

NERO WOLFE

"Champagne for One"

FADE IN:

INT. BOUDOIR - DAY

Our CREDITS play over A MONTAGE of FOUR YOUNG WOMEN dressing for an elegant night out.

-- A SILK STOCKING is drawn slowly up a slender leg.

-- A CAMISOLE drops down over a slender midriff.

-- BRIGHT RED LIPSTICK is carefully applied to an alluring set of lips.

-- A GARTER slides into place.

-- POLISH is lovingly painted on long nails.

And finally: A WOMAN'S HAND grabs a small bottle marked POISON. The bottle drops into a purse, and the purse is snapped shut.

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

Archie is at his desk OILING HIS TWO MARLEY .38s. As we hear his voice-over, he switches to OILING HIS TYPEWRITER with the SAME OIL.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

Nero Wolfe is a creature of habit. Every morning, from nine until eleven, he tends to his 10,000 orchids and I, Archie Goodwin, his confidential secretary and legman extraordinaire, tend to business. And since there wasn't any business to tend to, I was preparing for action... if and when it ever came.

The PHONE RINGS. He answers it.

ARCHIE

Nero Wolfe's office, Archie Goodwin speaking.

The caller's response is BARELY INTELLIGIBLE.

BYNE'S VOICE

Hello there. This is Byne. Dinky Byne.

ARCHIE

Clear your throat or sneeze or something, and try again.

And we INTERCUT with DINKY BYNE, who is talking on the phone in his apartment. Dinky is PINCHING HIS NOSE and PRETENDING TO BE SICK.

BYNE

That wouldn't help. My tubes are clogged. Tubes. Clogged. Understand? Dinky Byne -- B-Y-N-E.

ARCHIE

Oh, hello. I won't ask how you are, hearing how you sound. My sympathy.

BYNE

I need it. I need more than sympathy, too. I need help. Will you do me a hell of a favor?

ARCHIE

I might. If I can do it sitting down and it doesn't cost me my teeth.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

Austin, aka "Dinky" to his friends, was faking it, but I was curious why, so I strung him along. I knew him from an old case and was hoping this would lead to another one.

BYNE

It won't cost you a thing. You know my Aunt? Louise Robilotti?

ARCHIE'S VOICE

That was the old case.

ARCHIE

Only professionally. Mr. Wolfe recovered some jewelry for her. She didn't like paying the fee and she didn't like me.

BYNE

I suppose you know about the dinner party she gives every year for Grantham House?

ARCHIE

The charity her late, first husband Albert Grantham set up for unwed mothers?

BYNE

Yeah. Well, this is a social thing, to introduce to higher society four of the unwed mothers who have left the care of Grantham house.

(MORE)

BYNE (CONT'D)

It's tonight, and I was supposed to be one of the four *chevaliers*, but I'm too sick to go. You'd be perfect to take my place. You'll know exactly how to treat the lady guests.

ARCHIE

Your aunt didn't like me.

BYNE

She won't mind. She'd hate having only three *chevaliers* even more. Black tie, seven o'clock, you know the address. I'll guarantee nothing will be served that will break your teeth. How about it, Archie?

As Archie mulls it over, NERO WOLFE comes, goes to his desk, and starts sorting through his mail.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

I kind of liked the idea. It would increase my knowledge of human nature. It would be interesting to see how they handled me and how I handled myself.

ARCHIE

All right, I accept.

BYNE

I'll do the same for you one day.

ARCHIE

You can't. I haven't got a billionaire aunt.

At the mention of money, Nero Wolfe's eyebrows raise just a bit, but he keeps his attention on his mail. Archie hangs up the phone and smiles as he JOTS DOWN A NOTE.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

Mr. Wolfe pretended like he didn't hear, but I knew he had. It takes a lot of cash to feed 10,000 orchids, not to mention himself.

Archie hands the note to Wolfe.

WOLFE

What is this?

ARCHIE

Where you can reach me this evening from seven o'clock on.

WOLFE

Mr. Hewit is coming this evening to bring a Dendrobium and look at the Renanthera. You said you would be there.

ARCHIE

I know, but this is an emergency. I have to stand in for a sick friend, Austin Byne, at Mrs. Robilotti's dinner party for the unwed mothers of Grantham House. Do you know about the event?

WOLFE

Yes. Buffoonery. A burlesque of hospitality. Do you mean you are abetting it?

ARCHIE

It will give me a fresh outlook. It will harden my nerves. It will broaden my mind.

Wolfe's eyes narrow.

WOLFE

Archie.

ARCHIE

Yes, sir?

WOLFE

Do I ever intrude in your private affairs?

ARCHIE

Yes, sir. Frequently. But you think you don't, so go right ahead.

WOLFE

You demean yourself. These creatures are invited for an obvious purpose. It is hoped that they will meet a man who will be moved to pursue the acquaintance and who will end by legitimating, if not the infant already in being, the future produce of the womb. Therefore your attendance will be an imposture and you know it.

ARCHIE

If that were the purpose, I would say hooray for Mrs. Robilotti and I wouldn't go. But it's not about match-making.

(MORE)

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

The idea is that it will buck the girls up to spend an evening with the cream and get a taste of caviar, and sit on a chair made by Congreve, and--

WOLFE

(interrupts:)

Congreve didn't make chairs.

ARCHIE

I know he didn't, but I needed a name and that one popped in. I won't be perpetuating a fraud, but don't be too sure I won't meet the lady of my doom.

Archie goes, Wolfe returning to his letters.

WOLFE

Pfui.

WIPE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Archie comes in, looking very dashing in his finest duds. FRITZ is preparing dinner.

ARCHIE

Cross me off for dinner. I'm doing my good deed for the year and getting it over with.

FRITZ

That's too bad. I'm serving veal birds in casserole with mushrooms and white sauce.

ARCHIE

You may not be as great an expert on women as you are on food, but I would appreciate some suggestions on how to act this evening.

Fritz turns around, truly stunned.

FRITZ

Act with women? You? Ha! With your thousand triumphs, advice from me? Archie, that is upside down.

ARCHIE

Thanks for the plug, but these women are special. Unwed mothers from Grantham House being given a taste of society.

FRITZ
No!

ARCHIE
Why no?

FRITZ
You, Archie?

ARCHIE
Why not me?

FRITZ
It will ruin everything. They will all be back at Grantham House in less than a year.

ARCHIE
That's not the kind of advice I was looking for.

Fritz aims a knife at him and smiles.

FRITZ
I know you well, Archie, as well as you know me, maybe. This is just talk and I enjoy it. But you will go there and act as you feel. You always do.

Fritz returns to his cooking, adding something new to his mix.

ARCHIE
What is that?

FRITZ
Marjoram. I'm trying it.

ARCHIE
Don't tell Wolfe and see if he spots it.

FRITZ
Thanks for the advice.

ARCHIE
Any time. Don't hesitate to ask.

Archie leaves, no better off than he was when he came in, and we:

CUT TO:

INT. GRANTHAM MANSION - NIGHT

As the BUTLER, HACKETT, takes Archie's coat.

ARCHIE

How's it going, Mr. Hackett?

HACKETT

Very well, thank you, Mr. Goodwin.

Archie looks past Hackett and sees Mrs. LOUISE ROBILOTTI, 60s, talking with some other guests. She's rich and snooty, yet still attractive.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

Whoever had designed her had preferred angles to curves and missed no opportunities, and the passing years, now adding up close to sixty, had made no alterations.

Archie turns to Hackett.

ARCHIE

How is Mrs. Robilotti these days?

HACKETT

As kind and warm-hearted as you remember, Mr. Goodwin.

Archie smiles, appreciating the warning, but before he has a chance to prepare for it, Mrs. Robilotti is suddenly right at his side.

MRS. ROBILOTTI

Mr. Goodwin. My nephew Austin Byne says he phoned you and gave you the details.

ARCHIE

I guess he did.

MRS. ROBILOTTI

You *guess* he did?

ARCHIE

The voice said it was Byne, but it could have been a seal trying to bark.

MRS. ROBILOTTI

He has laryngitis. He told you so. Apparently you haven't changed any. Of course it is not unusual, on inviting a dinner guest, to caution him about his conduct, but for this occasion some care is required. You appreciate that?

ARCHIE

Certainly.

MRS. ROBILOTTI
Tact and discretion are necessary.

ARCHIE
I brought some along.

MRS. ROBILOTTI
And, of course, some refinement.

ARCHIE
I borrowed some.

She eyes him coldly.

ARCHIE'S VOICE
She still didn't like me, but she
didn't have much of a choice, unless
she wanted an empty seat at the table.

MRS. ROBILOTTI
Very well. Come with me.

ARCHIE'S VOICE
I knew then that I was right. It
was going to be a delightful evening.
For me, any way.

And with that a smiling Archie follows her inside.

WIPE TO:

INT. GRANTHAM MANSION - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone is seated around the table and engaged in lively conversation. We will "formally" meet each guest as Archie describes them in voice-over. Whoever we don't introduce here we will meet very soon. But for the sake of choreography, FAITH USHER is seated across from Archie, with BEVERLY KENT (a MAN) on her left and CECIL GRANTHAM to her right. On Archie's left is ROSE TUTTLE. The others -- Mrs. Robilotti, ROBERT ROBILOTTI, CELIA GRANTHAM, HELEN YARMIS, ETHEL VARR, EDWIN LAIDLAW, and PAUL SCHUSTER -- fill the remaining seats.

ARCHIE'S VOICE
I decided the best way to treat the
girls was as an older brother who
liked sisters and liked to kid them --
with tact, discretion and refinement,
of course.

TIGHT on HELEN YARMIS.

ARCHIE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Helen Yarmis was tall and slender, a
little too slender, with a wide curved
mouth that would have been a real
(MORE)

ARCHIE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
 asset if she kept the corners up.
 She was on her dignity and apparently
 had some.

TIGHT on ETHEL VARR.

ARCHIE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
 Ethel Varr was the one I would have
 picked for my doom, if I had been
 shopping. She was not a head turner,
 but she had one of those complex
 faces that you can't stop looking
 at.

TIGHT on FAITH USHER.

ARCHIE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
 I would have picked Faith Usher for
 my sister because she looked like
 she needed a brother more than the
 others. She was very attractive,
 but was doing her best to cancel her
 advantages by letting her shoulders
 sag and keeping her face so tight.

TIGHT on ROSE TUTTLE.

ARCHIE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
 Rose Tuttle showed no signs of needing
 a brother at all. She had been born
 cheerful and it would take more than
 an accidental baby to smother it.

ROSE
 Goodwin? That's your name?

ARCHIE
 Right. Archie Goodwin.

ROSE
 Mrs. Robilotti told me I would sit
 between Mr. Edwin Laidlaw and Mr.
 Austin Byne, but now your name's
 Goodwin. The other day I was telling
 a friend of mine about coming to
 this party and she said there ought
 to be unmarried fathers here too,
 and you seem to have changed your
 name. Are you an unmarried father?

ARCHIE
 I'm half of that. I'm unmarried,
 but not, as far as I know, a father.
 Mr Byne has a cold and asked me to
 fill in for him. His bad luck and
 my good luck.

She smiles, flattered.

ROSE

I was telling my friend that if all society men are like the ones that were here the other time, we weren't missing anything. But I guess they aren't. Anyway, you aren't. I'm going to tell my friend that.

ARCHIE

I'm afraid I'm not society. I'm a working man.

ROSE

Oh, that explains it. What kind of work?

ARCHIE

You might call it trouble-shooting. I work for a man named Nero Wolfe. You may have heard of him.

ROSE

You're a detective!

ARCHIE

I am when I'm working, but not this evening. Now I'm just enjoying myself.

Rose is served some oysters and cheerfully turns her attention to those, Archie forgotten, so he turns to Ethel Varr.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

I hope you won't mind a personal remark.

ETHEL

I'll try not to. I can't promise until I hear it.

ARCHIE

I'll take a chance. I want to explain why you might have caught me staring at you.

ETHEL

Maybe you'd better not. Maybe it would let me down. Maybe I'd rather think you stared just because you wanted to.

ARCHIE

You can think that, too. I was trying to catch you looking the same way twice.

(MORE)

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

If you turn your head only a little one way or the other, it's a different face. I've never seen a face that changes as much as yours. Has anyone ever mentioned that to you?

She parts her lips, closes them. He's touched a nerve.

ETHEL

You know, I'm only nineteen years old.

ARCHIE

I was nineteen once. Some ways I liked it, and some ways it was terrible.

ETHEL

Yes, it is. I haven't learned how to take things yet, but I suppose I will. Yes, someone did mention that to me once. About my face. More than once.

ARCHIE

I wouldn't have brought it up if I had known there was anything touchy about it. I think you ought to get even. I'm touchy about horses because once I caught my foot in the stirrup when I was getting off, so you might want to try that--

She turns away from him. End of conversation. Archie frowns. Strike one.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

So much for tact, discretion and refinement.

WIPE TO:

INT. GRANTHAM MANSION - DINING ROOM - LATER

The butler pulls back Mrs. Robilotti's chair while Archie and the three other *chevaliers* do the same for the other women, then sit down again. We then go around the table once more and "formally" meet the men as Archie describes them. The butler pours coffee for each man.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

After dinner, the women left to freshen up before the dance and the men waited around because that's what men do.

TIGHT on ROBERT ROBILOTTI.

ARCHIE'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Mrs. Louise Grantham, widow, had acquired Robert Robilotti in Italy and brought him back with her luggage.

TIGHT on BEVERLY KENT.

ARCHIE'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Beverly Kent, of the Rhode Island Kents, if that means anything to you. It didn't to me. He followed the family tradition and went into diplomatic service.

TIGHT on EDWIN LAIDLAW.

ARCHIE'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Edwin Laidlaw used to be pretty loose around town but three years ago his father died and he inherited ten million dollars, which he used to buy a book publishing company.

TIGHT on PAUL SCHUSTER.

ARCHIE'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Paul Schuster turned down a clerkship with a Supreme Court justice to join a Wall Street law firm instead, trading the honor for a shot at a lot more money.

TIGHT on CECIL GRANTHAM.

ARCHIE'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Cecil Grantham, Louise's son, was in a trust controlled by his mother and had to watch his budget. Supposedly, he wanted to do something to earn some money but just couldn't find any spare time.

CECIL

The last two hours are the hardest.

ROBERT

(to butler:)

Brandy, Hackett.

The butler stops pouring coffee to look at him.

HACKETT

The cabinet is locked, sir.

ROBERT

I know it is, but you have a key.

HACKETT

No sir, Mrs. Robilotti has it.

CECIL

(laughs:)

Get a hatchet.

The butler returns to pouring coffee.

KENT

A little deprivation will be good for us, Mr. Robilotti. After all, we all understood the protocol when we accepted the invitation.

PAUL

That's not what "protocol" means. I'm surprised at you, Kent. You'll never be an ambassador if you don't know what protocol is.

KENT

What do you know about it?

PAUL

Not much about it, but I know what it is, and you used it wrong.

EDWIN

I can settle this. Now that I'm a publisher, I'm the last word on words. You're both right. Protocol can be a document, an agreement, or it can be rules of etiquette. This affair does seem to require a special etiquette.

CECIL

I'm for Paul. Locking up the booze doesn't come under etiquette. It comes under tyranny.

Kent turns to Archie.

KENT

What about you, Goodwin? You're a detective, so maybe you can detect the answer.

ARCHIE

Get a dictionary. There's one upstairs in the library. But if what you want is brandy, the best plan would be for one of us to go to a liquor store. There's one at the corner of 82nd and Madison. We could toss up.

EDWIN

The practical man. The man of action.

CECIL

You'll notice that he knows where the dictionary is and where the liquor store is. Detectives know everything.

(to Archie:)

By the way, are you here professionally?

ARCHIE

If I were, would I say?

CECIL

Why, I suppose you'd say if you weren't.

ARCHIE

And if I weren't what would I say?

ROBERT

(to Archie:)

Touche.

(to everyone:)

Shall we join the mothers for the dance? If you please, gentlemen?

And as they all rise, we:

WIPE TO:

INT. GRANTHAM MANSION - NIGHT

There's a LIVE BAND and just about everyone is dancing. Archie is dancing with Helen.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

I was surprised to see the live band for such a small gathering. A record player and speaker might have been expected, but for the mothers, spare no expense.

Robert Robilotti cuts in, leaving Archie partnerless. All the other "mothers" are dancing. That's when Archie sees CELIA GRANTHAM heading for him.

ARCHIE'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I'd met Celia Grantham, Cecil's twin sister, four times, three of them in this house during the jewelry case. The fourth was a date to the Flamingo Club. She was a good dancer but she was also a very good drinker and I wanted to be able to go back to the club some day.

CELIA

How are you going to avoid dancing with me?

ARCHIE

Easy. Say my feet hurt and take my shoes off.

CELIA

You wouldn't, would you?

ARCHIE

I could.

CELIA

You really would, just to make me suffer. Will I never be in your arms again? Must I carry my heartache to the grave?

Before Archie has to make an awkward choice, Rose Tuttle approaches.

CELIA (CONT'D)

(to Rose:)

If you're after Mr. Goodwin, I don't blame you. He's the only one here who can dance.

ROSE

I'm not after him to dance. I just want to tell him something.

CELIA

Go ahead.

ROSE

It's private.

Celia laughs.

CELIA

That's the way to do it. That would have taken me at least a hundred words, and you did it in two.

Celia goes to the bar, where Hackett is OPENING CHAMPAGNE. Archie offers Rose a chair.

ROSE

There's something I thought you should know because you're a detective.

ARCHIE

I'm not here as a detective, Miss Tuttle.

ROSE

But you are a detective, and if something awful happened and I hadn't told anybody I would blame myself.

ARCHIE

Why should something awful happen?

ROSE

Helen Yarmis saw inside Faith Usher's purse. Faith still has that bottle of cyanide in there, the one she carried at Grantham House. Faith told us then she hadn't decided whether to kill herself or not but she might so she kept it handy.

ARCHIE

Is that all?

ROSE

If you knew Faith like I do, this is where she'd do it if she ever does. It's in that bag over there--

She motions to a BLACK LEATHER BAG on a chair.

ARCHIE

I see it. Just forget it. I'll make sure that nothing awful happens. Will you dance?

Rose nods and off they go, passing Edwin Laidlaw and Faith Usher, who Archie is already dutifully watching.

EDWIN

Will you dance with me, Miss Usher?

FAITH

No.

EDWIN

I would be honored.

FAITH

(firmly:)

No.

And she marches off, past Archie and Rose, who start to dance. As they do, Archie keeps his eye on Faith and the bag. We DISSOLVE into a MONTAGE under Archie's voice over.

MONTAGE

WE SEE ARCHIE DANCING WITH VARIOUS WOMEN (ROSE, HELEN, AND FINALLY ETHEL) WHILE KEEPING HIS EYE ON FAITH AND HER BAG.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

As a dancing partner, Rose was not a bargain. She was equipped for it physically, but she danced cheerfully. You can't dance cheerfully. Dancing is too important. It can be wild or solemn or lewd or art for art's sake, but it can't be cheerful.

WE SEE CECIL ASKS FAITH TO DANCE, AND SHE ACCEPTS.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

Helen would have been a good dancer if she wasn't so solemn. She was a good size for me, too, about level with my eyes. And the closer you got to her wide, curved mouth, the better you liked it, when the corners were up.

ARCHIE IS DANCING WITH ETHEL. FAITH IS AT HER SEAT, FIFTEEN FEET AWAY FROM THE CHAIR THE BAG IS ON. CECIL APPROACHES WITH A CHAMPAGNE GLASS IN EACH HAND GIVES ONE TO HER. SHE TAKES A SIP.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

I danced with Ethel and was tactful, discreet and refined. I didn't step on her toes once and I certainly didn't say anything nice about her face.

MONTAGE ENDS as Faith goes stiff, shakes all over, jerks half-way out of her seat and collapses, making a noise that's HALF SCREAM and HALF MOAN. The music STOPS. Everyone stares. Celia runs to a PHONE. Archie rushes over.

BACK TO SCENE

as Archie reaches Faith, her CONVULSIONS STOP and she goes STIFF. She's DEAD.

ARCHIE

Is someone calling a doctor?

ROBERT

Celia's phoning. Why don't you do something?

ARCHIE

I can't, she's dead.

ROBERT

Then what do you need a doctor for?

ARCHIE

Nobody is dead until a doctor says
so -- it's the law.

Everyone reacts to the starting news that Faith is dead.
Mrs. Robilotti, however, appears enraged. Archie turns to
Rose.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Rose, go guard that bag. Don't touch
it. Stick there and don't take your
eyes off it.

(to Robert:)

Do I phone the police or do you?

ROBERT

The *police*?

MRS. ROBILOTTI

No, he will not. I give the orders
here. I'll phone the police myself
when I decide it's necessary.

Archie looks around at everyone and finally focuses on the
BANDLEADER.

ARCHIE

Do you want to stay here all night?

BAND LEADER

No.

ARCHIE

I think this woman was murdered and
if the police do too, you know what
that means, so the sooner they get
here the better. See if there's an
officer on the street or use the
phone in the hall.

BAND LEADER

Yes, sir.

And off the band leader goes. Mrs. Robilotti moves to head
him off.

MRS. ROBILOTTI

Halt!

But he just sidesteps her and goes on, not bothering to argue.
Mrs. Robilotti, furious, immediately addresses her men.

MRS. ROBILOTTI (CONT'D)

Robbie! Cecil! Stop him!

When they fail to react, she wheels on Archie.

MRS. ROBILOTTI (CONT'D)
 Leave my house!

ARCHIE
 I would love to. If I did, the cops
 would bring me back. And anyone
 else who tries to leave.

Robert takes his wife's arm.

ROBERT
 It's no use, Louise. Come and sit
 down.

She yanks her arm free and marches away. Robert turns to
 Archie.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
 Why do you think she was murdered?

PAUL
 I was going to ask that, Goodwin.
 She had a bottle of poison in her
 bag.

ARCHIE
 How did you know she did?

PAUL
 One of the guests told me. Miss
 Varr.

ARCHIE
 One of them told me, too. But I
 still think she was murdered, and I
 will save my reason for the police.

Who arrive right at that moment. TWO UNIFORMED OFFICERS
 rush in, trailed by Hackett and the band leader.

OFFICER #1
 Mr. Robilotti?

Robert Robilotti steps forward.

ROBERT
 I'm Robert Robilotti.

OFFICER #1
 Is this your house? We got--

MRS. ROBILOTTI
 (interrupts:)
 No.

She shoves her husband aside and confronts the officer.

MRS. ROBILOTTI (CONT'D)

It's my house.

And on Archie, realizing it's going to be a very, very long night, we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - MORNING

Wolfe is reading the NEWSPAPER as Archie enters, still wearing last night's clothes. Archie slumps into a chair, exhausted.

WOLFE

You are disheveled.

ARCHIE

Yes, sir. Also disgruntled. Also disslumbered. Do the papers say Faith Usher was murdered?

WOLFE

No, that she died of poison and the police are investigating. Your name is not mentioned. Are you involved?

ARCHIE

Up to my chin.

Archie begins to explain, but we don't hear it. We get his voice-over instead.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

I told him all about the guests, and about the cyanide in Faith's bag, and that I was watching both her, and her bag, most of the evening. I knew she hadn't put the cyanide in her drink, but I was the only one who thought so.

ARCHIE

Mrs. Robilotti would like to choke me and some of the others would be glad to lend a hand. A suicide at a party would be bad enough, but homicide is murder.

WOLFE

Indeed. I suppose you considered whether it would be well to reserve your conclusion.

Archie smiles, genuinely touched.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

I appreciated that -- he wasn't questioning my eyesight or my attention. It was a real tribute and, the way I felt, I needed it.

ARCHIE

I considered it, but since Rose asked me to watch the bag, the police would know that I knew more than I was telling.

WOLFE

I take it we can expect no profitable engagement.

ARCHIE

God knows, not from Mrs. Robilotti.

WOLFE

Very well. You may remember my remarks yesterday.

ARCHIE

You said I would demean myself. You didn't say I would get involved in an unprofitable homicide.

The doorbell rings. Archie goes to get it.

INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY

Archie opens the door for INSPECTOR CRAMER, who looks as tired as Archie.

ARCHIE

Don't you ever sleep, Lieutenant?

CRAMER

Not much.

Cramer goes right past Archie towards Wolfe's office.

ARCHIE

Cramer!

Cramer turns, stunned.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

You know damn well he hates to have anyone march in on him, even you, or especially you, and you only make it harder. Isn't it me you want?

CRAMER

Yes, but I want Wolfe to hear it.

ARCHIE

That's obvious, or you would have sent for me instead of coming. If you will kindly--

Wolfe's bellow comes out from the office.

WOLFE

Confound it, come in here!

Cramer wheels around and goes in, Archie follows.

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

Wolfe is still at his desk.

WOLFE

I cannot read in an uproar. What do you want?

CRAMER

I know Goodwin is your man and I want you to understand the situation.

(to Archie:)

Nothing anyone else says rules out suicide, and there's a lot that points to it. I'm saying if it wasn't for you, suicide would be the final verdict.

ARCHIE

Yeah, I'm the fly in the soup. I don't like it any better than you do. Flies don't like being swamped in soup, especially when it's hot.

CRAMER

Faith Usher has been talking about killing herself for a while, she had cyanide in her purse, and there was cyanide in her drink. What's the mystery?

ARCHIE

I have good eyes, she was only 20 feet away from me. When she took her champagne glass by the stem from Grantham, her left hand was in her lap and she didn't lift it. She never had a chance to put the cyanide in.

CRAMER

So you're saying Cecil Grantham killed her?

It's a rhetorical question, Cramer doesn't wait for an answer.

CRAMER (CONT'D)

The two glasses Grantham took were poured by the butler. Grantham had one glass in each hand, held by the stem, so how did he put the poison in? If it was the butler, how did he know which glass she'd get?

ARCHIE

I didn't say I knew who did it or how or why.

CRAMER

So you won't discuss it.

ARCHIE

What are we doing?

CRAMER

(to Wolfe:)

I'm going to tell you what I think.

WOLFE

You often have.

CRAMER

I think Rose Tuttle told Goodwin to watch the bag. He told her to forget it that he would make sure nothing happened. Well, something *did*. You know him and so do I. You know how much he likes himself. He says she was murdered to cover the fact he bungled it.

WOLFE

Archie?

ARCHIE

Nobody likes me better than I do, but I'm not that far gone.

WOLFE

I'm afraid you're wasting your time, Mr. Cramer. And mine.

Cramer's red face gets redder.

CRAMER

I don't think so--

That's when the doorbell rings. Archie goes to get it while Cramer continues to lecture Wolfe.

INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY

Archie answers the door. It's Edwin Laidlaw. Before the man can speak, Archie shooshes him with a finger to his own lips.

ARCHIE

Is this something you want Lt. Cramer of homicide to know about?

Edwin shakes his head no.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Wait in the front room until he goes.

Archie leads him to the front room, closes the doors, just as Cramer is coming out of the office. Apparently, Cramer hasn't noticed a thing. In fact, Cramer shoots Archie a cold look and shows himself out. Archie goes into Wolfe's office.

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

Wolfe is behind his desk.

WOLFE

To bedevil Mr. Cramer for a purpose is one thing; to do so merely for a pastime is another.

ARCHIE

I wouldn't dream of it. You're asking me if my position with you, privately, is the same as it was with him. The answer is yes.

WOLFE

Very well. Then he is in a predicament.

ARCHIE

Someone else is, too, apparently. Edwin Laidlaw is in the front room. I can talk with him there, but I thought I should tell you because you might want to sit in... or eavesdrop through the peephole.

WOLFE

Pfui.

ARCHIE

Yeah, I know. I don't want to shove, but we haven't had a case in two weeks and this could be one.

WOLFE

Confound it.

He scowls at Archie, gets up and leaves.

WIPE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - TWO MINUTES LATER

Archie leads Laidlaw in and shoots a casual glance in the direction of the peephole.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

The peephole was in the wall, to the right of Wolfe's desk, covered by a picture of a pretty waterfall. On the other side, in the hall across from the kitchen, I had once stood for three solid hours, waiting for someone to steal something from my desk.

ARCHIE

What can I do for you?

EDWIN

Look, Goodwin, I want to ask you a straight question. The police would be happy to call Faith's death suicide except for something you told them. So I want to know -- why do you think it was murder?

ARCHIE

I've told the police, the D.A. and Mr. Wolfe, and for the present, that's enough.

EDWIN

And you won't tell me?

ARCHIE

At the moment, no. Rules of etiquette.

EDWIN

You're in the detective business, Goodwin. People hire you to get information for them, so I will pay for it. I'll give you \$5000 in cash. I have it in my pocket right now.

ARCHIE

Five grand would suit me fine, since the salary Mr. Wolfe pays me is far from extravagant. But I'll say no even if you double it.

EDWIN

I see.

(MORE)

EDWIN (CONT'D)

(then:)

I want to see Wolfe.

ARCHIE

He doesn't like to mix in when I'm involved personally. Also he's pretty busy. But I'll see. With him you can never tell.

Archie leaves.

INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY

Archie meets Wolfe.

ARCHIE

Sorry for the crack about salary. I forgot you were listening.

WOLFE

(grunts:)

Your memory is excellent and you shouldn't disparage it. What does that man want from me?

ARCHIE

Maybe he wants to publish your autobiography.

Wolfe growls and ambles into the office, Archie follows. Wolfe goes to his desk.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

He growled, as a lion might growl when it realizes it must leave its cozy lair to scout for a meal. I admit a better comparison would be an elephant, but elephants don't growl.

WOLFE

What do you want, Mr. Laidlaw?

EDWIN

To engage you professionally. Do you prefer your retainer in cash or a check?

WOLFE

Neither until I accept the engagement.

EDWIN

I want to know why the police do not believe that Faith Usher killed herself. I want all the information about the situation you can gather.

WOLFE

Indeed. Mr. Goodwin has told me of the proposal you made to him. I am at a loss whether to respect your doggedness and applaud your dexterity or deplore your naivete. In any case, I must decline your engagement. I already have the information you are after and I will not disclose it.

Edwin is clearly frustrated, and desperate.

EDWIN

In the name of God, what's so secret about it? What are you afraid of?

WOLFE

Not afraid, Mr. Laidlaw. Merely discreet.

EDWIN

I must speak to you privately.

WOLFE

You are. If you mean alone, no. If a confidence weren't as safe with Mr. Goodwin as with me, he wouldn't be here. His ears are mine and mine are his.

Edwin is clearly boxed in. Whatever his trouble is, he is cornered. He takes out his check book, writes a check, and gives it to Wolfe.

EDWIN

If twenty thousand isn't enough for retainer and expenses, say so. I want you to see to it that a secret about me doesn't come to light and I don't get arrested for murder.

WOLFE

I give no guarantee against either contingency.

EDWIN

If Faith Usher was murdered, I didn't kill her and I don't know who did. But if the police keep investigating, they will run across a certain event and might charge me with murder.

WOLFE

It must have been an extraordinary event.

(MORE)

WOLFE (CONT'D)

If that is what you intend to confide in me, I make two remarks: you are not my client and even if you were, disclosures to a private detective by a client are not privileged communication.

EDWIN

Fine. I'm not proud of this, but I'm going to tell you.

And as he speaks, we do a series of DISSOLVES under Archie's voice-over of Edwin talking and the detectives listening, Archie taking notes.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

And he did. Laidlaw met Faith at the flower shop where she worked. He secretly took her to Canada for a week-long affair, then went off himself for an eight-month trip to Europe. When he returned, his friend Dinky Byne told him he'd seen "that flower shop girl" at Grantham House. Laidlaw knew what that meant and went to see her. Faith told Laidlaw she'd put the baby up for adoption and never wanted to see him again. And until last night, she hadn't.

EDWIN

I'm convinced she killed herself and I hope to God my being there, seeing me again, wasn't what made her do it.

WOLFE

Did Mr. Byne know the two of you had an affair?

EDWIN

No.

WOLFE

Did you know she would be there before you went.

EDWIN

If I had, I wouldn't have gone.

WOLFE

Did she know you would be there?

EDWIN

I doubt it. If she had, she wouldn't have gone either.

WOLFE

Then it was a remarkable coincidence in a world that operates largely at random.

Wolfe considers for a moment, then:

WOLFE (CONT'D)

If I proceed, I can do your job only by A, proving that Faith Usher committed suicide and Mr. Goodwin is wrong, or B, by identifying and exposing the murderer. That would be a laborious and expensive undertaking, so I'll ask you to sign a memorandum stating that no matter who the murderer is, if I expose him, you'll pay the bill.

EDWIN

I'll sign it.

WOLFE

Then that's understood.

(hands Archie the check:)

Archie, you may deposit this as a retainer and advance for expenses. Draw up the memorandum. In the morning, you will go to Grantham house and find out everything about Faith Usher.

And as Wolfe gets up to leave, we

WIPE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - EVENING

Archie makes a phone call.

BYNE'S VOICE

Hello?

ARCHIE

Austin Byne?

BYNE'S VOICE

Who is this?

ARCHIE

Archie Goodwin, Dinky.

And we INTERCUT with Byne in his apartment.

BYNE

I've been waiting for this.

(MORE)

BYNE (CONT'D)

Calling to give me hell or getting you into a mess? I don't blame you. Go on, say it.

ARCHIE

I could, but I have another idea. I need to run up to Grantham House and need an introduction. You're going to give it to me.

BYNE

I can't, Archie.

ARCHIE

Why not?

BYNE

Because I'm not in a position to. I wouldn't be-- It might look as if-- I just can't do it.

ARCHIE

Okay, forget it. I'll just fed my other curiosities, and I have plenty. Like why you faked a cold. I haven't told the cops about it, so I guess I'd better do that and ask them to ask you why.

BYNE

I had a cold. I wasn't faking.

ARCHIE

Say hello to the police for me.

Archie starts to hang up, when he hears:

BYNE

Don't hang up! Come down to my apartment, I need to talk to you...

And on Archie's smile, we

CUT TO:

INT. BYNE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Archie is led in by Byne.

BYNE

I'm genuinely, deeply sorry I got you into this, but frankly, after reading the paper this morning, I'm just selfish enough to be glad I missed it. I'm sure you understand that.

ARCHIE

Don't mention it. But next time you want to skip out on something, don't overdo it. Instead of a cold, try food poisoning, it involves less acting.

BYNE

You've convinced yourself I was faking.

ARCHIE

Convincing myself doesn't prove anything. But proof could easily be found, so why don't we just move on?

BYNE

You said you haven't told the cops. Did you tell my Aunt?

ARCHIE

No, certainly not her. I was doing you a favor, wasn't I?

BYNE

Thanks Archie, I appreciate that.

ARCHIE

We all like to be appreciated. I would appreciate knowing what it is you want to talk over.

BYNE

Well, to tell the truth, I am in a mess, too. Or I will be, if you'd like to see me squirm.

ARCHIE

I might if you're a good squirmer. How do I go about it?

BYNE

Tell anybody, especially my Aunt, that I faked my way out of it. I was tired of going to those dinners, besides, I stayed up all night the night before playing poker and was in no shape to go anyway.

ARCHIE

So why pick me?

BYNE

The first two candidates I called were out of town, and the next three all had dates. Then I thought of you.

(MORE)

BYNE (CONT'D)

I knew you could handle yourself in any situation, and you had met my Aunt. So I called you and you were big-hearted enough to say yes.

ARCHIE

Okay, we'll swap. I'll keep quiet, and you arrange an audience for me at Grantham house.

BYNE

I told you on the phone I can't do that.

ARCHIE

Yeah, but then I was asking a favor, now I'm making a deal.

And on Byne's face, and the certainty that he's broken down, we

CUT TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Wolfe is reading a book and enjoying a BEER as Archie enters with a GLASS OF MILK.

ARCHIE

I just had a little chat with Dinky Byne.

WOLFE

Why do people call him Dinky?

ARCHIE

I suppose because he's an inch over six feet, but I didn't ask.

WOLFE

What did you ask?

OVER Archie explaining:

ARCHIE'S VOICE

I told him how Dinky came to pick me and why, and how I had to apply a little pressure.

ARCHIE

So we made a deal. He gets me in at Grantham House, and I won't tell his Aunt on him.

Wolfe grunts.

WOLFE

Nothing is as pitiable as a man afraid of a woman. Is he guileless?

ARCHIE

I would reserve it, but he's not a dope. He might have known someone was going to kill Faith Usher and make it look like suicide... and he wanted somebody there alert, brainy and observant to spot it. So he got me, and now Dinky's counting on me, with your help, to nail him. Or her. Or me maybe Dinky's on the level and merely pitiable.

WOLFE

You are only acquaintances, therefore his selecting you to take his place is suggestive, per se.

ARCHIE

Certainly, which is why I took the trouble to go see him. To observe. There were other ways of getting to Mrs. Irwin at Grantham House.

WOLFE

But you have formed a conclusion.

ARCHIE

No sir. I've formed a question mark.

WOLFE

Very well. Pfui. Afraid of a woman.

Wolfe returns to his book, conversation over. And on Archie, we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GRANTHAM HOUSE - DAY

Archie stands in front of a desk where MRS. IRWIN studies him sharply.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

Mrs. Irwin had me at a disadvantage. She reminded me of Miss Clark, my high school English teacher, and Miss Clark always had my number. I had waited until I saw her to decide just what line to take.

MRS. IRWIN

Was that you?

ARCHIE'S VOICE

But now I had to decide whether to say it was *me* or it was *I*.

ARCHIE

Yes, that was... me.

He waits to see if she's going to rap his knuckles with a ruler. She doesn't.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

It also said in the paper that I work for a private detective named Nero Wolfe.

MRS. IRWIN

I know it did. Is that why you've come?

She waits for him to continue. Archie's still trying to figure how to play this.

ARCHIE

I could tell you a story, and a pretty convincing one at that, but I believe honesty is the best policy... unless the other way is easier.

Mrs. Irwin studies him, almost approving. It seems that the truth is the right angle for her, too.

MRS. IRWIN

I see no reason not to tell you what I told the police. It's possible that Faith killed herself, but I doubt it. I get to know my girls pretty well, and she was here nearly five months.

ARCHIE

Did you know her well enough to know about the bottle of poison she used to carry?

MRS. IRWIN

She didn't tell me, but one of the other girls did. I felt as long as she had it and went on showing it and talking about using it, that was her outlet for her nerves, and if I took it away, she would have to get some other outlet. One reason I doubt she killed herself is that she still had that bottle of poison.

ARCHIE

The police must have loved that.

Mrs. Irwin gives him a look -- of course they didn't.

MRS. IRWIN

For Faith, that bottle of poison was merely the enemy that she intended to defeat somehow -- it was death, and she was going to conquer it. The spirit she had down deep showed sometimes in a flash in her eyes. You should have seen that flash.

ARCHIE

I did. Tuesday evening, when I was dancing with her.

MRS. IRWIN

Then she still had it, and she didn't kill herself. How are you going to prove it?

ARCHIE

I can't prove a negative. I have to prove an affirmative -- if she didn't poison her champagne, who did?

MRS. IRWIN

I wish you success. I would help you if I could.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

And she could -- up to a point, anyway.

UNDER Archie's narration, he and Mrs. Irwin converse.

ARCHIE'S VOICE (CONT'D)

She told me that Faith's stay at Grantham House overlapped with Helen Yarmis, Ethel Varr, and Rose Tuttle, and that there was never any trouble between any of them. And as for Edwin Laidlaw, Paul Schuster, and Beverly Kent:

MRS. IRWIN

I had never heard their names before.

ARCHIE

Who picks the girls to be invited to the annual dinner?

MRS. IRWIN

When Mr. Grantham was alive, I did. The first few years after he died, Mrs. Grantham did, based on information I supplied. The last two years she has left it to Mr. Byne, and he consults me.

ARCHIE

Is that so? Dinky didn't mention that.

MRS. IRWIN

Dinky?

ARCHIE

Mr. Byne. If you don't mind telling me, how does he do it? Does he suggest names and ask you about them?

MRS. IRWIN

I make a list, chiefly of girls who have been here in the past year, with information and comments. Some of my girls would not be comfortable in those surroundings. On what basis Mr. Byne makes his selections, I don't know.

ARCHIE

I'll ask him. I understand you don't ask your girls as few questions as possible about their pasts, but they must tell you a lot. Did Faith ever mention who was responsible for her being here?

MRS. IRWIN

She never said a word about him to me, and I doubt she did to any of the girls.

ARCHIE

But she did tell you things?

MRS. IRWIN

If you mean facts, really nothing. But she talked to me a great deal, and I formed three conclusions about her past. One was that she had had only one sexual relationship with a man, and a brief one. Another was that she had never known her father, and probably didn't even know who he was.

ARCHIE

And the third?

MRS. IRWIN

That her mother was still alive, and Faith hated her -- no, hate is too strong a word. Faith was not a girl for hating. Perhaps the word is repugnance. Beyond that, I know nothing about her past.

ARCHIE

Not even her mother's name?

MRS. IRWIN

I'm sorry.

Before she can finish, the door opens and DORA, middle-aged and a little too plump for her uniform, leans in.

DORA

Forgive me for interrupting, but Katherine may be going to rush things a bit. Four times since 9 o'clock, and the last one was only 20 minutes.

Mrs. Irwin is out of her chair and heading for the door.

MRS. IRWIN

I don't envy you your job, but I wish you success. You'll forgive me for rushing off.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

I told her I did, and I could have added that I'd rather have my job than hers or Katherine's either. But I would have been talking to the door, and I was already thinking of another way to waste my breath.

And as he looks around the empty room, we

WIPE TO:

INT. DINKY BYNE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Archie's fanny is barely touching a chair when Byne demands:

BYNE

What's all this crap about murder?

ARCHIE

The word crap bothers me. The way we used it when I was a boy in Ohio, we knew exactly what it meant. But I looked it up in the dictionary once and --

BYNE

My aunt says that you're saying that Faith Usher was murdered, and on account of that, the police won't accept the fact that it was suicide. What did you tell them?

ARCHIE

Get the cops to tell you.

(MORE)

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

I'll tell you this: If my statement is all that keeps them from calling it suicide, I'll be responsible for a whole lot of trouble. So I'm doing a little checking on my own.

BYNE

Checking on what?

ARCHIE

For example, if someone intended to kill Faith Usher at the party he had to know she would be there. So I asked Mrs. Irwin who had picked her to be invited. And she told me, and that was certainly no help, since it was you, and you weren't at the party. You even faked a cold to get out of going.

BYNE

I know you've got that to shake at me. But all I did was pick four names from the list Mrs. Irwin gave me. I had no personal knowledge of any of the girls -- as I just finished telling the DA.

ARCHIE

Did you keep the list?

BYNE

I did, but an assistant district attorney took it. One named Mandelbaum. No doubt he'll show it to you if you ask.

ARCHIE

I don't suppose there was anyone with you when you were making the suggestions. Someone who said something like "Faith Usher, a nice, unusual name, why don't you ask her?"

Byne glares at him, beginning to lose his patience.

BYNE

No one was with me. What the hell are you driving at anyway?

(off Archie's shrug)

My aunt has this idea that you have sold the police and the district attorney on your murder theory, and if they make things unpleasant enough for her and her guests you and Wolfe might figure she'd be willing to

(MORE)

BYNE (CONT'D)

make a big contribution to help you remember something that would change their minds.

ARCHIE

It is an idea. But if I remembered something now I didn't put in my statement, no contribution from your aunt would replace the hide that the cops would peel off.

BYNE

You keep harping on your damn statement. What's in it?

And OVER Byne and Archie continuing to talk:

ARCHIE'S VOICE

He didn't go so far as to make a cash offer for the information, but he appealed to everything from my herd instinct to my better nature. I would have let him go on if I hadn't known that company was expected at the office at six o'clock, and I wanted to be there when they arrived.

CUT TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Archie walks in to find Wolfe already in conversatin with Helen Yarmis, Ethel Varr, and Rose Tuttle, who are sitting across from him. Archie gives them a greeting smile as he takes his seat at his desk.

WOLFE

We have only exchanged civilities, Archie. Have you anything that should be reported?

ARCHIE

Nothing that won't wait. He's still afraid of a woman.

Wolfe files that away and turns towards the company.

WOLFE

As I was saying, ladies, I thank you for coming. You were under no obligation. Mr. Goodwin's opinion, expressed in your hearing Tuesday evening, that Faith Usher was murdered, has produced some complications --

ROSE

I told him that Faith might take that poison right there, and he said he would see that nothing happened, but it did.

WOLFE

He has told me that. But he still believes that someone else poisoned Miss Usher's champagne. Do you disagree with him, Miss Tuttle?

ROSE

I thought she might do it, but I didn't see her. And now I've answered so many questions about it I don't know what I think.

WOLFE

Miss Varr?

ETHEL

I don't think that Faith killed herself.

WOLFE

You don't, Miss Varr? Why not?

ETHEL

Because I was looking at her, and if she'd put anything in the champagne, I would have seen her. The police have been trying to get me to say that Mr. Goodwin told me to say that, but I keep telling them that he hasn't said anything at all to me. He hasn't had the chance. Have you, Mr. Goodwin?

ARCHIE

Of course not.

(to Wolfe:)

Cramer didn't mention that my statement had been corroborated. In fact, he said if it wasn't for me, suicide would be a reasonable assumption. The damn liar. After I shoot him, I will sue for damages.

(then:)

It wouldn't hurt any to tell Miss Varr her performance is satisfactory.

WOLFE

It is. Indeed, quite satisfactory.

She smiles, not quite sure how to take the unusual compliment.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

That, if only she'd known it, was a triumph. He gave me a satisfactory only when I hatched a masterpiece.

WOLFE

Miss Yarmis?

HELEN

I think Faith killed herself. I told her it was dumb to take that poison along to a party where we were supposed to have a good time, but I saw it in her bag. Why would she take it along to a party like that if she wasn't going to use it?

WOLFE

When did you tell her not to take the poison along?

HELEN

When we were dressing for the party. We lived in an apartment together for the last seven months. Just a big bedroom with a kitchenette, and the bathroom down the hall, but I guess that's an apartment and --

WOLFE

If you please, Miss Yarmis. We must respect the convenience of Miss Varr and Miss Tuttle. During those seven months, did Miss Usher have many callers?

HELEN

She never had any.

WOLFE

Did Miss Usher have no friends at all? Men or women?

HELEN

I never saw any. She never had a date, I never even saw her get any phone calls. I used to tell her that was no way to live, just crawling along like a worm --

This could go on for hours. Wolfe interrupts.

WOLFE

Did she get any mail?

HELEN

I don't think so.

(MORE)

HELEN (CONT'D)

This is kinda funny, Mr. Wolfe, I can answer your questions without even thinking because they're all the same questions the police have been asking, even the same words.

Wolfe is stung. And on his quiet simmering:

ARCHIE'S VOICE

I could have given her a big hug. Anyone who takes Wolfe down a peg renders a service to the balance of nature.

WOLFE

Every investigator follows a routine to a point, Miss Yarmis. Beyond that point comes the opportunity for talent if any is at hand. It may not be outside my capacity to contrive a question that will not parrot the police. I'll try.

HELEN

Okay.

WOLFE

Do you mean to tell me that during the seven months you lived with Miss Usher, you had no inkling of her having any social or personal contact -- excluding her job --

HELEN

She went to night school. She was going to be a secretary. I never saw how she could if she was so tired but --

WOLFE

-- Excluding her job and night school -- with any of her fellow beings?

HELEN

They didn't ask that. What's an inkling?

WOLFE

An intimation. A hint.

HELEN

I don't remember any hints.

WOLFE

Did she never tell you she met a man or woman she used to know?

(MORE)

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Or that she'd been accosted on the street? Did she never account for a headache or fit of ill humor by telling of an encounter she had? An encounter is a meeting face to --

But Helen is remembering something.

HELEN

Faith never had headaches, except once when she came home from work. I wanted her to take some aspirin, but she said it wouldn't help any. Then she asked if I had a mother and I said my mother was dead and she said she wished hers was. Faith said she met her on the street and there had been a scene and she had to run to get away from her. So that was an encounter, wasn't it?

WOLFE

It was. What else did she say about it?

HELEN

That was all. Never mentioned her again.

Wolfe scowls, but knows it would be useless to pursue this further. He addresses his next remark to all the women.

WOLFE

Do any of you know anything about the eight other people at the party that might suggest a reason why one of them wanted Miss Usher to die?

ROSE

I don't.

ETHEL

Neither do I.

HELEN

The only connection I know about is Mrs. Robilotti. When she came to Grantham House to see us, Faith didn't like her.

ROSE

Who did?

WOLFE

Was there something definite, Miss Yarmis? Something between Miss Usher and Miss Robilotti?

HELEN

Oh, no. I never heard Faith say anything to her at all. Neither did I. She thought we were harlots, that's all.

Wolfe takes a deep breath, holds it, and lets it out. Maybe he's calculating just how much time this has wasted.

WOLFE

I thank you again for coming, ladies. We seem to have made little progress, but at least I have seen you and talked to you.

Wolfe pushes his chair back and rises.

ROSE

One thing I don't see. Mr. Goodwin said he wasn't there as a detective, but he is a detective, and I told him about Faith having the poison and I think he ought to know exactly what happened. I didn't think anyone could commit a murder with a detective right there.

Archie gets up to herd the ladies out of the room.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

A very superficial and half-baked way to look at it, I thought. I didn't look at Wolfe to see if he thought the same thing.

And as the ladies file through the door

WIPE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE OFFICE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

Archie is at his desk on the phone.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

When, a little after ten Friday morning, Paul Schuster phoned to say that he and Grantham and Laidlaw and Kent wanted to see Wolfe, and the sooner the better, I broke two of Wolfe's standing rules.

CUT TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE ORCHID ROOM - DAY

As Wolfe glowers over an orchid at Archie.

WOLFE

You make no appointments without checking with me. And you disturb me in the plant rooms only for emergencies.

ARCHIE

I looked up emergency in the dictionary. It means "an unforeseen combination of circumstances which calls for immediate action." You want to argue with the dictionary, or with me?

Wolfe glares at him and we

WIPE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE OFFICE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

Wolfe sits across from Paul Schuster, Cecil Grantham, Edwin Laidlaw, and Beverly Kent. Archie is at his desk.

PAUL

We do not claim to have evidence that you have done anything actionable. But it is a fact we're being injured and if you are responsible for that injury it may become a question of law.

WOLFE

I expect it to, Mr. Schuster. A murder investigation is commonly regarded as a question of law. Gentlemen, what are you here for? To buy me off? To bully me?

CECIL

God damn it, what are you after? That's the point! Why did you send your man to question my butler and --

KENT

Shut up, Cecil. Let Paul tell him.

PAUL

Your insinuation that we have entered into a conspiracy to buy you off or to bully you is totally unwarranted. We came because we feel, with reason, that our rights of privacy are being violated without provocation or just cause, and that you are responsible.

WOLFE

I see. And you all share this feeling?

CECIL

I sure do.

KENT

So do I.

EDWIN

I don't have enough information yet.
But I have reason to suspect.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

He handled it pretty well, I thought.
Naturally, he had to be with them,
since if he had refused to join in
the attack, they would have wondered
why, but he wanted Wolfe to understand
that he was still his client.

PAUL

We doubt if you can justify your
responsibility, but we thought you
should be given a chance to do so
before we consider what steps may be
taken legally in the matter.

WOLFE

Pfui.

PAUL

An expression of contempt is hardly
an adequate justification, Mr. Wolfe.

Wolfe leans back and clasps his fingers over his stomach.

WOLFE

I didn't intend it to be, sir. This
is futile. You want to put a stop
to your involvement in a murder
inquiry, and my concern is to involve
you as deeply as possible, the
innocent along with the guilty.

PAUL

Why are you concerned?

WOLFE

I want to know if one of you has
buried in his past a fact that will
account for resorting to murder to
get rid of Faith Usher, and if so,
which. Manifestly you are not going
to sit here and submit to a day-long
inquisition, and even if you did,
the likelihood that one of you would
betray the existence of such a fact
is minute. So, as I say, this is
futile for you and for me.

(MORE)

WOLFE (CONT'D)

I wish you good day only as a matter
of form.

And on the four men storming out, and Wolfe looking after
them, we:

WIPE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - LATER

Wolfe is nursing a beer, glaring at space. Archie watches
him, vaguely amused, and sips a glass of milk.

WOLFE

This is grotesque.

ARCHIE

It certainly is. Four of the suspects
come to see you uninvited, all set
for a good long heart-to-heart talk,
and what do they get? Bounced.

WOLFE

Bah. Call Mr. Panzer, Mr. Cather
and Mr. Durkin, tell them to come in
at three. No. At two-thirty. No.
At two o'clock. We'll have lunch
early. I'll tell Fritz.

Wolfe gets up and marches out. As Archie watches him go:

ARCHIE'S VOICE

I felt uplifted. That he was calling
his operatives in for assignments
was promising. That he had changed
it from three o'clock, when his lunch
would have settled, to two-thirty,
when digestion would have barely
started, was impressive. That he
had advanced it again to two, with
an early lunch, was inspiring. And
then to go to tell Fritz instead of
ringing for him -- all hell was
popping.

And on Archie's grin:

WIPE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

FRED, SAUL and ORRIE sit across from Wolfe. Archie is back
at his desk.

WOLFE

Rather than plod over ground the police have already traveled, namely investigating the pasts of the party guests, we shall try another line where you will be on fresh ground. I want to see Faith Usher's mother. You are to find her and bring her to me.

Fred and Orrie pull out their notebooks. Saul doesn't.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

You won't need notes. There is nothing to note except the bare fact that Miss Usher's mother is alive and must be somewhere.

ORRIE

Is her name Usher?

WOLFE

You should learn to listen, Orrie. I said that's all I know.

Archie stifles a grin and turns to the phone, picks it up and dials, as Wolfe keeps talking to the other three.

SAUL

Do we keep covered?

ARCHIE

(into phone)
Lon Cohen, please.

WOLFE

Preferably, yes. But don't preserve your cover at the cost of missing your mark.

Saul picks up the phone book and leafs through it.

SAUL

There are a dozen Ushers listed in Manhattann. Of course, she doesn't have to be named Usher, and she doesn't have to live in Manhattan, and she doesn't have to have a phone. But it wouldn't take Fred and Orrie long to check the dozen.

Archie hangs up the phone and grins triumphantly.

ARCHIE

You can skip the phone book.
(MORE)

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Lon Cohen at the *Gazette* says A woman named Majorie Betz claimed Faith Usher's body from the morgue. That's B-E-T-Z, 812 West 87th Street, Manhattan. She had a letter signed by Elaine Usher, mother of Faith, same address. A *Gazette* man has seen Marjorie Betz, but she says Elaine went somewhere Wednesday night and she doesn't know where. The *Gazette* hasn't been able to find her, and Lon Cohen thinks no one else has. End of chapter.

SAUL

Fine. Nobody skips for nothing.

WOLFE

Find her. Bring her. Use any inducement that seems likely to effect results.

Fred, Saul, and Orrie start to head out.

WIPE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE ENTRY - DAY

Archie peers through the glass and sees Edwin Laidlaw. He opens the door, and lets him in.

EDWIN

I want to see Wolfe.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

His tone indicated that his plan was to get Wolfe down and tramp on him, so I left him to his mood.

ARCHIE

Wait here.

Archie goes back into

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

Where Wolfe is thinking.

ARCHIE

Our client is--.

That's when the office doors bursts open and Edwin charges in. He heads for Wolfe's desk, but Archie grabs him.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

(firmly:)

Please have a seat, Mr. Laidlaw.

Rather than wait for Edwin to comply, Archie leads him to the red chair and makes him sit. Edwin stares at Wolfe, enraged.

WOLFE

To what do I owe this rude interruption?

EDWIN

I may be wrong. I hope to God I am. Did you send a note to the district attorney telling him that I'm the father of Faith Usher's child?

WOLFE

No, I did not.

EDWIN

(to Archie)
Did you?

ARCHIE

Of course not.

EDWIN

Have you told anybody? Either of you?

WOLFE

Plainly you are distressed and so must be indulged. But nothing has happened to release either Mr. Goodwin or me from our pledge of confidence. If and when it does you will first be notified. I suggest that you retire and cool off a little.

EDWIN

Cool off, hell. When I left here this morning, there were police waiting at my office. They took me to see Bowen, the district attorney himself. He asked if I wanted to change my statement that I had never met Faith Usher before Tuesday, and I said no.

WOLFE

They had some kind of evidence?

EDWIN

They had a note. It came in the mail yesterday, typewritten, no signature. It said "Have you found out yet that Edwin Laidlaw is the father of Faith Usher's baby? Ask him about his trip to Canada in August 1956." I sat and stared at it.

WOLFE

It was worth a stare, even if it had been false. Did you collapse?

EDWIN

I just said one thing: that whoever sent that note had libelled me, and I had a right to know who it was. But they kept at me for two hours.

WOLFE

You admitted nothing? Not even that you had taken a trip to Canada in August of 1956?

EDWIN

I didn't answer a single question.

WOLFE

Highly satisfactory. This is indeed welcome, Mr. Laidlaw.

EDWIN

Welcome!

WOLFE

We have at last goaded someone to action. I am gratified. If there was some small doubt that Miss Usher was murdered, this removes it.

EDWIN

But good God -- they know about me.

WOLFE

They know no more than they did before. They get a dozen accusatory unsigned letters every day, and have learned that the charges in most of them are groundless.

Wolfe glances up at the wall clock. It's 3:30.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

We have 30 minutes. You told me that no one on Earth knew about your dalliance with Miss Usher; now we know you were wrong. We must review every moment you spent in her company when you might have been seen or heard. When I leave at four o'clock, Mr. Goodwin will continue. Start with the day she first attracted your interest.

And OVER the three often talking:

ARCHIE'S VOICE

When Wolfe undertakes that sort of thing, he is worse than a housewife bent on finding a speck of dust the maid overlooked. Once I sat for eight straight hours while he took a chauffeur over every second of a drive, made six months before, to New Haven and back.

WIPE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

As Wolfe gets out of his chair and heads for the door, Archie continues to question Edwin.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

When four o'clock came, time for Wolfe to go up and play with the orchids, he had covered their first meeting, two dinners, and a lunch at Gaydo's on 69th Street.

WIPE TO

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - LATER

As the inquisition continues. Edwin's beginning to look pretty ragged.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

My pulse wasn't pounding from the thrill of it, but I carried on, and we were working on the third day in Canada, somewhere in Quebec, when --

The DOORBELL RINGS. Archie gets up and goes into

INT. BROWNSTONE ENTRY - DAY

Archie looks through the glass and sees Inspector Cramer waiting impatiently.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

Wish I could have said I was surprised.

Archie grabs Edwin's hat and coat and goes back into the

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

Where he thrusts the hat at coat at Edwin.

ARCHIE

Inspector Cramer is here looking for you. This way out, come on, move.

EDWIN

But how...?

ARCHIE

No matter how. Damn it, move!

He leads Edwin out into

INT. BROWNSTONE KITCHEN - DAY

Where Fritz sits at the big table, doing something to a duck.

ARCHIE

Mr. Laidlaw wants to leave through the back way in a hurry and I haven't time because Cramer wants in. Show him quick, and you haven't seen him.

Fritz leads Edwin out the back door and Archie goes back to

INT. BROWNSTONE ENTRY - DAY

Where he puts the chain on the door and opens it to a two-inch crack.

ARCHIE

I suppose you want me? Since you know Mr. Wolfe won't be available until six o'clock.

CRAMER

Open up, Goodwin.

ARCHIE

Under conditions. You know damn well what my orders are: no callers admitted between four and six unless it's just for me.

CRAMER

I know. Open up.

ARCHIE

Okay. If it's me you want.

He takes the chain off the door and swings it open. Cramer pushes past him and storms into the office, then comes back out.

CRAMER

Where's Laidlaw?

ARCHIE

Search me. There's lots of Laidlaws, but I haven't got one. If you mean --

Cramer turns and heads for the door to the hall, nearly brushing Archie as he goes, checking first the office, then climbing the stairs. Archie follows after him.

CUT TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE ORCHID ROOM - DAY

Where Cramer is just coming in. Archie rushes past him, calling to Wolfe.

ARCHIE

He said he came to see me. When I let him in, he dashed past me and started yapping "Where's Laidlaw?" Apparently he has such a craving for someone named Laidlaw that his morals are shot.

Wolfe starts to glare at Archie, but shifts it over to Cramer.

WOLFE

Are you demented?

CRAMER

Someday...

WOLFE

Someday what? You'll recover your senses?

Cramer advances towards Wolfe, who of course does not retreat.

CRAMER

So you're horning in again. Goodwin turns a suicide into a murder, and here you are. This afternoon, Laidlaw is called downtown, and when he leaves he heads for you. So I know he has been here. So I come --

ARCHIE

If you weren't an inspector, I'd say that's a lie. Since you are, make it a fib. You do not know he's been here.

CRAMER

I know he hopped a taxi and gave the driver this address.

ARCHIE

So you actually suppose he's been here.

CRAMER

All right, I do.

(MORE)

CRAMER (CONT'D)

(to Wolfe)

Have you seen Edwin Laidlaw in the last three hours?

WOLFE

You know how rigidly I maintain my personal schedule. You know that I resent any attempt to interfere with these two hours of relaxation. But you get into my house by duplicity and then come charging up here to ask me a question you have no right to an answer. So you don't get one.

He turns, giving Cramer the broad expanse of his rear, and picks up a seedling.

ARCHIE

I guess your best bet would be to get a search warrant and send a gang to look for evidence, like cigarette ashes from the kind he smokes.

Smoldering himself, Cramer turns and marches out. Archie follows him to

INT. BROWNSTONE HALL - DAY

And down the stairs, still talking, rapid-fire.

ARCHIE

I know where it hurts. You've never forgotten the day you did come with a warrant and a crew to look for a woman named Clara Fox and searched the whole house, and didn't find her, and later learned she had been in the orchid room in a packing case, covered in osmundine that Wolfe was spraying water on. So you thought that if you rushed up before I could give the alarm you'd find Laidlaw there and now that he isn't you're stuck. You ought to take off your coat while you're in the house, or you'll catch cold when you --

That's when Cramer marches out the front door, slamming it behind him -- right in Archie's face.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

-- leave.

And on Archie's grin, we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Archie sits at his desk, on the phone. Wolfe is listening in on the extension. A COFFEE SERVICE is on his desk.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

After dinner, Saul checked in to tell us what he'd found out about Elaine Usher.

SAUL'S VOICE

(on the phone:)

Dresses well but a little flashy. Hates to tip. No job, but she's never short of money, and she seems to like men. And nobody knows where she is or when she'll be back.

Fritz comes in to clear away the coffee service.

WOLFE

Stay on it. We must find her.

Archie and Wolfe hang up their phones.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Confound it, I wait to see Mrs. Usher not merely because her daughter said she hated her. There is also the fact that she has disappeared.

ARCHIE

Yes, sir. I didn't say anything.

WOLFE

You looked something.

The phone rings again. Archie answers it.

ARCHIE

Nero Wolfe's office, Archie Goodwin speaking.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

It was Celia Grantham. She wanted to see me right away. I thought it was because she never got over me and couldn't bear to be away from me another second.

CUT TO:

INT. GRANTHAM MANSION ROOM - NIGHT

As Celia leads Archie into a smaller room and closes the door behind them.

CELIA

Mother wants to see you.

ARCHIE

You said you did.

CELIA

I do, but it only occurred to me after mother got me to decoy for her. She's up in the music room with the police commissioner, but first I want to ask you something. What is it about Edwin Laidlaw and that girl? Faith Usher?

ARCHIE

Search me. Why?

CELIA

I thought you'd know about it, since it's you that's making all the trouble. You see, I may marry him someday, since you've turned out to be a skunk. Are you a skunk?

ARCHIE

I'll think it over and let you know. What about Laidlaw and Faith Usher?

CELIA

That's what I want to know. They're asking questions of all of us, and they're typing samples on all our typewriters. I think they got an anonymous letter.

ARCHIE

Don't let it wreck your marriage plans. Even if an anonymous letter says Laidlaw was the father of her baby, that proves nothing.

CELIA

If he was the father of her baby, that means if I married him we could have a family, and I want one. I'm worried that he might be getting into a jam and you're no help.

ARCHIE

Sorry.

CELIA

So now suit yourself. If you'd rather duck Mother and the police commissioner, you know where your hat and coat are. I'll tell them you got mad and went.

ARCHIE

I wouldn't want you to get in a jam.
I'll tell them myself.

And as she tries to dope that out

WIPE TO:

INT. GRANTHAM MANSION MUSIC ROOM - NIGHT

As Celia leads Archie in, Cecil stands by a window, while Robert and Mrs. Robilotti sit with POLICE COMMISSIONER SKINNER. Robert and Skinner rise, but don't put out their hands. Mrs. Robilotti remains seated.

CELIA

Mr. Goodwin came up on his own, even though I warned him you were laying for him. Mr. Skinner, Mr. Goodwin.

SKINNER

We've met.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

Judging by his voice, it wasn't one of his treasured memories.

MRS. ROBILOTTI

I wish to say that I would have preferred never to have you in my house again.

ARCHIE

Your daughter said you wanted me to come here. Just to tell me I'm not welcome?

MRS. ROBILOTTI

I have just spent the worst three days of my life, and you are responsible. I want to tell you I think you are capable of blackmail, that I think that's what you have in mind, and I won't submit to it. If you try--

CECIL

Hold it, Mom. That's libel.

SKINNER

Also, it's useless. Goodwin, this is unofficial and off the record. None of my colleagues knows I'm here. Let's assume something, just an assumption.

ARCHIE

Assuming's one of my talents.

SKINNER

Let's assume that Tuesday evening when something happened that you had said you'd prevent, in the heat of the moment you blurted out that Faith Usher had been murdered, and then you found you had committed yourself. It carried along from the precinct men to Inspector Cramer to the district attorney, and then you were committed.

ARCHIE

Do I comment as you go along or wait until you're through?

SKINNER

I realize it would be very difficult now for you to say that on further consideration you were mistaken. But let's say you came here tonight, and after a careful inspection that, though you had nothing to apologize for, you had probably been unduly positive.

ROBERT

You just concede that it is possible that Faith Usher did poison her own champagne, and that if the official conclusion is suicide, you will not challenge it.

SKINNER

I will of course be under an obligation to ensure that you will suffer no damage or inconvenience, and that you will not be pestered.

ROBERT

We realize you probably have to consult with Wolfe before you can give us a definite answer. You can phone him from here.

SKINNER

Or even go to him. I'll wait here for you. This has gone on long enough.

ARCHIE

Are you through?

SKINNER

Yes.

ARCHIE

My mother used to tell me never to stay where I wasn't wanted, and you heard Mrs. Robilotti. I guess I'm too sensitive, but I've stood it as long as I can.

And with that, he turns and leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE DINING ROOM - DAY

As Archie sips his breakfast coffee, the phone RINGS. He goes to answer it.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

The next morning, Saul phoned to report. They'd been staking out Elaine Usher's apartment, the one she shared with Marjorie Betz. They were hoping Marjorie would leave so they could search it, but the lady stayed in all night.

WIPE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

As Archie talks on the phone.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

At noon, Saul reported in. Still no progress in the search for Elaine Usher. Nothing happening at her apartment.

INT. BROWNSTONE - DINING ROOM - DAY

As Wolfe pushes away from the lunch table, the phone RINGS.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

But at 2:30, the phone rang again.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PHONEBOOTH - DAY

As Saul talks into the phone.

SAUL

Got her.

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

Archie nods to Wolfe, who picks up the extension as he enters.

SAUL'S VOICE

A man from a messenger service went to the apartment.

INT. PHONEBOOTH - DAY

Saul continues.

SAUL

And when he came out, he had a suitcase with him.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

As the MESSENGER brings out the SUITCASE, Saul sees the TAG.

SAUL'S VOICE

The tag read "Miss Edith Upson, Room 911, Hotel Christie."

The suitcase is MONOGRAMMED: E.U.

HOTEL DOOR (FLASHBACK)

Swings open and ELAINE USHER peers out. She takes the suitcase from the messenger and closes the door behind her, not seeing Saul standing just down the hallway. Grinning.

INT. PHONEBOOTH - DAY

SAUL

I was tempted to tackle her then and there, but I thought I'd better wait for instructions.

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

ARCHIE

You need a staff. I'll be there in twelve minutes.

WOLFE

No. Proceed, Saul, as you think best. For this sort of juncture your talents are as good as mine. Get her here.

SAUL

Yes, sir.

WOLFE

Preferably in a mood of compliance, but get her here.

INT. PHONEBOOTH - DAY

SAUL

Yes, sir.

He hangs up and heads off. END INTERCUT.

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

Archie hangs up the phone. Hard. Then stands.

ARCHIE

This is Saturday and I've got my check for this week. I want a month's severance pay.

WOLFE

Pfui.

ARCHIE

No phooey. I am severing relations. It has been 88 hours since I saw that girl die, and your one bright idea, granting that it was bright, was to bring that girl's mother here, and I refuse to sit on my fanny while Saul --

WOLFE

Shut up.

ARCHIE

Gladly.

Archie gets the checkbook out of the safe and takes it to his desk.

WOLFE

Archie.

ARCHIE

I have shut up.

WOLFE

This is natural. You are headstrong and I am magisterial. Our tolerance of each other is a recurring miracle.

Archie opens the checkbook.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

I did not have one idea, bright or not. I had two. We have neglected Austin Byne. Since he got you to that party, pretending an ailment he didn't have, and since he chose Miss Usher as one of the guests, he deserves better of us. I suggest you attend to him.

ARCHIE

How? Tell him we don't like his explanations and we want new ones?

WOLFE

Nonsense. You are not so ingenuous.
Survey him. Explore him.

ARCHIE

I already have. He has no visible means of support, but he has an apartment and a car and plays table-stakes poker and doesn't go naked. The apartment, by the way, hits my eye. If you hang this murder on him, and if our tolerance miracle runs out of gas, I'll probably take it over.

WOLFE

Perhaps the best course would be to put him under surveillance.

ARCHIE

If I postpone writing this check, is that an instruction?

WOLFE

Yes.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

At least I would get out in the air and away from the miracle for a while.

Archie closes the checkbook and returns it to the safe, taking out twenty tens from the expense drawer.

ARCHIE

You'll see me when you see me.

And he leaves.

WIPE TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

As Archie walks along outside Byne's building.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

When starting to tail a man it is desirable to know where he is, so I was a little handicapped.

He stops at a phone booth and dials a number.

ARCHIE'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I dialed Byne's number. No answer. So at least I knew where he wasn't.

Archie leaves the phone booth and looks up and down the street for a place to wait.

He spots a small, casual restaurant with a hand-painted sign bordered in sweet-peas that reads AMY'S NOOK. That'll do.

WIPE TO:

INT. AMY'S NOOK - DAY

Archie sits at a table in the window as a WAITRESS takes an empty pie plate away off the table and puts a new piece of rhubarb pie in front of him.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

Over the next two hours, I ate five pieces of pie, two rhubarb and one each of apple, green tomato, and chocolate, and drank four glasses of milk and two of coffee.

Archie glances out the window towards Byne's apartment building, then looks back and sees the waitress eying him curiously.

WIPE TO:

INT. AMY'S NOOK - LATER

A CAT sleeps peacefully on a chair. Archie is studiously sketching it in his notebook.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

To keep from arousing curiosity either by my tenure or my diet, I made sketches of a cat sleeping on a chair. In the Village, that accounts for anything.

And indeed, the waitress now pays Archie no attention. He looks out the window and sees a TAXI pulling up outside Byne's building and Byne getting out. Archie hands some money to the waitress, then adds a quarter.

ARCHIE

For the cat.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

As Archie cranes his head to look up at Byne's lighted fifth-floor window.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

I could only hope that Dinky wasn't set to spend the evening curled up with a good book, or even without one. But that didn't seem likely, since he would have to eat, and I doubted that he did his own cooking.

The fifth-floor light goes out. After a moment, the front door opens and Byne comes out.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - NIGHT

Byne walks quickly down the street. Archie follows at a discreet distance.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

Tailing a man in Manhattan is a joke. If he suddenly decides to flag a taxi -- there are a hundred ifs, and the are all on his side. But of course any game is more fun if the odds are against you, and if you win it's good for the ego.

Byne enters a door under a sign: TOM'S JOINT. Archie looks around for a place from which to conduct his surveillance. And finds one -- a passage between two buildings almost directly across the street. He's intently watching the front of the joint when there's a NOISE. Someone else is in the alley. Archie tenses, then:

ARCHIE

Saul.

SAUL

Archie.

ARCHIE

What the hell?

SAUL

Are you on her, too? You might have told me.

ARCHIE

I'm on a man. I'll be damned. Where's yours?

SAUL

Across the street. Tom's joint. She just came.

ARCHIE

Mr. Wolfe says that in a world that operates largely at random, coincidences are to be expected, but not this one. Have you spoken with her? Does she know you?

SAUL

No.

ARCHIE

My man knows me.

(MORE)

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

His name is Austin Byne. Six feet one, 170 pounds, lanky, loose-jointed, early thirties, brown hair and eyes. Go in and take a look. One will get you ten that they're together.

SAUL

I never bet against fate.

Saul goes. Archie waits.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

The five minutes he was gone were five hours.

WIPE TO:

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

As Saul returns.

SAUL

They're together in a booth in the rear corner. No one is with them. He's eating oysters.

ARCHIE

He'll soon be eating crow. What do you want for Christmas?

SAUL

I have always wanted your autograph.

ARCHIE

I'll tattoo it on you. Now we have a problem. She's yours and he's mine, and now they're together. Who's in command?

SAUL

That's easy. Mr. Wolfe.

ARCHIE

I suppose so, damn it. We could wrap it up by midnight. Take them to a basement and peel their hides off. Still, if he's eating oysters, there's plenty of time to phone. You or me?

SAUL

You. I'll stick here.

Archie scowls. That's what he gets for asking.

CUT TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Fritz talks into the phone, shocked.

FRITZ

But Archie, it's dinner.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

Where Archie talks on a payphone.

ARCHIE

I know. Tell him it's urgent.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

That was an unexpected pleasure, having a good excuse to call Wolfe from the table. He has too many rules.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Wolfe picks up the phone, fuming.

WOLFE

Well?

ARCHIE

I have a report. Saul and I are having an argument. He thought --

WOLFE

What the devil are you doing with Saul?

ARCHIE

We have a problem of protocol. I tailed Byne to a restaurant and Saul tailed Mrs. Usher to the same restaurant, and our two subjects are in there together in a booth. So the question is, who is in charge, Saul or me? The only way to settle it without violence was to call you.

WOLFE

At meal time.

ARCHIE

They should have known better.

WOLFE

Do they know they have been seen?

ARCHIE

No.

WOLFE

Could you eavesdrop?

ARCHIE

Possibly, but I doubt it.

WOLFE

Very well, bring them. There's no hurry, since I have just started dinner.

Wolfe hangs up. So does Archie.

WIPE TO:

INT. TOM'S JOINT - NIGHT

Where Byne sits at a booth across from Elaine Usher. He reaching for an oyster when someone crowds onto the seat next to him.

BYNE

Hey!

He looks over and sees it's Archie next to him. He goggles.

BYNE (CONT'D)

Archie?

ARCHIE

Hi, Dinky. Excuse me for butting in, but I want to introduce a friend.

That's when Saul appears across the table and sits down next to Mrs. Usher.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Mr. Panzer, Mrs. Usher. Mr. Byne. Sit down, Saul. Would you mind giving him room, Mrs. Usher?

Byne tries to rise, but it can't be done in a tight booth without knocking over the table. Mrs. Usher spills wine from the glass she's holding, and Saul, squeezed in beside her, takes the glass away.

BYNE

Let us out, or I'll go out over you. And her name is Upson. Edith Upson.

ARCHIE

If you start a row, you'll only make it worse. Mr. Panzer knows Mrs. Usher, though she doesn't know him.

(MORE)

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Let's be calm and consider the situation. There must be --

BYNE

What do you want?

ARCHIE

I'm trying to tell you. There must be some good reason why you two arranged to meet in this out of the way dump, and Mr. Panzer and I are curious to know what it is.

SAUL

I expect others will be, too.

ARCHIE

Sure, the press, the public, the police, the district attorney, Nero Wolfe.

SAUL

We can't expect them to explain it here in this din and smog.

ARCHIE

Of course not. Either Mr. Panzer can phone Inspector Cramer for you, or we'll take you to talk it over with Mr. Wolfe. Whichever you prefer.

BYNE

Look, Archie, there's nothing to it. It looks funny, sure it does, but we didn't arrange it. I met Mrs. Usher about a year ago, I went to see her when her daughter went to Grantham House, and when I came in here tonight and saw her --

MRS. USHER

-- After what's happened, naturally, he spoke to me and we --

ARCHIE

Save it, both of you. Saul, phone Cramer.

Saul starts to slide out. Byne reaches over and grabs his sleeve.

BYNE

Now wait a minute. Damn it, can't you listen? I'm --

ARCHIE

No. No listening. You can have one minute to decide. In one minute either you and Mrs. Usher come along to Nero Wolfe, or we phone Cramer. One minute. Go.

Archie looks at his watch.

MRS. USHER

Not the cops. My God, not the cops.

BYNE

If you'd only listen...

ARCHIE

No. Forty seconds.

Byne and Mrs. Usher frantically try to calculate their way through this mess.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

If you're playing stud, and there's only one card to come, and the man across has two jacks showing and all you have is a mess, it doesn't matter what his hole card is, or yours either.

Byne cranes his neck around to look for the waiter.

BYNE

Check, please.

And as Archie and Saul exchange a look,

WIPE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Wolfe faces the couple. Archie and Saul are nearby.

WOLFE

I prefer to speak with you separately, but first I want to make sure there is no misunderstanding. I intend to badger you, but you don't have to submit to it. You may get up and leave. If you do, you will be through with me and henceforth you will deal with the police. I make that clear because I don't want you bouncing up and down.

He takes a deep breath and turns to Mrs. Usher.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

I wish to speak privately with Mr. Byne. Saul, take Mrs. Usher to the front room.

Saul escorts her out. Wolfe turns to Byne.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

I've heard your explanation for being in the restaurant with Mrs. Usher. Do you expect me to accept it?

BYNE

No. I told Goodwin that because the real story would have embarrassed Mrs. Usher. Now I can't help it. I met her three years ago and for about a year I was intimate with her.

WOLFE

And your meeting her this evening was accidental?

BYNE

She knew I was Mrs. Robilotti's nephew. She wanted to ask me about how her daughter died. But I really couldn't tell her more than what she read in the papers.

WOLFE

Is that your story?

BYNE

Yes.

WOLFE

Then I'll see Mrs. Usher. After I speak with her, I'll ask you in again with her present. Archie, take Mr. Byne and bring in Mrs. Usher.

Archie opens the door for him, then holds it open for Mrs. Usher to enter. Archie returns to his desk.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Of course, madam, my reason for speaking with you separately is transparent: to see if your accounts agree. Since you have had no opportunity for collusion, agreement would be, if not conclusive, at least persuasive.

MRS. USHER

You use big words, don't you?

WOLFE

I try to use words to say what I mean.

MRS. USHER

So do I. I don't know what Mr. Byne told you, but I phoned him this morning and asked to see him. He suggested the joint and I went. Not very thrilling, is it?

WOLFE

Only moderately. Have you known him long?

MRS. USHER

I don't really know him at all. I met him somewhere a year ago, I don't remember where. But yesterday I was sitting any my window, thinking about Faith...I had to know more.

She gets choked up for a moment, but Wolfe presses on anyway.

WOLFE

Why did you leave your home and go to a hotel under another name?

MRS. USHER

I didn't want to see people. I knew reporters would come. And cops. I wanted to be alone. You would too if--

And she gets all choked up again. It seems to irritate Wolfe, who turns immediately to Archie.

WOLFE

Bring in Mr. Byne, Archie, and Saul.

Archie goes to the door and opens it.

ARCHIE

Come in, gentlemen.

They do and take their seats.

WOLFE

I don't want to prolong this beyond necessity, but I would like to congratulate you. You have both lied so cleverly that it would have taken a long and costly investigation to impeach you. It was an admirable performance. Unfortunately for you, the performance was wasted.

He reaches into his jacket and pulls out a SHEET OF PAPER.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

When you left your hotel room, Mrs. Usher, I had one of my men search it. He found a most interesting document.

BYNE

What document?

WOLFE

It's a letter from Albert Grantham in which he concedes being the father of your child. Perhaps the best way to identify it is to quote an excerpt, say, paragraph four:

(reading:)

"So I have given my nephew, Austin Byne, a portfolio of securities the income of which is tax exempt, amount to more than \$2 million. The yield will be about \$55,000 annually. My nephew will remit half to you and keep the other half to himself. If you disclose the relationship we once had, or make any additional demands, this agreement is null and--

"

Byne moves forward. Saul and Archie stop him, not realizing that the real danger is Mrs. Usher. She BOLTS OUT OF HER CHAIR streaks for Wolfe, who SWIVELS AROUND and leans back, KICKING HER IN THE CHIN and sending her staggering back to her seat. She grabs her jaw and yells:

MRS. USHER

You hit me!

Archie pins Byne's arm behind him.

ARCHIE

Easy.

Wolfe puts the paper back into his pocket.

MRS. USHER

Give that back to me.

WOLFE

It will eventually be returned to you, after it is used as an exhibit in a murder trial.

BYNE

No one has been murdered!

WOLFE

You are in error, Mr. Byne. Now sit down.

Archie releases him and Byne sits. Wolfe turns to Mrs. Usher.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Does the agreement state that your remittance decreases if your daughter dies?

MRS. USHER

Yes. I only get half as much or even less. Are you telling the truth, was she murdered?

WOLFE

I'm afraid so, Madam.

(to Byne:)

I would like to see the agreement. So I sent Mr. Cather to your apartment to look for it. It will expedite matters if you phone him and tell him where it is. He should be inside by now.

Byne stares at Wolfe.

BYNE

By God. You've been threatening to call the police. I will call them myself. I'll tell them a man has broken into my apartment and he is there now.

Archie leaves his chair.

ARCHIE

Here, Dinky, use my phone.

BYNE

He won't find the agreement because it's not there. It's in a safe deposit box and it's going to stay there.

WOLFE

Tomorrow is Sunday, so it must wait until Monday. However, Mr. Cather didn't go to the trouble for nothing. He will use your typewriter and write something with it: "Have you found out yet that Edwin Laidlaw is the father of Faith Usher's baby?"

Byne smiles. Wolfe notices.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

You smile. Are you amused? Because you don't have a typewriter?

BYNE

Sure, I have a typewriter. Did I smile?

He smiles again, a poker smile.

WOLFE

You were wrong to smile. That was a mistake. You couldn't possibly be amused, so you must be pleased. By what? I'll try to guess. The guilty machine is elsewhere. It should be easy to find. For instance, the bank vault where you have the safety deposit box. Archie, you go to my box regularly, would it be remarkable for a vault customer to ask for a typewriter?

ARCHIE

Remarkable? No.

From the look on Byne's face, Wolfe has hit the target.

BYNE

Beat it, Elaine. I want to talk to Wolfe.

Wolfe nods to Saul, who escorts Mrs. Byne out.

WOLFE

Please wait in the front room.

BYNE

You win. So I spill my guts. Where do you want me to start?

WOLFE

Why did you send the note to the police?

BYNE

Because they were going on with the investigation and they might dig up I knew Faith's mother and about the arrangement. And if she was murdered, I thought Laidlaw probably did it.

WOLFE

Why?

BYNE

The day he left for Canada, I saw the two of them together in his car. I put the rest together. So now you know he was the only one at the party with a reason to kill her.

WOLFE

You had one.

BYNE

I wasn't there!

WOLFE

True, but those who were there can also plead lack of opportunity.

BYNE

I told Elaine I'd keep sending her half. You can ask her. So where's my motive now?

WOLFE

You told Mr. Goodwin that your selection of Miss Usher to be invited to the party was fortuitous, but now that explanation won't do.

BYNE

When I got the list from Mrs. Irwin, and saw Faith's name, I thought it would be ironic to invite her. Of course, my aunt could cross Faith off and tell Mrs Irwin--

(then:)

That gave me another funny idea, to have Laidlaw there, too. I know I was a damn fool, but there you have it.

WOLFE

Did Miss Usher know that Albert Grantham had fathered her?

BYNE

My God, no.

Wolfe leans back and closes his eyes... and does some things which Archie now explains to us:

ARCHIE'S VOICE

Wolfe leaned back, closed his eyes, and his lips started to work. They pushed out and in, out and in, out and in...sooner or later he always does that. I should have a sign made, GENIUS AT WORK, and put it on his desk when he starts it.

Wolfe opens his eyes and aims his gaze at Byne.

WOLFE

The time has come to attack the central question: how was Faith Usher murdered? Archie, get Mr. Cramer.

Byne jumps to his feet.

BYNE

No! Damn you, after I've spilled--

WOLFE

Mr. Byne! Don't squeal until you're hurt. I've got you and I intend to keep you.

(to Archie:)

Call Mr. Cramer, ask him to invite everyone from the party to my office tomorrow morning at eleven O'clock. He may come as well, particularly if he wishes to apprehend a murderer.

Wolfe rises now and addresses Byne.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

You and Miss Usher will remain here as my guests. I don't want either of you to have a chance to confer with any one and this will ensure it.

Wolfe leaves, Archie smiling, Byne glaring after him.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

I had no idea what he had in mind, but I knew one thing. The murder had already been solved and tomorrow I would know how.

WIPE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - DAY

The room has changed. The globe and the couch and other furniture have been moved out to recreate the party as much as possible. FOURTEEN CHAIRS have been brought in, a table standing in for the bar, etc. Everyone is scattered around, some seated and some standing, waiting for Wolfe to arrive. In addition to the party guests, Byne, Cramer, PURLEY STEBBINS and Saul are also there.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

Wolfe's idea was to reproduce, as nearly as possible, the scene of the crime, and it was a damn silly idea. If re-creation was essential, he could have broken his rule to never leave the house on business and move the whole performance uptown to Mrs. Robilotti's. But he was too stubborn for that.

Wolfe enters, making it an entrance, of course, letting everyone stare at him as he makes his way to his desk.

WOLFE

Ladies and gentlemen, I will not keep you long -- at least not most of you. I have no exhortation for you and no questions to ask. To form an opinion of Mr. Goodwin's competence as an eyewitness, I need to see, not what he saw, but a close approximation of it. We'll do the best we can. Archie?

Archie leaves his chair to stage manage. And we

WIPE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Everyone is in their new place. Hackett behind the table/bar, and Laidlaw and Helen Yarmis at one end of it. Rose Tuttle and Beverly Kent are in chairs where the globe stood. Celia Grantham and Paul Schuster are by the wall to the right of Wolfe's desk, with her sitting and him standing. Saul is on a chair near the door to the hall.

ARCHIE

Mr. Panzer is Faith Usher. The distance is wrong, but the relative position is right.

Archie puts an ASHTRAY on a chair to the right of the safe and tells them:

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

This is the bag containing the bottle of poison.

(to the Robilottis:)

Could you please take your places in front of the bar?

Reluctantly, they do. Archie and Ethel stand at a corner by Archie's desk.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

(to Wolfe:)

All set.

WOLFE

Mr. Hackett, I understand that when Mr. Grantham went to the bar for champagne for himself and Miss Usher, two glasses were there in readiness. You had poured one of them a few minutes previously and the other just before he arrived. Is that correct?

BUTLER

Yes, sir.

WOLFE

Please pour a glass now and put it in place.

Hackett the butler does as he is told.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

The bottles in the cooler on the table were champagne, and good champagne, Wolfe had insisted on it. Fritz had opened two of them.

WOLFE

Keep the bottle in your hand. I'll explain what I am after and you may proceed. I want to see it from various angles. After Mr. Grantham delivers his glass to Mr. Panzer, that is to say Miss Usher, I will ask repeat him to repeat his performance by delivering glasses individually to everyone.

Cecil shrugs and does what he is told. We do it in A SERIES OF TIME CUT/DISSOLVES, intercutting Wolfe watching it all closely, all UNDER:

ARCHIE'S VOICE

I was as confused as everyone else about what Wolfe had in mind. But I had sympathy for the others. Unlike them, I was comfortable with that unique brand of confusion, I'd experienced it many times before in that very room.

Before Cecil can hand a glass to the last person, his sister, he decides to swallow the contents himself.

CECIL

Here's to crime.
(drinks, then to Wolfe:)
I hope I didn't spoil it.

CELIA

It was in bad taste.

CECIL

I meant it to be. This whole thing has been in bad taste from the beginning.

Wolfe ignores the remark.

WOLFE

I appeal to all of you: Did anything about Mr. Grantham's performance catch your eye?

Purley Stebbins clears his throat.

STEBBINS

He carried his glasses the same every time. The one in his right hand, his thumb and forefinger were on the bowl, and the one in his left hand, held that by the stem. And he kept the one in his right hand and handed them the one in his left hand.

Wolfe is stunned.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

I had never before seen Wolfe look at Purley with unqualified admiration.

WOLFE

Thank you, Mr. Stebbins. You not only have eyes but know what they're for. Will anyone corroborate him?

SAUL

I will. I do.

CRAMER

(to Wolfe:)

What's your point?

WOLFE

Surely, that is obvious. Anyone who is sufficiently familiar with Mr. Grantham's habits, and who saw him pick up the glasses and start off with them, would know which one he would hand to Miss Usher.

(to Archie:)

Please bring in our guest.

Archie opens the door and in comes Elaine Usher, who he leads to Mrs. Robilotti.

ARCHIE

Mrs. Robilotti, let me present Mrs. Elaine Usher, Faith's mother.

Mrs. Usher bends at the waist and puts out a hand.

MRS. USHER

It's a pleasure, a great pleasure.

Mrs. Robilotti stares for a moment and then SLAPS Mrs. Usher RIGHT ACROSS THE FACE, shocking everyone, except, perhaps Nero Wolfe.

WOLFE

That is all, ladies and gentlemen.

(MORE)

WOLFE (CONT'D)

I wish to continue, but only with Mrs. Robilotti, Mr. Byne, Mr. Laidlaw, and Mr. Robilotti, if he chooses to stay. The rest of you may go.

ROSE

You mean we have to? I want to stay.

But she's led out, along with the others, by Archie and Saul, leaving the four remaining guests, Cramer and Stebbins.

WOLFE

(to Mrs. Usher:)

Madam, I regret the indignity you have suffered under my roof.

BYNE

You stage it and *then* you regret it? Unbelievable.

WOLFE

The reason Mr. Byne is here will soon be apparent. It was something he said that informed me that Mrs. Robilotti knew her husband fathered Faith Usher.

BYNE

That's a lie! A damn lie!

WOLFE

I choose my words, Mr. Byne. I didn't say you *told* me that, but that something you said *informed* me. Speaking of the people invited to the gathering, you said "of course my aunt could cross Faith off and Tell Mrs. Irwin--" and you stopped, realizing you'd slipped. When I let it pass, you thought I missed it.

BYNE

There was no implication!

WOLFE

Nonsense. Why should your Aunt refuse to have Miss Usher in her house? Only one reason suggested by the known facts: that she knew Miss Usher was her former husband's illegitimate daughter.

MRS. ROBILOTTI

(to Wolfe, with disgust:)

This is incredible.

WOLFE

I agree, murder is always incredible.

(to Byne:)

You have trimmed long enough. Did your aunt know Faith Usher was the daughter of Albert Grantham?

Byne sags, cornered and he knows it.

BYNE

I told her a couple of months ago because she called me a parasite for living on my Uncle's money. I lost my temper and told her why he gave me the money, to provide for his illegitimate daughter.

Mrs. Robilotti glares at Byne, seething with hatred.

MRS. ROBILOTTI

You liar! You sit there and lie. You told me so you could blackmail me out of more millions. The millions Albert gave you wasn't enough, you--

WOLFE

(interrupts:)

Stop it!

(to Cramer:)

I submit to you that Mrs. Robilotti deliberately let Faith Usher come to the party so she could kill her.

CRAMER

How did she get Faith Usher's cyanide out of her purse and into the drink?

WOLFE

Confound it, must I shine your shoes for you?

(then:)

I doubt she ever went near the bag. I suggest you inquire whether Mrs. Robilotti recently had access to cyanide. You might even find she actually procured some.

MRS. ROBILOTTI

I've had enough!

Mrs. Robilotti gets to her feet and starts to go. But she only gets a few feet before Cramer and Stebbins block her way.

MRS. ROBILOTTI (CONT'D)

Let me pass. I am going home.

CRAMER

Not right now. I'm afraid you'll
have to answer some questions.

He motions to Stebbins and they lead her out. Archie smiles
at Wolfe, who merely nods, spots Fritz in the door way,
glances at his watch, and starts to rise.

WOLFE

Now, if you will excuse me, it's
time for lunch. You're welcome to
join me in the dining room if you
wish.

And Wolfe leaves. The others start to follow, staring after
him in amazement. Celia joins Archie at his desk.

CELIA

You've left my life in tatters.

ARCHIE

I'm sorry, this must be a terrible
shock for you.

CELIA

This changes everything. I could
never marry a man who put my mother
in jail.

Archie is taken aback. That wasn't what he meant.

ARCHIE

Oh.
(then:)
A wise policy.

CELIA

As if you didn't know, you skunk.
You win. I'll just have to find
someone else.

She motions to Laidlaw.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Edwin, my dear, would you please
take me home?

Laidlaw immediately offers Celia his arm.

LAIDLAW

My pleasure.

As the two of them pass, Laidlaw shoots a smile at Archie
and he smiles back. Fritz joins Archie.

FRITZ

Can I get you anything?

ARCHIE

A tall glass of milk. Make it a
cold one.

And on Archie, looking thoughtfully after the couple, we
FADE OUT.

THE END