

The Wolfe Pack
The Nero Wolfe
Literary Society



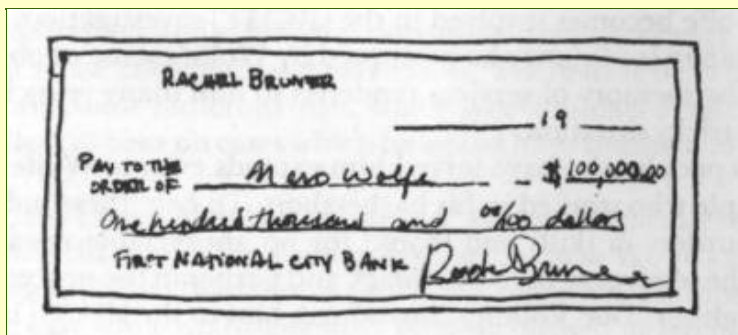
Not Too Many Clients

By Evelyn Herzog

ONCE, WHEN ASKED whom Wolfe was working for on an investigation, Archie Goodwin facetiously remarks: "There is never any question about that. He is working first, last and all the time, for Wolfe."

The range of Wolfe's reasons for taking on a case is nearly as broad as his girth. Honor, affection, appetite and envy are only some of the possible motives that propel him into action and sometimes out of his house.

Wolfe himself would be among the last to admit this. He avers that he adopted the profession of detective because of his desire to earn enough to live in "acceptable circumstances." Despite this claim and Archie's frequent statements that only the lure of the lucre can get Wolfe to work, actually less than half of Wolfe's recorded cases are undertaken on behalf of a regular paying client.



Wolfe's affectations and affections, even more than his avarice, can engage his interest in a case and command his services. There have been many admirable causes, and some ludicrous ones, which have induced Wolfe to bring his massive intellect to bear on cases which he would have shunned for mere money.

Ironically, the cases which Wolfe takes up "for love" typically require much more adroitness than ordinary business because in them Wolfe's aims are generally more complicated than simply providing a solution. He must, for example, solve the case while simultaneously keeping himself or Archie out of jail, protecting himself and his associates from a killer's vengeance, keeping himself out of the witness box in a crowded courtroom, shielding from public scrutiny any sottise he or his clients have committed, arranging for adequate punishment of a killer despite inadequate legal evidence, or blacking the eyes of the police, district attorney or F.B.I.

Wolfe has acknowledged strong attachments for only a few people, and is not given to talking about his feelings. Actions, however, speak louder than words. Wolfe's unprecedented efforts in [BLCK] are directed toward avenging the deaths of Marko Vukcic, his oldest friend, and of Caria Lovchen on whose behalf he had earlier taken on the case in [OVER]. On several occasions, most memorably in [corn] and [notq], Wolfe commits himself on Archie's behalf when the latter becomes a murder suspect through bad luck, a killer's plot or even his own conniving. At other times Wolfe joins Archie in investigations rather than do without his services [BASE], [meth], [DUDE].

Honor, perhaps even more than personal affection, is a force with a powerful effect upon Wolfe. He is extremely sensitive to claims upon his services by people who share his passions or his work. His willingness to oblige orchid-growers and chefs, particularly his own Fritz Brenner and the staff of Rusterman's, leads to his involvement in [omit], [pois], [July], [this], and [RBOX].

KEY FOR REFERENCED TITLES	
Abbr.	Title
corn	<i>Murder is Corney</i>
AFAM	<i>A Family Affair</i>
BASE	<i>Prisoner's Base</i>
BLCK	<i>The Black Mountain</i>
CAES	<i>Some Buried Caesar</i>
COOK	<i>Too Many Cooks</i>
copk	<i>The Cop-Killer</i>
coun	<i>Countfeit for Murder</i>

To save a young gardener from a murder charge, Wolfe takes on the [door] case. He starts the [FERD] investigation to oblige Fred Durkin, one of his operatives, and the [DOXY] case to extricate another, Orrie Gather, from an accusation of murder. To requite a man who once provided him with valuable evidence, Wolfe becomes involved in the [RGHT] investigation. His services for Lily Rowan in [rode] may be prompted by Wolfe's sense of obligation as a guest or by the memory of services rendered to him many years before in an unusual and tricky situation. Loyalty to people who have served him extends even to Wolfe's bootblack and to a couple who worked in his barbershop. To help these individuals, Wolfe loses the services of both bootblack and barber in the process. His physician and neighbor, Doc Vollmer, introduces him to the [PASS] investigation and he avenges another neighbor, young Peter Drossos, by finding the killer in [GOLD]. Even so minor a member of the West 35th Street household as a black dog prompts Wolfe's entry into the [diel] case.

Wolfe would not be human if he responded only to noble motives. His envy for Lewis Hewitt's unprecedented black orchids takes him onto the scene of a murder in progress in the story of that name. In [east], his larcenous desire to possess another man's unique pink hybrids lands Wolfe in the middle of another

dets	<i>Too Many Detectives</i>
disg	<i>Disguise for Murder</i>
DOXY	<i>Death of a Doxy</i>
DUDE	<i>Death of a Dude</i>
eeny	<i>Eeny, Meenie, Murder, Mo</i>
FERD	<i>Fer-de-lance</i>
GOLD	<i>The Golden Spiders</i>
help	<i>Help Wanted, male</i>
joke	<i>Murder Is No Joke</i>
meth	<i>Method Three for Murder</i>
notg	<i>Not Quite Dead Enough</i>
OVER	<i>Over my Dead Body</i>
RANG	<i>The Doorbell Rang</i>
RBOX	<i>The Red Box</i>
RGHT	<i>A Right to Die</i>
xmax	<i>Christmas Party</i>
zero	<i>The Zero Clue</i>

murder. Wolfe's gourmandise leads him into the thick of [COOK] as he pursues the recipe for saucisse minuit, while real hunger for strictly rationed wartime meat impels him to accept a job for gangster Dazy Perrit in [befo].

In [CAES], Wolfe is again trying to get something that money seems unable to buy, namely, comfortable lodgings during a visit to an orchid exhibit in upper New York state. Comfort, or the lack of it, likewise prompts Wolfe to reopen a murder case in [next] in a desperate bid to escape the discomfort of a crowded courtroom. Yet physical inconvenience is not his only motive. Some of the credit also belongs to Wolfe's animus against miscarriages of justice.

Pride is another almost irresistible force for Wolfe. His deep offense at the sneer that he is a bootlicker and flunky for the cops makes him take up the.... Many times Wolfe's self-esteem takes the place of a paying client. The affront of murders committed in his own home — and once with his own tie - goads him to solve [eeny], [disg] and [AFAM]. The need to restore his professional dignity is more compelling than any fee.

The indignity of being made a witness to one murder and a suspect in another leads Wolfe to work on his own account in [zero], [xmas], [dets] and [joke]. In an even more urgent case, [help], Wolfe sets himself to find a killer when he discovers that he is to be the next victim!

Time after time Wolfe manages to emerge with his own and his associates' skins and reputations intact, with a new orchid, a new recipe, or a debt of honor paid. And, sometimes, with a large fee after all. Because, while there is obviously more to Wolfe's life than money, money certainly helps.

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