

The Mother Hunt

teleplay by

Sharon Elizabeth Doyle

based on the novel

THE MOTHER HUNT

by

REX STOUT

PRODUCTION WHITE DRAFT

October 23, 2001

PRODUCTION PINK DRAFT

November 1, 2001

PRODUCTION BLUE DRAFT

November 8, 2001

Production GREEN DRAFT

November 13, 2001

PRODUCTION YELLOW DRAFT

November 16, 2001

PRODUCTION GOLDENROD DRAFT

November 28, 2001

THE MOTHER HUNT

FADE IN:

MONTAGE/CREDITS

1 INT. VALDON MANSION - LIVING ROOM - DAY 1

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

VOICE (V.O.)

Mrs. Valdon. Go look on your
doorstep.

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

DISSOLVE TO:

2 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY 2

INSERT: THE NOTE

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

WOLFE (V.O.)

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

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

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Is this likely or merely
credible?

(Lucy doesn't answer; she
is staring at the morning's
orchid.)

Madam? Is it likely?

She reaches across and plucks a flower from the orchid.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

LUCY

Your Cypridium Lawrenceanum has an aphid. Oh. No, just dust. Sorry. Pretty though. Who is your florist?

She tucks it in her button hole.

WOLFE

Madam.

LUCY

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

WOLFE

How long were you married?

LUCY

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

WOLFE

How old was he when he died?

LUCY

Forty six.

WOLFE

How old are you.

LUCY

(smiling)

Old enough. Plenty old enough.

(on Wolfe's look)

During that last year, before he died, he may have had one woman, or a dozen, I just don't know.

Wolfe glares. First babies and now sex.

WOLFE

Can you get to the problem, madam?

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: (2)

2

LUCY

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

WOLFE

Pfui. Never to be solved and you know it.

LUCY

Pfui? You are the best detective in the world.

WOLFE

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

LUCY

You can find the mother. Wait.

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

LUCY (CONT'D)

No. No. Huh. No. Ah. Here. I've written the dates down.

(she hands him a piece of paper with all the dates.)

The doctor said he was five months old, which means he was born last June and conceived last fall.

WOLFE

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

LUCY

Oh, my lawyer did that.

WOLFE

And he is aware you are consulting me?

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: (3)

2

LUCY

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

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

WOLFE

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

LUCY

No, just an ordinary pin.

WOLFE

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

ARCHIE

Not enough data. Roughly ten to one.

WOLFE

Were you alone in the house when the call came?

LUCY

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

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

WOLFE

Whoever did this, madam, is someone you know.

LUCY

How could you know that?

WOLFE

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

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: (4)

2

LUCY

But isn't there a retainer?

WOLFE

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

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

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Wolfe's mind was on the shad roe casserole slated for lunch. He and Fritz had a disagreement over the use of onion which had never been resolved.

(out loud)

Why don't we go to your place, Mrs. Valdon. We can get the baby clothes and conduct the interview there.

Lucy hands him a check.

WIPE TO:

3 INT. VALDON MANSION - HALLWAY/LIVING ROOM - DAY

3

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

ARCHIE

Nice digs.

LUCY

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

MISS MIMM

Mrs. Valdon.

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

LUCY

Miss Mimm.

(flipping through them)

No, no. Yes. Definitely. Buy a whole table.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

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

ARCHIE

Hate you enough to saddle with a loose baby?

LUCY

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

ARCHIE

Fog kills?

LUCY

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

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

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

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

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

She lights up as THE NURSE appears with the baby. Lucy takes the baby.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: (2)

3

LUCY (CONT'D)

Hello, there. Hello. Hello.

(to Archie)

I'd introduce you, but I'm not going to name him until I decide to keep him.

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

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

I'm considering Moses. No one knew who his father was either.

(to Miss Mimm)

Miss Mimm, take Mr. Goodwin to the nursery and help him pack up the clothing the baby came in.

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

WIPE TO:

4 INT. VALDON MANSION - HALLWAY - DAY

4

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

LUCY

No, Robert. That's a bad dog. Get down now. Oh, hello.

ARCHIE

I need those names now.

LUCY

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

ARCHIE

I mean the female names. Candidates.

She strikes a few chords on the piano.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

4

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

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

LUCY

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

She gestures over at the table. He sees it.

LUCY (CONT'D)

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

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

That's part of your job?

ARCHIE

Sure.

LUCY

Are you an expert?

ARCHIE

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

WIPE TO:

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

LUCY

Oh, no. Wait. You can't just drink it. We have to be civilized and observe a ritual.

(holding out her drink)

You take a sip of mine; I'll take a sip of yours.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED: (2)

4

ARCHIE

A fine old Persian custom.
Used to foil poisonings.

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

LUCY

What am I doing? Why did I do that?

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

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

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

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

Archie sips his martini, leans on the piano.

ARCHIE

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

She abruptly leaves the room, embarrassed.

LUCY

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

And she's gone. Archie blinks in astonishment.

5 EXT. BROWNSTONE - STOOP (STUDIO) - DAY

5

Archie lets himself in.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

The Valdon Mansion was only twenty four short blocks away
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

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

6 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

6

ANGLE ON BABY CLOTHES

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

WOLFE
What the devil is this?

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

Wolfe starts inspecting the clothes. Archie looks smug.

WOLFE
Did you get the names?

ARCHIE
Yes. Do you want it verbatim?

WOLFE
Not if you're satisfied.

ARCHIE
I am.

WOLFE
What else?

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

Wolfe eyes Archie, suspiciously.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

WOLFE

You had better report verbatim.

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

Have you any suggestions?

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

Shut up.

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

WOLFE (CONT'D)

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

ARCHIE

Congratulations.

WOLFE

Should I apologize for pulling a feather from your cap?

ARCHIE

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

{A&E: END ACT ONE}

7 EXT. GARMENT DISTRICT - DAY

7

Archie dodges through the frenzy of the garment district.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

ARCHIE (V.O.)

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

8 INT. EXCLUSIVE NOVELTY BUTTON COMPANY -- DAY

8

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

ARCHIE

Excuse me. I am in search of...

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

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

LOSSEFF

Where did these buttons come from?

ARCHIE

That's my line.

LOSSEFF

Are you a button man?

ARCHIE

No.

LOSSEFF

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

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

LOSSEFF (CONT'D)

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

ARCHIE

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

LOSSEFF

I admit I can't!

ARCHIE

But you know about buttons.

LOSSEFF

I know all about buttons!

ARCHIE

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

LOSSEFF

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

Archie has to yank to get the overalls.

ARCHIE

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

9 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

9

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

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

WOLFE

Well?

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

Satisfactory.

He gets on the elevator, and then stops.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

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

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

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

Wolfe ascends. Archie detours to the phone.

10 EXT. NEWSTAND - DAY

10

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

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

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

BEATRICE

How do I know you'll pay me?

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

ARCHIE

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

BEATRICE

I've never been to Singapore.

ARCHIE

Exactly. Where did you see them?

BEATRICE

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

Archie pulls the overalls from his bag.

ARCHIE

Anything like these?

BEATRICE

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

ARCHIE

What was her name?

BEATRICE

I suppose I have to tell you.

ARCHIE

Do you want the money?

He holds out \$100.

BEATRICE

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

He hands it to her.

WIPE TO:

11 INT. CHURCHILL HOTEL - BLUE ALCOVE BAR -- DAY

11

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

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

ARCHIE (V.O.)

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

WIPE TO:

They have drinks, are sitting in a booth.

ANNE

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

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

ANNE (CONT'D)

But don't tell me someone saw me wearing these. They wouldn't fit.

Archie takes them back.

ARCHIE

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

ANNE

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

(changing tones)

Haven't we had enough about buttons?

ARCHIE

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

ANNE

Oh, I'm very very busy.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: (2)

11

ANNE (CONT'D)

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

ARCHIE

Because the boss's wives like you?

ANNE

I'm more like revenge.

ARCHIE

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

ANNE

No. They can't afford me.

12 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

12

Wolfe looks up from his book. He raises an eyebrow. Archie finishes reporting.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

I got home and gave Wolfe the facts. When I finished he said, "Satisfactory."

WOLFE

Satisfactory.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Then he decided that was an understatement.

WOLFE

Very Satisfactory.

ARCHIE

Yes, sir, I could use a raise.

WOLFE

No doubt.

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

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Can you get Saul now?

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

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

ARCHIE

Indubitably he is the seventh son of a seventh son.

13 INT. VALDON MANSION -- DAY

13

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

LUCY

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

(she continues under. We cannot hear her)

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

ARCHIE (V.O.)

I stopped by on my way out of town to brief the client on our remarkable progress, but she was all wrapped up in Fog. On her, it looked good.

14 EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY 14

Archie zips north on the Sawmill Expressway towards Mahopac.

15 EXT. MAHOPAC GENERAL STORE/FILLING STATION - DAY 15

Archie gets directions from a LOCAL, who points him up the road.

16 EXT. ROAD -- DAY 16

The Studebaker pulls up to a mail box reading "TENZER." He turns into the bumpy road.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

After conferring with a local sage, I found Aunt Ellen's cottage off the beaten path.

17 EXT. TENZER COTTAGE - DAY 17

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

ELLEN TENZER

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

ARCHIE

Miss Ellen Tenzer?

ELLEN TENZER

That's my name.

ARCHIE

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

ELLEN TENZER

Buttons? How did you know I make buttons?

ARCHIE

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

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

ELLEN TENZER

I only have a few. Only
seventeen.

ARCHIE

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

ELLEN TENZER

Come on in then.

She steps back to let him in.

18 INT. TENZER COTTAGE - KITCHEN - DAY

18

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

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Her knowing about the ad changed
the program completely.

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

ELLEN TENZER

How did you find out that I
make buttons?

ARCHIE

The Button man. Good water.
Deep well?

She stops being polite and becomes a brusque nurse.

ELLEN TENZER

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

ARCHIE

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

ELLEN TENZER

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

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: 18

ELLEN TENZER (CONT'D)
Get out!

WIPE TO:

19 EXT. MAHOPAC GENERAL STORE/FILLING STATION -- DAY 19

Archie has parked the car next to the filling station and is on the phone in the phone booth.

INTERCUT WITH INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE

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

WOLFE
When will you eat?

ARCHIE
Tomorrow maybe.

20 EXT. GRAVEL ROAD -- DAY 20

Archie has parked the Studebaker on the side of the road is taking off towards the house.

21 EXT. TENZER COTTAGE - DAY 21

Archie creeps up towards the house. But then he gets far enough to see something's wrong.

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

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

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

22 INT. TENZER COTTAGE - DAY

22

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

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Who'd have thought that I could get pleasure looking at baby clothes.

23 OMITTED

23

24 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

24

ARCHIE (V.O.)

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

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

25 EXT. GRAVEL ROAD -- DAY

25

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

26 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY (LATER)

26

Wolfe searches for another book balanced high on a ladder.

WOLFE

Confound it. That woman has skedaddled.

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

ARCHIE

Heads, No.

WOLFE

Pfui. I want your opinion.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED:

26

ARCHIE

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

27 EXT. GRAVEL ROAD -- DAY

27

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

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

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

28 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

28

ARCHIE

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

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

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

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

WOLFE

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

Archie starts dialing.

{A&E: END ACT TWO}

29 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

29

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

(CONTINUED)

29 CONTINUED:

29

ARCHIE

Do we still have a credit
balance?

LON

And here I thought you just
enjoyed my company.

ARCHIE

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

LON

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

Archie and Wolfe exchange looks.

ARCHIE.

So.

30 EXT. STREET - DAY

30

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

LON (V.O.)

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

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

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

Ellen Tenzer had been strangled.
The piece of cord was still
around her throat.

30A INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

30A

ARCHIE

But who was she?

LON

A registered nurse.

WOLFE

Ah.

(CONTINUED)

30A CONTINUED:

30A

LON

What?

ARCHIE

"Ah".

LON

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

WOLFE

She boarded illegitimate children?

LON

One at a time.

WOLFE

Where did they come from?

LON

And where did they go to? Nobody knows.

ARCHIE

In a little town like Mahopac?

LON

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

ARCHIE

Buster. That's something. Thanks.

LON

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

ARCHIE

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

(CONTINUED)

30A CONTINUED: (2)

30A

LON
Logic is like that.

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

Lon looks at Wolfe. Wolfe says nothing.

LON
I see.

ARCHIE
For his suspenders.

LON
Nero Wolfe wears suspenders.
Now that is news.

WIPE TO:

30B INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

30B

The boys return from lunch.

ARCHIE
Talk about ifs.

WOLFE
Futile.

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

WOLFE
You can supply no information
relevant to the murder.

ARCHIE
The hell I can't.

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

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

(CONTINUED)

30B CONTINUED:

30B

WOLFE

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

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

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

ARCHIE

No.

WOLFE

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

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

ARCHIE (V.O.)

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

31 INT. CHURCHILL HOTEL - BLUE ALCOVE BAR - DAY

31

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

ARCHIE (V.O.)

My first stop was Anne Tenzer, who had been hauled down to headquarters and was sore.

ANNE

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

ARCHIE

I'm really more of an assistant.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

ANNE

It's not that you lied, that's your job. And it's not my Aunt Ellen. Whoever killed her, you didn't start it.

ARCHIE

And still you're sore at me.

ANNE

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

ARCHIE

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

ANNE

No. That's not it. Not precisely. But it's close.

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

32 INT. VALDON MANSION - HALLWAY/LIVING ROOM - DAY

32

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

LUCY

Mr. Goodwin.

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

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

ARCHIE.

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

LUCY

So she's the mother?

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED:

32

ARCHIE

No.

LUCY

She knows who the mother is!

ARCHIE

Probably she did.

LUCY

You mean she forgot?

ARCHIE

What?

LUCY

How could she forget?

ARCHIE

She didn't.

LUCY

The grandmother!

ARCHIE

No.

LUCY

Aunt, uncle, second cousin?

ARCHIE

(cuts her off)

She's dead.

LUCY

Dead?

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

Murdered?

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

You're saying it was my fault?

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED: (2)

32

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

I'm responsible for a murder.

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

I sent you out there.

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

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

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

Why don't you call me Lucy?

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

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

ARCHIE.

Not unless he was very good, Mrs. Valdón.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED: (3)

32

ARCHIE. (CONT'D)

(on her look)

If you think we owe you an apology for letting a mother hunt hatch a murder, here it is.

LUCY

No. I owe you an apology. I was so rude. That's not the word, Lucy. I was such a...a jerk, that day.

(he reacts. Beat. He starts to go.)

You're going?

ARCHIE

Sure. I've done the errand.

LUCY

Oh. Well, then. Goodbye.

ARCHIE

Goodbye.

They part but it's no longer just business.

33 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

33

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

ARCHIE (V.O.)

I came home to find Inspector Cramer and Mr. Wolfe engaged in a friendly interrogation.

34 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - NIGHT

34

Wolfe and Cramer are almost nose to nose.

WOLFE

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

CRAMER

You eating scraps. Good God.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

34

ARCHIE

Inspector Cramer, fancy meeting
you here.

CRAMER

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

Archie holds out his hands for handcuffs.

CRAMER (CONT'D)

Awww.

35 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

35

ARCHIE (V.O.)

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

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

WIPE TO:

36 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY

36

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

37 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

37

Archie comes in. Wolfe is reading.

ARCHIE

Well, I see you've kept busy.

(no response.)

I'm going upstairs. I had a
one-hour nap with a dick standing
by. What's for lunch?

WOLFE

Sweetbreads in béchamel sauce
with truffles and chervil.
Beet and watercress salad.
Brie.

ARCHIE.

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

He starts to go.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

37

WOLFE

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

ARCHIE

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

He reaches for the phone.

WIPE TO:

38 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

38

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

LUCY

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

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

ARCHIE (V.O.)

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

WOLFE

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

LUCY

(writing)

How do we know that?

WOLFE

Inference.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED:

38

LUCY

A nurse wouldn't use a bare pin.

WOLFE

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

LUCY

So you assume that's why she was killed?

WOLFE

It would be vacuous not to.

LUCY

Why?

WOLFE

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

LUCY

Why?

WOLFE

Archie.

LUCY

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

ARCHIE

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

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED: (2)

38

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

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

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

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

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

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Not if you're no longer a client.

LUCY

I am. Of course, I am.

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

So I proceed?

LUCY

Yes.

WOLFE

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

LUCY

That would be Leo, Julian, Willis and I suppose, Manny Upton.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED: (3)

38

WOLFE

And I have your promise that if you are contacted by the police you will stand mute?

LUCY

Yes.

Wolfe notes the time: 3:55.

WOLFE

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

LUCY

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

WOLFE

You should be gratified I consider it imaginable.

LUCY

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

WOLFE

Are you referring to the London event?

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

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

(to Wolfe)

It's utter nonsense to suspect me.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED: (4)

38

WOLFE

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

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

ARCHIE (V.O.)

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

WIPE TO:

39 OMITTED

39

40 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY

40

ARCHIE (V.O.)

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

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

LUCY

Thank you for a lovely afternoon.

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

ARCHIE

The party is arranged for 9:00.

WOLFE

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

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

40

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

Shut up.

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

ARCHIE

You don't dust, Fritz.

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

{A&E: END ACT THREE}

40A OMITTED

40A

41 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - NIGHT

41

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

ARCHIE (V.O.)

The party began on time. I
profiled them neatly for Wolfe,
and will do so for you.

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

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

Manual Upton, the Editor of the
Distaff Magazine, discovered
Dick Valdson and published his
first stories.

SHOT of WILLIS KRUG -

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

Willis Krug was Valdson's agent
and anxious to get back to work.

SHOT OF JULIAN HAFT - in his fifties, balding, shaped like a
pear on toothpicks, polishes his balloon-tired cheaters.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

The distinguished Julian Haft published Mr. Valdon's novels and claimed to be his good friend.

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

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

Leo Bingham was Dick Valdon's oldest friend and fellow connoisseur of the female of the species.

BINGHAM

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

WOLFE

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

Bingham gives Wolfe his neon smile.

BINGHAM

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

HAFT

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

WOLFE

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

KRUG

Can we get started? I got calls to make.

Wolfe orates; the men listen, ask questions.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED: (2)

41

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Wolfe spun them a tale about Lucy hiring him to track down anonymous letters she had received from a lover of her husband. If they wanted to save Lucy from blackmail, they had to agree to name every woman they thought Valdon might have been with the year before.

WOLFE

More brandy, Mr. Bingham?

BINGHAM

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

UPTON

What exactly does this lover say?

WOLFE

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

LEO

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

KRUG

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

UPTON

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

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

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Upton was the only one who refused.

WIPE TO:

41A INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - NIGHT 41A

CLOSE ON TYPED LISTS

as Archie pulls them from the typewriter.

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

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

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

INTERCUT:

41B -A CALENDAR PEELING OFF DAYS IN NOVEMBER 41B

41C INT. BROWNSTONE OFFICE - DAY 41C

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

41D VARIOUS 41D

- Saul questions young couple at the beach.

- Saul questions Mexican woman

- Fat woman slams door in Orrie's face.

- Orrie questions pretty Russian woman.

- Fred talks to kids on the street.

- Fred questions lady of the night

41E INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY 41E

LUCY hands Archie another check.

41F INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY 41F

WOLFE reads a succession of books.

(CONTINUED)

41F CONTINUED:

41F

ARCHIE (V.O.)

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

42 INT. VALDON MANSION - DAY

42

Lucy watches as Archie puts a record on a large console record player.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

The first was that my relationship with the client had grown increasingly cordial.

They start dancing.

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

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

Archie gets fancy and Lucy follows him easily.

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

I discovered that as a dancer, she was no slouch. She was good enough to take to the Flamingo Club.

They improvise a bit and end up in a kiss.

IRIS IN/IRIS OUT

43 INT. VALDON MANSION - VESTIBULE - DAY

43

ARCHIE (V.O.)

The second development was that Lucy came within an ace of quitting as a client. Cramer put two and two together and got four and sent Stebbins to do the counting.

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

STEBBINS

Did you know Ellen Tenzer?

LUCY

What business is that of yours?

STEBBINS

I'm here on the people's business.

LUCY

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

STEBBINS

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

LUCY

Of course.

STEBBINS

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

LUCY

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

ARCHIE (V.O.)

After Purley left, the queen stormed out of her castle and paid a visit to the peasant.

*
*
*

WIPE TO:

44 INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - DAY 44*

Archie and Lucy are head to head in the kitchen. *

ARCHIE *

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

LUCY *

I'm not huffy! . *

ARCHIE *

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

LUCY *

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

ARCHIE *

Why are you here, Mrs. Valdon? *

LUCY *

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

ARCHIE *

You promised Mr. Wolfe you... *

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED:

44

LUCY

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

*
*
*

ARCHIE

Are you going to keep your mouth shut?

*
*
*

LUCY

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

*
*
*

ARCHIE

Are you?

*
*

Impasse.

*

{END HOUR: A&E}

*

45 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - NIGHT

45*

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

ARCHIE

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

*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

45

WOLFE

Can I reach you?

ARCHIE

Sure. At Mrs. Valdon's number.

WOLFE

She came here this afternoon. *

ARCHIE *

Yes. She was shying a little. *

She wanted some assurance you *

could stay in the saddle and I *

supplied it.

WOLFE

Is she, in fact, in a pucker?

ARCHIE *

She was afraid that you might *

pull out. She asked me to come *

back and report what you said.

WOLFE

Flummery.

ARCHIE *

Oh. I'll tell her that. *

He leaves. Fritz sighs. Wolfe glowers.

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

I was off by three minutes. *

Cramer arrived at 11:05 the *

next morning.

46 OMITTED
THRU
4846
THRU
48

49 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

49

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

CRAMER

What's the matter? You blocked?

WOLFE

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

49

CRAMER
The hell you are.

49 CONTINUED: (2)

49

CRAMER (CONT'D)

Do you deny that there is a direct connection between Goodwin's seeing Ellen Tenzer and the murder?

WOLFE

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

CRAMER

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

WOLFE

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

CRAMER

Your word?

WOLFE

My word.

CRAMER

Then what the hell are Goodwin and his monkeys doing?

WOLFE

They're not investigating a homicide.

Cramer growls, chomps his cigar and takes on Archie.

CRAMER

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

ARCHIE

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

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED: (3)

49

CRAMER

The eight-to-two man says you entered at nine and didn't come out. The two-to-eight man says you didn't come out either. You spent the night there.

Archie looks for something to do to avoid Wolfe's glance.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

This was all Wolfe needed. First a woman passes a note to me under his nose. Now Cramer was taking notes under my window.
(out loud)

At a quarter to two Mrs. Valdon and I were somewhat high, and went out to dance on the sidewalk. At a quarter past two, she went back in and I left. So they both missed me

CRAMER

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

WOLFE

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

CRAMER

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

Cramer grabs his hat and marches out. Archie goes to the door and shuts it.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Cramer's bark was worse than the DA's bite. They only kept Lucy downtown for four hours. For an Armstead, that was enough and she went to recover at her country cottage...

50 OMITTED

50

WIPE TO:

51 EXT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - FRONT -- DAY

51

A WOODIE pulls up to the estate, honks, and starts to disgorge its human occupants. TWO GARDENERS are planting a tree. The HOUSEKEEPER and her HUSBAND come out waving.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

She took the baby, the nurse,
the maid, and the cook and me.

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

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

It was a modest little cottage
with just enough room for the
Russian army.

52 EXT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - FRONT - DAY

52

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

LUCY

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

ARCHIE

Yes, but he can't fire me.

LUCY

Why not?

ARCHIE

Because if I wasn't around he'd
be sleeping under a bridge and
eating scraps.

(on her look)

He hates to work and half my
salary comes from poking him.

LUCY

Sounds dangerous.

ARCHIE

Yeah.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED:

52

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

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

LUCY

Will it work?

ARCHIE

We shall see in a few hours.

53 OMITTED

53

54 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE -- DAY

54

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

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

Get your notebook.

Archie takes his time getting his notebook.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Thus started the second stage of the Mother Hunt. And it was elaborate even by Wolfe's standards.

WIPE TO:

55 INT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - DAY

55

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

LUCY

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

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

True. Oh, all right.

ARCHIE

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

56 INT. LON COHEN'S OFFICE - DAY

56

Lon eats at his desk. Archie talks.

LON

I'm listening.

ARCHIE

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

LON

Lambkin?

ARCHIE

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

LON

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

ARCHIE

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

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED:

56

LON

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

ARCHIE

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

LON

Who killed Ellen Tenzer?

ARCHIE

Ask the cops.

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

LON

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

He chooses a phone.

{A&E: END ACT FIVE}

57 OMITTED

57

58 INT. SALLY'S LOFT -- NIGHT

58

ARCHIE (V.O.)

I spent the next stage of the Mother Hunt with Sally Corbett, who had made it necessary for me to revise my prejudice against female ops. And I held it against her, like Wolfe held it against Jane Austen for proving women could write.

SALLY CORBETT shows Archie around her digs, which is full of gadgets and investigative gear. There is a very female bed, decked out in satin cushions, however. Sally goes to get the perambulator. Archie tests the bed.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

58

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

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

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

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

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

SALLY
Gotta get glamorous first.

ANGLE ON SALLY

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

59 OMITTED
THRU
60

59
THRU
60

A60 INSERT: NEWSPAPER SPINNING -

A60

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

MATCHED DISSOLVE TO:

61 INT. VALDON MANSION - KITCHEN - MORNING

61

Archie, holding the article in his hand. He is in his shirt-sleeves. He folds back the paper and shows it to Lucy who is pouring coffee, dressed in a peignoir.

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

61

ARCHIE

WOMEN LOVE BABIES. It's a matter of taste. In my opinion, WOMEN LIKE BABIES would have been more subtle.

LUCY

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

Lucy shudders at the exposure. Archie steals a kiss.

62 EXT. UNIVERSITY PLACE PARK - DAY

62

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

CUT TO:

INSERT: BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO OF THE TWO WOMEN

Peering down at the baby.

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

INSERT: BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO OF WOMAN

Smiling at the baby from the side of the carriage.

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

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

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

DISSOLVE THROUGH TO:

63 INT. SALLY'S LOFT - DAY 63

SALLY AND ARCHIE hang up photos to dry.

WIPE TO:

64 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY 64

A STACK OF PHOTOS

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

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

And it works by remote control?

SALLY

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

WOLFE

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

ARCHIE

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

WIPE TO:

64A ANGLE ON JULIAN HAFT - DAY 64A

who frowns and opens a packet of pictures.

WIPE TO:

64B ANGLE ON BINGHAM - DAY 64B

looks at the stack of picture. Then he smiles his electric smile, and begins to flip through them.

WIPE TO:

64C ANGLE ON WILLIS KRUG - DAY 64C

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

WIPE TO:

64D ANGLE ON ARCHIE - DAY 64D

hanging up the phone. He turns to Wolfe.

ARCHIE

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

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

65 EXT. UNIVERSITY PLACE PARK - DAY 65

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

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

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

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

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

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

66 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY 66

Archie is on the phone.

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

66

ARCHIE

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

He hangs up. Then he jumps up.

67 INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - DAY

67

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

FRITZ

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

WOLFE

Parsley.
(Fritz shakes his head)
Sorrel.

They look at each other - Eureka!

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

Satisfactory.

68 INT. SALLY'S LOFT - DAY

68

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

ARCHIE (V.O.)

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

69 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

69

Wolfe and Saul sit in the couch area. Wolfe has beer and Saul has a bottle of Montrachet. They've been discussing

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED:

69

books and are surrounded by them. Archie waits impatiently as Saul deals the pictures onto the desk deftly, then stops.

SAUL

There. That's her.

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

ARCHIE

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

*
*
*

He leaves. Wolfe and Saul look at each other.

SAUL

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

WOLFE

Perhaps it is a variable standard. Where were we?

SAUL

Heart of Darkness, the descent into chaos.

70 OMITTED

70

71 INT. VALDON MANSION - DAY

71

Close on a picture of Carol Mardus.

*

ARCHIE (V.O.)

After the strain of appearing in the press, I thought it would cheer the client up to know the Mother Hunt might be over.

*
*
*
*
*

.

*

71 CONTINUED:

71

LUCY

Carol Mardus. I should have known.

*
*

ARCHIE

I have never seen you look beat until now.

*

LUCY

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

*
*
*
*

ARCHIE

But it ended.

*

LUCY

Yes, when she got Manny Upton to take Dick's stories. Manny made her fiction editor and then she was with Manny.

*
*
*
*

71 CONTINUED: (2)

71

LUCY (CONT'D)

She left him to marry Willis
Krug. That didn't last either.

*
*
*

ARCHIE

She wasn't on your list.

*

LUCY

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

*
*
*
*
*

ARCHIE

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

*
*

LUCY

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

*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

	MOTHER HUNT	9-2-04	GOLDENROD	72	62
71	CONTINUED: (3)				71
	He comforts her.				*
72	ANGLE ON JULIAN HAFT - DAY				72
	Opening a packet. He starts looking, frowning.				
				WIPE TO:	
73	ANGLE ON BINGHAM - DAY				73
	shakes his head as he looks at pictures.				
				WIPE TO:	
74	ANGLE ON WILLIS KRUG - DAY				74
	Packages up the pictures, frowning. He reaches for the phone.				
				WIPE TO:	
74A	INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY				74A
	Archie hangs up the phone and turns to Wolfe. Saul is there, reporting.				

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

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

ARCHIE
I think she just got her hooks
in deep.

WOLFE
Continue your report, Saul.

(CONTINUED)

74A CONTINUED:

74A

SAUL

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

WOLFE

Satisfactory.

ARCHIE

So the mother hunt is over.

WOLFE

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

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

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

ARCHIE

Around fourteen grand.

WOLFE

Pfui. You will see Carol Mardus.

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

Was this not as you preferred it?

The PHONE RINGS. Archie picks up.

ARCHIE

Nero Wolfe's office...

(CONTINUED)

74A CONTINUED: (2)

74A

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

ARCHIE
Right.

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

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

WIPE TO:

{A&E: END ACT SIX}

75 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

75

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

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

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

CAROL
Baby? What baby?

WOLFE
Archie?

Archie gets the pic and hands it to her.

CAROLE
What is this? Where...

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

She tears the print into little pieces.

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED:

75

CAROL

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

WOLFE

Do you know Mr. Leo Bingham?

CAROL

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

WOLFE

Mr. Julian Haft?

CAROL

We dine together occasionally.

WOLFE

Are you intimate?

CAROL

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

WOLFE

Mr. Willis Krug.

CAROL

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

WOLFE

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

CAROL

Yeah? What touching loyalty.

WOLFE

Is one of them the father of your baby?

CAROL

No.

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED: (2)

75

WOLFE

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

CAROL

No.

WOLFE

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

CAROL

No.

WOLFE

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

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

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Grrrr.

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

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

ARCHIE

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

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED: (3)

75

WOLFE

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

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

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

ARCHIE

Don't ask me. I might answer.

76 INT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - NIGHT

76

Archie and Lucy lie side by side and watch a fire.

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

What else did Carol say?

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

Well, what was she wearing?

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

I just want to know. I just...

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

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

76

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

77 INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN -- DAY

77

Fritz is placidly making breakfast and Archie comes in.

ARCHIE
No word from upstairs?

FRITZ
No, Archie.

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

FRITZ
Courage, mon vieux.

The PHONE RINGS. Archie grabs it.

ARCHIE
Nero Wolfe's kitchen.

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

ARCHIE
The radio? No. I was brooding.

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

78 INT. BROWNSTONE - WOLFE'S BEDROOM - DAY

78

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

WOLFE
Yes.

Archie sighs. Wolfe glares.

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

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

78

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

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

WOLFE

No.

ARCHIE

Yes.

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

WOLFE

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

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

ARCHIE

Where are you bound for?

WOLFE

The plant rooms, of course.

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

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

Pfui.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Wolfe went to his plants. I phoned Lon Cohen for details.

79 EXT. STREET - DAY

79

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Carol Mardus was murdered less than a block from her exhusband's apartment.

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED:

79

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

CAROL MARDUS

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

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

Her employer came to identify her.

79A OMITTED

79A

80 EXT. BROWNSTONE - STOOP (STUDIO) - DAY

80

Archie leaves.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

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

81 EXT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - FRONT - DAY

81

Lucy bolts out of house. Archie comes after her.

LUCY

No. No!

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

I don't want to turn loose.

ARCHIE

You don't?

LUCY

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

ARCHIE

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

81

LUCY

Then I want Nero Wolfe to get him.

ARCHIE

The cops will get him sooner or later.

LUCY

I want Nero Wolfe to get him.

ARCHIE

All right. He will. I'll go back to help him.

(he turns to go. Then he stops.)

I just had an idea. I have one a year. I might possibly be walking past the house and feel like dropping in. May I have a key?

Lucy reaches in her pocket and produces a key.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Nine hundred and ninety-nine women out of a thousand would have asked me "Why?".

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

82 OMITTED
AND
83

82
AND
83

84 OMITTED
AND
85

84
AND
85

86 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY

86

Archie is camped by the elevator waiting for Wolfe to come down from the plant rooms. The elevator opens. Wolfe looks at him: What?

ARCHIE

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

(CONTINUED)

86 CONTINUED:

86

WOLFE

Archie.

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

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

The DOORBELL RINGS. They look down the hall.

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

87 INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - DAY

87

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

WOLFE

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

The DOORBELL RINGS. Fritz is frozen on the spot.

FRITZ

But the shad roe...

WOLFE

Go.

FRITZ

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

Wolfe growls and goes out. Archie follows.

88 EXT. STREET - DAY

88

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

ARCHIE (V.O.)

He didn't know where he was going, but he did it with style.

WOLFE

Are we followed?

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

Must it be a hotel?

ARCHIE

(pulling out key)

No. I had an idea we might need a dugout, so I asked Mrs. Valdron for a key to her house. It's two miles that way.

WOLFE

We will stop on the way for accouterments.

They walk on.

WIPE TO:

89 OMITTED

89

90 OMITTED

90

91 INT. VALDON MANSION - DAY

91

Archie lets himself in. He signals to Wolfe and he comes in carrying one small bag. Archie looks at him in disgust and goes out again. He comes back, carrying four bags.

ARCHIE.

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

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED:

91

WOLFE

Is this the Salor rug?

ARCHIE

I doubt if you'll find any clues there.

Wolfe gets down with a rug in the hall.

WOLFE

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

*
*
*

ARCHIE (V.O.)

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

92 INT. VALDON MANSION - KITCHEN - DAY

92

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

ARCHIE

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

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

WOLFE

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

ARCHIE

Right. What for?

(CONTINUED)

92 CONTINUED:

92

WOLFE

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

ARCHIE

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

WOLFE

You were too busy fuming.

Wolfe returns to his coldcuts.

{A&E: END ACT SEVEN}

WIPE TO:

93 OMITTED

93

94 INT. VALDON MANSION - PARLOR - NIGHT

94

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

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

You are conceited, but I like you anyway.

WOLFE

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

LUCY

I hope, Sir, you have been comfortable.

WOLFE

I have never been more uncomfortable in my life.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED:

94

WOLFE (CONT'D)

No reflection on your hospitality is intended; but Mr. Goodwin and I are in a pickle.

LUCY

Again?

WOLFE

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

Lucy laughs at the incongruity. Wolfe scowls.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Confound it, are eggs comical? Do you know how to scramble eggs, Mrs. Valdon?

LUCY

Yes, of course.

WOLFE

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

LUCY

Forty minutes?

WOLFE

Yes. I knew you didn't know.

Archie stretches and yawns. They exchange a look.

LUCY

(to Wolfe)

Mr. Wolfe. You must be exhausted.

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED: (2)

94

WOLFE

No, no. A good book. A good chair. Satisfactory, madam.

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

95 INT. VALDON MANSION -- MORNING

95

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

96 INT. VALDON MANSION - KITCHEN - DAY

96

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

WIPE TO:

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

ARCHIE

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

LUCY

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

If Wolfe could beam, he would.

WOLFE

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

The DOORBELL RINGS. Archie gets up and leaves.

ARCHIE

Saul.

Wolfe and Lucy share a moment.

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED:

96

WOLFE

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

LUCY

Yes. My uncle published it under his name.

WOLFE

R.P. Armstead didn't write it?

LUCY

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

Saul and Archie enter.

WOLFE

Well, Saul?

SAUL

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

Wolfe sighs mightily.

WOLFE

Archie. Give him Miss Tenzer's address.

WIPE TO:

97 EXT. VALDON MANSION - DAY

97

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

LUCY

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

UPTON

Others? What is all this, Lucy. Who is this man?

(CONTINUED)

97 CONTINUED:

97

LUCY

He works with Nero Wolfe.

UPTON

You're still involved with that fat fool?

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

SAUL

This way, sir.

CUT TO:

98 INT. VALDON MANSION - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY/BEDROOM

98

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

ARCHIE (V.O.)

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

Lucy appears from downstairs.

LUCY

They're all here.

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

LUCY (CONT'D)

I keep thinking. This time tomorrow, I will no longer be a client. No more business relations.

ARCHIE

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

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED:

98

LUCY

Are you flirting with me, Archie.

ARCHIE

(he smiles and gestures)

Mrs. Valdón.

LUCY

Mr. Goodwin.

They go down.

99 INT. VALDON MANSION - LIVING ROOM - DAY

99

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

CRAMER

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

WOLFE

Mine.

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

UPTON

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

WOLFE

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

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

CRAMER

Yeah. Yeah.

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

WOLFE

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

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED:

99

UPTON

Make it Z. X has been
overworked.

WOLFE

(ignoring him)

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

UPTON

Such purple prose.

WOLFE

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

BINGHAM

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

WOLFE

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

UPTON

OH BLAH. Blah, blah, blah,
blah.

CRAMER

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

WOLFE

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

Archie goes to the door and signals. Saul Panzer enters
with Anne Tenzer.

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED: (2)

99

WOLFE (CONT'D)

This is Anne Tenzer, the niece of Ellen Tenzer. She works for an Employment Service and fills temporary vacancies at the senior executive level.

(to Anne)

Look around, Miss Tenzer. Is there anyone in this room you have ever worked for?

ANNE

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

Overlapping cues.

HAFT

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

ANNE

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

HAFT

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

WOLFE

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

ANNE

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

HAFT

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

Mr. Haft can't keep his hands still.

WOLFE

Do you contradict her? Do you say she lies?

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED: (3)

99

HAFT

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

WOLFE

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

HAFT

I call you a liar.

WOLFE

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

UPTON

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

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

HAFT

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

WOLFE

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

CRAMER

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

BINGHAM

Good god, this is brutal.

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED: (4)

99

CRAMER

All of you - I'm sending for cars and I'm taking you all to the District Attorney's office.

(to Wolfe)

Especially you. You never leave your house, huh? Now that you've left it you'll go back when I say so.

Wolfe ignores him and goes to Lucy.

WOLFE

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

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

CRAMER

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

He herds Wolfe to the door. Archie grabs Haft.

ARCHIE

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

100 EXT. VALDON MANSION - DAY

100

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

ARCHIE (V.O.)

It took eight hours to sort things out. But as soon as he made the case, Wolfe returned to the Brownstone, got into bed and didn't emerge for four days.

101 INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - DAY

101

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

ARCHIE (V.O.)

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

FRITZ

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

ARCHIE

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

FRITZ

Bien. I ask.

ARCHIE

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

FRITZ

Oui.

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

FRITZ (CONT'D)

He is worried, too, Archie. He thinks there is a danger that you may marry that woman.

ARCHIE

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

Archie eats. Fritz wisely decides to keep his counsel.

THE END