

TOO MANY CLIENTS

by Sharon Elizabeth Doyle

based on the novel
TOO MANY CLIENTS

By
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SECOND DRAFT

December 11, 2001

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12301 Wilshire Blvd Suite 110
Los Angeles, CA 90025

TOO MANY CLIENTS

FADE IN:

1 INT. MARIA'S ROOM - POV HALLWAY THROUGH DOOR - NIGHT 1 *

DARK. The SOUND OF SHUFFLING. A door opens a crack, revealing a slice of a dimly lit hallway. A man's dead body is dragged past the doorway. The door pulls shut.

2 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY 2

ARCHIE GOODWIN opens the door to reveal THOMAS YEAGER (HOUGH), dressed in a rumpled cheap suit which doesn't fit.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

In his \$39.00 suit and \$3.00 shirt, Thomas Yeager didn't have the air of a man who might make a sizable contribution to Nero Wolfe's bank balance. I admitted him anyway.

WIPE TO:

3 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE -DAY 3

Archie guides Thomas Yeager to a yellow chair, opposite Archie's desk.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

We only had \$14,194 dollars in the checking account and our income tax deposit was due in five weeks.

YEAGER

I'll have to tell you who I am, of course.

ARCHIE

Not unless it's material.

YEAGER

Else there was no use coming, Mr. Goodwin. This is, of course, in strictest confidence.

ARCHIE

Of course. Unless you're loaded with something too heavy for me. Like murder or treason.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

YEAGER

"Other sins may speak; murder shrieks out." Fear not, I am loaded with neither.

ARCHIE

Then fire away.

YEAGER

My name is Thomas Yeager; I am the vice president of Continental Plastics and I think that I am being followed. If I am, I want to know who is following me.

ARCHIE

That's kindergarten stuff. Any reputable agency...

YEAGER

What agency would have a man as good as you?

ARCHIE

Even if I'm half as good as I think I am, it'd be a pity to waste me on spotting a tail at a hundred dollars an hour.

YEAGER

Ah. But this is special. I think I am being followed only at certain times. Specifically I expect to be followed when I leave my home at 34 East 68th Street at 7:00 this evening to go across the park to 156 West Eighty Second Street. I don't want it known that I have any connection with that address. If I am not followed that would end it, until the next time I go, of course.

ARCHIE

That is rather special. Which is more important to you, not to be followed or to identify the tail?

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: (2)

3

YEAGER

They're both important.

ARCHIE

I mentioned \$100 an hour, but the shoe would have to fit the foot and Mr. Wolfe would do the fitting and you the footing.

YEAGER

Oh, there will be no difficulty about that. I'll expect you a little before seven?

ARCHIE

No. At 7:00 on the dot you will leave your house and walk to Second Avenue. About thirty paces is a lunch room...

YEAGER

How do you know that?

ARCHIE

There aren't many blocks of Manhattan I don't know. In front of the lunch room will be a blue and yellow taxi. You will say to the driver, "You need a shave." He will reply, "My face is tender." Give him the address and sit back and relax.

YEAGER

Wonderful. I knew you would be the man for it.

(he holds out his hand)

"Measure your mind's height by the shadow it casts."

They shake and Archie sees him out.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

That block of 68th Street is not a slum so I felt justified in taking the job without consulting Wolfe, as it might lead to other things. However, on my way uptown I decided to verify the facts with Lon Cohen.

4 INT. LON COHEN'S OFFICE - DAY 4

Archie comes in knocking. Lon is on one of his three phones.

LON

No. No. No. No.
(hanging up)

Damn yes man.

(to Archie)

I'm too busy for anything but a front page lead or a poker game.

ARCHIE

So am I, so I'll be quick.

What can you give me on Thomas G. Yeager, vice-president of Continental Plastics?

LON

I know the name. I can send down to the morgue for the file.

ARCHIE

Anything off the top of your head?

LON

Continental Plastics is one of the big ones. Yeager's been vice president going on five years. Now go away. I have things to do.

5 EXT. 82ND STREET - NIGHT 5

TWO KIDS are playing stickball. One of them swings wild, the ball bounces across the street and into a barricaded construction site. The pitcher gripes to the hitter who goes after it.

THE BALL bounces down into the hole and hits A LUMP, wrapped in a tarp. A bluish hand sticks out of the tarp.

6 EXT. EAST SIXTY NINTH STREET -- NIGHT 6

Archie stands near the corner of 69th and 2nd Ave. He looks at his wrist watch. He leaves his CAB and crosses the street to another CAB parked at the corner of Second and 68th in front of a luncheonette. The CABBIE rolls down his window.

ARCHIE

7:30. Where is he?

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

CABBIE

All I know is where he isn't.

ARCHIE

I'll ring him. If he comes while I'm inside, have trouble starting your engine until I come out.

Archie in a PHONE BOOTH outside the luncheonette. The PHONE IS RINGING on the other end.

STEBBINS (O.S.)

Mrs. Yeager's residence.

Archie recognizes the voice and disguises his voice.

ARCHIE

May I speak with Mr. Yeager?

STEBBINS (O.S.)

Who is this, please?

Archie hangs up the phone. He signals Cabbie to wait.

ARCHIE

Runs up the street and rounds the corner of Second and 68th Street. He stops and looks.

ARCHIE POV: In front of 34 Sixty Eighth Street is a POLICE CRUISER, lights flashing. SPOT CRAMER going up the stairs.

Archie turns and heads back to the phone. He puts a coin in a dials.

INTERCUT WITH LON COHEN'S OFFICE

LON

Archie?

ARCHIE

Right. Have you...

LON

How the hell did you know Thomas G. Yeager was going to be murdered when you were here three hours ago.

ARCHIE

I didn't. I don't. I merely...

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED: (2)

6

LON

Balls. But I appreciate the page one box: Nero Wolfe Scoops Cops Again. How does this sound? "Nero Wolfe, private eye extraordinaire, was plunging into the Yeager murder more than two hours before the body was discovered. At 5:55 his lackey, Archie Goodwin, phoned the Gazette office to..."

ARCHIE

Hey! The whole world knows I'm not a lackey, I'm a flunky.

LON

Give.

ARCHIE

Pretend I didn't know Yeager had been murdered until you told me. When was the body found?

LON

Ten minutes after seven.

7 EXT. EIGHTY SECOND/CONSTRUCTION - NIGHT

7 *

The hitter scrambles down into the pit. He looks around and sees the ball - and then the hand.

LON (V.O.)

The body was found by two boys playing ball. They chased a stray into the Con Edison excavation and discovered it wrapped in a tarp.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Are they sure he was murdered?

WIPE TO:

PURLEY STEBBINS kneels by the tarp and pulls it back.

LON (V.O.)

He's got a large hole in his head that he didn't make with his finger. Apparently he'd been dead since the night before.

8 EXT. EAST 69TH STREET/COHEN OFFICE - NIGHT

8

ARCHIE

Wrapped in a tarp? Someone
threw him down a hole and then
went down and wrapped him in a
tarp?

LON

I just report the news.

ARCHIE

I'd like a look at that file.

LON

If you come in here, people are
gonna ask questions.

9 INT. LUNCHEONETTE - NIGHT

9

Archie works on pie and coffee as Lon Cohen enters the
luncheonette.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

I paid the cabbies twenty dollars
for their time and another forty
to forget that they'd been there.

Lon slides into the booth, flopping down the folder. Archie
goes through the file, picks out two identical pictures.
(WE DO NOT SEE PICTURE CLEARLY) He reads the back.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Thomas Yeager speaking at the
banquet of the National Plastics
Association. Huh.

LON

Look, Archie. The file was on
my desk when the flash came.
Within an hour everybody here
is going to want to know why I
sent for it. If I tell them,
some friendly soul is bound to
inform the police.

Archie puts one picture back and palms the other while he
leafs through the rest of the file.

ARCHIE

Why did it take so long to find
the body?

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

LON

According to the lady manning the phones: "Due to equipment failure, no work was done at the W. 82nd site today." Now give.

ARCHIE

I know absolutely nothing about Thomas Yeager except what I have read in this folder.

LON

Okay, that's for the record. Now between us.

ARCHIE

Come off it. I'm offering you a deal. If you forget about my curiosity about Yeager until further notice, I'll put you on my Christmas card list.

LON

The name is spelled "C-O-H-E..."

ARCHIE

Ah, but this year it will be an abstract painting with the message: "we want to share this picture of us bathing the dog with you. Love, Archie, Mehitabel and the children.

LON

You haven't got a Mehitabel.

ARCHIE

That's why it will an abstract.

10 EXT. BROWNSTONE - STOOP (STUDIO) - NIGHT

10

Archie comes home. The chain bolt is on.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

I wanted to go investigate on 82nd street, but intelligence guided by experience told me Wolfe needed to be informed in person of what had occurred or he would refuse to play.

11 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - NIGHT 11

Fritz opens the door and looks at him.

ARCHIE

I can see it in your eyes.
Yes. It's possible we have a
client. Could I have a hunk of
bread and glass of milk?

FRITZ

Of course. I will bring it.

12 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - NIGHT 12

Archie enters. Wolfe is reading with only the reading light
on. Archie flips on a light. Wolfe looks up.

WOLFE

Have you eaten?

ARCHIE

Pie. Fritz is bringing me a
hunk of bread and milk.

WOLFE

Bringing?

ARCHIE

I have something on my chest.

Wolfe heaves a sigh and closes on a finger to hold his place.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

The June tax payments will be
due in thirty seven days.

WOLFE

Must you harp on the obvious?

ARCHIE

I refer to it now because I
would like permission to dig up
a client instead of sitting on
my fanny waiting for one.

WOLFE

And your modus? A sandwich
board?

(CONTINUED)

ARCHIE

No, I have a target. Well, a possible target. Just barely a target. A man named Thomas Yeager hired me this afternoon to follow him to a specific address and spot a tail.

WOLFE

What about him?

ARCHIE

He's dead. His body was found very near that address.

Wolfe growls and re-opens his book.

WOLFE

Then it's over.

ARCHIE

No, because our client is not dead.

(he pulls out the photograph)
I suppose it's more accurate to say we never had a client because the man who came to hire me today was not Thomas Yeager. This is a picture of Mr. Yeager giving a speech.

Wolfe looks at the picture which Archie is holding out to him and looks at his book. He reaches for the gold bookmark. He closes his book on it. He takes the picture. Fritz enters with Archie's dinner and notes that Wolfe is looking at the picture.

FRITZ

How is the weather?

ARCHIE

Warming. Warming.

WOLFE

Beyond all doubt?

ARCHIE

Yes sir.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: (2)

12

WOLFE

Yeager's body was found near
the address the imposter named?
How long had he been dead?

ARCHIE

The ME's initial report said he
died last night between 9 pm
and 2 am.

WOLFE

If I approve of your proposal
to explore getting a client and
earning a fee, how do you intend
to proceed?

ARCHIE

That block in the eighties is
no place for a big shot in a
big corporation. The Puerto
Ricans and Cubans average six
to a room. I want to find out
what business Yeager had there,
just as soon as I empty this
tray.

WOLFE

Pfui. How often have I told
you that impetuosity is a virtue
only when delay is dangerous?

ARCHIE

About six thousand.

WOLFE

Instead of dashing to 82nd
street, you will spend the
evening at the typewriter.
Record your conversation with
the imposter verbatim. When
was the body found?

ARCHIE

About the same time as I was
setting up my tailing operation.

WOLFE

It was there all day.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: (3)

12

ARCHIE

It was wrapped in a tarp at the bottom of a pit. ConEd had an equipment failure and never sent any workmen to the site.

WOLFE

So the killer could have disposed of the body late Sunday evening. Do we assume that Yeager had a connection with someone at the 82nd Street address?

ARCHIE

To assume that the body was dumped there co-incidentally, you would have to swallow a coincidence a whale couldn't get down.

WOLFE

If Yeager was killed elsewhere and the body brought to that spot deliberately to impress someone in at that address, it wouldn't have been hidden. It would have been displayed on the sidewalk in front.

ARCHIE

Then can we say Yeager was shot inside 156 and the body hidden in the closest spot? Probably very late.

WOLFE

Indeed.

ARCHIE

It doesn't account for wrapping it up in the tarp, no theory can.

13 EXT. EIGHTY SECOND/CONSTRUCTION SITE/PEREZ APT. BLDG - DAY 13*

Archie passes a crowd clustered around the Con Ed construction. He makes his way to 156. It's a slum. There is a cardboard sign taped to the stoop - SUPERINTENDENT - and an ARROW pointing to a door down three stairs. Archie reaches the door. SPOT DOORKNOB AND LOCK. It's shiny and very expensive for the location.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

ARCHIE (V.O.)

There's no polite way to say it. 156 82nd Street was a slum. But the Superintendent's door had something peculiar for a slum - a Rabson door lock - for which you have to be willing to shell out \$61.50.

He pushes the bell button. He's about to push it again when the door opens the MARIA PEREZ, 18, is standing there. She is a Cuban girl, breath takingly beautiful, with a regal air. Archie gapes.

MARIA

You want something?

ARCHIE

I'd like to see the superintendent. Forgive me, did I stammer when I said that?

MARIA

Are you a policeman?

ARCHIE

No, I'm a newspaperman.

MARIA

That's nice.
(calling back)
Father, a newspaperman.

While they wait, she looks at him curiously. Archie shifts.

ARCHIE

I know I'm supposed to say something, but the only thing I can think of is "Will you marry me?" But it would never work.

MARIA

Why not?

ARCHIE

The idea of you washing dishes is preposterous.

Then CESAR PEREZ appears, shorter than his daughter. She moves aside. Archie takes the opportunity to get halfway in.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED: (2)

13

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

My name's Goodwin. From the
Gazette. I want to rent a room.
100 dollars a week.

CESAR

No rooms.

He tries to close the door but Archie exerts some pressure
and slips inside.

14 INT. 82ND STREET APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

14*

ARCHIE

It has to be at the front so I
can get pictures of people coming
to look at the scene of a murder.

CESAR

I said no rooms.

ARCHIE

\$200. Shift somebody.

CESAR

No.

ARCHIE

300.

CESAR

No.

ARCHIE

500.

CESAR

You're crazy.

ARCHIE

You're crazy. Snooting five
hundred bucks. What's your
name.

CESAR

It's my name.

ARCHIE

For god's sake, I can get it
from anybody on the block.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

CESAR

My name is Cesar Perez. I am a citizen of the United States of America.

ARCHIE

So am I.
(getting out his license)
But I'm not a reporter. I'm a private detective. I'm investigating the death of Thomas Yeager.

CESAR

Get out. Get out of this house!

ARCHIE

So you killed him?

CESAR

You are a policeman.

ARCHIE

I am not. I'm Archie Goodwin and I work for Nero Wolfe. We prefer not to tell the police that we know Thomas Yeager was killed here on Sunday.

CESAR

What you say?

ARCHIE

Did you kill him.

CESAR

I've got a knife. In this house I've got a right to have it.

ARCHIE

(pulling out his gun)
And I've got this. Did you kill him?

CESAR

Falita! Falita.

MRS. PEREZ appears with Maria.

MRS. PEREZ

We're here, Cesar.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: (2)

14

Perez turns around to his wife and Maria and starts spouting in Spanish.

MRS. PEREZ (CONT'D)

Stop it! He'll think it's secrets. With an American, talk American.

(to Archie)

My husband is an honest man. He did not kill Mr. House. Mr. Yeager. We call him Mr. House because he owns the building. How did you know he was killed here?

ARCHIE

Does it matter?

MRS. PEREZ

No. I am a fool to ask. You have questions?

ARCHIE

It may take awhile. Is there a room with chairs?

MRS. PEREZ

We sit down with friends.

ARCHIE

Well, if your legs can stand it, mine can. Who did Mr. House come here to see on Sunday?

MRS. PEREZ

I don't know. We never know.

ARCHIE

Try again.

MRS. PEREZ

Have you ever been up there?

ARCHIE

I'm asking the questions.

MRS. PEREZ

He came around seven o'clock and knock on our door.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: (3)

14

MRS. PEREZ (CONT'D)

He asked my husband to bring him roast pheasant and oysters from a place and gave him money. He went upstairs. We watch the television. If someone come later, we don't hear. We weren't supposed to hear.

Archie sees that at the end of the hall is an elevator. It is private, needs a key.

ARCHIE

Have you ever been up there?

MRS. PEREZ

Of course, we clean it every day.

ARCHIE

Then you have a key.

Mrs. Perez looks at her husband. Then remembers Maria.

MRS. PEREZ

Maria, go.

MARIA

But Mother, it's not...

MRS. PEREZ

Go!

Maria retreats into the apartment, slams the door. The Perezes take Archie down the hall. There are doors on either side of the hall to the elevator. Perez gets out his key and unlocks it. The door opens to reveal a small elevator padded with red. They go in.

15 INT. LOVENEST - DAY

15

The door to the elevator opens. For the second time that day, Archie is at a loss for words. He steps out into a room that runs the length of the building. There are no windows. No doors other than the elevator. There is almost no furniture. The walls of the entire room are covered in red silky material. There's a pale yellow rug on the floor. A giant bed in the center, covered in yellow. It is a room for one purpose only. Sex.

The walls are covered in paintings of naked women. There are all kinds of styles: 19 century romantic, modern and

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

stark, Art Deco beauties, Drunken Flappers, Vargas girls. All of them are naked, all of them are looking back at Archie as he passes, their eyes knowing, their gaze sensual.

Archie stops at one who's struck his eye.

ARCHIE

Yowsa.

He turns back to look at the Lopezes - she's disgusted, he keeps his eyes doggedly on the ground.

In the center of the room on the wall is an eight foot square bed covered with a pale yellow silk coverlet. The rug is pale yellow. There are statues of naked women - lascivious Indian women, languorous Art Deco girls, ecstatic Rodin types.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Have you cleaned in here since Sunday night?

MRS. PEREZ

Yes. Yesterday morning.

ARCHIE

Why'd you kill him? Maria?

PEREZ

Me. No.

ARCHIE

Look. Look you got rid of the fingerprints here but there are a lot of fingerprints on that tarp the body was wrapped in. If just one matches yours, good-bye.

PEREZ

Felita?

MRS. PEREZ

You're a private detective. So we pay you. \$100.

ARCHIE

Not if you killed Yeager.

MRS. PEREZ

I told him he must put on gloves. But he didn't.

16 INT. LOVENEST - NIGHT 16

The elevator door opens and Carlos comes in bearing pheasant and oysters. He drops them when he sees the body of THOMAS YEAGER on the floor, blood pooling from the hole in his head.

MRS. PEREZ (V.O.)

My husband come running to me
but what could we do? If we
call a policeman, we know what
would happen. And I could not
sleep with that up there.

17 EXT. 82ND STREET/CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT 17*

Carlos drags the body through the street. He is much shorter than Yeager and has trouble with him. He sees the ConEd excavation.

18 INT. LOVENEST - DAY 18*

THE ELEVATOR makes a noise and goes down.

MRS. PEREZ

Somebody is coming up.

ARCHIE

Quick, then. Don't think and
don't lie.

(to Cesar)

When you put that body in the
hole, why did you climb in and
pull the tarp over him?

PEREZ

(surprised)

He was dead. A man dead, you
cover him.

ARCHIE

Too bad you didn't wear gloves.
Now stand back.

THE ELEVATOR RETURNS. Archie stands to one side of the door, draws his weapon and waits. The DOORS OPEN and MEG DUNCAN, star of Broadway but looking a little wan today, steps out.

MEG

Thank God, it's you.

MRS. PEREZ

We don't know you.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

ARCHIE

I do, Mrs. Perez. Meg Duncan,
lovely star of The Back Door to
Heaven.

Meg Duncan wheels around and charges Archie like a mad bull -
her claws out and her mouth open to bite.

Archie sizes up the situation and rams into her, past the
claws, turns her and then squeezes sharp and hard. In a
second, all the air is out of her, and she's gasping.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

I saw your show last week from
the eighth row. You were
wonderful.

She can't answer. He lets go. She concentrates on getting
oxygen.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

I'm not a cop. I work for Nero
Wolfe.

MEG

You're...Nero Wolfe's Archie
Goodwin?

ARCHIE

I'm my Archie Goodwin. I'm
Nero Wolfe's confidential
assistant.

MEG

I came here to get something
that belongs to me.
(on his look)
It's something with my initials
on it, okay? A cigarette case.

ARCHIE

How did it get here?

MEG

(she turns on the smile)
Does it matter, Mr. Goodwin?

ARCHIE

When did you leave it here.

MEG

I didn't say I had.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (2)

18

ARCHIE

Sunday evening?

MEG

I wasn't here then.

ARCHIE

Why'd you kill Yeager?

She goes to slap him - really hard - but he ducks and grabs her wrist and twists. He lets go.

MEG

You are a man, aren't you?

ARCHIE

I can be. Right now, I'm just a working detective. Did you kill Yeager?

MEG

Of course not. I know I can't bribe you, Mr. Goodwin, but ...look, just get my cigarette case and give it to me whenever you want and I 'll pay whatever you say. A thousand dollars?

ARCHIE

My stock is going up. Mrs. Perez just dangled a hundred in my face and now you come on with a grand. However, too many clients can worse than too few.

(putting away his gun)

If I find your cigarette case, you can pick it up at Nero Wolfe's office at 2:30. You have no matinee today.

MEG

But why can't you...

ARCHIE

And give me your keys.

MEG

Give them...Why can't...

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (3)

18

ARCHIE

Damn it, I'm giving you a break.
The keys.

She looks in her bag and produces a leather key fold. He takes it, opens it and immediately starts taking two keys off the chain.

MEG

How do you know which ones they
are.

He goes over to the elevator, pushes the button to open the door.

ARCHIE

Rabson keys for Rabson locks.
They don't look like any others.
I'll see you later. Send the
elevator back up for them.

Meg sighs and makes an exit. Archie waves. He looks at the Perezes.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

When she saw you, she said,
"Thank God, it's you."

MRS. PEREZ

She must have seen me some time
when she come in. I don't know
her. I was paid not to know.

ARCHIE

And you're very good at it. Two
things or maybe three. One:
the only reason I believe you
is the expression on your
husband's face when he told me
about the tarp. Two: I'm sending
a man to stay here. You will
supply him with food, which I
will pay for. And three: you
will both be in Nero Wolfe's
office tomorrow at six o'clock.
Now I'm gonna look around and I
want you to leave.

*

MRS. PEREZ

You take things?

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (4)

18

ARCHIE

If I take anything you think I shouldn't, you can call a cop.

PEREZ

We couldn't.

MRS. PEREZ

He makes a joke. This is a bad day, and he makes a joke.

The elevator arrives and they get in. Archie locates the phone which is red and concealed in a stand next to the elevator.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

I couldn't find Saul so I sent for Fred and told him to pack a bag for a week. Then I got to work investigating.

MONTAGE: ARCHIE explores the BOWER OF CARNALITY.

He admires the PAINTINGS. The PAINTINGS admire him, they seem to watch as he tests the bed.

FLASHCUT: Yeager and Meg Duncan making love

ARCHIE prowls the long red room again, surrounded by silk and skin, being watched by the naked ladies. He finds another brass plate.

ARCHIE discovers the BATHROOM. A sybaritic wonder. Bathtub big enough for two. A shelf of fancy glass perfume bottles.

FLASHCUT: Yeager is in the tub and a WOMAN joins him.

Back in the Bed Room, Archie looks for anything like a drawer, but there are none. Then he sees a tassled cord. He pulls on the cord. A CURTAIN OF RED SILK draws back to reveal a built in refrigerator and bar. *

ARCHIE opens the door of the refrigerator: There is a case of FRENCH CHAMPAGNE and a large tin of caviar and oysters. *

FLASHCUT: Yeager feeds a woman caviar. *

Archie finds another tassled cord. He pulls on it and reveals a built in cabinet of reddish wood. Inside are shelves of a dozen pairs of *

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (5)

18

FEMALE MULES and BED SLIPPERS, satin and caribou lined up in a row of graduating sizes.

He opens another drawer: NIGHTIES

Archie tosses out NIGHTIES of every different shade and shape and style and size and they float down all over the bed.

FLASHCUTS OF WOMEN in the various nighties - red, black and yellow....

In the last drawer are odds and ends - he pulls out a gold cigarette case with the initials MD and an emerald in the corner. The NOISE OF THE ELEVATOR arriving makes him turn.

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

It was probably, Fred, but you never know.

He draws his gun and takes his place at the door. The door opens and FRED DURKIN steps out.

FRED

Jeee-ho-se-phet!

*

ARCHIE

Your new home. I do hope you'll be happy here.

FRED

I've always wondered why you didn't marry. How long have you had it.

ARCHIE

Oh, ten years, I guess. I have others here and there around town. I'm turning this one over to you.

FRED

I'm a married man.

ARCHIE

Yeah. Too bad. I'd like to stay and explain the pictures to you, but I have to go.

FRED

That guy Yeager's body was found right out front.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (6)

18

ARCHIE

Yeah, I read it in the paper.

FRED

Maybe I ought to know a little more?

ARCHIE

The less you know the better, but take my word for it: if a visitor steps out of that elevator - you are in a position to refuse to let her get back in.

FRED

Alone with a woman and restraining her by force isn't so good. What if a cop comes?

ARCHIE

He won't, but just tell him you've forgotten your name and he'll have to ring me at Nero Wolfe's office to find out.

FRED

Then I'll be in the coop.

ARCHIE

We'll have you out by Christmas easy.

WIPE TO:

19 INT. MARIA'S ROOM - POV HALLWAY THROUGH DOOR -- DAY 19*

Someone watches Archie coming down the hallway, headed for the door.

20 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY 20

WOLFE

I won't see them.

ARCHIE

Naturally, you don't like it. If it was just a nice place he'd fixed up for his mistress, it wouldn't be so bad.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

But there may be twenty women with keys to that door. I realize that you wouldn't want to be involved...

WOLFE

Nonsense.

ARCHIE

Nonsense?

WOLFE

This is not a domestic squabble. The man's a satyr.

ARCHIE

Well, that makes a difference.

WOLFE

The modern satyr is part pig, part jackass. He doesn't lean gracefully against an olive tree with a panpipe in his hands, but gratifies his lust in the dark corners of other men's beds. The preposterous bower of carnality you have described is a sorry makeshift, but at least Mr. Yeager tried.

ARCHIE

I'll say. It's even your favorite colors.

WOLFE

The flute strain was in him, as it once was in me. No doubt he deserved to die, but I would welcome a sufficient inducement to expose his killer.

ARCHIE

You would?

WOLFE

Certainly. But your objective was to find an acceptable client. I concede your craft, your finesse, I even felicitate you, but where are we to send a bill?

(CONTINUED)

ARCHIE

We know about the preposterous bower.

WOLFE

And to whom can we disclose it? His family and his business associates surely would want it concealed, and are we blackmailers?

ARCHIE

What about the man who came here posing as Yeager?

WOLFE

Yes. Manifestly he is a man with an educated fondness for words. He said, "Else there would be no use in coming." Extraordinary. Else, instead of or. Remarkable.

ARCHIE

If you say so.

WOLFE

I do. But then, merely talking along, he said: "Other sins only speak, murder shrieks out. John Webster, The Duchess of Malfi. And "Measure your mind's height by the shade it casts." Robert Browning. Was he trying to impress you?

ARCHIE

No.

WOLFE

Just so. He had them on the tip of his tongue. He is a pedagogue. He teaches literature. But if he knew Yeager was dead, perhaps because he killed him, why did he come here with that taradiddle?

ARCHIE

If he killed him and came here, then he's cracked.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED: (3)

20

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

And I saw him, and he wasn't.
If he didn't kill him, but knew
he was dead, why come at all?

WOLFE

Indeed. He did not know.

ARCHIE

So why get me out with two
taxies? He had to know when he
failed to show, I'd follow up
with Yeager.

WOLFE

Perhaps he wanted Yeager to
know that someone knew of his
connection with that house. I
would like to speak with him.

ARCHIE

So would I. That's why I got
Fred there.

WOLFE

Pfui. You got Fred there so
because I cannot now merely say
that the incident is closed.
Yes, Fritz?

FRITZ

Lunch is ready, sir. The parsley
had wilted and I used chives.

WOLFE

Pepper?

FRITZ

Not with chives.

WOLFE

I agree, but we'll see.
(to Archie)
I still will not see them.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

I let it pass...

21 INT. BROWNSTONE - DINING ROOM - DAY

21

Wolfe and Archie devour dumplings.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

21

ARCHIE (V.O.)

I knew that soon we would be deep into Fritz's marrow dumplings, one of the few dishes with which I keep neck and neck with Wolfe. Those marrow dumplings induce a state of mind in which anybody would see anybody. Even clients.

22 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY

22

Meg Duncan looks every inch a star as Archie lets her in. She gives Archie a star smile as she sashays past.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

When she arrived, Meg Duncan's face was being handled by a professional. The smile she gave me would melt a glacier. And her voice was the voice of an angel who might take a week off if you asked nice.

23 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

23

Meg settles into the red leather chair.

MEG

Did you find it?

WOLFE

He did. And if you answer two or three questions to my satisfaction, you may have your cigarette case back for fifty thousand dollars.

MEG

Fifty thou...Oh. Of course, you don't mean that. You can't.

WOLFE

I suppose you are familiar with the statutes regarding the suppression of evidence of a crime?

MEG

My cigarette case isn't evidence of a crime.

(CONTINUED)

WOLFE

I haven't said it is.

MEG

And I wasn't in that room on Sunday night.

WOLFE

I am trying to explain the delicacy of our position. We cannot accept your offer of payment for the return of the cigarette case if it would help to convict a murderer. That's too great a risk for \$1000. You may have it for fifty thousand with a certified check.

MEG

You might as well say a million.

WOLFE

A factor would be your answers to my questions.

MEG

You haven't asked me any questions.

WOLFE

I do now. When were you last in that room?

MEG

I haven't said I was ever there.

WOLFE

That's egregious. You had keys.

MEG

Oh my God. Mr. Wolfe, this could ruin my career. Why must you drag me into it?

WOLFE

I didn't drag you there this morning, madam. When you did visit it, were others there?

MEG

No.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED: (2)

23

WOLFE

You knew there were others?

MEG

I knew there were others.

24 INT. LOVENEST - NIGHT

24

Yeager and Meg make love and over his shoulder she sees all the eyes of all the naked women in the paintings.

WOLFE (V.O.)

Of course. He wanted you to know. He derived pleasure from not only his present companion but also from her awareness that she had...uh...colleagues. Surely he wasn't silent about them.

25 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

25

WOLFE

Surely he spoke of them. In comparison, in praise or derogation?

Meg Duncan doesn't answer.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

If you wish this episode to pass into history as quickly as possible, tell me something about the others.

MEG

Are you going to keep my cigarette case?

WOLFE

For the present, yes.

MEG

Then you have me at your mercy.

She gets up to leave and makes quite an exit. But when she turns back at the door, Wolfe has returned to his book. She looks at Archie, who smiles and shoos her out.

MEG (CONT'D)

I wish I had clawed your eyes out.

26 INT. MARIA'S ROOM - POV HALLWAY THROUGH DOOR - DAY 26*

The door to hall opens a crack. Someone watches through the crack as a woman, JULIA MCGEE, comes past.

27 INT. LOVENEST - BATHROOM - DAY 27*

Fred is bored. He is examining the bathtub. He turns on the water. It's noisy. He turns it off. Then he decides - why not - he pulls off his tie. But just as he reaches to turn on the water again, the SOUND of the elevator comes. He is immediately alert.

He goes to the elevator and waits by the door. The door opens and he steps forward. A whirl of arms and legs meet him.

WIPE TO:

28 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - NIGHT 28

The Perezes and Wolfe argue in Spanish. Archie tries to take notes, but it's no good. He puts his notebook down. Wolfe looks at him, and the chatter pauses.

ARCHIE

You can fill me in later. I
won't insist on verbatim.

The conversation continues.

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

I learned later that the upshot was that they had heard no shots, which meant nothing because the whole place was soundproofed and they were sure none of the tenants knew about the room because Yeager let them handle the rentals. But then things got a little warm.

Mrs. Perez jumps up and slaps the desk with her hand. The Perezes storm out.

WOLFE

It's bootless. Time, effort
and money wasted. That woman
killed him.

(CONTINUED)

ARCHIE

Yeah. After all the bastard was paying them \$300 a month to keep his house.

WOLFE

She discovered Yeager had debauched her daughter and killed him. Call Fred in.

ARCHIE

She admitted it?

WOLFE

Certainly not. She resented the implication with fury. Call Fred.

ARCHIE

I don't believe it. Maria may be part witch, but she hasn't been debauched. If and when she orgies with a satyr, he'll be leaning gracefully against a tree with a flute in his hand.

WOLFE

Orgy is not a verb.

ARCHIE

It is now.

The phone rings. He picks it up.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Nero Wolfe's res..

FRED

Archie! I've got one.

ARCHIE

I'll be right there.

(he hangs up)

Fred has caught a fish. Female. I can have her here in an hour. Instructions?

WOLFE

What good would it do to give you instructions?

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED: (2)

28

ARCHIE

Then I'll use my discretion and sagacity.

29 INT. MARIA'S ROOM - POV HALLWAY FROM DOOR - DAY

29*

The door opens. Through the crack we see Archie whiz by. He pauses, sensing something. The door is pulled closed.

30 INT. LOVENEST - NIGHT

30

Archie emerges from the elevator. Fred is standing at the center of the room, holding his pants up. He has two claw marks on his cheek. He is guarding a bundle which turns out to be a woman wrapped up in the yellow coverlet and secured with Fred's belt. Archie comes out and stares down at her.

FRED

She's not hurt any. I wish she was. Look at me.

ARCHIE

Have you told her who you are?

FRED

No, I wouldn't do her that favor. That's her bag there.

Archie gets it, looks inside.

JULIA

Who are you?

ARCHIE

I'll unwrap you in a minute, Miss..uhm Julia Magee. Nero Wolfe wants to talk to anyone who comes to this room.

JULIA

Let me up!

ARCHIE

The police of course would be interested, too. So it might be a mistake to decline his invitation. Think it over while we unwrap you.

He unbuckles the belt and pulls it from around her. He grabs one corner of the quilt, Fred grabs the other and together they unroll her. She jumps to her feet.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

JULIA

I am Mr. Yeager's private secretary. I came here to get the dictation book I left here.

ARCHIE

Then you have nothing to fear.

FRED

So this is Yeager's room. Now that I know that...

ARCHIE

You don't. You don't know anything. I lied to her and she fell for it.

Julia has made her decision.

JULIA

All right, I accept your invitation.

31 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

31

Archie comes in, leading Julia McGee to the red chair.

ARCHIE

This is Miss Julia McGee. She says she is or was Mr. Yeager's secretary, which is probably true.

But Julia has other ideas.

JULIA

I have to use the phone.

She goes to Archie's phone and dials. Archie continues.

ARCHIE

However, she also said she came to the apartment to get a dictation notebook, which is false. I have checked. There is no notebook that room.

JULIA

(into phone)
Mr. Aiken? Yes...yes, I know.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

JULIA (CONT'D)

There was a man there and he attacked me. I have been taken to Nero Wolfe's...I don't know. Yes, of course...Yes, I will.

(she hangs up)

Mr. Aiken will be here in twenty minutes.

She takes her coat off as Wolfe absorbs this intrusion.

WOLFE

Who is Mr. Aiken.

JULIA

Benedict Aiken. The president of Continental Plastics. I went to that place this evening because Mr. Aiken asked me to see if there was anything to connect Mr. Yeager with it.

WOLFE

Mr. Aiken gave you keys?

JULIA

No. I had been there a few times to take dictation from Mr. Yeager and he gave me a set.

The lie sits there. Julia sits there, stonefaced.

WOLFE

And did you find it to be a suitable milieu for business dictation.

JULIA

It wasn't my place to think. He was my boss. But yes, I thought it was very vulgar for him to ask me there. I worried about it and decided my loyalty shouldn't be to Mr. Yeager but to the corporation. It paid my salary. So a month ago, I told Mr. Aiken. And now I am not going to say any more until he arrives.

WIPE TO:

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED: (2)

31

MR. BENEDICT AIKEN, every inch a president, takes off his homburg hat and settles into the red leather chair. Julia has been moved to one of the yellow ones.

AIKEN

When Miss McGee told me about the room, I asked her to mention it to no one, but not to refuse to go there again. I wanted time to consider how to deal with it.

WOLFE

Did you mention it to Yeager.

AIKEN

No. I was considering whether to take it up with my board of directors first when the news came of his death. Naturally that was a shock, it was unpleasant, well very unpleasant, that he had been murdered, but it would be disastrous for Continental Plastics if the existence of that room became known. You won't deny that it's a legitimate concern.

WOLFE

Legitimate and desperate. You can't possibly hope that his connection will never be divulged.

AIKEN

I don't hope. I act. I will pay you to learn how you learned of the room.

WOLFE

I don't sell information, Mr. Aiken. I sell services.

AIKEN

I'm buying them. I'm hiring you.

WOLFE

To do what?

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED: (3)

31

AIKEN

Whatever is necessary to protect the reputation of my corporation.

WOLFE

I doubt if it would work. Your only hope is to provide the police with an acceptable solution to the murder that does not involve that room. I can't undertake not to disclose Mr. Yeager's connection, events might take charge. The only alternative is for me to take charge of events.

AIKEN

How?

WOLFE

By guiding them.

AIKEN

And if that proves to be impossible?

WOLFE

You will have wasted your money.

AIKEN

All right!

WOLFE

Archie, the typewriter. Two carbons. On behalf of my corporation, I hire Nero Wolfe...

WIPE TO:

Aiken is reading the end of the agreement.

AIKEN

"....Nero Wolfe will disclose no facts unless compelled to by his obligations as a citizen and licensed detective. The purpose of his engagement is to prevent damage to the corporation as a result of the death of Thomas Yeager." Your fee isn't specified.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED: (4)

31

WOLFE

It will depend on what I do.

AIKEN

And who decides if you have faithfully observed the provision?

WOLFE

Reason and good faith, jointly applied.

AIKEN

How did you discover that room?

WOLFE

I don't start a difficult job by babbling.

AIKEN

That's absurd; you're working for me.

WOLFE

The only test of my performance is the result.

AIKEN

Who told you about that room?

WOLFE

Confound it, sir. Do you want this job done or not?

AIKEN

It's not what I want, it's what I'm stuck with. You have the handle. Come, Miss McGee.

They get up and leave.

32 EXT. BROWNSTONE - STOOP (STUDIO) - DAY

32

Archie watches from the door as the duo descends.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

One thing we had learned: Julia McGee was a liar. No man had his secretary come to a room like that to take dictation.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED:

32

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

Not even if she was a lump,
which speaking a satyr, Julia
McGee was not.

33 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

33

Archie returns. Wolfe is trying to get back to his reading,
can't.

WOLFE

I was a witling to take this
job. All we can do is flounder
around in the slush.

ARCHIE

Yeah. Yesterday, we had too
many clients. Today we have
only one, and that's still too
many because we can't possibly
fill his order.

WOLFE

There is nothing in that room
to connect it to Yeager.

ARCHIE

He owned it. It will be an
item in his estate.

WOLFE

The house, but not the room.
We could try a coup. We
confront Mr. and Mrs. Perez
with our conviction that they
killed Yeager because he had
defiled their daughter. We
offer them 20 thousand to go to
some far corner of the earth,
provided that they sign a
confession, which we will deliver
to the police after they are
safely away.

ARCHIE

Wonderful. It only has one
flaw. They didn't kill him.

WOLFE

That's your opinion.

(CONTINUED)

ARCHIE

With damn good legs under it.
How bout some good old fashioned
detective work? Means, motive
and opportunity?

WOLFE

Archie, are you attempting to
be theoretical?

ARCHIE

Hell no. For Means, we have
everyone in the country who
owns a gun. For Opportunity,
we have everyone who had keys
to the place - that should take
about a year to figure out. We
just keep Fred there.

WOLFE

Does it hurt?

ARCHIE

Using my intellect? No. I
have to use it at the track to
figure odds. Now about Motive.
I am not a qualified expert in
bowers of carnality, but it
seems to me that the situation
might arouse strong feelings,
say in ten of Yeager's guests.
Allow them three apiece for
husbands, brothers and fathers,
there are forty likely prospects
out there.

Wolfe sighs, puts his book down and heads for the kitchen.
Archie follows.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Reason and intellect can't crack
this. What it needs is a good
stiff dose of genius. And
apparently you haven't turned
the switch on. Or luck, we
could use some luck. Where do
you keep it hidden...you know,
just in case...

Wolfe growls. Archie stays after him.

MONTAGE

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED: (2) 33

- Wolfe and Fritz confer in the kitchen. Wolfe looks up. Archie is tapping his foot in the corner.

- Wolfe rounds a corner. Archie is waiting for him. They are excessively polite as they make their way around each other.

- Wolfe eats his dinner. Archie just stares at him.

Each time they exchange a glance: Are you working? Leave me alone.

34 INT. MARIA'S ROOM - POV HALLWAY FROM DOOR - DAY 34*

The door opens a crack in time to see some pretty little feet and curves fly past.

35 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY 35

Wolfe comes in bearing his morning orchid. He notices a note on his desk.

WOLFE

What's this? 14,682,235 dollars
and fifty seven cents?

ARCHIE

That's the cash reserve of
Continental Plastics. When I
finished sweeping the sidewalk,
I had nothing else to do. I
like to keep busy...

WOLFE

Archie...

The doorbell RINGS.

ARCHIE

Well, maybe you do have luck.

36 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY 36

Archie opens the door to reveal a very expensively dressed woman who has let herself go to seed - a lump - MRS. YEAGER.

MRS. YEAGER

Nero Wolfe?

ARCHIE

His house anyway.

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED:

36

MRS. YEAGER

I want to see him.

ARCHIE

Normally he won't see...

MRS. YEAGER

I'm Ellen Yeager, Mrs. Thomas
G. Yeager.

ARCHIE

But seeing as this is a crisis.

She marches in. On her look, he gestures down the hall...

37 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

37

Wolfe looks up surprised from his reading.

ARCHIE

Mr. Wolfe, Ellen Yeager. Mrs.
Thomas G. Yeager.

WOLFE

I wasn't informed that I had an
appointment.

MRS. YEAGER

(she seats herself and
pulls out a checkbook)How much do you want as a
retainer.

ARCHIE

Client Number Four, ladies and
gentlemen.

MRS. YEAGER

I want you to find out who killed
my husband and exactly what
happened and then I will decide
what to do about it.

WOLFE

Madam, in the interests of your
protection...

MRS. YEAGER

Don't bother. He was a sick
man, completely oversexed. I
know all about it; I've kept
still about it for years, but...

(CONTINUED)

WOLFE

Shut up.

(on her astonishment)
I'm blunt because I can't let you rattle off confidential information under the illusion that you are hiring me. You can't. I'm already engaged to investigate the murder of your husband.

MRS. YEAGER

You are not.

WOLFE

Indeed.

MRS. YEAGER

No. You're engaged to keep it from being investigated. The board doesn't want the murderer caught. All they care about is the corporation. I have a block of stock now but I don't care. They can't keep me from telling the District Attorney about that room if I decide to.

WOLFE

What room?

MRS. YEAGER

You know perfectly well what room. Julia McGee went there last night and you brought her here. Benedict Aiken told a board member and he told me.

(to Archie)

You're Archie Goodwin? I want to see that room. Where is it?

(without waiting for an answer)

How much do you want for a retainer.

WOLFE

Archie. The typewriter. Two carbons.

38 INT. LOVENEST - BATHROOM - DAY

38

Fred is soaking in the tub, the water running. Two lovely little hands reach and turn it off. His eyes pop open, he grabs for a towel. DINAH HOUGH just laughs and sits on the edge of the tub, splashing water at him.

DINAH

Don't you think this would be a great place to have PTA meetings? What's your name, honey?

On Fred, who can't quite remember

{A&E: END HOUR}

39 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

39

-Wolfe dictates; Archie types

-Archie pulls the agreement out of the typewriter.

MRS. YEAGER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"If in trying to find the murderer, a conflict arises between the obligation of this agreement and the obligation of the agreement with Continental Plastics...

-Archie brings it to Mrs. Yeager.

MRS. YEAGER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Nero Wolfe will terminate his agreement with Continental Plastics.

(out loud)

And I, Mrs. Thomas Yeager, will do nothing to interfere with his investigation without giving him notice in advance." This isn't right. I want you to tell me when you find out who killed him and I'll decide what to do.

WOLFE

Nonsense. The People of the State of New York will decide what to do.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. YEAGER

I'm not going to sign it. I promised my husband I would never sign anything without showing it to him first.

The two men stare at her. Wolfe's mouth goes up an eighth of an inch. Archie actually smiles.

MRS. YEAGER (CONT'D)

What?

ARCHIE

Nothing.

WOLFE

Perhaps you would like me to sign it?

MRS. YEAGER

It doesn't do any good to sign things. What counts is what you do, not what you sign. How much do you want as a retainer?

WOLFE

I do not ask for a retainer. I will expect no payment if I find out that you killed your husband.

MRS. YEAGER

You won't. There was a time when I felt like killing him, but that was when the children were you. How much?

WOLFE

One dollar.

She nods, opens her purse again and gets out a dollar. She leaves her chair and hands it to him and turns to Archie.

MRS. YEAGER

Now I want to see that room.

WOLFE

Not now. You said that you have known for years that your husband was oversexed, you used the word, "sick", so it may be presumed...

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED: (2)

39

MRS. YEAGER

Yes. I asked my doctor if something could be done, but what was the use? My husband wouldn't do that. I have a friend whose husband is an alcoholic; it's the same.

The DOORBELL RINGS. Archie steps to the door.

40 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY

40

INSPECTOR CRAMER works a cigar on the other side of the glass.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Inspector Cramer of Homicide West has never been a client. And his expression made it clear he hadn't come to ante a retainer.

Archie opens the door but keeps the chain bolt on.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Greetings. I don't open up because Mr. Wolfe has company.

CRAMER

I know. Mrs. Thomas G. Yeager. She's been here nearly half an hour. Open up.

ARCHIE

Make yourself at home, I'll see.

41 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

41

Archie comes in and gets Wolfe's attention from Mrs. Yeager who is still talking.

ARCHIE

The tailor. He says his man brought the suit nearly half an hour ago and he wants to discuss it.

Wolfe turns to Mrs. Yeager.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

WOLFE

Inspector Cramer of the police
is at the door, and he knows
you're here.

MRS. YEAGER

He does not. How could he?

WOLFE

Ask him. It may be assumed
that you are under surveillance.

MRS. YEAGER

They wouldn't dare! Me? I
don't believe it.

And before they can stop her, she's out of her chair and out
the door.

42 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY

42

Mrs. Yeager flings open the door to a surprised Cramer.

MRS. YEAGER

Am I being followed around?

CRAMER

Good morning, Mrs. Yeager.

MRS. YEAGER

Am I being followed around?

CRAMER

When there's a murderer loose
we don't like to take chances,
and for your protection...

MRS. YEAGER

You didn't protect my husband.
You didn't even find his body!

CRAMER

There are things to be protected
from besides personal violence,
like making mistakes. If you
came to tell Nero Wolfe something
about your husband's death...

MRS. YEAGER

I hired him to find out who
killed my husband.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

MRS. YEAGER (CONT'D)
If I had anything to tell anybody
I'd tell him, not you. Get out
of my way, I'm going to see
this man who was following me.

CRAMER
I want to know what you said to
Wolfe.

MRS. YEAGER
Ask him.

She goes out the door. Cramer shakes his head at Archie who
gestures to go in. He charges up the hall, and Archie starts
to follow when he notices Mrs. Yeager is still at the door. *
She taps on it. He opens it. She whispers.

MRS. YEAGER (CONT'D)
When will you take me to see
it?

ARCHIE
As soon as I can.

43 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

43

CRAMER
What information do you have on
Yeager that will help identify
the killer?

WOLFE
The responsibility of withholding
it is mine - and the risk.

CRAMER
Risk my ass. With your goddamn
luck and you talk about risk.
I'll try a question that is
more specific. Why did Goodwin
phone Lon Cohen at the Gazette
for the dope on Yeager two hours
before Yeager's body was found?

WOLFE
That is indeed specific.

CRAMER
Yeah. Now you be specific.
How did you know he was dead.

(CONTINUED)

WOLFE

I didn't. Someone, call him X, said something in this room that made Mr. Goodwin phone Mr. Cohen for information. But first, nothing X said indicated that he knew Yeager was dead and second, nothing X said was true.

CRAMER

Is X Mrs. Yeager?

WOLFE

No. I wouldn't name him if I could, but I can't.

The PHONE RINGS. Archie answers it.

CRAMER

You're taking the risk then.

FRED (V.O.)

Archie. I've got another one.

ARCHIE

I'm not so sure that was sensible, Mr. Gerson. That might get you into trouble.

FRED (V.O.)

Oh. Somebody there?

ARCHIE

Certainly. I guess I'll have to come down there, but I don't know how soon I can make it.

(to Wolfe)

That damn fool Gerson has found his bonds and has got two of his staff locked in a store room.

WOLFE

You have to go then. The man's a nincompoop.

ARCHIE

I'll be there. Keep them locked up until I come.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED: (2)

43

He hangs up.

WIPE TO:

44 INT. 82ND STREET APARTMENT BLDG - HALLWAY - DAY

44*

Archie lets himself in and chugs down the hall. Mrs. Perez sticks her head out as he passes. She is joined by Cesar.

MRS. PEREZ

There's a woman up there.

ARCHIE

I came to meet her.

MRS. PEREZ

Wait.

CESAR

No.

MRS. PEREZ

Cesar. We must tell him.

PEREZ

I don't know. You think better than I do, Felita. If you say so.

MRS. PEREZ

If you are not an honest man, may the good God send us help.

She hands Archie a sheaf of paper and a business card.

ARCHIE

(reading)

John Morton Seymour, attorney
at law.

MRS. PEREZ

He give it to us. He said that Mr. Yeager tell him to give it to us 48 hours after he died.

ARCHIE

It's a deed. He's left you the house. How long have you known about this.

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED:

44

MRS. PEREZ

We didn't know. We were going to go away tonight. But now we fight. My husband and my daughter think we can stay. I think we must go.

PEREZ

This Mr. Seymour, he say that Mr. Yeager make it so nobody ever know he own this house and we must not say he own it. So I say we stay.

ARCHIE

Yeager told you, didn't he? You knew the house would be yours if he died.

MRS. PEREZ

If you listen, do you call us liars? When we say we were going away and now we fight.

ARCHIE

Have you got a bible?

MRS. PEREZ

Of course.

WIPE TO:

45 INT. PEREZ APARTMENT - DAY

45

The Perezes have their hands on the bible.

ARCHIE

I swear on this Bible...

(they repeat it)

That I didn't know and had no reason to believe...

(they repeat it)

That Mr. Yeager was going to give us this house.

(they repeat it.)

I advise you to stay here.

Skipping out is the worst thing you can do.

MRS. PEREZ

They wouldn't find us.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

45

ARCHIE
Don't kid yourself.

He goes out into the hall and turns toward the elevator.

46 INT. MARIA'S ROOM - POV HALLWAY THROUGH DOOR

46*

The door opens a crack to see Archie chug by out of frame. Then suddenly the door is yanked open by Archie. We discover Maria standing in the darkness of her room.

MARIA
Why did you do that? This is my room.

ARCHIE
I beg your pardon. As you know, I'm a detective and detectives have bad habits. How many times have you been in the room on the top floor?

MARIA
I'm not allowed up there. And why would I tell you? So you could tell my mother? Excuse me, I shut the door.

She does - on Archie's foot. She slackens it a bit.

ARCHIE
A nice talk with you would be desirable, but it will have to wait.

He withdraws his foot, she closes the door.

47 INT. LOVENEST - DAY

47

The elevator opens and Archie enters. Music is playing. Candles are lit. What he takes in is Fred lounging in a yellow silk chair with a glass of champagne and draped all over the chair and him is a female who is all curves, DINAH HOUGH. She wears a negligee.

ARCHIE
Am I intruding?

DINAH
Oh. It's you.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

47

DINAH (CONT'D)

When Fred said Archie Goodwin
was coming, I nearly swooned.
I've seen you at the Flamingo.
You dance like a dream.

She dances up to him. He takes her for a spin.

ARCHIE

Are you and Fred old friends?

DINAH

No, but it seems silly to call
a man Mister when you're drinking
champagne with him.

ARCHIE

If she calls you Fred, what do
you call her?

FRED

She said to call her Di.

DINAH

I made a man mad once saying I
wanted to dance with you.

He spins her out and picks up her bag.

DINAH (CONT'D)

That's not nice.

ARCHIE

I'm only nice when I'm dancing.
(looking at her wallet)
Mrs. Austin Hough. 64 Eden
Street.

DINAH

Uhuh. I left the gun at home.

ARCHIE

That was sensible. Nero Wolfe
wants to see anyone who has
keys to this room. But we'll
have to wait because he's with
his orchids now.

DINAH

Have some champagne then.

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED: (2)

47

ARCHIE

Is the champagne what you came for?

DINAH

No, no, no. My umbrella.

ARCHIE

Yellow with a red plastic handle?

DINAH

Grey with a black handle.

ARCHIE

It's in the drawer, but you'll have to manage without it for awhile. How did it get here?

DINAH

I need a refill. I left it here. I met Tom Yeager three weeks ago. He told me he knew a place that was worth seeing.

48 INT. LOVENEST - DAY (FLASHBACK)

48

Yeager leads Dinah in. In contradiction to what she is telling Wolfe and Archie, she is enchanted with the lovenest and intimate with Yeager.

DINAH (V.O.)

I came but he had ideas I didn't like. He didn't actually assault me, say nothing but good of the dead, but he was pretty difficult.

49 INT. LOVENEST - DAY

49

DINAH

(toasting)

To Faith Hope and Charity.

(she goes to get more)

I wasn't worried about being suspected of having something to do with his death, but I know how clever they are at tracing thing and well, if it got bad enough, my husband might lose his job.

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

49

ARCHIE

He works for Continental
Plastics?

DINAH

Oh, no, no, no. He's a professor.
An assistant professor at NYU.

ARCHIE

What is he professor of?

DINAH

English lit. Why don't we go
dancing now?

ARCHIE

Measure your mind's height by
the shade it casts, Mrs. Hough.
(to Fred)
Let her finish the bottle.
I've got an errand.

WIPE TO:

50 INT. HOUGH APARTMENT - DAY

50*

Austin Hough opens the door to see Archie Goodwin.

ARCHIE

"Other sins only speak; murder
shrieks out."

HOUGH

How in the name of god...

ARCHIE

There's nothing I'd enjoy more
than chatting with you, but Mr.
Wolfe will be down from the
plant rooms soon and he'll be
waiting for you.

HOUGH

I don't know what you're talking
about. Who are you?

ARCHIE

I'm the ghost of Thomas G.
Yeager. Don't be a sap. You
can't get away with it.

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED:

50

HOUGH

We'll see if I can't.

ARCHIE

How do you think I got this address? I just had a talk with your wife.

HOUGH

That's a lie.

ARCHIE

Dinah Hough. Hazel eyes. She tilts her head a little to the right when she...

HOUGH

Where did you see her?

ARCHIE

That's all you get from me.

HOUGH

Where's my wife?

ARCHIE

Ask Mr. Wolfe.

WIPE TO:

51 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

51

Wolfe has been interrupted in the middle of his crossword puzzle.

HOUGH

Where is my wife?

WOLFE

Mr. Hough. Would you like the police to know your name and address?

HOUGH

Until I know where Goodwin saw my wife I'm explaining nothing.

WOLFE

Very well. Archie.

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

51

ARCHIE

Your wife came to 156 W. Eighty Second Street this afternoon. She had keys to the house and the room.

WOLFE

You position is hopeless. What did you hope to accomplish by sending Mr. Goodwin on that pointless errand.

HOUGH

You talked with her, Goodwin. What did she tell you?

ARCHIE

As lies go, not a very good one. She said she had been there only once and hadn't stayed long.

HOUGH

Why do you think it was a lie?

ARCHIE

Nuts. I don't think she lied; I know she lied.

WOLFE

Mr. Hough. We have humored you but our indulgence isn't boundless.

HOUGH

Circumstances. Men are the sport of circumstances.

ARCHIE

You should know.

HOUGH

My wife shouldn't have married me. She wanted things I couldn't supply, she wanted to do things that I am not inclined to. So she did them without me.

52 INT. HOUGH APARTMENT -- NIGHT

52*

Hough works at his desk, grading papers. In the b.g., Dinah dresses to go out nightclubbing.

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED:

52

She comes to kiss him goodbye and he pretends to be engrossed in his reading. The door slams. He closes his book.

HOUGH (V.O.)

About a year ago, she suddenly had a watch that must have cost a thousand dollars or more. Then a fur coat. Then she started coming home after dawn. I descended to snooping.

53 EXT. 82ND STREET APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

53*

Dinah crosses to the building and lets herself in. Hough emerges from the shadows to spot her. Then he retreats as Thomas Yeager strides purposefully towards the building and goes inside.

HOUGH (V.O.)

"Curiosity creeps into the homes of the unfortunate under the names of duty or pity."

54 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

54

Hough is miserable.

WOLFE (V.O.)

Pascal?

HOUGH (V.O.)

Nietzsche. At least my wife came home that night. I didn't ask her where she'd been. I hadn't asked her that for a year. But I found out who he was and where he lived when I found a phone number scribbled on a scrap of paper.

WOLFE

So you came to see Mr. Goodwin.

HOUGH

Yes. I knew that when Yeager didn't turn up, Goodwin would find out why. He would describe me to Yeager. And Yeager would tell my wife and describe me, and she would know that I know. That's what was most important.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED:

54

HOUGH (CONT'D)

I couldn't tell her, but I wanted her to know that I know. Thank god she wasn't there Sunday night.

WOLFE

Are you sure of that?

HOUGH

Certainly I'm sure. We sleep in separate beds, but when she turns over I hear her.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

I seldom feel sorry for people that Wolfe has in a corner, they usually deserve it, but this time I was tempted.

55 EXT. BROWNSTONE - STOOP (STUDIO) - DAY

55

Archie sees Hough out and watches him down the steps.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

On the other hand, he had married her, I hadn't.

He goes back inside.

56 EXT. 82ND STREET/CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT

56*

Maria and two FRIENDS come down the street giggling. Maria stops and tells them to go on she forgot something. They go on. She waits a beat and then sets off purposefully in a another directions.

*
*
*
*

57 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

57

Wolfe is working again on the crossword when Archie comes back

WOLFE

We've had a letter from Farmer Jenkins in Putnam County asking how many starlings we will want this year. Please reply to him that we will take forty as usual.

ARCHIE

Hmmm. Starling pie.

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

57

WOLFE

Your exclusion of Mr. and Mrs. Perez is no longer valid. They knew they would get the house.

ARCHIE

It's a funny thing about the Bible. I haven't been to church in years and modern science has proved that heaven is 200 degrees hotter than hell, but if asked to put my hand on the bible and swear to a lie, I'd dodge. I'd say I was a Hindu or a Buddhist.

WOLFE

You're incorrigibly mulish.

ARCHIE

Yes, sir. Same to you.

WOLFE

Nor is that imbecile Hough excluded. What if in fact subtle, wily and adroit? He got her keys, went there and killed Yeager. Then he decided to take an action that would make it seem highly unlikely that he could be implicated.

ARCHIE

I see only three holes in it.

WOLFE

I see four, but none beyond patching.

ARCHIE

The problem is we don't have a single card to play. Our big ace, that we know about the room, is worthless and the longer we keep it up our sleeve, the more ticklish it will be when the police find it.

58 INT. BROWNSTONE - ARCHIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

58

Archie gets ready for bed.

(CONTINUED)

	CLIENTS	5-13-06	62
58	CONTINUED:		58
	<p style="text-align: center;">ARCHIE (V.O.) Wolfe was so sour that he didn't say good night. I was so upset I turned over three times before I fell asleep.</p>		
	<p>He turns out the light.</p>		
59	INT. PEREZ APARTMENT - NIGHT		59
	<p>No lights. The PHONE is RINGING. Mrs. Perez stands over it. Crosses herself and reaches for it.</p>		
60	INT. BROWNSTONE - ARCHIE'S ROOM - LATER		60
	<p>The PHONE is RINGING. Archie doesn't really wake up.</p>		
	<p style="text-align: center;">ARCHIE 'Lo.</p>		
	<p style="text-align: center;">MRS. PEREZ (V.O.) Mr. Archie Goodwin.</p>		
	<p>He switches on the light. INTERCUT WITH MRS. PEREZ</p>		
	<p style="text-align: center;">ARCHIE Mrs. Perez?</p>		
	<p style="text-align: center;">MRS. PEREZ You must come now. Our daughter Maria is dead. She was killed with a gun.</p>		
61	INT. MORGUE - NIGHT		61
	<p>The ATTENDANT pulls back a sheet and reveals MARIA dead and cold. The Perezes look at her in disbelief.</p>		
62	EXT. 83ND STREET APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT		62*
	<p>The Perezes return home. Archie emerges from the shadows where he's been waiting and accompanies them.</p>		
63	INT. 82ND STREET APARTMENT BLDG - HALLWAY - NIGHT		63*
	<p>Archie lets them in. Without a word, Cesar walks down the hall and opens the door to Maria's bedroom.</p>		
64	INT. MARIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT		64
	<p>Cesar Perez sits on his daughter's bed.</p>		

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED:

64

CESAR

My wife told you we sit down
with friends. Are you a friend?

Archie sits.

CESAR (CONT'D)

You can't do anything, nobody
can do anything, not even God
himself.

ARCHIE

The trouble with a time like
this is that there is something
to do. You have no room in you
right now for anything except
that she's dead, but I have. I
want to know who killed her.

CESAR

I'll kill him.

ARCHIE

What time did she leave the
house, where did she go?

MRS. PEREZ

She went to the movies with
friends. But she left them.

ARCHIE

Have you any idea where she
went?

MRS. PEREZ

No.

ARCHIE

Have you any idea who killed
her? If her going had anything
to do with Yeager...

MRS. PEREZ

She never had anything to do
with Yeager. She never spoke
with him. She knew nothing
about him and the people who
came.

ARCHIE

I don't believe it.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED: (2)

64

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

She had good ears. She heard me enter the house and watched me from this room, through this door. She watched others.

MRS. PEREZ

No!

CESAR

You're crazy.

MRS. PEREZ

Maria wouldn't do that.

ARCHIE

But she did. And why shouldn't she? A beautiful intelligent girl not interested in what was happening in her own house? That's absurd.

MRS. PEREZ

She wouldn't.

ARCHIE

All right. But we've got to find out what she did that made someone want to kill her. Have the police searched here?

MRS. PEREZ

Yes, in this room. The first one that came.

ARCHIE

Did he take anything?

MRS. PEREZ

No.

ARCHIE

Okay. You two go to bed or if you can't do that, go to the kitchen. I have to go through all her things.

Slowly, very slowly the Perezes leave the room.

MONTAGE:

Archie looks thoroughly all through the room while

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED: (3)

64

- Cesar works his way through a bottle of rum

- Mrs. Perez goes back and forth between them, finally putting Cesar to bed.

Archie lifts the mattress and checks inside the box spring with a knife.

Checks the drawers of bureau for false bottoms with a screwdriver.

Takes up the rug. Checks the light fixture.

Finally the room is back in order, sort of. Archie sits on the bed. Mrs. Perez is at the door.

MRS. PEREZ
I told you. Nothing.

ARCHIE
Yeah, I heard you.

He pulls a drawer out of the bureau again.

MRS. PEREZ
Not again. You are stubborn
like my husband.

This time he looks at the inside with a flashlight. The drawers are lined with a flowered fabric.

ARCHIE
Not stubborn enough.

He spies a tiny hole in the fabric. He takes an ice pick and pries. The whole bottom comes up with it and out onto the bed spills a collection of material: Five dollar bills, sketches of women and women's faces, newspaper clipping featuring photographs of Yeager, Yeager and his wife, Yeager giving a speech that Archie looked at and Meg Duncan. There is a signed fan photo of Meg Duncan.

Mrs. Perez moves to get them, Archie holds her back.

MRS. PEREZ
I have a right. It's my
daughter.

ARCHIE
She was hiding it from you,
wasn't she?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED: (4)

64

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

The only right was hers and now she's dead. Do you have a dollar?

MRS. PEREZ

Why?

ARCHIE

Because you're hiring Mr. Wolfe to investigate the death of your daughter. And I am taking all of this to his office. If the police see it they will find out about Yeager and the room upstairs.

MRS. PEREZ

I'm not sure.

ARCHIE

I am. Unless you're my client, I'm concealing evidence.

MRS. PEREZ

You were right before.

ARCHIE

I haven't earned any medals yet. The dollar, please.

It's pinned inside her blouse. She hands it to him.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

When they come to ask you questions, don't mention Yeager. And I'm going send the man upstairs home, so you don't have to bother with breakfast any more.

He offers her a hand. She takes it.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Tell your husband we're friends.

65 INT. LOVENEST - NIGHT

65

Fred is curled up asleep in the yellow silk bed. He stirs and blinks. Someone is in the shadows. Archie flips on the bedroom light and Fred goes for his gun.

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED:

65

ARCHIE

At ease. I could have plugged you before you touched it. It's time to go. Don't say goodbye to the Perezes. Their daughter was murdered tonight.

FRED

What the hell is this, Archie. What am I in?

ARCHIE

I advise you to ask me no questions, I might answer.

FRED

Am I going to get tagged?

ARCHIE

Toss a coin.

FRED

Then I'm gonna wipe this place before I go.

ARCHIE

Forget it. If they get this far, they won't need fingerprints.

Archie takes one last glance at his favorite picture - and he leaves Fred alone.

66 INT. BROWNSTONE - DINING ROOM - MONTAGE - DAY

66

Archie and Wolfe sort the evidence on the dining room table - Archie labels the pictures.

- Ads for Continental Plastics
- Two newspaper pics of Thomas Yeager
- One newspaper pic of Mrs. Thomas Yeager
- one newspaper pic of Yeager addressing National Plastics Association. Aiken is seated next to him.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

This is the one I showed you.

- 31 pencil sketches of women's heads, dated.

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

66

- Three pics of Meg Duncan - a fan magazine, a signed publicity photo and a newspaper pic.

WOLFE (V.O.)

Why are there are no sketches
of Meg Duncan.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Well, she already had her name
and her face attached.

- 9 five dollar bills.

Wolfe and Archie sort the sketches into piles of faces who resemble each other. The faces mix and match and finally 12 different piles take shape - some with more, some with fewer sketches -

Archie puts labels on the piles with the faces he recognizes - Julia McGee, Dinah Hough, one or two others.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

(pointing)

She's married to Standard Oil.

WOLFE

All the sketches are pictures
of women whose names she did
not know.

ARCHIE

(pointing)

And I've danced with this one
at the Flamingo Club once or
twice.

WOLFE

And they are dated. Julia McGee
was there last Sunday, so either
she killed him or found him
dead.

ARCHIE

I assume that this lets the
Perezes off the hook.

(on Wolfe's look)

I am not crowing. I would rather
have been wrong than be proved
right by having Maria get it,
even if she did ask for it.

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED: (2)

66

WOLFE

Mere conjecture.

ARCHIE

No. Our theory is that whoever killed Yeager killed Maria or we haven't got a theory. And in that case, Maria made the contact. And she wouldn't have done it for the hell of it, she would have wanted to make a deal.

WOLFE

Get Fred. And then Julia McGee. How much do we owe him.

ARCHIE

We are now out three C's on the Yeager investigation and have a total of 2 dollars in retainers.

But Wolfe isn't listening. He has his eyes closed and is pushing his lips in and out.

WIPE TO:

67 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

67

Fred gets his instructions from Wolfe. He nods and smiles. Wolfe hands him his check for \$315.00.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Fred received his instructions without a blink. He has the idea that there is no limit to what Wolfe can do, so there is no risk involved. I would like to be present when Wolfe tells him to go to Moscow and bring back Joe Stalin.

The DOORBELL RINGS. Fred goes to his post, Archie goes to the door.

68 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY

68

Archie is surprised to see that Julia McGee is accompanied by Benedick Aiken. Fred is in the corner, nods at her.

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED:

68

ARCHIE

Why Miss McGee. You've brought
your boss.

69 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

69

Aiken and Julia are seated.

AIKEN

You sent for Miss McGee. If
there has been a development, I
should have been notified since
I am your employer.

WOLFE

Fred?

FRED

Yes, sir.

WOLFE

Look at Miss McGee.

FRED

I don't have to, sir.

WOLFE

You recognize her?

FRED

Yes, sir. I saw her on Tuesday
and I saw her on Sunday evening
when I was covering that house
on 82nd. She entered at the
basement door.

*

*

WOLFE

Why didn't you tell me this on
Tuesday.

FRED

When she came at me on Tuesday,
it was a tangle. And then I
got to thinking later, and I
knew what it would mean. And I
didn't want to be a witness in
a murder case. But this morning
I decided that you were paying
me and counting on me and that
I'd have to.

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED:

69

WOLFE

How sure are you?

FRED

Dead sure.

(Wolfe sighs)

I know I'm in for it now.

WOLFE

And you deserve it. You withheld vital information for thirty six hours. Go to the front room and wait.

Fred departs.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Why did you kill him, Miss McGee?

AIKEN

Don't answer. You're working for me, and so are you, Wolfe. Why did you have that man watching the house?

WOLFE

Why did you kill Mr. Yeager, Miss McGee?

AIKEN

That's just a trick. Did your man see Yeager enter?

WOLFE

I am humoring you, sir. I dare contrive a solution that will satisfy the conditions of our contract only by knowing the truth. Miss McGee. Was Mr. Yeager in the room when you entered Sunday night?

JULIA

Yes, he was.

AIKEN

No, I'm ordering you...

*

JULIA

He was dead.

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: (2)

69

WOLFE

What did you do?

JULIA

I sat in the chair for a few minutes and then left.

WOLFE

Did you see a gun?

JULIA

No.

WOLFE

Did you tell anyone of your experience?

JULIA

No.

WOLFE

Not Mr. Aiken.

JULIA

No.

WOLFE

He did not know until now that you were there on Sunday night.

JULIA

Nobody knew.

WOLFE

You said your loyalty should be to the corporation not Mr. Yeager, so you betrayed him... *

JULIA

I didn't betray...

WOLFE

Betray. Verb. Second
Definition: to prove faithless to one who trusts. Surely Mr. Yeager trusted you not reveal the activities of that room.

JULIA

But I...

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: (3)

69

WOLFE

A hypothetical. If you went there that night, not to take dictation, but for activities more congenial to the decor, I assume you had decided to switch your loyalty back to Mr. Yeager.

*

JULIA

My loyalty had nothing to do with it. Mr. Yeager asked me to come and take dictation and I did. You asked me why I killed him? I ask you: why would I? Why would I go there to take dictation and take a gun along with me?

WOLFE

It's futile. I doubt if I'll learn anything from you.

He closes his eyes and starts pushing his lips.

AIKEN

I don't think she killed him and I don't think you do. You're only making it worse...

He trails off, seeing Wolfe isn't listening.

ARCHIE

Sorry. When he's doing that, we're not here any more.

AIKEN

He can hear me!

ARCHIE

He doesn't hear anyone or anything.

Then

WOLFE

Miss McGee. I want your keys.

JULIA

What?

*

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: (4)

69

AIKEN

Do you call this protecting the interests of the corporation?

WOLFE

How the deuce did you get to be a president? You spout and you sputter and say I have made it worse. If I hadn't resorted to humbug, we would not know that Yeager was killed in that room and I might have blundered fatally.

*
*
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AIKEN

Humbug?

WOLFE

I pried it out of her with a ruse. Mr. Durkin was never at that house on Sunday.

AIKEN

You tricky bastard! Where's that paper...

WOLFE

I am now gravely compromised. If I had my share of prudence, I would be on the telephone, speaking to Inspector Cramer. Where were you last night from nine o'clock to midnight?

Aiken stares at him, speechless with rage.

AIKEN

None of your damned business!

WOLFE

Very well. Miss McGee?

AIKEN

No. Don't answer him. Don't answer anything.

JULIA

But I have to answer that.

AIKEN

He's a liar and a blackmailer.

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: (5)

69

JULIA

I never saw that girl. Last evening I had dinner with friends and got home after midnight. Their name is Quinn and they live at 98 W. 11th Street.

AIKEN

What exactly do you want?

WOLFE

Since I lie, what does it matter?

Wolfe leaves. Aiken takes his leave, Julia trailing after. *

70 INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - DAY

70

Wolfe is inspecting the goods for lunch. Fred is there having coffee. Archie enters.

ARCHIE

Nice way to treat our one paying client.

WOLFE

You realize that we have never been so close to catastrophe. And ignominy.

ARCHIE

Yes, sir.

WOLFE

It is imperative that we find the murderer before Mr. Cramer finds that room.

ARCHIE

Errands?

WOLFE

Fred. You will join us for lunch. Get Saul and Orrie. I must have them this afternoon.

ARCHIE

And me?

WOLFE

Presumably that woman, Meg Duncan was at the theater last evening.

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED:

70

ARCHIE

Presumably I can find out. The play ends at eleven, if she made a date with Maria Perez for eleven thirty, she could have made it without rushing.

WOLFE

Instructions after you get Saul and Orrie.

71 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY

71

Orrie and Saul arrive. Archie conducts them inside.

72 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

72

Fritz serves everyone. Archie goes to sit down.

WOLFE

Archie. You have made your appointments.

ARCHIE

Yes, but there's time and my date with the actress is not for a particular minute.

WOLFE

You had better get started.

ARCHIE

Maybe I can supply details.

WOLFE

No. We won't need you.

ARCHIE

There are a few pointed remarks I could make, but it might not fit the script.

WOLFE

You occasionally show remarkably good judgment.

73 INT. MEG DUNCAN'S APARTMENT -- DAY

73

Archie is met by a square jawed female sergeant.

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED:

73

SQUARE JAW

She's got a headache. She can't see you...

ARCHIE

I made an appointment...

MEG (O.S.)

Is that you, Archie. Bring him in, Matilda.

ARCHIE

Yeah, Matilda. Bring him in.

74 INT. MEG DUNCAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM -- DAY

74

Archie takes in the darkened room and eyes the closed Venetian blinds and the fact that his prospective interview is in bed clad in a flimsy nightgown. She smiles at him and sits up, revealing more than she should.

MEG

I haven't got a headache, sit here.

She pats the edge of the bed. Archie sits gingerly.

MEG (CONT'D)

Did you bring my cigarette case?

ARCHIE

It's still in Wolfe's safe. Where were you yesterday evening from nine to midnight.

MEG

I wish I had clawed your eyes out.

ARCHIE

You used that line before. Maria Perez was murdered last night. Did you ever see or speak with her.

MEG

I don't know who that is.

ARCHIE

She had a secret stash hidden in her chest.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

In it, she had three photographs of you, one signed. And there was money. 9 five dollar bills.

MEG

Oh my god, the money.

ARCHIE

Oh my god, the money.

MEG

Do bills show fingerprints?

ARCHIE

Certainly. When did you give them to her?

MEG

I-I don't remember. There are so many...oh my god...

She starts squirming. Archie moves his hand, to where her leg happens to be. Meg takes this as a sign. And she comes up from the pillow - her arms go around him and she pulls him down to her. His face in the pillow and her biting his neck passionately. Archie takes it for about two seconds and then he brings his hand between her face and his neck and shoves, pulls the pillow out and slaps it down over her face.

ARCHIE

The time the place and the girl are a splendid combination, but this is the wrong time and I doubt your motives are pure.

She squirms and kicks for ten seconds and then stops. Archie gets his feet back on the floor and lifts up the pillow.

MEG

Damn you. You put your hand on me.

ARCHIE

You expect me to apologize? Patting a place on the bed and you in that gauzy thing? You know darned well your nipples show through it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED: (2)

74

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

It was not every smart, trying to take my mind off of business when you've got as much stake as I have.

MEG

You did put your hand on me.

ARCHIE

Conditioned reflex. The wonder is that it wasn't both hands. When did you give her the photograph and why did you give her the money?

Meg talks. Archie keeps his distance and listens.

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

It turned out Maria was very ambitious. At first she blackmailed Meg for theater tickets and moved on to five dollar bills, one a month, to keep Meg's rendezvous a secret.

MEG

Have you seen her?

ARCHIE

Yes.

MEG

Aren't you surprised. She was so proud. She was so beautiful and my God, so proud.

ARCHIE

I quit being surprised after two years of detective work.

MEG

She told me about watching. And I knew she was doing it when I went there. It gave me a feeling - I don't know why - it made it more exciting. Sit here.

ARCHIE

No, Ma'am.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED: (3)

74

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

It's even more of a strain when you have the cover up like that, now that I know what's under it.

(he gives her leg a squeeze)
See. Conditioned reflex. You'll get your money back. Money paid to a blackmailer is recoverable.

And he leaves.

75 INT. HOUGH APARTMENT -- DAY

75*

Archie knocks at the door.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

I had no appointment with Mr. or Mrs. Austin Hough, because I preferred to have one of them alone, but it didn't work out that way.

Austin opens the door.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Did you find your wife yesterday?

HOUGH

What do you want?

ARCHIE

Nothing startling. You probably know about the murder of a girl named Maria Perez.

HOUGH

No. I haven't been out today. Who is Maria Perez.

ARCHIE

The daughter of the man who was the caretaker of the house on 82nd Street. Mr. Wolfe is wondering how you spend your evening. And your wife.

HOUGH

Balls.

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED:

75

ARCHIE

Is that by Robert Browning?
Sounds more Elizabethan.

HOUGH

You want to know how my wife
spent the evening? Why don't
you ask her. Come on.

He turns around and heads into the apartment, which has no
foyer. The whole living room is lined with books. He crosses
to the bedroom and motions Archie to follow.

Archie gets to the door of the bedroom and stops still.

76 INT. HOUGH APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

76*

There appears to be a body on the bed, shrouded in a sheet.

Archie looks at Hough, who moves to the corpse and speaks
softly.

HOUGH

It's Archie Goodwin, Dinah. A
girl was murdered last night.
What was her name?

ARCHIE

Maria Perez.

HOUGH

She lived in that house. He
wants to know what you were
doing last night between nine
and midnight.

No answer.

HOUGH (CONT'D)

I think you had better tell
him. He saw you at that place
yesterday and he might as well
talk to you now.

No answer. He makes a move towards the corpse.

HOUGH (CONT'D)

Dinah.

Before he can touch her, the corpse shrinks away from him.

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

76

DINAH

No, Austin.

Austin reaches for the sheet and pulls it away. One of Dinah's eyes is swollen shut and her cheek and jaw are the color of calves' liver. Her lips are purple. There are bruises on her shoulders and arms.

HOUGH

I told you yesterday that I wanted her to know that I knew, but I couldn't tell her. I was afraid of what might happen and now it has. Tell Mr. Goodwin where you were last night.

DINAH

Here, I was here, Austin.

HOUGH

Was I here with you?

DINAH

Yes, Austin.

HOUGH

Now you've seen her, you can go.

ARCHIE

Do you want me to send for a doctor, Mrs. Hough?

HOUGH

No.

DINAH

No.

HOUGH

Send her a bottle of champagne.

Silence. He begins applying cold compresses to her eye. She doesn't react one way or another. Archie beats it.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

And I did. But I sent it him not her. I have often wondered if he dumped it or shared it with her. My next errand was to find out where Mrs. Yeager had been last night.

77 EXT. 69TH STREET - DAY

77

Archie and Mrs. Yeager look for a cab.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

It turns out she had dined with her son and daughter in law. She insisted that I take her to see her husband's lovenest or she would call the District Attorney. We took precautions in case we were followed.

78 INT. LOVENEST - DAY

78

The elevator door opens. The room is dark. Archie and Mrs. Yeager emerge and then Archie hits the light. Mrs. Yeager walks to the center of the room and turns slowly in a circle.

She looks through the whole apartment.

- The kitchen
- The bathroom
- The various pictures.

She comes back to the main room, where Archie is waiting for her.

MRS. YEAGER (V.O.)

Do you believe Julia McGee came here to take dictation?

ARCHIE (V.O.)

No. Do you?

MRS. YEAGER (V.O.)

Certainly not. Why do you think the person who killed my husband killed that girl?

ARCHIE (V.O.)

It's complicated but it's not a guess.

Mrs. Yeager is ready to leave.

MRS. YEAGER

Where's Maria's mother? I want to speak to her.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

78

ARCHIE

Better not. Not right now.
It's hit her pretty hard.

MRS. YEAGER

I know how to talk to a mother.

Archie sighs. He gestures for the elevator.

79 INT. 82ND STREET APARTMENT BLDG- HALLWAY - DAY

79*

Archie and Mrs. Yeager emerge from the elevator. Mrs. Perez is headed for the front door. Mrs. Yeager starts down the hall; Mrs. Perez opens the door to reveal Purley Stebbins.

STEBBINS

I'm sorry to bother you again,
Mrs. Perez but...Goodwin. And
you, Mrs. Yeager.

He comes in.

ARCHIE

We were just talking to Mrs. Perez. Mrs. Yeager has hired Wolfe to investigate her husband's murder and thought there might be a connection between the two murders. Like Maria had seen whoever dumped the body into the hole. It's amazing if you came up with the same idea as she did.

PURLEY

What are you up to, Goodwin?
Since when do you talk about
anything but the weather?

MRS. YEAGER

Please sergeant. I want to
thank you, Mrs. Perez. We've
both lost someone dear to us.
It was kind of you to see us on
a day like this. I'll phone
you later.

Mrs. Perez gets it.

MRS. PEREZ

I told you the truth.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED:

79

MRS. PEREZ (CONT'D)
If my daughter saw anything
like that on Sunday, she would
tell me and she didn't.

STEBBINS
Did she leave home at all that
evening?

MRS. PEREZ
No. We always knew where she
was.

Purley looks from one to the other and then back at Archie.

STEBBINS
All right, Goodwin. We're going
downtown.

ARCHIE
Am I under arrest.

STEBBINS
Not yet.

ARCHIE
It's nice to have a choice.
Excuse me, Mrs. Yeager. Mrs.
Perez.

They go.

ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It suited me fine to get Stebbins
out of that house. I yawned as
I got into the PD car. I'd
needed a good yawn all day, but
had been too busy to have one.

80 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

80

Archie returns.

WOLFE
How long did they keep you?

ARCHIE
I came home a little after one.

WOLFE
It must have been difficult .

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

80

ARCHIE

It was. I had to keep a wall between two sets of facts - the ones they know and the ones we hope to God they'll never know.

WOLFE

Satisfactory. Mrs. Yeager called and told me of your impromptu explanation to Mr. Stebbins. She was impressed. Satisfactory.

ARCHIE

Two satisfactories in one speech. A record. Anything on the program?

WOLFE

Yes. Saul has found what he was sent to find. Mr. Aiken and Miss McGee are due at 12:15.

81 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY

81

Saul enters with MR. WENGER and is shown to the peephole.

WIPE TO:

82 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

82

Aiken and Julia listen to Wolfe with increasing impatience.

WOLFE

Before I submit my conclusion to you, I must tell you how I came to it. When you asked me on Tuesday evening who would decide if I had faithfully observed the provision of my employment...yes, Saul?

SAUL

It's a perfect fit, Mr. Wolfe.

WOLFE

Very well. I'll look at it later.

(nods to Archie)

This is the evidence which supports the conjecture that whoever killed Yeager, killed Maria Perez.

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED:

82

Archie gives Aiken a folder with the contents of Maria's stash.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

This is what cost Maria Perez her life.

AIKEN

What does this mean?

WOLFE

My conjecture is that Miss Perez saw someone arrive shortly after Mr. Yeager did Sunday evening. Recognized him or her and undertook an ambitious venture in extortion.

AIKEN

This is a picture of you, Julia.

WOLFE

Yes, and the fact that it is in this folder makes it highly unlikely that Miss McGee is the killer because Miss Perez kept no sketches of the people she knew. And she would have had to know the name of the person in order to contact them.

AIKEN

There's pictures here of Meg Duncan.

Wolfe picks up the picture of Yeager addressing the National Plastics Association.

WOLFE

Are you familiar with this picture?

AIKEN

Of course. I have it framed in my office.

WOLFE

Your name is here. It makes me wonder whether it was you Maria Perez saw whom Mrs. Perez saw in the hallway on Sunday evening.

(CONTINUED)

AIKEN

Preposterous.

WOLFE

Preposterous? First you must answer three questions: 1) Could you get keys? 2) Did you know of his appointment? And 3) Did you have a motive?

AIKEN

I don't have to listen to this!

WOLFE

I understand from Mrs. Yeager that ever since Yeager became vice-president he has been a threat to your leadership.

AIKEN

She would...

WOLFE

I talked to others. The situation was widely known. Clearly Julia might have told you of the appointment. The problem was the keys. You couldn't have borrowed them from Miss McGee, shot Yeager and then returned them so that she could gain entrance. That would be preposterous. But if you had them copied, they are unique keys, Rabsons...

AIKEN

I'm not going to listen to this a minute longer.

Wolfe hits a button on his desk. Before Aiken can get to the door, Saul appears at it, with Mr. Wenger.

WOLFE

This is Mr. Arthur Wenger. Do you recognize him?

AIKEN

No. Why should I?

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED: (3)

82

WOLFE

Mr. Wenger. This is Benedict Aiken. Do you know him?

WENGER

Sure. He come to my shop one day last week to get dupes made of a set of Rabson keys.

WOLFE

How sure are you?

WENGER

I couldn't be surer. People are a lot like keys; they look alike but they're different. I don't know faces as well as I know keys, but I look at keys and I look at faces.

WOLFE

An excellent habit. Thank you, sir.

WENGER

I got the receipt, too.

WOLFE

Thank you, Saul.

Saul retires with Mr. Wenger. Archie now stands at the door. Aiken turns.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Miss McGee. You must now shift your loyalty to yourself. When Mr. Aiken goes on trial, you will be a witness and if you lie, it will be perjury. You may even be charged as an accessory to murder since you provided the means...

JULIA

I didn't know...

AIKEN

Hold your tongue! He's tricked you once before and he's trying it again. We're going...

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED: (4)

82

JULIA

You're a fool. A bungling old fool. Yes, he borrowed my keys. And I told him about that I would be there Sunday night. So he knew Yeager was there. I had promised to keep him informed. Informed. I was a fool. God, what a fool.

WOLFE

Fool doesn't do you justice, madam. Harpy or lamia, perhaps. I am not judging you, merely classifying you. Pfui. So much for what is done. Now what to do. Sit down, sir.

Archie guides Mr. Aiken to his chair.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

You are doomed, sir. However, I want to satisfy the terms of my engagement as far as possible and protect the reputation of your corporation. And with this in mind, I have prepared this document which I suggest you copy in your own handwriting and sign.

He hands a paper to Aiken.

AIKEN

I, Benedict Aiken, killed Thomas Yeager and transported his body to a construction site on West 82nd Street because he threatened my control....

83 INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - DAY

83

Archie admits the members of the Board of Continental Plastics. Mrs. Yeager accompanies them.

84 INT. BROWNSTONE - OFFICE - DAY

84*

- The members of the board all get seated.
- They listen again as Mrs. Yeager finishes the letter.

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED:

84

MRS. YEAGER (V.O.)

Since I was responsible for the development and success of the corporation for the last ten years, it was intolerable.

(out loud)

I express no remorse for my deed. Benedict Aiken.

She puts down the letter.

WOLFE

When was his body found, Archie?

ARCHIE

Thursday afternoon by the maid. He apparently shot himself shortly after he mailed the letter.

WOLFE

Gentlemen of the Board of Continental Plastics. If this affair had been left to the police, there would have been a trial, the existence of that room would have been bruited in the press and Mr. Aiken would have been, instead of the subject of a brief sensation, the center of a prolonged hullabaloo. Do you question my evaluation of my services at fifty thousand dollars?

DIRECTOR 1

No. I don't.

DIRECTOR 2

We don't question that.

DIRECTOR 3

We can't. Will a certified check be adequate?

WOLFE

I prefer cash.

DIRECTOR 1

You will have it then. Good day, sir.

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED: (2)

84

The men get up and make their way to the door. Mrs. Yeager lingers behind.

MRS. YEAGER

I owe you a fee, too.

WOLFE

I have your dollar. I'll keep that. You may keep the copies of Mr. Aiken's statement. They are cheap at the price.

It's 3:55. He rises and goes to the orchids.

85 INT. LOVENEST - DAY

85

The Perezes are getting ready to tear the place apart. They have stripped the bed and pulled off all the pictures off the wall. They are piling them and the other artifacts at the door to the elevator. The Elevator comes up. They stop and stare. To their relief, Archie emerges.

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ARCHIE

I came to tell you that the police won't be bothering you for much longer. The man who killed Maria is dead. The police don't know that he did it and will probably never know.

MRS. PEREZ

We understand this.

ARCHIE

Your keys. You ought to change the locks just in case someone else comes back.

CESAR

First we make this room like it never exist.

ARCHIE

I also came to explain why I can't come to Maria's funeral. I want to. But it's too risky. They send policemen to attend the funerals of people who have been murdered.

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED:

85

MRS. PEREZ

We said we would pay one hundred dollars.

ARCHIE

Forget it. We had too many clients anyway.

They nod. Archie heads for the door and on the way, stops at his favorite naked lady.

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

In case any of you have a notion to go and take a look at the preposterous bower of carnality, you won't find it on 82nd street. For obvious reasons I have changed the names and addresses and a few other details. If Inspector Cramer reads this and drops in to inquire, I will tell him that I made the whole thing up. Which I did, of course.

He picks it up and exits down the elevator.