and contemplates the pleasantness of life as he reads the paper.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
The jury wasn't impressed with Haft's executive job title and voted unanimously to send him to the chair.

FRITZ
I didn't expect you down until later, Archie. You said you were going to the Flamingo.

ARCHIE
There you go, Fritz, circling around again. You could just ask why I came home early.

FRITZ
Bien. I ask.

ARCHIE
Good. I answer. The baby had a temperature and my companion was worried about it. A worried mother should not be dancing. Does that cover it?

FRITZ
Oui.

He gets Archie's plate, and returns it with a slice of hot scrapple.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
He is worried, too, Archie. He thinks there is a danger that you may marry that woman.

ARCHIE
I know he does and that suits me fine. After a month or so of it, I'll be able to hit him for a raise.

Archie eats. Fritz wisely decides to keep his counsel.

THE END