

TRIVIA AND TREASURES
FROM REX STOUT'S NERO WOLFE
DETECTIVE STORIES

Collected by
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Chapter One

Stout Sets The Scene

In 1934, writer Rex Stout introduced two detective characters: big, brainy, and wildly eccentric Nero Wolfe, and breezy, unflappable, and wonderfully witty Archie Goodwin. Each of the characters was sublimely confident in his own powers and abilities, each was a jealous guardian of his personal liberties, and both were a thorn in the side of authority. Together they made a lively, entertaining detective team. After the introduction of the two characters, Stout wrote a number of novels and short stories featuring them.

The material that is presented in the following pages consists of a collection of "bits and pieces" of information, and memorable quotes and moments gathered from this detective series. Although all substantive material is drawn from Stout's work (See Appendix), it has been reorganized and transitional phrases and summaries have been added to provide a more narrative form.

Stout set the stage for the series in New York City. Detectives Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin live and work in Wolfe's old brownstone house. Located one block from the Hudson River in New York City on West Thirty-fifth Street, their home is a five-minute taxi ride or a fifteen-minute walk from Times Square. The house faces north. The number on Thirty-fifth Street is referred to variously as 506, 618 and 918. Across the street from the house there is a tailor shop. At times, neighborhood children play ball in the street.

The house sits right on the sidewalk. The main entry is reached via a stoop. Seven steps rise above it to an uncovered landing by the front door. At the side of the stoop, a lower entry, rarely used, is five steps below, where a paved areaway is barred by

an iron gate. Beyond that gate, a tiny-vestibule underneath the stoop and a heavy door lead into the lower part of the house, referred to as the basement, although it is actually only three feet below street level.

A glass panel in the main front door allows Wolfe and Archie to screen visitors. The panel features one-way glass. Visitors cannot see into the house but are clearly visible from within. When there are callers after dark, an exterior light illuminates them. The doorbell rings in four places: in the office, in the kitchen, in Archie's bedroom, and in the basement room of Wolfe's chef, Fritz Brenner. A chain bolt secures the door. If the bolt is engaged, the opening is restricted to two inches.

The door opens into a long, wide hall. Originally, the house had a vestibule but Wolfe removed it to enlarge the hall. On the right, a walnut clothes rack holds a shelf for hats. It replaced an enormous old oak one with a mirror that was there earlier. Wolfe's walking canes are kept in the rack, including a cane of Montenegrin apple wood with a knob the size of Archie's fist, and one made of red thorn.

Also on the right, is a door to the dining room, stairs that continue up three floors, and an elevator installed at a cost of seven thousand dollars.

On the left of the hall, a door opens to what is called the front room. The front room is primarily used to seat people who are there for one reason or another but who are not yet wanted in the office. This room faces the street. There are two windows and a table between them with a large vase on it. A sofa with six velvet cushions, several large comfortable chairs, and also a piano and bench welcome guests.

Since Wolfe dislikes open fires and the house is kept at seventy by the radiator heat, the fireplace is almost never used. In summer the house is air conditioned although the air conditioning came only after some years and many hot days because Wolfe distrusts machinery. The front room has three doors -- one to the hall, one that leads to a fully equipped bathroom between the front room and the office, and one that connects with the office. The doors may be locked if necessary to prevent visitors from gaining

access to other parts of the house.

Also off the hall to the left is the office, which could be described more as a library than ordinary office. It is twice as big as any of the other rooms. Deep bookshelves holding some twelve hundred books line the walls. Steps allow Wolfe to reach books at the top, near the high ceiling. Other files and cabinets store back issues of the Times, seven city directories, telephone books, case records, and records of Wolfe's orchid plants grown in the top floor roof gardens. Notes on a pending case may also be kept in the old-fashioned two-ton safe. One of the drawers of the safe is partitioned in the middle. Petty cash is held on the right and five thousand dollars, the emergency reserve, used hundreds, twenties, and tens, is stacked on the left. Wolfe also stores a locked metal box on a shelf in the safe (that is never opened in Archie's presence) and a number of municipal bonds are kept in a tidy pile in the upper compartment with its own lock.

A 14 x 26 rug covers the center of the room, sometimes described as a Feraghan (or Keraghan), and at other times by a Shirvan given to Wolfe in 1932 in Cairo by a man to whom he rendered a service. Wolfe suspects the man stole the rug in Kandahar but if an heir of the Kandahar prince who once owned it ever challenges Wolfe's possession, he is prepared to enter the defense that after sufficient time legal ownership is established.

Wolfe's desk, cherry wood with a highly waxed finish, holds several items: his telephone, a desk calendar, and a vase that always hold fresh orchids in bloom. He has several paperweights --a chunk of petrified wood once used to bust a man's skull, one of carved ebony used by a man named Mortimer to crack his wife's skull, and a chunk of jade a woman used to conk her husband. Oversized and custom made of Brazilian mauro by Meyer, Wolfe's chair cost six hundred and fifty dollars. He often has a book on his desk, his page marked with a thin strip of gold given to him by a client. He uses the shallow middle drawer as a depository for caps from beer bottles so that he can keep count of how many he drinks. He opens the beer with a solid gold bottle opener, a gift that doesn't work too well.

Archie's desk is about eight feet from Wolfe's, so placed that a half-turn of his swivel chair, that cost \$135.95, puts him facing Wolfe. With another half turn, he confronts the red leather chair beyond the end of Wolfe's desk where a lone visitor is usually seated or if there are a number of visitors, Wolfe's client or the visitor deemed most important. A mirror four feet high and six feet wide on the wall enables Archie to see the room when he is facing his desk or using the telephone. He has a six inch jade bowl ashtray, a gift from a client, mostly there for decoration. He seldom smokes. Wolfe has no hard and fast rule about smoking in the office except that he insists the ashtrays be emptied after use, as he cannot tolerate the remains of cigarettes. In addition to the usual office supplies, Archie keeps what he calls the "arsenal" in the locked second desk drawer, meaning three guns, his Marley and two of Wolfe's.

In the corner of the office, to the left and beyond Archie's desk, sits a big, bright yellow couch that has to be cleaned every two months. The drapes and several other comfortable chairs for visitors are also yellow. A small table next to the red leather chair is a convenient height for writing checks. One of the most decorative objects in the room is a large globe, some three feet in diameter. (The exact dimensions are given variously as thirty-two and three-eighths inches and thirty-five and one-half inches.) Wolfe says he paid five hundred dollars for it; however, Archie recalls that it was given to Wolfe. Whatever its diameter and source, Inspector Cramer of the New York Police Department calls it the biggest and finest globe he has ever seen.

Among other decorative objects on the wall are three pictures --one of Socrates, one of Shakespeare, and one of an unwashed coal miner in oil by Sepeshy. The pictures represent what Wolfe terms man's three main resources: intellect, imagination, and muscle. On the left wall, the one that separates the office from an alcove in the back hall, fifteen feet from Wolfe's desk, Wolfe has a trick one-way picture window. On the office side, it appears to be a 14 x 17 picture of a waterfall (earlier, one of the Washington

Monument was used). The picture conceals a rectangular peephole on the alcove side that is an inch below Archie's eyelevel and is seven inches high and twelve inches wide. By looking through the hole, it is possible to see a guest's profile and Wolfe full face inside the office and to overhear what is being said. The peephole is concealed on the alcove side by a sliding panel, although at one time there was an old brown woodcarving, a panel in three sections with two sides of the section hinged in the middle so that the right side could be swung aside to reveal the opening.

The office has eight lights, one in the ceiling above the big bowl of banded Oriental alabaster, one on Wolfe's desk for working on crossword puzzles, one on the wall behind his desk for reading, one on Archie's desk and the other four positioned so that one lights the globe and the other three light the bookcases. The telephone number for the office is Bryant 92828. The office and all other rooms and doors on the first floor are soundproofed.

At the far end of the hall, a door opens on to the kitchen, where there is a big center table used for food preparation. Another smaller table near a window holds a toaster rack and a newspaper. Here is where Archie has his breakfast. Wolfe has declared stainless steel taboo in the kitchen and dining room. The back door to the house is down a flight of twelve steps. Outside the back door, four more steps lead down to a little space with a brick walk between rows of herbs grown in season, enclosed by a board fence with a solid wooden gate seven feet high equipped with a Hotchkiss spring lock. Beyond the gate, a narrow, dark passageway runs between a warehouse building and a garage and emerges on the sidewalk on Thirty-fourth Street.

The lower floor of the house, or basement as it is called, has two main rooms and a cubbyhole used for a couch and storage. One of the larger rooms has a pool table that was installed at the suggestion of Wolfe's friend, Marko Vukcic. For a time, Wolfe and Vukcic had five-hour sessions at the pool table on Sundays. For Wolfe, it was not play but exercise. About once a year, Archie plays pool with detective Saul Panzer and Wolfe

occasionally watches from a big, comfortable chair placed on a platform so that he can observe.

The largest room is the combination den/bedroom and bath used by Wolfe's chef, Fritz. Although Fritz could use one of the bedrooms upstairs, he prefers this one. Over the years it has gotten pretty cluttered. Tabletops hold stacks of magazines and busts of Escoffier and Brillat-Savarin on stands. Framed menus, a king-size bed, five chairs, bookshelves for his collection of 289 cookbooks, a head of a wild boar he shot in the Vosges, a television and stereo cabinet and two large cases of ancient cooking vessels, one of which Fritz believes was used by Julius Caesar's chef, finish off the busy room.

The other rooms in the house are on the upper floors. From the front entry hall, up one flight, there are two rooms. The one on the north facing the street is rarely used except for storage. Wolfe's bedroom is at the back. Over the head of his bed, a black silk canopy hovers, with a white pillow cord at hand to pull the canopy back. He has yellow percale sheets topped by a yellow electric blanket. A black silk puffy quilt covers the bed. A yellow extension telephone is on the bedside table. On a table by the window he sometimes breakfasts on sunny days. Shelves of books stuff the far wall. For reading, he has a big tapestry chair by a reading lamp. Wolfe keeps an old solid gold bowl in his room. He also opens his windows at night but a contraption automatically closes them at six a.m., as he likes a good, warm room at breakfast.

Two flights up from the hall, there are two more bedrooms. Archie has the one facing the street. A fair-sized room, it has its own bath and a pair of windows. An African violet preens on the windowsill. The bed is big and good, a desk has plenty of drawer space, and there are three roomy, comfortable chairs as well as a reading chair with a light. The floor is covered with a real carpet all over--not little rugs that might slide around. Archie has a picture of Mount Vernon, a colored one of a lion's head and another colored one of woods and grasses. He keeps a big-framed photograph of his father and mother. In the bathroom, he has a picture of September Morn. He also has a

little tile top table that he uses to hold a glass of milk at night. His shirts are kept in the drawer of a chest. The furniture and pictures in Archie's bedroom belong to Archie rather than to Wolfe. Part of an alarm system, a gong, is located in the bedroom beneath Archie's bed. When activated, if anyone comes within five feet of Wolfe's door, if any of his windows are disturbed, if any of the entrances to the plant rooms on the roof are disturbed, the gong sounds. Wolfe installed the gong after he got a knife stuck in him, although its presence is no testament to his cowardice. Wolfe has an intense dislike of being touched or being compelled to make quick movements. The gong acts as a warning system. Ten feet from Wolfe's door a push-button notifies Wolfe to turn off the system when inadvertently activated.

The guest bedroom, referred to as the South Room, is at the rear on the same floor as Archie's room. Well furnished with twin beds and a Kashan rug fifteen by eleven, it has three windows, one opening on a narrow fire escape and a connecting bath. The room is always in order. Overnight guests are served breakfast on a tray brought up by the chef, Fritz.

On the top floor of the house, three flights up from the entry hall, Wolfe has plant rooms for his ten thousand orchid plants. There are three main rooms, one for *Attleyas*, *Laelias* and hybrids, one for *odontoglossums*, *oncidiums* and *Miltonia* hybrids, and the tropical room. The roof is glassed in and in the summer, lath screens are put up. The rooms, kept in varying conditions of temperature and humidity by the vigilance of Theodore Horstmann, Wolfe's botanist, have concrete benches and angle-iron staging with a spraying system. There is also a potting room and one used for propagation. Supplies such as pots, sand sphagnum, leaf mold, loam, osmudine, and charcoal are kept in an unheated and unglazed room in the rear. When the snow is dancing on the sloping glass overhead, the display of blooms in white, yellow, lilac, violet, pink and other shades is stunning.

Every Wednesday, three male employees of the Midtown Home Service Corporation come to clean the old brownstone. They arrive at nine a.m., have lunch in the kitchen, and leave around four p.m.

Wolfe's automobile is kept in a service garage two blocks away. He buys a new car every year. Since Wolfe does not drive and the car is used primarily by Archie, Archie usually selects the model. Early on, Wolfe has a big, shiny black roadster. Later, at different times, he owns a brown Weathersill sedan, a Heron sedan, and a new Cadillac sedan.

On most weekdays, the old brownstone stirs at about eight o'clock when Fritz prepares breakfast.

Chapter Two

Enter Nero Wolfe

Mrs. Barry Rackham called Nero Wolfe "big and handsome and successful and not afraid of anything." (In The Best Families). Archie says that Wolfe is unquestionably impressive when he is in motion. He holds people's attention. Partly it is his size, but his manner and style have a lot to do with it. There is nothing clumsy about him. In motion, he is smooth, balanced and efficient. (And Be A Villain). He can walk across a ledge less than a meter wide with a five hundred meter drop without faltering. (The Black Mountain).

Wolfe is now between forty-five and fifty-five years of age (He no longer ages). Of medium coloring, he is five feet eleven inches in height and weighs between two-hundred seventy and three-hundred forty pounds. He carries the extra weight, he says, to insulate his feelings because as a young man, they got too strong for him once or twice and he had the idea that if he had stayed lean and kept moving around as he did formerly, he would have been dead long ago.

Born in a stone house in Montenegro near Black Mountain, Wolfe is of Montenegrin descent, the race that fought the Turks for five hundred years. As a boy he herded goats and with his childhood friend, Marko Vukcic, fished for trout in streams and killed bats in an old Roman fort just across the border in Austria. At age nine, he climbed Black Mountain for the first time. At sixteen, he decided to move around. For the next fourteen years, that's what he did, becoming acquainted with most of Europe, a little of Africa, and much of Asia in a variety of roles and activities.

When he was still a young man, he joined the Montenegrin Army. He then

believed that all misguided or cruel people should be shot. He shot some. When the Austrians came, fighting machine guns with fingernails, he starved. Logically, Wolfe says, he was dead, as a man can't live on dry grass. Actually, he went on breathing. When the United States entered the war, he walked six hundred miles to join the A.E.F. He says of his experience: "War doesn't mature men; it merely pickles them in the brine of disgust and dread..." (Over My Dead Body).

After the war, Wolfe, still lean and moving here and there, had shed some of his illusions. He returned to the Balkans where he says he shed still another illusion. At that point, he came to the United States.

He may have married before he left Europe. He told Archie once about a woman in Hungary who relieved her husband's headaches by applying cold compresses and who eventually put a penetrating poison into the water used to wet the compresses. Wolfe admitted that he was that man. (League of Frightened Men). However, some years later a government agent asked if he was married and Wolfe said "No." so any earlier marriage had been ended. He also told Archie: "I have skedaddled, physically, once in my life, from one person and that was a Montenegrin woman." Although many years had passed, he said his nerves still remembered it. (Over My Dead Body).

He retained ties with his old country even after he came to the U. S. For a time, Wolfe sent remittances to his mother each month to her home in Budapest and wrote a monthly letter to an uncle in Belgrade. He retained his ability to speak six (or eight) languages and sent money on occasions to the League of Yugoslavian Youth because he knew how hard it was for even a Montenegrin to be brave on an empty stomach.

When Wolfe arrived in this country, not penniless, he bought the old brownstone, became a naturalized citizen, and set up his business as a private detective. Once settled, Wolfe began to live in what he described as "acceptable circumstances."

Nero Wolfe is not a man who does things by halves, however. When he decided to stop "moving around," he did just that by refusing to leave his house except on rare

personal business. He never left due to mere detective business.

He has his reasons.

To him, leaving the house at any time equated foolhardiness. After taking an automobile ride from Long Island, Wolfe said, "I have decided every man alive today is half idiot and half hero. Only heroes could survive in the maelstrom, and only idiots would want to." (*The Doorbell Rang*). His dislike of vehicles in motion is partly based on his philosophy that the apparent submission of vehicles to control is illusory and they may at their pleasure, and sooner or later will, act on whim. He also fondly argues that nine times out of ten, the places that people are on their way to is no improvement whatever on where they are coming from.

In drastic situations, when circumstances necessitate it, with Archie driving, and Wolfe nevertheless incurring all the same outdoor risks, he sits in the back because if and when the car takes a whim to dart aside and smash into some immovable object, Wolfe believes his chances are better in the back. As far as riding in a taxi in a strange vehicle with a stranger driving, Wolfe says: "I would not enter a taxicab for a chance to solve the sphinx's deepest riddle with all the Nile's cargo as my reward." (*The Red Box*).

His dislike of moving things is not confined to automobiles. He shudders when he hears of a person getting on an airplane voluntarily. Trains he does not trust to start, or, once started, to stop.

Although Wolfe spends most of his days at home, he is not idle, even when a case does not pend. He is up by eight each morning. At a quarter past, Fritz brings his breakfast tray and the morning Times. The tray may hold a meal such as melon, eggs a la Suisse with oatmeal cakes and croissants slathered in blackberry jam, along with a cup of chocolate for him to drink. On rainy days, he breakfasts in bed propped on three pillows with the black silk cover thrown back, but on sunny days, he sits at the table by the window. The sun streams on his pajamas made of eight to ten yards of yellow silk, making a dazzling sight. He never folds the newspaper to read it. He holds it out, wide

open with his arms stretched. Archie claims that this is the most strenuous exercise Wolfe gets. Invariably, Wolfe has finished his breakfast and the paper and is dressed for the day by nine o'clock.

Nero Wolfe wears nice suits with vests. He has a new one of soft light brown with tiny yellow specks that can be seen only under a strong light. Made by Paul Boynton, this suit cost three hundred forty-five dollars. With it Wolfe wears a dark brown silk tie. He had never worn it until one day he and Archie were going to jail because of a dispute with the Police Department. Archie changed his clothes and put on an older casual outfit for the cell time, as the New York lock-up was the worst for everything--food, dirt, smell, companionship but Wolfe, in his usual perverse way, went to jail elegantly clad in his new Boynton suit. In winter, when, on rare occasions, he leaves the house, he wears an overcoat, a size 8 black felt pirate's hat, gloves and a scarf. He carries a walking stick.

He has other suits -- one a dark blue pin-stripe Cheviot he wears with a dark blue tie, and another a brown summer weight self-striped suit he wears with a yellow shirt and maroon tie sporting a narrow maroon stripe. His shirts are mostly canary yellow and he wears two clean ones a day. His socks are also yellow. He has a particularly nice brown tie with tan stripes Constanza Berin sent him from Paris. He had another nice one with curlicues on, it but that one fell into the hands of a murderer who used it to strangle a woman. (Eeny Meeny Murder Mo). In his vest pocket, Wolfe carries a watch. He never carries money.

At nine a.m. exactly, Wolfe leaves his bedroom and goes to the elevator to ride up to the plant rooms where he works on the plants until eleven. There, he removes his suit coat and dons a jacket for working with the orchids.

As immoderate about his orchids as he is about leaving the house, Wolfe is highly competitive with other growers. A grower named Shanks once developed an albino plant. Hearing of it, Wolfe offered Shanks some of his own albino plants in trade. Shanks refused. Wolfe did not take his refusal lightly. On learning that Shanks was

going to display his variety at the North Atlantic Exposition in Crowfield, 237 miles from New York, Wolfe set aside his dislike of automobile travel. He took the long trip, bringing with him his own albino plants, just to beat the one Shanks was showing. (Some Buried Caesar).

Nero Wolfe is obsessed when another grower develops a color he does not have. A grower named Bynoe developed a flamingo-pink vanda. Wolfe wanted to see it but Bynoe kept it under wraps. Then Wolfe heard that Bynoe's wife was going to wear a corsage of the blooms to church on Easter Sunday. Wolfe hired a thief to steal the corsage. As it happened, Mrs. Bynoe was murdered as she came out of church and collapsed on the street before the thief could get the corsage. Undaunted, Wolfe grabbed the flowers off her corpse. On hearing what had happened, Wolfe's first concern was as to the condition of the stolen orchids. (Easter Parade).

Nero Wolfe will do anything to get a new color. Millionaire Lewis Hewitt developed a black orchid in his hundred-foot orchid house on Long Island. He displayed three of the plants at a show. Wolfe went to see them. He wanted those plants so he took full advantage of Hewitt when a piece of Hewitt's property was used in the commission of a murder at the show. Hewitt wanted to avoid public disclosure of the fact. Wolfe took on the task in exchange for the black orchids. He identified the murderer and obtained proof of guilt in short order but the problem was how to avoid public disclosure at the trial. Since the only substitute for a public execution of the murderer would be a private one by the murderer's own hand, it would take some doing. (Black Orchids). But then, as Archie once said, Machiavelli was a simple little shepherd lad compared to Wolfe. (Some Buried Caesar).

When Wolfe is in the plant rooms he works with his botanist, pug-nosed Theodore Horstmann, who is there ten hours a day except on Sunday when he visits a sister in Jersey. Hortsman is about half Wolfe's size, weighing around 137 pounds. At times, he pretends to be annoyed with Wolfe but if anything prevents Wolfe from

showing up on the dot of nine, Hortsmann is anxious and worried about him. He keeps careful records of the plants at his little desk where he keeps a pad of forms. At the end of the day, he stops in the office and puts them on Archie's desk.

Wolfe works on the plants at a long bench, checking for aphids, his fingers nimble and precise. When he sits down, it is usually on one of the stools at the bench or in a chair nearly big enough for him over in a corner. He likes to show his orchids to most people, although it depends. Gushers he can stand, even jostlers, but he can't bear those who pretend they can tell a *P. stuartiana* from a *P. schilleriana*. His one ironclad rule is that no one goes to the plant room for any other purpose than to look at orchids except for Archie and Fritz. This rule is rarely broken. Wolfe is usually willing to invite people who write from out of town and ask to see the orchids; that is, unless they want to bring their children.

From nine to eleven in the morning and four to six in the afternoon on weekdays, Wolfe works his plant room. On Sundays he does not have a regular session. He goes up once or twice to look around and do whatever chores the situation and weather require. He almost never allows anything to disrupt his routine. As he puts it, if he permitted exceptions to his schedule, he would have no schedule. "A schedule broken at will becomes a mere procession of vagaries." (Murder By the Book).

At eleven, Wolfe changes into his suit coat. Carrying a spray of fresh orchid blooms for the vase on his desk, he descends in the elevator to begin his office hours. When he gets downstairs, he may spend time in the kitchen conferring with his chef, Fritz. Wolfe relishes food. Once he and Archie attended what Archie called a "gastronomical world series" prepared by a group of distinguished master chefs. Archie said that Wolfe sat in solemn bliss and "As far as he was concerned, we were in church and Saint Peter was speaking." (Too Many Cooks).

Wolfe's theory is that all you needed to know about any human society was what they ate. If you knew that, you could deduce everything else --culture, philosophy,

morals, politics, everything. Archie's comment about this theory was that if you tried to deduce everything about Wolfe from what he had eaten in the past ten years, you would deduce he was dead. (The Final Deduction).

Wolfe pursues his interest in food as thoroughly as he pursues his interest in orchids. He is intolerant when he finds a recipe that does not meet his standards. He once burned a cookbook because it advised readers to remove the hide from a ham end before putting it in the pot with the lima beans. His final claim was that the brain could be hoodwinked but not the stomach. (Blood Will Tell).

Served a dish that particularly pleases him, Wolfe doesn't forget. As a young man in Europe, he tasted a dish called saucisse minuit. Years later, he learned that the chef who prepared the dish was attending a conference of chefs in this country. Wolfe took a long, arduous overnight train trip to meet the chef in the hope that he could learn the recipe for the dish. The chef had always carefully guarded the secret recipe and adamantly refused to reveal it, even when Wolfe offered him five thousand dollars for it. Wolfe persevered and when the chef had the bad luck to be arrested for a murder, Wolfe worked all night to get him out of jail. The chef, who liked to pay his obligations, offered Wolfe money for his services. Wolfe refused it, saying only the recipe would satisfy the obligation. (Too Many Cooks).

Wolfe and Fritz like to discuss recipes, the exact amount of a spice to add or whether to add the spice at all. Fritz is Swiss and such a fine chef, the Ten for Aristology who pursue the ideal of food and drink invited him to cook one of their dinners (Poison a la Carte).

In the kitchen Fritz wears a cap and apron. He removes the apron and puts on a jacket when he answers the door. His manners are elegant and stiffly formal with women who call at the house. To him, anything in a skirt is a lady and he helps a young woman off with her coat like a headwaiter helping the Duchess of Windsor. However, until she

leaves, he is apprehensive and ill at ease. No matter what her age or appearance, he fears she many have designs on his kitchen. At the same time, when Archie entertained a group of young women from a law firm for dinner as part of an inquiry Fritz had a gleam in his eye and said: "If you need any help with the ladies, Archie, for my age I am not to be ignored. A Swiss has a long usefulness." (Murder By the Book).

Ordinarily, Fritz does not take part in Wolfe's detective cases although he loves conspiracies and sinister things such as when Wolfe or Archie hide in the alcove, using the peephole to spy on someone in the office. He is aware of the activity generated when a case is on because of the telephone calls and people who ring the doorbell. When there are no interruptions, he wonders if the bank account is getting too low. No interruptions mean no clients and no fees. He never asks with words if there is a client but when someone arrives, he may ask Archie with a questioning glance. His salary as chef is about the same as Archie's and his budget for the kitchen is about the same as that for the orchid rooms.

Usually Fritz and Wolfe concur about the seasoning for a dish but occasionally Fritz tries a change without consulting Wolfe. Wolfe turns obstinate when this happens. There is a dish he particularly enjoys which Fritz serves just once a year in May when a farmer delivers eighteen or twenty starlings to the door within two hours of when they are winged. Fritz dresses them and sprinkles them with salt, and, at the proper moment brushes them with melted butter, wraps them in sage leaves, grills them, and arranges them on a platter of hot polenta. One year, Fritz brought the steaming platter into the dining room. Wolfe, eagerly looking forward to the meal, leaned forward, sniffed the dish and missed the sage. When Fritz conceded that, without consulting Wolfe, he had substituted saffron and tarragon, Wolfe refused to eat it, saying coldly: "... it may possibly be edible, but I am in no humor to risk it. Please dispose of it and bring me four coddled eggs and a piece of toast." (The Golden Spiders). Their differences last only until the next meal.

Usually, Wolfe and Archie have lunch and dinner in the dining room. When it is time to eat, using both hands, Wolfe gets the tip of his vest between thumb and finger and pulls down. He never allows business discussions at the table. Now and then he invites guests to dine but there are only two kinds he invites: men for whom he has personal feelings, and there are only eight altogether, only two of whom live in New York; and people who are involved in current cases. When he has a guest, he makes a point of steering table talk to subjects that he thinks are of interest to his visitor. He says rather fancifully that a guest is a jewel on the cushion of hospitality.

Lewis Hewitt comes to dinner about twice a year. Lon Cohen of the Gazette is an occasional guest. At dinner one evening when he was present, Fritz served clam cakes with chili sauce, beef braised in red wine, squash with sour cream and chopped dill, avocado with watercress and black walnut kernels, and the Liederkranz. The talk covered the state of the union, the state of the feminine mind, oysters, and the price of books.

Another time when Wolfe and Archie were alone, Wolfe chose cosmetics as a topic. That day a Miss Gertrude Frazee, founder of the Women's Nature League of America was in the office. She had asked what they thought of women "who smear themselves with grease and soot and paint and stink themselves up with stuff made from black tar and decayed vegetable matter and tumors from male deer." Wolfe did not invite Miss Frazee to dinner but he went to the encyclopedia after she left to check cosmetics. At dinner he related to Archie such facts as that a bill was introduced in the English Parliament in 1770 that would have made a marriage null and void where virgins, maids, or widows imposed upon, seduced and betrayed into matrimony any of his Majesty's subjects by scents, paints, cosmetic washes, artificial teeth, false hair, Spanish wool, iron stays, hoops, high heeled shoes and bolstered hips. (Before Midnight).

He rarely invites a female to dinner. Archie says that there are many things about the old brownstone Wolfe likes such as the furniture, the rugs, the plant rooms, the

kitchen, and the books but the thing he likes best is that there is no woman in it and it would suit him fine if one never crossed the doorsill. Wolfe says he rarely dislikes women and never likes them. (Some Buried Caesar). To him, all women are hysterical and "their moments of calm are merely recuperative periods between outbursts." (Too Many Cooks). They are dotty or devious or both he says. (Death of A Demon). He holds it against Jane Austin for forcing him to concede a woman could write a good novel. (The Mother Hunt). Told there was a woman in the office who might shake his hand, Wolfe picked up a glass with one hand and a beer bottle with the other. One female did get an invitation. That was Maryella Timms, a Southerner, who showed Fritz and Wolfe how to make corned beef hash using fresh pig chitlins. Wolfe was so impressed that he conversed with her through most of the meal. He was not only sociable but also positively respectful. (Cordially Invited For Murder).

When things are going well, Wolfe is expansive, talkative, and good humored at meals but when a case is going wrong, he can be grim, sullen, and peevish. At either time, he hates to have meals interrupted. Once started, Archie says, there may be something or somebody Wolfe would leave the table for but Archie does not know what or who. No matter how bad a case is going, however, Wolfe is attentive to a visitor's needs and never fails to offer refreshments. He once offered refreshments to a guest and was refused because "It takes time." Wolfe asked: "...is time really so precious? Mine isn't. If yours is, all the more tempting to steal a little." Archie commented that the twelve-year-old Big Sandy bourbon being offered was worth stealing a little time for. (A Right to Die).

Wolfe never eats between dinner and breakfast but that is not to say he does not drink anything. Any time after lunch Fritz may hear the two long and one short beer signal. For a while, Wolfe kept beer in barrels in the basement but later switched to bottles, after trying forty-nine kinds to find one that was potable. As to wine, he remarked of a bottle of Chateau Latour '29 "It would soothe a tiger." (Too Many Cooks).

On Sundays when Fritz is off, meals are less formal. Although Wolfe is a fine cook himself, and can turn out a dish of couronne de canard au riz a la Normande, he usually does something simple on Sunday like eggs au beurre noir.

Following his meals, Wolfe believes the best digestive is a book because it occupies the mind and leaves the stomach in privacy. His favorite place to read is in his comfortable chair at his desk in the office.

Wolfe is usually in the office even when a case is not pending except when he is in the plant rooms or at the dining table until about midnight. Usually he reads. He is not a fast reader but he is a demanding one. His knowledge of words is as comprehensive as his knowledge of food and plants. He does not bow to the dictionary either. When he paid \$47.50 for a new edition and it said the words infer and imply were interchangeable, he took it to the fireplace in the front room, tore it apart, and burned it, cover and all. He considered it subversive because it threatened the integrity of the English language. He said he was not a government or a committee of censors. Having paid for the book and finding it subversive and intolerably offensive, he destroyed it. (Gambit)

He has his own potent way with words. Offered fifty thousand dollars to fake evidence, he replied: "Pfui." (Gambit). Offered cash for a fee in a way that would keep it off his income tax, he turned down what he called skullduggery." (The Silent Speaker). At other times, such as when he cautioned Archie about taking remarks about detectives personally, he is more pedantic. He said: "Detach yourself, Archie, personal resentment of a general statement is a barbarous remnant of a fetish-superstition." Archie may have been justified when he called the remarks "flossy." (Fer de Lance).

Besides reading books, Wolfe spends his leisure time in various ways. He reads the Wall Street Journal and other current material to find out what his fellow beings are up to or works crossword puzzles. He allows twenty minutes a week for looking at advertisements and occasionally listens to radio programs. He rarely misses the Joy Boys. In the evening, he turns on the television as many as eight times. He glares at it

from one to three minutes, turns it off, and goes back to his book. He likes to study maps in his atlas with a magnifying glass or to stand at the globe, twirling it to far off places.

The problem is that if he is to continue to live in these "acceptable circumstances", he has to earn money for salaries and the budgets for the plants and the kitchen. Archie says that Wolfe could easily borrow money when the bank balance is low but Wolfe once said that if he were to begin borrowing money he would end by devising means of persuading the Secretary of the Treasury to lend him the gold reserve. (Fer de Lance).

Wolfe prefers to earn his money. That is where Archie Goodwin comes in.

Chapter Three

Archie Goodwin On Stage

At the house on West Thirty-fifth Street, Nero Wolfe is the principal player but Archie Goodwin tends to steal the show. Partly it is his sense of humor. Partly it is the sheer enjoyment he takes in his work and in his personal life. Mainly, it is probably his refusal to knuckle under to any man or any cop or any woman for that matter. He says:

“I’m Nero Wolfe’s employee, body guard, office manager and wage slave, but I can quit any minute. I’m my own man.” (Over My Dead Body). Lieutenant Rowcliff of the Police Department says: “This bird’s never been tamed yet.” (The Red Box)

Archie is just under six—feet tall and weighs 180 pounds. He is about twenty—nine years of age. Archie was born in Ohio on October 23rd. As a child, he liked to walk in the woods and pastures. One of his childhood memories is of being impressed by a picture he saw in his father’s library of Lord Byron. In high school, he was pretty good at geometry and football. After graduation, he attended college for a short time until he decided it was childish, and came to New York. At first, he worked at a job guarding a pier, then was recommended to Wolfe for a chore Wolfe wanted done. Archie did the chore and was offered a full—time job by Wolfe. He accepted, came to live in the old brownstone, and as a licensed detective worked with Wolfe on his cases. During the war, he was in the Army serving as a major in Military Intelligence. Although he requested that he be sent overseas, his requests were denied and he was placed on special assignment to assist Wolfe in various projects the Army entrusted to Wolfe who served without pay. Following his release from the Army, he continued, as before, to work with Wolfe.

Archie’s day-to-day routine varies. He needs eight and a half to nine hours of sleep. After a late night session of work, he may not turn out until nine or nine-thirty in the morning unless something important is on. Ordinarily, his bedside clock turns the

radio on at 7:30 a.m. It takes him about forty minutes to get rigged for the day. He spends a lot of money for his clothes. One of his favorite outfits is a gray suit with pin checks, a light blue shirt and a dark blue tie. Another outfit he likes is a quiet brown suit with a faint tan stripe, a light tan shirt, a green challis four-in—hand, and a dark green soft brim hat. He finds it a good idea to consider what kind of place he is going to and to dress accordingly. When he is going to see someone on business who lives on an estate, he wears a dark blue suit, blue shirt, tan tie and a panama hat. For a weekend in the country, he chooses a mixed tweed made by Fradick. His evening clothes set him back three hundred dollars. He doesn't like to wear a hat before Thanksgiving and the only time he wears a straw one in summer is when he "might need the tone." He carries a penknife, his key ring, a pencil flashlight and his wallet in his pockets but he says he was born neat. He does not go around with pocket maps pushed in.

When he is dressed, he goes to the kitchen for breakfast. Fritz never tries to talk to him as Archie does not break through his personal morning fog until he has emptied his coffee cup. The morning Times newspaper is in tie rack on the little table and he reads it while he breakfasts on a meal such as Fritz's creole pork sausage and fritters.

By nine a.m. he is usually in the office. Even when no case is pending he is occupied with routine chores other than his duties as a detective. He dusts the desks, empties the wastebaskets, changes the water in the vase on Wolfe's desk, fills Wolfe's fountain pen and deals with the mail. Archie says Wolfe answers neatly all letters, especially handwritten ones, because, "It is a mandate of civility". Archie types the letters and when Wolfe reads them, it is not to catch errors because Wolfe knows there won't be any but to let Archie know that if he ever makes one it will be spotted. A lot of Archie's time is devoted to recording statistics Theodore brings down on germination and blooming performance of the orchids.

On financial matters, he makes out checks on Wolfe's account at the Continental

Bank and Trust Company for Wolfe's signature and keeps track of the bank balance. Go Fridays, he makes out salary checks for himself, Fritz and Theodore. Wolfe signs them and delivers the checks to each of them personally. Archie knows to the penny how much is in the cash reserve kept in the safe. He sends in Wolfe's quarterly income tax installment payments and prepares the annual return.

He is a rapid, accurate typist and his shorthand signs are so abbreviated he can get down every word of fast conversations. When he is typing reports, he can type as many as ten pages in an hour but he averages around six or seven and has been known to mosey along at four or five. He answers the telephone and checks out stop-in callers at the front door. He deals summarily with some. Archie helped a slick youth who wanted help getting through college only as far as the stoop.

When there is a check to be deposited or other errands nearby, Archie usually walks to his destination. Before he leaves the house, he tells Fritz, fixes the phone to ring in the kitchen and locks the safe. Fritz may put the chain bolt in place while Archie is away from the house. Archie likes to walk on Manhattan sidewalks. He says that the angle you get on people and things is absolutely different from the one you get when you are in a car or in anything else that does the moving for you. (The Final Deduction). He walks even it is twenty above and at every corner a snowy blast bends him nearly double and he has to grit his teeth to go on by all the doors to shops and bars and hotel lobbies. For errands at a distance, he takes the car. He enjoys the Parkway out of the corner of his eye with its bushes covered with flowers, a new crop of leaves, and the grass thick and green. He says he also appreciates the cows in pastures as long as he has a car he can depend on to get him back to town.

He has lunch and dinner with Wolfe in the dining room. He enjoys Fritz's cooking but at times he is disgusted when Wolfe and Fritz get too intense about a recipe. When they were testing whether two eggs or three eggs were better in spoon bread, Archie stalked out and went to Sam's Place. He climbed onto a stool at the counter muttering to

himself. Sam demanded “Spoon bread” What the hell is spoon bread?” which suited Archie just fine. (Cordially Invited To Meet Death)

After office hours, when a case is not underway, Archie goes out. One evening he paid \$5.50 for a theater ticket to ‘Scrambled Eggs.’ Some evenings he goes to a movie or to Phil’s for a few games of pool or to the Garden for the middleweight fights or to the hockey games. One night a week he plays poker with friends and on weekends he sometimes goes to Lily Rowan’s country place. For his vacation one year he went to Canada, another year to Norway.

On other evenings, he takes a date for a show or for dinner at Rusterman’s or a Brazilian restaurant on Fifty-second Street. Archie is known as a good dancer and he and Lily often go to the Flamingo for an evening of dancing. Archie has a hearty appreciation and approval of pretty girls. Once he saw five hundred of them, clean, healthy, and friendly, at a downtown office. To him, it was an “ocean of opportunity.” On another occasion, at a flower show he and Wolfe were attending, he saw two pretty girls and was moved to remark: “what are orchids to a pair of blossoms like that?”

Archie does not believe in being distant with females between twenty and thirty who meet a certain standard in contour and coloring and as Wolfe once said that although he did not know why, they willingly seem to want to spend time with Archie. (The Silent Speaker) Archie immodestly concedes, “They melt like chocolate bars in the sun.” (Eeeny Meeny Murder Mo). He has said that he can slide through the old come—hither look like molasses through a tin horn. (Where There’s a Will).

Wolfe thinks highly of Archie’s judgment of women. Wolfe has never taken a murder suspect for a client if he thought there was any chance that he was guilty. (A Right To Die). In one case, a woman named Alice had just told him she wanted to shoot her husband when news came that he had been shot. There was reason to suspect her but Wolfe still took her for a client. He asked Archie’s opinion and Archie said she was innocent. Wolfe was satisfied saying Archie’s judgment of women under thirty was

infallible. (Death Of A Demon)

Archie is interested in women and he says he has seen dozens of them he wouldn't mind marrying but he has never been pulled so hard he lost his balance. When he meets a new one, he is fully alive to all the possibilities but he never seems to get infatuated. He loves to do a good job more than anything else and he supposes that is what shorts tie line. (League of Frightened Men).

When he is at home in the evening he sometimes reads books but, unlike Wolfe, he does not get any real satisfaction out of one. He feels there is nothing alive about it and you might as well try to enjoy yourself on a picnic in a graveyard. He has his own opinion about lawyers who defend what he calls "dirty" books. Their argument that if the author's purpose is a worthy literary purpose, the obscenity does not matter is rejected by Archie. He has said that they might as well say if his purpose is to buy his old grandmother a silk dress, it does not matter if he grabs the jack from a Salvation Army kettle. (League of Frightened Men). His opinion about most lawyers is not particularly high at any time. One lawyer, Archie said he would not hire him to change blotters. (Murder By The Book)

On the days when Archie is doing routine office chores, walking around Manhattan, or going out in the evening, he is nevertheless constantly aware of the bank balance. When it gets low, Archie's real work as a detective with Wolfe begins.

In some ways, Wolfe and Archie are two-of-a kind. They are both stubborn. According to Archie, Wolfe is always part mule, and sometimes all mule. (The Final Deduction). But so is Archie. It took several days to clear the atmosphere the time Wolfe's comment about Archie's weekend plans ticked Archie off and he tore up his paycheck. A new check had to be drawn and Archie was too stubborn to do it without being told and Wolfe was too stubborn to tell him to. (Prisoner's Base).

Neither likes to compromise. One evening Archie wanted to have after-dinner

coffee in the dining room as he was tired and wanted to go to bed. Wolfe wanted to have it in the office, as was their custom. Archie had his in the dining room and Wolfe had his in the office. (The Silent Speaker)

Neither wants the other to get the upper hand. Once when their lives were threatened by a crook named Zeck if they continued on a case, Archie said to Wolfe: “You know perfectly well that I would rather eat soap than have you think I would knuckle under to that son of a bitch, and I know that you would rather put horseradish on oysters than have me think you would. I might if you didn’t know about it, and you might if I didn’t know about it, but as it is we’re stuck.” (In The Best Families).

Both like to kid lawyers. On one case there were four lawyers and one disbarred lawyer in the office. Archie does not take notes unless Wolfe tells him to and Wolfe had not said to do so. Archie knew the lawyers expected the conversation to be private and confidential so when the session began, he took out his notebook and began scribbling. The outraged reaction of the lawyers was instantaneous and unanimous. Wolfe chuckled. He knew what Archie was up to and the idea of getting the goats of four lawyers and one ex-lawyer at one crack appealed to him too. (Murder By The Book). In his opinion, lawyers “think everything has two sides, which is nonsense...” (Booby Trap)

Archie sometimes seems to be trying to get Wolfe’s goat. During an investigation, Wolfe often instructs Archie to bring a witness to the office so that he can be questioned. People don’t necessarily want to come and it is not always easy for Archie to go and bring back a prominent, wealthy man Wolfe might want to see. He said once that someday Wolfe would tell him to go get the Senate and the House of Representatives. If Wolfe wants them though,

Archie would try to bring them. It’s a matter of pride that he does whatever he is called upon to do. So when Wolfe sent Archie to bring a woman named Zorka, Archie

followed instructions. He had a difficult time locating her and when he did, she was drunk. By the time they arrived at Wolfe's house, she was in a stupor. He got his shoulder under her, hoisted her up, and carried her up the stoop into the office. The couch was covered with maps so he put her on the floor in the middle of the rug, to Wolfe's consternation, and announced casually, "Madame Zorka." (Over My Dead Body).

Archie retaliates when he thinks Wolfe does not show proper appreciation for something he has accomplished. In one investigation, Wolfe wanted Archie to take a woman out to see what he could learn. It was unlikely the young woman would accept but Archie called her and was able to make a date for lunch the following day. With a gleam of self-congratulation in his eye, he told Wolfe of the appointment. Wolfe said, "This evening would be better. Archie counted ten and retorted, "...try getting her to meet you any time whatever, even at Tiffany's to try things on." (The Silent Speaker).

In the middle of a particularly difficult matter, Archie searched until he found a stone used in a murder. He was proud of his find. When Wolfe said all the stone established was corroboration, Archie was disgruntled. Knowing how Wolfe likes to talk at the table, Archie got even immediately by not eating dinner with him and used the time to think up a few comments, timely and appropriate. (The Second Confession).

He may also hold a grudge when Wolfe withholds information from him. Usually, when they are working on a case Archie is always at his desk during conferences with clients and witnesses. When Rudolph Hansen said the matter was confidential and asked to see Wolfe privately, Wolfe said: "This is private. You glance at Mr. Goodwin. He may not be indispensable, but he is irremovable." (Before Midnight)

No one ever binds Wolfe to secrecy if it means leaving Archie out but now and then Wolfe himself leaves Archie out. When this happens, Archie gets back at Wolfe by such tactics as using the pencil sharpener because he knows the noise irritates Wolfe or

by raising one eyebrow when Wolfe gives him instructions because he knows it disconcerts Wolfe. At times, Archie is hard pressed to hold the line. Once when Wolfe left Archie in the dark, Archie was exhausted as he had been up all night on a flight from another city. After dinner, Wolfe told him to go to bed but Archie was so ticked off at Wolfe he wouldn't take the suggestion. As Archie put it, "God knows I would have liked to but I got stubborn and went for a walk instead." (Murder By The Book).

Part of Archie's job is to keep after Wolfe if he thinks Wolfe is laying down on the job during a case. He does not always know what Wolfe is up to but he does know when Wolfe is up to nothing at all. (And Be A Villain). In one case, the investigation was at a halt. Archie was after Wolfe to get to work. Thinking to squelch him, Wolfe asked, "What would you suggest?" Not even Wolfe can squelch Archie though. Archie retorted: "it's not up to me. If I did the suggesting, that would be my desk and this would be yours." (Before Midnight).

It is not surprising that Archie has quit or been fired thirty or forty times. Mainly they are just blowing off steam. (Poison a la Carte). Somehow they mend the break. Wolfe once said to Archie: "I cannot remake the universe, and must therefore put up with this one. What is, is, including you." (The Red Box).

At times, they are even companionable. One late evening after visitors left there were glasses and refreshments to clear. Wolfe picked up his book and stayed to keep Archie company while he took things out and straightened things up. If Wolfe had gone to bed, leaving the mess to Archie, it might have implied Archie was merely a menial, so he stayed to collaborate. (A Right To Die).

Archie would not admit it to Wolfe but his heart gives an extra thump when Wolfe mutters “Satisfactory”, about the only praise Wolfe gives. He feels it in his bones that Wolfe will never let them tumble into a hole without having a ladder to climb out. When Wolfe gave him a brown, ostrich—skin card case for his birthday that was tooled in gold with orchids on one side and Colt automatic pistols on the other, Archie said he might have traded it for New York City if a couple of good suburbs were thrown in. (League of Frightened Men). One evening Wolfe had an appointment with a man in his office and he told Archie to go on upstairs. Archie did not know the man and was concerned about Wolfe’s safety. He went upstairs but he was uneasy so he stood guard at the top of the stairs for three hours until the conference was over. (The Second Confession).

Archie says Wolfe is the best orchid grower in New York, a champion eater and beer—drinker and a genius. (Help Wanted Male). He adds: “ He’s pig—headed and high—nosed and toplofty, and he thinks he is the best detective in the world, and so do I...” (The Father Hunt).

Wolfe says of Archie: “He is young and vain and spends too much for his clothes. (The Silent Speaker). He is vulnerable to young women...who have a knack of stimulating his love of chivalry and adventure and his preoccupation with the picturesque and the passionate. (Prisoner’s Base). He is a constant reminder of how distressing it would be to have someone present - - a wife, for instance, whom I could not dismiss at will. (Fer de Lance).

He also says: Archie is an “excellent observer, not in any respect an *utter* fool, completely intrepid and too conceited to be seduced into perfidy...” (The Silent Speaker).

He is irreplaceable. (The Golden Spiders). His memory is incomparable. (The Final Deduction). When he is proved right, the most revealing manifestation of his self—esteem is not an action but an exclusion. He never crows. His discretion is the twin of his valor. (The Red Box). Outside the house, Archie “is me, in effect - - if not my alter ego, my vicar.” (Gambit).

People in New York know that when they need the best detectives a lot of money can buy, the house on West Thirty-fifth Street is the place to go.

Chapter Four

Money Plays A Part

According to Wolfe, a government, like an individual, spends money for any or all of three reasons: because it needs to, because it wants to or, simply because it has it to spend. (And Be A Villain).

There was a time Wolfe recalls when a thousand dinars a year was ample for him but more like a gross of ten thousand dollars a month is needed to pay the salaries of Archie, Fritz, and Theodore and for the budgets of the orchids and kitchen. Ho and Archie earn the money through fees for investigations. The rule, he says, is to never collect or accept a fee you haven't earned but with that reservation, get all you can and don't~ even discuss a case with a prospective client until you know about his ability to pay. (The Golden Spiders).

When someone calls for an appointment, Archie checks out their financial standing through calls to Wolfe's bank or to Lon Cohen of the Gazette or by other sources. Wolfe places a high value on his services. As he says, "In my own field I am an expert. I sell expert information, advice and services." (Before I Die).

He does not give away his expertise. A banker by the name of Barrett once asked Wolfe for some information. Wolfe told him: "I am always reluctant to make a present of information. Just as you are reluctant to make a present of money. You're a banker and your business is selling money. I'm a detective and mine is selling information..." (Over My Dead Body).

If he has reached an opinion on a matter, he will not give the opinion away either. Frederick Osgood's son was found dead in a pasture where a bull was kept. In the opinion of the authorities the bull had killed him. Wolfe knew of the circumstances and Osgood asked if he thought the bull had killed his son. Wolfe said: "Expert opinions cost

money, Mr. Osgood. Especially mine. .“ (Some Buried Caesar).

One client was willing to pay the freight. Mrs. Rachel Bruner sought Wolfe’s help on a matter that was troubling her. She had sent 10,000 books critical of methods used by the F.B.I. to prominent people all over the country. Afterwards, the F.B.I. began snooping on her and her family.

She wanted Wolfe to compel the agency to stop annoying her. She admitted she did not know how that could be done. Wolfe told her he did not disapprove of her sending the books but agreed with her lawyers who said it was quixotic. He said that as “the don endured affliction, so must you.” He pointed out that the F.B.I. had many times his resources.

Mrs. Bruner would not take no for an answer. She said she thought he was afraid of nothing and nobody. Wolfe answered peevishly, “...I can dodge folly without backing into fear.” However, when she handed him a check for a hundred thousand dollars, it was enough for him to disregard the folly and to turn quixotic on his own. (The Doorbell Rang)

Client Otis Jarrell had a reputation as a tough operator who could smell a chance for a squeeze play in his sleep. He rated upwards of thirty million dollars. He came to Wolfe to get evidence his daughter-in-law was a snake. People who must have had advance information of his plans had ruined several of his deals. He thought she was passing on the information. He wanted Archie to come and stay at his house, pretending to be his secretary. It would take a man of Archie’s reputation, Jarrell said, because she was as slick as grease. He brought along a cash retainer of ten thousand dollars. Archie later reported there was nothing reptilian about the way the daughter—in-law moved and she didn’t slither or hiss like a cobra or rattle like a rattler but she might be a witch as he had found himself following her like a lap dog. (If Death Ever Slept).

Miss Blount, daughter of Matthew Blount, president of Blount Textile Corporation, came to Wolfe when her father was arrested for the murder of Paul Jerin.

Jerin had been playing chess at the Gambit Club and died after drinking a cup of chocolate. Blount had served the chocolate, believed to contain arsenic, and had washed out the cup. All the evidence was against him but his daughter believed he was innocent. She came to Wolfe because she had heard he could do things nobody else could do — that he was a wizard. Wolfe was reluctant to take the case since Blount’s attorney did not approve of hiring Wolfe and Blount would probably go along with his attorney. Without their help, Wolfe said, he “couldn’t move a finger.”

Miss Blount put it to him: “Does a wizard only do easy things? What if you’re the only man on earth who can save my father from being convicted of a murder he didn’t do?” Archie said she had hit exactly the right note, calling Wolfe a wizard and implying that he was the one and only --that plus the twenty—two thousand dollars she said she had in her bag. (Gambit).

The fee was high enough also when a group of men who had received poems with threatening overtones came to Wolfe for help. They had all been students at Harvard twenty—five years before and they believed a fellow student was responsible for the threats. Wolfe offered to remove all their apprehension and expectation of injury about the matter for a fee. Wolfe apportioned the fee. It was reasonable enough for one of the group, a newspaperman, who was asked to pay only one hundred and eighty dollars. A doctor was asked to pay seven thousand, a banker eight thousand, and the balance by the rest of the group to a total of fifty-six thousand, nine hundred and fifteen dollars. (League of Frightened Men). It is not surprising that the banker was hit with the lion’s share. Wolfe once told about an international financier who when confronted by a holdup man with a gun, automatically handed over not only his money and jewelry but also his shirt and pants, because it didn’t occur to him that a robber might draw the line somewhere. (Over My Dead Body).

Both the fee and the problem have to be worthwhile for Wolfe to take on a case.

A grower asked Wolfe to investigate who deliberately infected his plants with a fungus disease. There was no evidence of deliberate poisoning and the fungus could have been carried in different ways by a tool or a pair of gloves used in infected soil. He offered Wolfe one thousand dollars. Wolfe was sympathetic as between growers a fatal fungus makes a bond but Wolfe turned him down. He explained that the effort and expense were out of proportion to the object sought. He said, "You wouldn't walk across the continent to take a swim in the Pacific Ocean." (Black Orchids).

On the other hand, Wolfe does not sit in judgment as to the motive of the client who can pay his fee. John R. Wellman, a wholesale grocer from Peoria, Illinois, came to New York to hire Wolfe to find the person who killed his daughter. He said he knew that hiring Wolfe was "vindictive and wicked" but he wanted revenge for her death. Wolfe told him, "Morality of vengeance is not a factor in my acceptance or refusal of a case." (Murder By The Book).

Wolfe accepted the case of the man who told Wolfe he was going to be murdered by a man named Conroy Blaney. He did not expect Wolfe to keep Blaney from killing him; he just did not want Blaney to get away with it. (Instead of Evidence)

Wolfe sometimes takes a case even though he would rather turn it down. Three women who were sisters named April, May, and June came to Wolfe following the death of their wealthy brother, Noel Hawthorne. When his will was read, they learned he had left an apple to June, a pear to May, a peach to April, five-hundred thousand to his wife Daisy, and the residue of seven million to la femme Naomi Karn. Daisy intended to contest the will. The sisters wanted to avoid the publicity of a will contest by persuading Miss Karn to accept a settlement. They came to Wolfe because they needed the services of a detective - - one that was able, astute, discreet and unscrupulous --to find a way to bring pressure on Miss Karn more compelling than that of a court contest of the will. Wolfe hated fights about wills, having once gone so far as to tell a prospective client that

he refused to engage in a tug of war with a dead man's guts for a rope. Nevertheless he took the case because the bank balance was the lowest it had been for years. (Where There's a Will).

Usually, there is a flow of clients coming to Wolfe but there are times when the bank balance is low and no client is forthcoming. Then Wolfe and Archie have to seek one out. At one such time, the murder of the director of the federal Bureau of Price Regulation was unsolved. The murder had happened at a dinner for the National Industrial Association whose members attending the dinner represented in the aggregate assets of something like thirty billion dollars. It appearing the Association could pay his fee, Wolfe devised a scheme to inveigle them into hiring him to investigate the murder as the Association was receiving a lot of adverse publicity. The scheme was carried out by Archie who paid calls on Inspector Cramer of the New York Police Department, on the F.B.I., and on the public relations department of the Association. At the Association office, he dropped a memo on the floor before he left which referred to an approval for him to inspect the scene of the crime that had Cramer's initials on it, actually put on the memo by Archie. The idea was to raise the specter of Wolfe coming into the case. The Association took the bait and a day later, Wolfe had a retainer of ten thousand dollars with the ultimate charge including expenses left open. (The Silent Speaker).

Another time when the bank account was low, Archie took the lead. Llewellyn Frost wanted Wolfe to investigate the murder of Molly Lauck who died after she ate a piece of poisoned candy. Wolfe turned him down because Frost wanted him to go to the office where the poisoning took place. With Archie's connivance, Frost produced a letter signed by six orchid growers urging Wolfe to take the case. Heading the list was the name of a grower who had recently received from an agent in Sarawak four bulbs of a

pink *Coelogyne pandurata*, never seen before, and had scorned Wolfe's offer of three thousand dollars for two of them. There was no guarantee that the grower would change his mind even if Wolfe solved the case but Wolfe took the bait. (The Red Box)

Once Wolfe passed up a fee to even a score. A corporation was grateful to Wolfe for his work in exposing a murderer and offered him a fee although the corporation was not a client. Wolfe knew the corporation sponsored radio commentator, Paul Emerson. Wolfe listened to him but seldom to the end as he thought Emerson would be more at home in Hitler's Germany. One evening Emerson compounded his error by attacking Wolfe. Wolfe declined the fee but suggested the corporation no longer sponsor Emerson. The corporation obliged. (The Second Confession)

At other times, no amount of money could buy Wolfe's services. A Miss Tedder, just twenty-one years old, came to Wolfe for help in finding ransom money in a kidnapping case Wolfe was working on. She got off on the wrong foot by patronizing Wolfe and by suggesting Wolfe could not possibly appreciate his Shirvan rug. Wolfe wanted any information she had about the case so he let her remarks pass until he gulled her into telling everything she knew. After wringing her dry, he let her have it saying it was "amazing that a creature so obtuse could live so long without meeting disaster. . . I don't know how a brain that is never used passes the time..." After helping Miss Tedder out, Archie chided Wolfe for "taking candy from a baby." (The Final Deduction)

He also gave short shrift to Mrs. Laszlo, who wanted his help when an attempt was made to poison her husband. She had been married to Wolfe's friend, Matko Vukcic and had divorced him five years before to marry another man. Wolfe resented the way she had treated Marko and he wanted nothing to do with her. In a later conversation with her he explained why. He said: "It is not decent to induce the cocaine habit in a man, but it is monstrous to do so and then suddenly withdraw his supply of the drug." "You saw Marko and you wanted him. You enveloped him with your miasma - - you made that the only

air he wanted to breathe -- and then by caprice, without warning, you deprived him of it and left him gasping.”(Too Many Cooks). That seems reason enough to steer clear of Mrs. Laszio.

Wolfe’s reasons for taking a case can be other than a fee. When he and Archie were away from home at the North Atlantic Exposition, Archie suspects Wolfe only accepted a case so they could stay in comfortable rooms at the client’s house rather than the small, noisy, smelly hotel room that was all that was available to them. (Some Buried Caesar).

Now and then, Wolfe has a case thrust upon him such as when Fritz was upset because food cooked by him was poisoned and killed a man. (Poison a la Carte). There was also the time Wolfe was one of the speakers at a picnic and a man was killed in the tent behind the stage. The only possible murderer was among the group backstage, including Wolfe and Archie. (Fourth of July Picnic)

On another occasion, Wolfe and Archie had words. Archie happened to have a fake marriage license in his pocket with his name on it with that of a woman he knew. She was going to show it to a man she was seeing in the hope it would make him propose. When Archie and Wolfe were at loggerheads, Archie pulled out the license and told Wolfe he was getting married. Naturally Wolfe was curious about the woman. He knew she and Archie were attending an office Christmas party the next day at the office of a man Wolfe knew. At the party, a man was murdered. The police were wondering most who the mysterious man was who had played Santa Claus. For reasons of his own, Wolfe worked fast to solve the case before they found out. (Christmas Party)

When Wolfe accepts a client, he earns his money. One client paid him a retainer to look into a financial matter concerning her husband. When she was killed shortly afterwards, her lawyer questioned Wolfe’s right to keep the retainer. Wolfe told him, “You are not my mentor in propriety and ethics.” Wolfe has his own code of ethics. He

earned the retainer by discovering who had killed his client. He said he could not have his office turned into an anteroom for the morgue. (The Golden Spiders).

Ordinarily, Wolfe earns his fees for the reason he was hired. When the telephone begins to ring more often, and there are more callers at the front door, Fritz knows that a new investigation is underway.

Chapter Five

A Cast of Suspects

A European chef was discussing a murder case with Wolfe. He commented: “True, it is bad to stab a man in the back, but when one is in a hurry the niceties must sometimes be overlooked.” (Too Many Cooks).

During Wolfe’s investigations, it is the ‘niceties’ the murderer may have overlooked that sometimes gives Wolfe the opening he needs to solve a case. Although some of his cases do not begin as murder investigations, murder often intervenes. According to Wolfe, nothing is easier than to kill a man. The difficulty arises in attempting to avoid the consequences. He once said that no man could commit so complicated a deed as a premeditated murder and leave no opening. The only way to commit a murder and remain safe from detection despite any ingenuity in pursuit and trusting to no luck is if the murder is impromptu. The murderer awaits his opportunity, keeps his wits about him, and strikes in the instant offered but the luxury of the impromptu murder is afforded only by those who happen to be in no great hurry about it. (League of Frightened Men).

In either case, the premeditated or the impromptu murder, the difficulty is in discovering the opening left by the murderer, if any. In doing so, Wolfe does not search for tobacco ash or a coat button or the clues that may be left behind by the murderer. As Archie says, Wolfe wouldn’t go to the window to see the scene of the crime. Instead, Wolfe relies on his intellect to find the truth. He once distinguished the work of the private detective from scientific crime detection.

Wolfe said: "The role of science in crime detection is worthy, honorable, and effective but it has little part in the activity of a private detective who aspires to eminence. Anyone of moderate capacity can become adept with a vernier caliper, a camera, a microscope, a spectrograph, or a centrifuge, but they are merely the servants of detection. Science in detection can be distinguished, even brilliant, but it can never replace either the inexorable march of a fine intellect through a jungle of lies and fears to the clearing of truth, or the flash of perception along a sensitive nerve touched off by a tone of a voice or a flicker of an eye." (The Golden Spiders)

He compares himself as a private detective to an artist saying an artist's deepest secret of excellence is a discerning elimination - - he must leave out vastly more than he puts in and at the same time, leave out nothing that is vital to his work. Similarly, as a detective, in the labyrinth of any problem that confronts him, Wolfe must select the most promising paths. If he attempted to follow all at once he would arrive nowhere so he must exercise the same discerning elimination as the artist. To arrive at the truth, he must ignore great quantities of facts and impingements and yet he must ignore no fact that proved to have significance. (League of Frightened Men).

In selecting the most promising path when going for a well-concealed murderer, Wolfe says it is always necessary to trample down improbabilities to get a path started but it is foolhardy to do so until a direction is plainly indicated. (And Be A Villain).

At the beginning of a case, he points out that nothing is obvious in itself as obviousness is subjective. He gives as an example three pursuers who learn the fact that a fugitive boarded a train for Philadelphia. To one -- it is obvious he has gone to

Philadelphia; to the second -- it is obvious he left the train at Newark and has gone someplace else; to the third, who knows the fugitive is clever, it is obvious he did not leave the train at Newark because that would be obvious but stayed on and went to Philadelphia. (The Silent Speaker).

Consequently, in deciding the direction to take in an investigation, he does not necessarily take what might be the ‘obvious’ direction to the police or others. It may appear obvious to the police that a certain person committed the crime such as in the Blount case where all the evidence pointed to Matthew Blount having killed Jerin. When Wolfe took on the investigation of the murder for Miss Blount he had to look beyond the obvious. He could not eliminate Blount from suspicion by simply proving his innocence.

Wolfe has said that the to eliminate someone from suspicion of murder is tommyrot. “Innocence is negative and can never be established; you can only establish guilt. The only way I can apodictically eliminate any individual from consideration as the possible murderer is to find out who did it.” (Some Buried Caesar).

It. is never easy. Wolfe says that a murderer uses “all possible resource, cunning, resolution and malice to evade your grasp.” (Omit Flowers).

When Wolfe begins an investigation, then, he is searching for any opening the murderer may have left. To find the opening, Wolfe sifts through a jungle of lies and fears, relying on either his intellect or a flash of perception to find the clearing of the truth. He assembles great quantities of facts and impingements and ignores many of them while not ignoring any fact of vital significance. He looks beyond the obvious and eliminates no one from suspicion until he finds who is guilty.

Archie has said: of the three angles to a murder problem -- means, opportunity

and motive -- you pick the one that seems most likely to open a crack. If means, opportunity and motive are hopeless, all you can do is go fishing. Catch somebody in a lie. Find two pieces that are supposed to fit but don't. Find someone who saw or heard something. You need either a genius or a lucky break. (Too Many Clients).

However, even where it appears there is no opening or lucky break, Wolfe finds a way. He does not do detective work by halves anymore than he does anything else by halves but he first begins by looking for the opening.

At the onset of an investigation, Wolfe and Archie acquire as much information as is available to the public about the crime through newspaper accounts and, at times, other information that is not published but is available to newspaperman Lon Cohen. Archie may telephone Lon or stop in at his office in the Gazette Building that is a nine—minute walk from Wolfe's. Lon was in the rank and file at the paper when Archie first met him but he is now second in command at the Gazette's city desk. His office is on the twentieth floor, two doors down the hall from the publisher's office. There is barely space for a big desk with three phones on it, one chair besides his and shelves with a few books and a thousand newspapers. Lon has a neat and smooth face, dark brown deep-set eyes that are clear and keen, and slick black hair. Archie says Lon looks like nobody in particular, but somehow he always seems to fit whatever he is doing -- in his office or dancing with a doll at the Flamingo or at the table with Archie and others in Saul Panzer's apartment where they play poker. Archie thinks Lon is 'sharp' and he and Lon get along well together. They trade favors. When Archie needs information available to Lon, Lon checks it out for him. In turn, when Wolfe is about to break a case, Archie tells Lon so that the Gazette has the news ahead of other newspapers.

Although Wolfe reads the Gazette and the Times newspaper reports, he is a discerning reader. He does not shut his eyes to reality or gobble garbage. (Where There's A Will).

Also at the onset of an investigation, Wolfe wants to see and hear people who may have information about the murder for one reason or another such as those with known motives, or those who had the opportunity to commit the crime, or those who were closely associated with the victim. If there are several people who have information who are known to the client, Wolfe generally asks the client to arrange for them to come to his office together so that he can question them.

Wolfe is of the opinion that if a person is lying, there will be an indication of it in his manner of speaking. He explains that the most important requirements for successful lying is relaxed vocal cords and throat muscles, otherwise you are forced to put on extra pressure to push the lie through and the result is that you talk faster and raise the pitch and the blood shows in your face. (Some Buried Caesar). In questioning people, he looks for such indications

Even if he decides a person is lying, he does not necessarily consider that an indication of guilt. He has said that anyone would tell a lie, at least by acquiescence, rather than stand trial for murder. (Over My Dead Body).

A part of his operation in questioning people is to simply “prick the facts” to see if anything develops.

When four or more of the people connected to a murder are coming for a session,

Archie and Fritz equip a portable bar in the kitchen and wheel it into the office. It is placed by the bookshelves to the left of the safe, or by the globe. One evening the assortment included eight brands of whisky, two of gin, two of cognac, a decanter of port, cream sherry, armagnac, four fruit brandies, and a wide assortment of cordials and liqueurs, dry sherry, as well as garnishes of cherries, olives, onions and lemon peel. (Before Midnight).

Wolfe does not take the cost of refreshments that are served as a business expense on his income tax. He says what anyone eats or drinks in his house is on him. He insists that the guests must all have stands or tables at their elbows for their drinks. (And Be A Villain).

At the time a meeting is scheduled, when the client and guests arrive, Archie brings them into the office and seats them. The client is placed in the red leather chair next to Wolfe's desk. Wolfe does not like to be seen sitting around waiting for people by anyone but Fritz or Archie, possibly operating on the theory that it might affect his prestige. He does not arrive at his office until Archie lets him know all those expected have arrived. He enters the office, bows to those present, crosses to his chair and gets himself comfortable. (And Be A Villain)

As introductions are made, he acknowledges them with a nod of about one—eighth of an inch, an inch at most. He rarely shakes hands with visitors. His manner is formal and distant. He controls the discussion, keeping to the point, cutting off discussion of extraneous matter.

Whether a group is present or whether a client is alone, if the client has the idea he can browbeat Wolfe because he is paying a fee, Wolfe soon disabuses him of the

notion. Once Llewellyn Frost was upset and sputtered some ii suiting remarks to him. Wolfe told Frost he had several bad habits -- one was his assumption that words were brickbats to be hurled at people in an effort to stun them. Wolfe then hurled a few brickbats of his own back at Frost and the client got the message. (The Red Box).

While one of the purposes of these gatherings is so that Wolfe can see and hear the people involved, there is a limit to what he will listen to. If loud discord arises among them, Wolfe bellows. His bellow is a loud explosion, a boom, as a bellow should be, but also it has an edge, it cuts. It can override even the loudest argument.

However, despite an occasional bellow, Wolfe maintains a certain dignity in his bearing. He said once; “We are concerned with death and a dealer of death. I do this work to earn a living, but I am conscious of its dignities and complications.” (Murder By The Book).

Those who come to Wolfe’s office may be emotional, worried, fearful, or grief-stricken. Wolfe remains dispassionate. He appears to follow what he has said is the Anglo-Saxon treatment of emotions and desserts: freeze them and hide them in your belly. (The League of Frightened Men)

At his desk. Archie looks the guests over. There had been a time when he had the notion that no murderer, man or woman, could stand exposed to his sharp eyes and not show their guilt. Now he knew better. (Home To Roost). Nevertheless, he still uses his eyes at a gathering where there is a possibility a murderer is present. Ho once said his eye is professionally trained to take in anything from a complicated street scene to a speck on a man’s collar. (And Be A Villain.) Although Wolfe controls the verbal discussion during meetings, if the going gets physical, Archie takes over.

In one case, Wolfe was investigating the death of Bertram Fyfe. He was meeting with Bertram's family, David and Paul Fyfe and their sister and her husband. A friend of the deceased, Johnny Arrow, came to the door and was admitted. He was angry with Paul Fyfe and without any warning jumped him. Arrow jabbed Fyfe with his left, hard enough to rock him off his balance, and then swung his right and sent Fyfe six feet crashing into a yellow chair. As he was reaching to yank him up, Archie got there, put his arm around Arrow's neck from behind and his knee in Arrow's back. Arrow tried to wriggle, found that the only question was which would snap first, his neck or his back and quit. (A Window For Death). Archie can deal effectively with this kind of trouble. He commented once that if he had had to deal with one man, a small fellow, he would have had to decide what to do with his other hand if he wanted to be fully occupied. (And Be A Villain).

There was also a lively, but not so violent, meeting at the onset of the investigation into the death of Arthur Rackell. Wolfe began with an interview of his clients and the people who were present at the time he died. (Home To Roost).

Arthur Rackell died while he was having dinner at Chezar's Restaurant with three women and two other men who were his guests. During dinner, he took a pillbox he used to carry vitamin capsules from his pocket and put it on the table. It was shoved around during the service of the rolls. Some ten or twelve minutes later, he retrieved the pillbox from behind the basket of rolls, got from it a capsule and swallowed it with a sip of water. Six or seven minutes later he collapsed and died. The capsule contained potassium cyanide. His uncle, Benjamin Rackell, came to Wolfe's office with his wife, Mrs. Rackell, and hired Wolfe to investigate.

The number of people who had an opportunity to substitute the capsule was

limited. Arthur had lived with Mr. and Mrs. Rackell. Their housekeeper had filled the pillbox from a bottle, as she did each day, while he was dressing for dinner. Tire balance of the capsules were not contaminated. The housekeeper had no reason for wanting Arthur dead and Mr. and Mrs. Rackell denied being in his room at all that evening.

The only other people with an opportunity were those at the table. The capsule might also have got into the box by accident or Arthur may have chosen that moment and method to kill himself but Wolfe excluded these as too improbable for consideration. Wolfe asked Mr. Rackell to arrange to have tie dinner guests come to his office so that he could question them. Archie checked out their backgrounds with Lon. The five guests were: Fifi Goheen, a former Deb of the Year who lived with her wealthy parents; Della Devlin, a resident buyer of novelties; Carol Burk, from Hollywood, supposedly a TV contact specialist; Ormond Leddegard in labor-management relations and Henry Jameson Heath, a wealthy man who provided bail for Communists who had been indicted.

At the meeting, Wolfe reviewed some of the facts of the case. He said that the newspapers had focused attention on the five guests and it was characteristic of the newspapers to do so because “it’s obvious and dramatic’ since they were present when Arthur swallowed poison and died. He asked: “But beyond the obvious, why you?”

Fifi was noisy and unruly from the start. She created one commotion after another, suddenly whirling herself on Heath and saying she loved him which caused Della Devlin to jump up, haul off and smack Fifi on the side of the head. Fifi just jeered at Della telling her when Heath was with Della he wished he was with Fifi and if he would quit bailing out Communists she might make him happy. She then caused another set-to when she implied Arthur was a Communist and that he had told her the week

before he died that his aunt, Mrs. Rackell, put it to him to reform or leave the house. According to her, Arthur said he told Mrs. Rackell he was secretly working for the F.B.I. spying on the Communists, but he was not. He thought the F.B.I. was practically the Gestapo. Mrs. Rackell called Fifi a liar saying her nephew was a patriotic American. She marched out followed by her husband.

Fifi then started in on Della again saying she had reason to kill Arthur because Heath would have married her long before if Arthur hadn't told him something about her. Then she said Leddegard had reason to kill Arthur because his wife went to South America with Arthur and caught a disease and died. As for her and Carol, Fifi said they discovered a month before that Arthur was "driving double" and she didn't know about Carol but all she needed was the poison. That left Heath and Fifi said he thought Arthur had Fifi taped and might have killed Arthur to get her. By that time, they might have all wanted to kill Fifi including Wolfe after she poured scotch in his beer glass, patted him on top of the head and told him to "Get High." The meeting ended when she approached him again. He headed for the door and kept going.

Later, Wolfe told Archie it would take an army to delve into the past of those present and it would need a regiment to determine if any of the motives suggested were authentic. There was apparently no information incriminating one or the other from their positions or movements at the restaurant since the police had not acted. On reflection, however, he decided the meeting had been productive in that there was a lever he believed he could use to identify which of the suspects was the murderer and short-cut the investigation. (Home To Roost)

In other cases, when the initial meeting produces no results, there is no short cut

and the investigation takes considerably longer. In the Orchard murder case, the session started at nine o'clock in the evening and at four o'clock in the morning, Wolfe was still asking questions of one of the group. Cyril Orchard, a horse-race tipster had appeared on a radio show hosted by Madeline Fraser. One of the sponsors of the show was a company that made a bottled drink called Hi-Spot. As part of the show, the guest and the hostess drank some of the Hi-Spot and when Orchard drank his he made terrible noises right into the microphone and died from poisoning. Wolfe took the case on a contingency basis with Miss Fraser and three of the four sponsors of the program paying the expenses plus a fee of twenty thousand dollars if Wolfe got the murderer with evidence to convict. As a matter of principle he would not sign an agreement with one of the sponsors named Sweeties. (And Be A Villain).

There were eight people at the studio when Orchard died who might have had the opportunity to poison the drink: Miss Fraser, Deborah Koppel—her manager, Bill Meadows who was also on the show, Elinor Vance a writer, Tully Strong of the sponsor's council, and Nathan Traub, executive of the advertising agency which handled the accounts of three of the sponsors. In addition, Professor Saverese, Miss Shepherd, and a sixteen-year old girl were present. All but Saverese and Shepherd came to the meeting at Wolfe's office. Archie had met all of them but Traub, the agency man. Of him, Archie said he was no surprise as the chief difference between any two advertising executives is that one goes to buy a suit at Brooks Brothers in the morning and the other one goes in the afternoon. (And Be A Villain).

The meeting got underway but it was without result. They were all friends and all said they did not remember who had given Orchard the Hi-Spot. At eleven o'clock Wolfe

said he had thought it barely possible that he might get a wedge into a crack by getting them there together but it seemed hopeless. The time was completely wasted. Having failed to get anything from the group, Wolfe began his second phase, questioning each one separately. Bill Meadows stayed behind after the others left and appointments were made for them to return in the next few days.

In questioning Meadows, Wolfe was fishing, so to speak. Once Wolfe spent five hours questioning a young woman about everything and nothing hoping to get some small fact to give him a start. At the end of five hours he got it. The woman had once seen a newspaper with a piece cut out of the front page. With that for a start Wolfe got proof of who had committed a murder. (For-de-Lance).

Wolfe did not have the same break with Meadows. Archie said he poked in one hole and then another and then went back to the first one. At four o'clock in the morning Archie ushered Meadows out. As he locked the safe, Wolfe asked who was scheduled to be there the next morning. Archie told him Miss Koppel. Wolfe said: "You might have taken the men first, on the off chance that we'd have it before we got to the women." (And Be A Villain). As it turned out, it would not have mattered which among the suspects came first, the men or the women, as the individual questioning did not provide a breakthrough. A full investigation was necessary.

When the case does not begin as a murder investigation there may be no initial group of suspects to question. Routine detective work is required to establish the facts, such as the time a baby was left in the vestibule of Mrs. Lucy Valdon's home. She came to Wolfe because a note was left with the baby that implied her deceased husband was the father. She wanted Wolfe to find the mother. On examination of the overalls the baby had

been wearing, Wolfe and Archie discovered that although the garment was mass-produced, four of the buttons appeared to be hand made. As an initial step in that case, the investigation began with a search for the source of the buttons as that might provide a trail to the mother. (The Mother Hunt).

In cases where there are a number of inquiries to make or routine detective procedures to be followed, Wolfe often calls upon a few well—chosen freelance detectives to assist. These detectives, with Archie, search apartments, check records, talk to witnesses, tail suspects, and carry out Wolfe’s instructions. If the murderer has left an opening, they will help find it.

Chapter Six

Detectives On Call

“Detecting can be fun,” according to Archie, “but it can be a pain not only in the neck but also in the head, the guts, the back, the legs, the feet, and the ass, and often is.” (The Father Hunt). There are occupational hazards in detecting and although Archie has little trouble dealing with physical force from men he encounters in an investigation, with women it is a different matter.

Archie says, “If you ever have your pick of being jumped by a man or a woman who only comes to your chin, I advise you to make it a man. If he’s unarmed, the very worst he’ll do is floor you but God knows what a woman will do. And you may floor him first, but you can’t plug a woman.” (Too Many Clients). He also said: “I am not incapable of using force on a woman, since after all, men have never found anything else to use on them with any success when it comes right down to it.”

In one case, Archie had just finished searching an apartment of a murdered man when their client’s wife made a surreptitious entry into the apartment. Mrs. Sperling was frightened at being caught and came at Archie in a wild rush “like a hurricane,” her hands straight for his face, her nails raking it from his left eyebrow straight down. Archie had no choice but to stiff-arm her out of range. (The Second Confession).

Daisy Hawthorne presented another problem. Daisy always wore a veil over her face to hide scars. During an investigation someone impersonated her and Wolfe wanted to be sure he was talking to the real Daisy. He told Archie to pull off the veil. Archie did it, albeit reluctantly. He pretended to stumble, lurched against Daisy and grabbed the lower edge of the veil. After that, he said thirty wild cats flew at his face with all their

claws working leaving him feeling as if someone had scattered gunpowder on his face and touched a match. (Where There's a Will).

Fingernails are only one of the dangerous weapons women use on Archie. Archie went to Dora Chapin's home during an investigation. Her husband, Paul, was suspected of writing threatening letters. A platter of fried chicken and a salad with green peppers in it sat deliciously on an enamel-top table in the kitchen. Dora invited Archie to help himself. Hungrily Archie considered his options. Since another *man*, Scott Pitney, involved in the case was at the table eating, Archie thought psychology demanded he should join in. He got into a chair and Scott passed the platter. When Dora brought in coffee, Archie drank, not knowing that Dora had added a little something extra which knocked him flat for a couple of hours. When he finally came to, his head was "pounding like the hammers of hell" and the following morning, he felt as if someone had jabbed a thousand ice picks into his skull. (League of Frightened Men).

Even Wolfe's office is not safe - for him. He was seated at his desk and Laura Jay pulled a gun out of her purse and pointed it at Archie's back. Wolfe saw her, warned Archie not to turn around, and ordered her to drop the gun. She said rather sheepishly that she would not shoot a man in the back but Archie noticed she did not say if she would have shot when he turned around. (The Rodeo Murder)

Archie takes it all in stride. Sometimes, he has even closer calls, not all created by women. One evening, he stood on the sidewalk in front of the house talking to two men. A taxi sped past and the driver began shooting at them. Archie dived for cover. When the gunfire was over, one man was dead, the other still twitching but done for. Archie picked himself up, climbed the steps and announced coolly, "Corpses on the sidewalk." (Before I Die).

Whatever complaints he has, however, Archie is always glad when a case gets underway. Bored when he and Wolfe were between cases for a month, he said he would

have welcomed a job tailing a laundry boy suspected of stealing a bottle of pop.

When Wolfe begins an investigation, after interviews with those connected to the matter such as in the Rackell case, he may also attempt to acquire information or evidence using other routine detective methods. Sometimes Archie follows a suspect to gather further information: to learn where the suspect goes, whom he sees, and what he does. It isn't always easy to follow a man. As Archie explains: "Tailing in New York can be almost anything, depending on the circumstances. You can wear out your brain and muscles in a strenuous ten hour stretch, keeping contact only by using all the dodges on the list and inventing some more as you go along, and then lose him by some lousy little break that nothing and no one could have prevented or you can lose him the first five minutes, especially if he knows you're there or, also in the first five minutes, he can take to a chair somewhere, an office or a hotel room and stay there all day, not giving a damn how bored you are. So you never know." (The Silent Speaker)

Such searches can also be a waste of time. In one instance, Archie recalled that he spent four hours tagging a guy up and down Fifth and Madison Avenues using all the tricks and dodges he knew. Later he learned the guy had been trying to find a pair of gray suspenders with a yellow stripe. On another occasion, Archie was at a country estate when he saw one of the men involved in a murder case dig up a patch of ground where a substance had been spilled and then pack it up and leave the estate taking the sod. Since a test of the sod could provide valuable evidence, Archie trailed the man first down paths and then along paved streets. When the man boarded a bus, Archie commandeered a car, claiming "police business." The bus, with the car following wound through downtown for about forty-five minutes before the man got off and began walking to Thirty-fourth Street. Archie almost lost him in a crowd. To Archie's chagrin, the trailed ended when the man marched up the steps of Nero Wolfe's house. (Cordially Invited To Meet Death).

At other times, vital information may be obtained. Wolfe often calls on freelance

detective Saul Panzer for tailing jobs as he considers Saul first-rate. Saul always has at least ten times more jobs offered him than he has the time or the wish to take. When Wolfe needs him though, Saul never turns him down if he can help it. Saul is wiry, five feet—seven, and weighs about one hundred forty pounds. Archie describes him as looking as if he could be a hackie, with a big nose lording it over his narrow face. Saul occasionally smokes Pharaohs, an Egyptian cigarette or a slick light brown cigar. He wears an old wool cap from November to April. Archie says that a cap like that, reversible with light tan on one side and plaid on the other and not there at all when you stick it in your pocket, can be a help when you're tailing.

Wolfe once said Saul has a superlative knack for shadowing a man as he seems to know, just in the nick of time what the man he is following is about to do --not what he has done or is doing, but what he intends. (The Golden Spiders). Saul also has a unique ability to remember people. Archie said that you look at Saul and all you see is a guy walking along, but Archie believes that if you showed him one of those people on the street a month later and asked him if he had ever seen the man before, he would reply, "Yes, just once, on Wednesday, June twenty second on Madison Avenue between Thirty-ninth and Fortieth Streets." Saul can also smell a liar through a concrete wall.

On Wednesday night, Archie joins Saul and other friends for poker at Saul's one-man apartment on the top floor of a remodeled house on Thirty-eighth Street between Lexington and Third. Their usual deadline is two o'clock. Saul could have occupied about any spot in life that appealed to him, but he had settled for freelance operative years ago because he could work only when he wanted to, make as much money as he needed, and be outdoors.

In the Rackell case, Wolfe called on Saul to follow one of the men who attended the dinner where Rackell was poisoned. One evening, during the time Saul was following him, the man went into a park where he had a clandestine meeting with another person.

They sat down on a park bench to talk. Saul managed to creep near them and to hide beneath a bush so that he could overhear what they were saying. Armed with the information of the meeting and of what Saul overheard, Wolfe was able to resolve the case.

Another routine detective method Wolfe uses to obtain information is to have a search made of an apartment or of a person's possessions for evidence that will explain a question or that will help to pinpoint blame.

In the Molloy case, when Wolfe needed to have a search made, he called on Saul as well as two other freelance detectives, Fred Durkin and Orrie Cather. Fred is five-feet ten, one hundred ninety pounds. He is big and burly and bald according to Archie who says that although Fred looks like a piano mover and you always expect him to trip and fumble, he never does. Fred looks solid and honest and Archie has said you can trust him to hell and back. Fred and his Italian wife, Fanny, have four children. They sometimes have Sunday dinner at a restaurant on Broadway where the dinners are \$1.85 for adults and \$1.15 for children. When Fred is on a job, he eats at Wolfe's house now and then but ever since he called for vinegar and stirred it into brown roux for a squab, Wolfe will not eat at the table with him. He has to eat in the kitchen with Fritz. Fred is wary of women. He once fell temporarily for a pretty girl and his wife caught on so he does not trust himself with females under thirty.

Archie describes Orrie as six feet flat, one hundred eighty pounds, with a square jaw, thin lips, a crew cut, and young enough looking to still be playing pro football. His attitude towards women was like that of a fisherman toward trout in a stream.

Wolfe's instruction in the Molloy case was for them to search every inch of the Molloy apartment but he added, "The devil of it is you won't know what you're looking for." However, Wolfe was convinced that Molloy, who had been murdered, had left some hint that would lead to discovery of where Molloy got a very large sum of money. They

were to search for this hint. The four of them, Archie, Saul, Fred, and Orrie, assembled a kit of tools for the search, such as probes for the upholstery, from a cupboard in tile office where Wolfe and Archie kept everything from keys to jimmies. Searching for almost six hours, from 9:35 a.m. to 3:10 p.m., they found nothing of help. As Wolfe suspected, a hint appeared, but it was not in the apartment. (Might As Well Be Dead).

Other searches made by the four were more productive. In one case, the four of them came back to the office with a tan leather suitcase that contained five hundred thousand dollars in cash. In another, Archie once had particularly good results in a search. At the office of a Mr. Tingley, he searched for a certain adulterated jar of paté. The policemen guarding the place insisted that the room had already been thoroughly searched by Officer Bowen. They were positive that the jar was not there. Archie did not let them stop him. He told the policemen Bowen was all right but he lacked subtlety, adding in his usual off—hand manner, “He’s too scientific. He uses rules and calipers whereas I use my brain. For instance, since he did that desk, it’s a hundred to one there’s not an inch of it unaccounted for, but what if he neglected to look in that hat?” Archie then pointed to Tingley’s hat dangling on a hook. He walked across the room, took the hat from the hook and dug, finding the jar in the hat. The policemen gaped and so did Archie. (Bitter End).

Saul and Archie worked together in another search for information. During an investigation Wolfe had undertaken for a Mr. Sperling, Wolfe was asked to find out if a man by the name of Rony was a Communist. In order to resolve the question, Archie went to the Sperling estate as a guest. Rony was also a guest, and Archie hoped that he would be able to search Rony’s things for a membership card.

Ordinarily, Wolfe does not give Archie specific instructions on how to carry out assignments. Archie acts under the general instruction that he is to use his intelligence guided by his experience. However, he maintains close communication with Wolfe, and if he is out during the morning, telephones in at eleven when Wolfe is down from the

plant rooms to find out if Wolfe has any instructions. If he comes in late at night, he checks his desk to see if Wolfe has left a note.

In the Sperling case, Wolfe did not give specific instructions so Archie developed a plan that unfortunately backfired. His idea was to dope Rony's drink so that he would sleep during the night and Archie could search his things. That evening, when nightcaps were being served, Archie dropped a little brown capsule in his own drink and, while a female guest showed Rony a rhumba step, Archie switched drinks with Rony--but Archie did not realize somebody had already doped Rony's drink before Archie made the exchange. He only found out when he began to feel "awful damn sleepy." At ten o'clock the next morning, he dragged himself out of bed with a "head as big as a barrel stuffed with wet feathers," and five hours later, it was still "the size of a keg and the insides were still swampy." (The Second Confession).

Ticked off, Archie called Saul. They devised an unorthodox plan--Archie would offer Rony a ride back to New York. About a mile out, Saul and another operative would hold them up. They would knock Rony out for just long enough for Archie to complete the search. The plan went off without a hitch. Wolfe did not turn down the information they obtained but he grumbled that Archie might have at least phoned before "assuming the risk of banditry." (The Second Confession.)

Along with tailing suspects and conducting searches, an investigation occasionally calls for a stakeout. Archie and Fred worked together on one of those cases. Archie was searching for evidence in the Yeager murder case and found what he called a "bower of carnality" hidden away in a house located in a slum neighborhood. As Archie described it, the apartment was decorated in "silk and skin." The silk, mostly red but some pale yellow, decorated the walls, ceilings, and couches. Skin, naked skin, was on the girls and women in the pictures and paintings that took a good third of the wall space. An eight foot square bed was covered with a pale yellow silk coverlet. A man named

Yeager owned the apartment. A corporate executive, he had been murdered. Based on items Arcjoe found in the apartment, it appeared that Yeager had entertained several different women there and thinking that one of them might come back, he decided to call in Fred to stake it out.

When Fred stepped into the apartment, he swiveled his head, right and left. After taking in the silk and skin said, ‘Jesus Kee—rist!’ Embarrassed to be there, he was not keen on the part of his assignment to detain any woman who came to the apartment. He took it on though and when one young woman arrived, Fred did his best to keep her there. When she put up a fight, he grabbed the silk coverlet off the bed, rolled her up in it, and kept her there until Archie arrived to question her. (Too Many Clients).

Wolfe also sometimes needs to have routine inquiries made of neighbors or fellow workers or taxi drivers in an attempt to verify an alibi. Dyne traveled to Washington, D.C. to check out an alibi of a man who said he was out of the country when a child was conceived when Wolfe was trying to identify the father of the child. (The Father Hunt). Saul traveled to Peru to check a suspect’s story. (Prisoner’s Base). In another case, he checked the location of a room at a hotel to see if a suspect could have left and returned to it without being recognized. (Bullet For One). Once, he even checked to see if a wastebasket had been emptied following a certain conversation. (Christmas Party.)

In some instances, Wolfe sends his minions “fishing” to ask questions of people in the vicinity of a murder, such as when attempting to find out who knew that the murder victim was going to go to a particular room and open a certain drawer where an explosive had been planted. (Please Pass The Guilt). In one matter, Fred was working on a case and he was trapped in a garage by some thugs until Saul, Orrie, and Archie rescued him. The evidence they obtained that night helped to reveal the operation of a blackmail game and motive for murder. (The Golden Spiders).

In addition to the freelance detectives, another person helps Wolfe and Archie

now and then, Archie's friend, Lily Rowan. Lily has fine blonde hair and dark blue eyes. A tall woman, her head comes clear up to Archie's chin. Her Irish father, a Tammany district leader for thirty years, left her eight million dollars he earned building sewers and laying pavement. Lily lives in a penthouse on Sixty-third Street between Madison and Park, Manhattan. The living room is large, with a fourteen thousand dollar 19 x 34 Kashan carpet woven into a garden pattern of seven colors. A painting by de Kooning hangs on the wall. On the lovely piano, Lily often plays Chopin preludes. She enjoys poetry and has a shelf of volumes of poems. A door from the den leads to a terrace where annual flowers bloom along the parapet and evergreens thrive in scattered tubs scattered. She also has a fourteen-room house in Westchester called "The Glade" and a ranch near Lame Horse, Montana called the "Bar J.R. Ranch".

Lily helped out when Wolfe and Archie were engaged in an investigation of the crook, Zeck. Under the circumstances of the case, it was necessary for Wolfe and Archie to meet secretly. They asked if she would help and she was willing. Her part was to meet Wolfe in a taxi, pretend to be his girl friend and bring him back to her apartment. Lily carried out her instructions to the letter, particularly the part about being the girlfriend. She later gloated to Archie that she was the only woman in America who had necked with Nero Wolfe. Wolfe had no comment. (In *The Best Families*).

Although Lily and the freelance detectives all help on cases now and then, Archie still does most of the outside detective work when Wolfe needs to have someone questioned and a report made to him of the conversation. Probably the biggest part of Archie's detective work is to talk with people, suspects or witnesses or someone with information, and then report back to Wolfe. Archie reports verbatim and with Wolfe, verbatim means not only the words but also all the actions and expressions. It has taken years of practice but Archie can now repeat long conversations with three or four people verbatim. A good listener, Wolfe sits with his elbow on the chair arm, his chin resting on his fist, and his eyes half closed or at times, closed since to listen all he needs is his ears.

It takes ingenuity to get in to some of the people Wolfe sends Archie to see. When Wolfe sent Archie to see Jean Esty, he did not have the slightest expectation that Archie could sense there had been a murder. Police were on guard. After getting the assignment, Archie went up to his bedroom and stood by the window concocting and rejecting different plans. He picked the fifth one he devised. He dressed up as an undertaker, black cutaway and vest, striped trousers, and a homburg. When Fritz saw his outfit as he left the house, Archie told him he had been appointed ambassador to Texas. The police were on guard as anticipated and when Archie approached the house where Miss Esty was, a policeman moved to meet him. Archie stopped, looked at him mournfully and said, "Arrangements." He got in all right. (The Golden Spiders).

In another investigation, Archie carried a small bag and pretended to be a medical examiner to get past police stationed at the scene of a crime so that he could get inside and interview the witnesses. The public library was a help in another case when he was trying to get in to see a very wealthy recluse. Archie found information that the man collected Colonial items so Archie invented a silver abacus made by Paul Revere and told the man he had one. It got him through the door. (The Father Hunt).

On the whole, Archie seems to enjoy using his wits in his detective work but there are times when he is dead serious. He was stricken and felt personally responsible under the circumstances when one young woman was strangled. Wolfe told him: "No man can hold himself accountable for the results of his psychological defects, especially those he shares with all his fellow men, such as the lack of omniscience." Archie replied that he could get along without omniscience but he could not get along "with a goddamn strangler." He said he had no great ideas about galloping down Broadway on a white horse with the strangler's head on the point of a spear; he just wanted to catch the sonofabitch. And Archie did not let up until Sergeant Purley Stebbins put the handcuffs on the murderer. (Prisoner's Base).

In that case, Archie cooperated with the police as he and Wolfe do now and then but far more often, they are apt to be at odds with them. As Archie puts it, Sergeant Stebbins and Inspector Cramer are their dearest enemies.

Chapter Seven

Cue For Inspector Cramer

What should you do when you find a corpse with a knife sticking perpendicular to the ribs in a taxi you have borrowed? Well, Mira Holt, when faced with this question, threw a tarp over the body and drove the taxi to Nero Wolfe's house so she could ask Archie how to dispose of it. As it happened, the police were right on her heels and the question of how to dispose of it was settled. However, Archie was able to give Mira some advice on how to answer the questions the police were sure to ask.

Archie told her: "There are only three methods that are any good in the long run. One. Button your lip. Answer nothing whatever. Two. Tell the truth straight through. The works. Three. Tell a simple basic lie with no trimmings, and stick to it. If you try a fancy lie, or a mixture of truth and lies, or part of the truth but try to save some, you're sunk." (Method Three For Murder).

Archie also has his own methods for getting around questions from the police in addition to the above. He admits, "If I had a dime for every lie I've told them I'd be on my yacht in the Caribbean." (A Right To Die). The lies he tells, however, are so outrageous that the police simply disregard them. Once, when Archie wanted to get Carla Lovchen out of a building surrounded by the police, he had her dress in a bellboy uniform and put her clothes in a bundle. She made it out of the building but Sergeant Stebbins saw Archie with the bundle and asked what was in it. Archie answered blithely, "Revolvers, daggers, narcotics, smuggled jewels and a bottle of blood. Confronted with this list of contraband, Stebbins shrugged it off and let him pass. (Over My Dead Body).

Another officer once asked Archie casually exactly what Archie wanted with the woman for whom he was looking. Archie replied that he wanted to sell her a ticket on a turkey raffle. The officers are so accustomed to his jeering replies, they do not believe him when he tells the truth. When the police were looking everywhere for a man and woman from the barber shop Wolfe frequents to question them in the murder of a policeman, Stebbins asked Archie if he had seen them. Archie said, "Sure I have. . . I put them in our front room and told them to wait..." For once, he told the truth, but Stebbins took it for just another one of Archie's jokes.

Archie seems constitutionally unable to give them a straight answer and is reluctant to give them any information at all unless it is necessary. Once Wolfe told Archie to telephone the police and give them the name of a young woman believed to have been seen with a murdered man, although it was not absolutely certain. Archie balked. He said: "I am reminded of the famous remark of Ferdinand Bowen up at Sing Sing when they told him to walk to the chair they had got ready for him. He muttered, "The idea is repugnant to me."

Wolfe harbors his own ideas about lying to the police. Told by some clients that they had lied, Wolfe said judiciously: "Well...you were not under oath. The police have been lied to informally many times by many people, including me. The right to lie in the service of your own interests is highly valued and frequently exercised." (Before Midnight). In his opinion, a passion for honesty is admirable, but in that, as in everything, moderation is often best.

This attitude Wolfe and Archie have towards answering the questions of the police is not conducive to a calm relationship with them. They run into trouble when the police think Wolfe or Archie has information that should be disclosed to them and Wolfe thinks otherwise. As a result of the way Wolfe and Archie protect their information, when Wolfe investigates a murder case, he and Inspector Cramer of the New York Police Department get into a tangle.

Big and brawny, Inspector Cramer is about Archie's height and weighs around one-ninety. With sharp gray-blue eyes, small ears that stay close to the skin, and gray hair, he has a pink complexion that turns to red in the summertime. On his head, he sports an old felt hat and carries cigars which he rolls between his palms and sticks in his mouth but does not light. He sits with his feet planted on the floor, not crossing his legs and when he gets up from a chair, he uses his leg muscles rather than the arm of the chair.

Cramer's office, in the Office of the Homicide Squad on Twentieth Street less than a mile from Wolfe's house, is an inside room, not really shabby but not for show. The linoleum floor shows years of wear and Cramer's desk needs a sanding job. The windows are not really clean and all the chairs except for Cramer's are plain, hard wood. His old felt hat is always on a corner of his desk when it isn't on his head although there is a rack only a step away. He has been with Homicide about twenty years.

He describes his job: "I'm a cop. I'm paid a salary to go and look at dead people and decide if they died as a result of a crime and if they did, find the criminal and fasten it on him so it will stick." (Over My Dead Body). He takes his work seriously and may eat a lunch of pickles, salami, and buttermilk at his desk rather than waste time.

Cramer's assistant, Sergeant Purley Stebbins, also weighs about one-ninety and Archie is not sure which would be the toughest to handle, Cramer or Stebbins. Stebbins's office is in a dingy little room. His rusty old swivel chair squeaks and groans. He never sits with his back to anyone, even his superior officer if he can help it. He likes clams and Archie says that offering him fried clams at Louie's is like swinging a bit of red flannel in front of a bull.

Inspector Cramer has known Wolfe longer than Archie has and when Wolfe is mixed up in a murder case, Cramer may stop by Wolfe's house to see him if he thinks Wolfe has some information Cramer should have. He comes in a police car, a big Cadillac with a chauffeur and he always asks Archie when he answers the door, "Wolfe in?" Archie says Cramer knows darn well Wolfe is in since he never went out. Before

Cramer is admitted, Archie always checks with Wolfe.

Wolfe may or may not tell Archie to admit Cramer. He told Cramer once: “a citizen’s rights vis-à-vis an officer of the law are anomalous and nonsensical. I can refuse to let you into my house, but once I admit you I am helpless. You can roam about at will. You can speak to anyone you choose. I dare not touch you. If I order you to leave you can ignore me. If I call in a policeman to expel an intruder I am laughed at, so I don’t admit you - unless you have a warrant. (Kill Now Pay Later).

Wolfe may, at times, insist on a warrant, but ordinarily he tells Archie to admit Cramer. Archie can tell something about Cramer’s frame of mind when he lets him in. Archie says: “If he calls me Archie, which doesn’t happen often, no one wants something he can expect to get only as a favor. If he calls me Goodwin and asks how I am, he still is after a favor but thinks he is entitled to it. If he calls me Goodwin but shows no interest in my health, he has come for what he would call cooperation and intends to get it. If he calls me nothing at all, he is ready to shoot from the hip and look out.” (Before Midnight).

In the Amy Denovo case, Cramer and Wolfe were at odds about whether Wolfe was required to divulge information. The case began when twenty-two year old Amy asked Wolfe to find out the identity of her father. Her mother, Elinor Denovo, had brought her up, but a hit-and-run driver had recently killed Elinor. Her mother had never told Amy who her father was but after her death, Elinor’s employer delivered a box to Amy that Elinor had left in his office safe. The box contained two hundred and sixty-four thousand dollars and a letter from Elinor that said that the money was from Amy’s father, who had sent a bank check for one thousand dollars a month since shortly after Amy’s birth. At the outset of the case, Wolfe was not investigating the hit-and-run and Archie told Cramer their only client was a girl who was trying to find her father. However, as the case progressed, Cramer became convinced that they were investigating the hit-and-run

as well. Since his department was also investigating it he demanded the name of their client.

Wolfe refused to give it. Wolfe's attitude about giving Cramer information is, generally, that if he has information relevant to a crime Cramer is investigating, he is bound to give it to Cramer but relevance must be established, not by Cramer's whim or conjecture, but by an acceptable process of reason. Since Cramer does not even know what information Wolfe has, Wolfe insists that whether the information is to be disclosed must be left to him to decide. He points out that he is not ass enough to withhold evidence in a capital crime.

In the Amy Denovo case, he told Cramer the information his client had given him was confidential and had no bearing on the hit-and-run but Cramer insisted that when he was investigating a homicide, he not Wolfe, decided what had a bearing and what did not. Wolfe merely said that until events answered the question conclusively of whether the information was relevant, he alone was responsible and his judgment need not bow to Cramer's. He admitted he was withholding information from an officer of the law but said it was not pertinent to a crime so he need not disclose it.

As the case progressed, Wolfe obtained information that led him to believe a certain man was the driver of the car that struck Elinor Denovo and with Saul and Archie's help, he was able to obtain several items with the man's fingerprints. Archie delivered the items to the police with a request that they be checked against the fingerprints the police had from a cigar case they found in the car without identifying whose prints they were. When they matched, Cramer was furious. Certain that Wolfe had been withholding evidence and in doing so obstructing justice, he and Stebbins arrived at the house, invaded the plant rooms and Cramer told Wolfe he would hold him as a material witness until he could get a warrant to arrest him.

Not intimidated, Wolfe told Cramer that if Cramer put a hand on him and Archie they would stand mute and communicate with their lawyer. He would also see that the

Gazette and morning papers published the news that Wolfe and Goodwin had discovered the identity of the murderer of Elinor Denovo and had delivered satisfactory evidence to the police. Cramer backed off. When the air had cleared, Wolfe gave Cramer the name of the man and convinced Cramer that he had delivered the fingerprints as soon as feasible after they had been obtained. To Wolfe, the match of the prints was the event that proved conclusively that he had information pertinent to a crime that had to be disclosed. Cramer was irate but did not arrest Wolfe and Archie, at least not that time. (The Father Hunt).

They are threatened often enough, however, any time they may call Phoenix 5-2382 for Wolfe's lawyer, Nathaniel Parker. A tall, thin, middle-aged man, Parker is one of eight men with whom Wolfe will shake hands. He wears a dark gray overcoat, cut to give him more shoulder but not overdoing it. His clothes are made by Stover and he wears a homburg. Over the years he has answered ten thousand legal questions for them and bailed out Archie more than once.

As much as Cramer and Wolfe argue, they show a wary respect for each other. Cramer says of Wolfe: "You're tricky, you're foxy, you're the best liar I know but if anybody asked me to name something you had done that was dishonorable I'd have to think." (If Death Ever Slept).

Wolfe says of Cramer: "I respect your integrity, your ability, your understanding. I even trust you, up to a point . . ." Wolfe thinks enough of him that he saw to it that Cramer was restored to his position when he was replaced in one case. Wolfe was investigating the murder of Cheney Boone, the Director of the government's Bureau of Price Regulation. Hit on the head with a piece of lead pipe, a young woman was killed as she climbed the steps to Wolfe's house. Prominent people in the case made Cramer wary of stepping on toes. His replacement, Inspector Ash, was a tall man, with a face all bone and eyes with a plastic look.

Ash had the notion that Wolfe was holding out evidence and sent a man with an arrest warrant for Wolfe as a material witness regarding the murder. Wolfe refused to let the officer in the house. Threatened with a search warrant, Wolfe had Archie drive him to police headquarters. There he met with District Attorney Skinner, the Police Commissioner Hombert and Ash. Wolfe, furious, had some harsh words for Ash, calling him a numbskull and a hooligan. Ash, in turn, had a few words to say about Wolfe. Tempers flared and when Wolfe began to leave, Ash grabbed his arm. Wolfe slapped him, and when Ash started to hit Wolfe Archie stepped between them. Although Wolfe claims to detest hubbub, Wolfe urged Archie to “Hit him, Archie. Knock him down.” Ash wanted to throw the book at him but Skinner and Hombert intervened. They wanted to find a way to get the case solved and Wolfe appeared to be the one who could do that. They had the warrants vacated. Wolfe was released.

Later in the case, for reasons of his own, Wolfe had some information he wanted to sit on. He decided to have a nervous collapse and called in his friend Dr. Vollmer. Vollmer lives and has his office a few doors down from Wolfe. With a round face and round ears, for two or three years he has not tried to stand with his belly in and his chest out. He’s a sad looking little guy with lots of forehead and not much jaw. Wolfe asks for his help every now and then. Vollmer always obliges. One reason Wolfe likes him is that Vollmer doesn’t waste time. When he has the information he needs, he leaves. In this case, Wolfe put up a show so that Vollmer would issue a certificate that it would be dangerous to Wolfe’s health if he was questioned or had visitors. Vollmer issued the certificate and Wolfe hid out in his room for several days.

When the police learned of the certificate they were convinced that Wolfe knew the identity of the murderer and was probably in possession of evidence against him. They obtained a court order to have an eminent neurologist examine Wolfe. Based on that, Wolfe decided to solve the case but he was not about to give Ashbury any credit. He

called in Cramer and Cramer made the arrest. In gratitude, Cramer bought Wolfe an orchid plant but warned him, “Try pulling any fist ones and I’ll still be on your neck.” (The Silent Speaker)

Archie gets along fairly well with Cramer and Cramer says of him: “You have one or two good qualities. In a way I even like you. In another way I could stand and watch your hide peeling off and not shed any tears. You have undoubtedly got the goddamdest nerve of anybody I know except Nero Wolfe.” (Over My Dead Body).

It was Archie Cramer called when Wolfe was treading on the toes of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Mrs. Bruner’s case. Cramer learned that an effort was being made to take away Wolfe and Archie’s detective licenses. He sent a message to Archie through Dr. Vollmer in case the telephones were tapped and they had a secret meeting in a hotel room. The lead he gave Archie was instrumental in Wolfe’s eventual resolution of the case. (The Doorbell Rang).

One policeman, however, Archie cannot abide: Lieutenant Rowcliff. Archie has the same effect on Rowcliff as a bee on a dog’s nose. Rowcliff tends to stutter and Archie takes delight in the fact that he once was able to get Rowcliff stuttering in two minutes and twenty seconds. There has never been a time when the sight of Rowcliff has done Archie any good.

Rowcliff thought he had Archie in one instance.

Archie wanted to get some information from a group of stockholders of a corporation. He identified himself as a “detective.” He even showed them his license, which no one took the trouble to examine. They assumed he was a policemen and Archie let them think he was. When he asked questions they answered. Unfortunately, Lieutenant Rowcliff arrived before he finished. Rowcliff arrested Archie for impersonating a police officer. At headquarters, he put him in handcuffs. He left Archie sitting, brought Wolfe into headquarters, and arrested him, too. Rowcliff fumed, but the

district attorney listened to Wolfe rather than Rowcliff. In short order, the matter was cleared up. As he left Wolfe expressed his opinion of the place by calling it a “paradise for puerility.” (Prisoner’s Base)

In view of the way they are treated by the Police Department, it is not surprising that Wolfe and Archie do not cooperate with law enforcement. When they were involved in a case the F.B.I. was also investigating, an agent named Stahl came to Wolfe and asked him for the information Wolfe had acquired. It was a difficult case and Wolfe cooperated fully in the hope that Stahl, in turn, would return the favor and give him at least some hint of information the F.B.I. had uncovered with all its prerogatives and resources. Stahl took all the information Wolfe gave him, then just smiled at the idea he would tell Wolfe anything and left. Archie was so irked after he let Stahl out, he told Wolfe, “There are times when I wish I hadn’t been taught manners. It would have been a pleasure to kick his ass down the stoop.” (The Black Mountain).

They take their problems with Cramer and other officers as part of the game, however, and now and then get a good laugh such as when the F.B.I. and Cramer both came armed with court orders for seizure of the same packet of counterfeit money. (Counterfeit for Murder) In any event, Wolfe and Archie do not let the police department or any other law enforcement agency interfere with their solving a case. At times, when Wolfe resorts to some of his tactics to solve a case, they skate pretty close to the line—but ultimately, that doesn’t stop either one of them.

Chapter Eight

The Closing Act

After observing Wolfe in action during one case, Archie told Wolfe ruefully, “Someday you will try to bluff the trees out of their limbs.” Wolfe often does resort to bluff. Few of Wolfe’s murder cases are simply solved by acquiring information and evidence from routine detective methods. In most cases, one or more of the witnesses may conceal information or tell an outright lie. When that happens, the investigation may be stalled unless a way is found to compel the witness to talk and to tell the truth. The use of violence to coerce information is not a Wolfe technique. Wolfe rejects such tactics as out of hand, claiming that whatever you get by physical aggression costs more than it is worth. However, he does not hesitate to devise devious threats or tricks when it suits his purpose. Bluff is his long suit.

He may decide he needs a witness to place someone at the scene of a crime as he did when he was investigating the death of Susan Brooke. A man by the name of Peter Vaughn, who was a friend of Susan’s brother and sister-in-law, Kenneth and Dolly Brooke, told police a lie. He said he was at his club at the time of the murder although he had actually been at the Brooke apartment baby-sitting for Dolly while she went out. Dolly also lied to the police. She said she had been at home in their apartment although she had actually driven to Susan’s apartment and could give testimony of events at the scene of the crime that would clear Wolfe’s client. Vaughn eventually told Archie the truth, but getting the truth out of Dolly was another matter. At Wolfe’s request she came to the office and he left her there alone. As she sat there, Saul and two men walked in. They stopped at Wolfe’s desk and they lined up there, side by side, facing Dolly in the red leather chair, ten feet away. For thirty long seconds they stood, no movement, gazing at her. Saul then looked at the other two men who nodded. He nodded back and they filed

out. Wolfe entered and after a few remarks, Dolly was convinced that the men were eyewitnesses to the fact that she had been at the scene of the crime. She knew, as Archie put it, that ‘she had been flushed out of the tall grass.’ Tie line—up was just a charade planned by Wolfe and the two men had never seen Dolly before but the bluff worked. (A Right To Die).

He even produced an eyewitness to the crime itself in the Bottweill case. Bottweill was poisoned when he had a drink from a bottle he kept in his office. Suspects in the case received a note that said the writer saw what happened and demanding money be paid over at a certain time and place. One of the suspects turned up at the appointed time but the fictitious eyewitness was not there. Saul was there instead and Wolfe had an answer as to who killed Bottweill. (Christmas Party).

The absence of fingerprints at the scene did not slow Wolfe down for long. The murder had been committed in a tent and it was certain the murderer was among a limited group of people who had been in the tent during the time period. Wolfe called the suspects to a meeting. Saul was present and Wolfe asked him to report. Saul said that he had taken fingerprints from the flap of the tent that he was sure belonged to the murderer. Wolfe then asked those present to have their fingerprints taken so they could be checked against those Saul had. One man, a foreigner, objected. He called it a “treek” and he was right. Saul hadn’t found any fingerprints but the “treek” worked and the murderer was identified. (Fourth of July Picnic).

Wolfe may even produce recorded evidence that someone has lied. One of his clients lied to the police about what he had hired Wolfe to do. It was Wolfe’s word against that of the client. At a second meeting between Wolfe and the client, the client made another statement he contradicted a few minutes later. Wolfe called him on it and told Archie to play back the recording. The client had been unaware they were being recorded. Archie fumbled with the recorder and “accidentally” put on a faked tape that began with the conversation Wolfe and the client had when the client had first hired

Wolfe. He quickly shut it off and replaced it with a tape of the second conversation.

The client was flummoxed into thinking the original conversation was also on tape and Wolfe could prove he lied. He folded. (The Squirt and the Monkey).

Sometimes, when a witness is reluctant to talk, Wolfe gives them a reason to do so. In the investigation of the murder of Mrs. Bynoe, Iris Innes held back information about one of the suspects because she had once been engaged to him and she wanted to avoid any trouble. Wolfe exposed the suspect to her as a tinhorn Casanova who had tried to romance Mrs. Bynoe. Iris spilled the beans. (Easter Parade)

There are times, however, when an investigation stalls because there does not appear to be a lead to follow. As Wolfe has pointed out, in a murder case it sometimes happens that a detective may be stopped at a dead end and simply have to withdraw to wait upon a further event that may start a new path. Wolfe sometimes does stop dead end on a case and does nothing for an afternoon or several weeks even though Archie keeps after him. Once when Archie was after him, Wolfe told him, "Patience, Archie; if you eat the apple before it is ripe your only reward is a bellyache." (League of Frightened Men).

Wolfe is not stalled for long usually. If a lead does not appear, he stirs the pot. During the investigation of the death of Mrs. Fromm, the investigation has not been productive although several people who had been associated with her were suspects. Events took a turn when Archie approached each of the suspects and offered to sell the details of a conversation between Wolfe and Mrs. Fromm before her death for five thousand dollars. He gave the impression that the conversation might implicate the person and his offer strictly under the counter. One called him a common skunk. Another said she would give him twenty dollars. Another said it sounded like blackmail and a fourth thought it was interference with an official investigation. The ploy, devised by Wolfe, did not produce immediate disclosure of facts to solve the case but the result was satisfactory as it had the effect of turning "a tiger loose in a crowd" which was what

Wolfe intended. (The Golden Spiders)

In another case the investigation was stalled so Wolfe devised a complicated stratagem. In effect, he asked for twenty thousand dollars from his client to bribe a witness and solve the case by chicanery. The scheme to be carried out by Archie was to offer money to one of the suspects to admit another suspect murdered a man and that she saw her do it. She was to be told that if she did so, it would serve the interests of justice with the money coming to her in appreciation of her cooperation in the cause of justice. It was not subornation of perjury, Wolfe said, since they were not attempting to bribe a witness to give false testimony. It could not be shown that there was intent for her to swear falsely. It was close enough, however, to make Archie say it was a “swell approach to the hoosegow” for both of them. The result of the scheme, aside from a clamor from the police, was to bring pressure on a third suspect as Wolfe hoped it would. (Home To Roost).

These tricks and schemes, plus the routine detective work, all help to accumulate the information needed to solve a case but they do not explain how Wolfe is able to come up with solutions. There are times when others and Inspector Cramer have most of the same information, if not all, and they cannot figure out the murderer. The exact reasoning process Wolfe uses is unclear. As he says, “It is the same with detectives as with magicians. Their primary and constant concern is to preserve the air of mystery which is attached to their profession.” (League of Frightened Men).

It is no mystery that Wolfe brings superior brainpower to bear on the investigations. He has said there is a question whether rapid and accurate brainwork result from superior equipment or from good training. Wolfe’s own brain has had the advantage of severe and prolonged training so that he sees things others have missed. (Some Buried Caesar). His training has been to attend, to observe, and to register. As a result, phenomena are filed in his brain, even such phenomena as the sound of a

telephone being dialed.

However, the way he thinks through the solution of a problem remains a mystery. When he “goes to work” he leans back in his chair, closes his eyes, and his lips go out and in, out and in for a period of time, once as long as twenty—one minutes and ten seconds. He has given a few hints now and then as to how he analyzes a problem. He does not reject coincidence since he believes the complexities of nature permit a myriad of coincidence but he discriminates. He concedes that it is the fashion to say anything in possible but in his view, very few things are possible, pitiably few, and probabilities take precedence over possibilities. Generally, he has said he reaches a conclusion based on deductions and assumptions from the evidence at hand. Or it may be that Professor Gottlieb, the psychologist, is correct and Wolfe solves cases because he has “intuition from the devil”.

An example of Wolfe’s methods of solving cases took place outside New York City in Albany. The State Department was investigating wiretapping activities. All the private detectives in New York City had been required to report any wiretapping investigations they had conducted. Hearings were then held in New York and Albany and the detectives were summoned to appear. Wolfe and Archie reported one incident and were required to appear in Albany although Wolfe asked that they be allowed to appear in New York. Wolfe and Archie arrived at building where the hearings were being held at 9:55 a.m. for the ten o’clock appointment. They were directed to a room on the third floor where five other detectives waited.

The other detectives were Jay Kerr who usually tailed husbands and wives, Harland Ide who was well-known. He had a reputation for high standards, Steve Amse had been fired from one agency and started his own. Theolinda Bonner had her own agency and was doing all right. Sally Colt, her employee waited along with them until well past eleven when Wolfe and Archie were called and they were conducted to the office of Albert Hyatt, special deputy of the secretary of state. Partner in a big law firm in midtown

New York, he mixed a good deal in politics and had a reputation as a trial man.

The inquiry related to the one wiretapping case Wolfe and Archie had reported. Wolfe stated that he knew it was legally permissible for a man to have his own wire tapped and that a man who gave his name as Otis Ross asked him to tap his home telephone wire because he suspected his secretary who worked from his home office of double dealing. Wolfe became suspicious when the man paid in cash and insisted that they not call him at home. Before he accepted the case, Archie went to the man's home to check his bona fides. He was admitted by a maid and the man was there reading. Wolfe took the case and other operatives installed the equipment and monitored the calls. The man picked up reports each night. On the eighth day, Archie listened in and noticed that the man who spoke and identified himself as Ross did not sound like the man who had visited their office. A check revealed that the real Otis Ross was not the one who had hired them. He did not appear that night for a report and they were never able to locate him. Wolfe was embarrassed by the incident and told Ross what had happened.

This information was provided to Hyatt who said that he credited the story. He then told Wolfe that he had a surprise for him. He told an aide to bring the man from room thirty-eight which was across the hall from Hyatt's office. The aide reported that the man was dead. He had been hit with a brass ashtray, and then strangled with his own necktie. The hearings were suspended and the police called. The dead man was the man who had hired Wolfe to wiretap Ross.

The case was investigated by Leon Groom who was chief of detectives of the City of Albany. Groom questioned Wolfe and Archie. Hyatt told Groom that about nine o'clock that morning he was notified that a man giving the name Donahue wanted to see him on a matter that was urgent and confidential. He met Donahue in the hall and took him to room thirty-eight to talk. All Donahue said about himself was that he lived at the Hotel Marburg in New York. The reason he had come was because he had heard about the investigation into wiretapping and he wanted to make a deal. He offered to testify that

Wolfe had known the wiretapping was illegal if the district attorney would go easy on him for procuring the wiretapping. Frey talked until 9:30 a.m. when Hyatt returned to his office to consult the secretary of state about the offer and when he could not reach him, he called the New York Police for a report on Donohue.

Wolfe and Archie were arrested as material witnesses and taken to a detention room. After making bail, they went to the Hotel Latham. Wolfe realized that they were going to be held until the case was solved and the only way he could hurry their release was to solve it. The police believed that one of the seven detectives including Wolfe and Archie who were in the waiting room that morning had killed Donahue. The means for murder--the ashtray and the necktie--were clear. The detectives had all recognized the murdered man and, because arrival times varied, each had an opportunity to kill him. The police theorized that the sight of Donahue on the premises raised a fear in the mind of the murderer that Donahue would disclose illegal wiretapping activities.

At first, Wolfe did not reject this theory. Those present in the waiting room were the obvious suspects. He proceeded to gather as much information as possible. The other five detectives were all being held in Albany and he instructed Archie to arrange a meeting with them. Archie did, and at nine p.m., a discussion began. The other detectives admitted they had been taken in by Donahue just as Wolfe had been. Bonnet had wiretapped the line of Alan Samuels and Wolfe told Archie to call Lon Cohen for information about him. Lon called with the information that Samuels was a member of the Charity Funds Investigating Committee. He gave Wolfe the names of the other members. It developed that Ide, Kerr and Amsel had wiretapped other members of the same committee.

When the meeting began, Wolfe tried to learn whether any of the others had had any association with Donahue. When he found that they had all recognized the victim and that their times of arrival eliminated none of them, the inevitable assumption was that one of them killed him. After that, there were any number of paths that an ordinary detective

might have taken in investigating the case; however, in sifting through the facts, Wolfe noticed one possibly significant fact -- all the detectives present had been associated with Donahue and all were summoned to appear at the same time. The question he asked was whether that could have been a coincidence. Wolfe does not reject all coincidences but he decided this one invited inquiry. Hyatt had summoned them and Hyatt had been in room thirty-eight with Donahue. Wolfe also knew that the statement Donahue reportedly made that Wolfe knew the wiretapping was illegal was false. He suspended his assumption that one of the detectives had killed Donahue and decided on a different investigatory path.

With the help of the staffs of the other detectives and Saul, Wolfe started up inquiries to: 1) check the Hotel Marbury where Donahue had lived; 2) check the background and activities of Hyatt with emphasis on his connection with the Charity Fund Investigating Committee; and 3) find evidence of prior association between Hyatt and Donahue. As a result, he learned that Hyatt had previously been retained as counsel for a large fund raising organization and the organization was slated to be target for investigation by the Committee. He also learned that people had observed Hyatt and Donahue together. He had looked for an opening left by the murderer and found one.

As to motive for the murder, Wolfe's conjecture was that Hyatt had summoned them all to appear at the same time so that he could see them rather than his colleague in New York and that when Donahue had appeared that day, he had told Hyatt that he was ready and willing to disclose Hyatt's part in the illegal wiretapping. The information was turned over to Groom. Hyatt was arrested, tried and found guilty of the murder of Donahue. Wolfe's expertise as a detective was demonstrated by his choice of the right path to follow in the investigation. (Too Many Detectives)

In other cases, though Wolfe reaches a conclusion about the identity of the murderer, he may lack proof enough to convict in a court of law. In those cases, Wolfe sometimes exerts such pressure on the murderer that the murderer will take matters into

his own hands to avoid a public trial. Wolfe's theory is that in nearly all cases, men who are confronted with their doom, such as a murderer who has been found out, face an insuperable difficulty. Their mental processes are numbed by the emotional impact of their predicament. Wolfe claims that it is fallacy to suppose that the best minds will deal effectively with a crisis if emotion has asphyxiated the mind. (Gambit). Wolfe takes full advantage of this.

He says that the potency of knowledge depends on how and when it is used. (Murder By The Book). Consequently, Wolfe confronts the murderer with the fact that he has been found out when the murderer least expects it. When Wolfe was investigating the murder of Colonel Ryder, his suspicions became fixed on a prominent elected official and were confirmed after a trap had been set. Wolfe confronted the official, admitting that at the time there was not sufficient evidence to prove a case but Wolfe assured him that he would see to it that the evidence was found and that he was condemned and brought into court. Wolfe told him: "You don't stand a chance. If you're not put to death by the people of the state of New York, you're done for anyhow. At a minimum, irremediable disgrace, the ruin of your career." Faced with what Wolfe has called the "inexorable miasma of murder", the official took the fast way out with a grenade. (Booby Trap)

In another case, Wolfe was investigating the death of a man whose business was manufacturing novelties including harmless exploding cigars. A cigar smoker, he was killed when he lit one of his cigars that had been filled not with a harmless charge but with a powerful explosive capsule. Wolfe gathered enough evidence to feel sure about who had murdered him. Some proof was available but Wolfe gave the murderer a choice. That time Archie carried the bad news. Archie went to the murderer's apartment and handed the murderer nothing more than a piece of evidence and one of the explosive capsules. He then told the murderer he would be calling Inspector Cramer in seven minutes. The murderer made a brief stab at winning Archie over. When that failed, the

choice was made. The murderer chose the same way the victim had gone -- by way of the exploding capsule.

(Instead of Evidence).

Not all of the murderers Wolfe exposes go quietly. In one case he confronted a young woman who had stabbed a man. For reasons of his own, he let her leave the house. A short time later, Archie walked outside and left the front door open momentarily. The woman was hiding outside and when Archie's back was turned, she raced up the steps and through the door. Archie was after her as she hurtled into the house. He saw a glittering streak from something she had in her hand but he could not catch her. By the time Archie made the office door, she was halfway across it and her hand was up with a shining blade. Wolfe sat vulnerably in his chair with no time to move. All Archie could do was yell and keep going. Wolfe grabbed a beer bottle with each hand. As she leapt at him, dagger flashing, he struck simultaneously with both hands, with his left at her descending wrist and with his right at anything at all. Something broke her right wrist and something cracked her skull. (Over My Dead Body).

Most of Wolfe's cases, however, come to an orderly conclusion with Cramer on hand to arrest the murderer and take him or as the case may be, her, away for trial. Over the years, he has exposed a variety of murderers. One man Archie described as a "middle-aged well-fed specimen in a conventional gray overcoat, with scarf and a dark gray homburg..." used arsenic to kill one man in the hope that another man would be condemned for the murder. The murderer had hoped to marry the dead man's wife.

Wolfe described another as "a middle-aged female, hair showing some gray, with a chin and a half and a long thin nose which didn't fit." She battered the victim's skull with a club because the victim had turned down her son's marriage proposal and he had killed himself.

Another murderer was a male in his early forties with a fair start on a paunch, round face, wide nose and dark brown eyes that moved quickly and often. He shot his

victim in the side of the head above the left ear with a Marley .38 because he feared his victim would disclose an embezzlement scheme. One man who had a round red face that made his hair look whiter and whose white hair made his face look redder shot his victim from the back, through his heart, using a cushion from a divan to muffle the sound, because he suspected his victim wanted to usurp him as head of the firm. A comely female with greenish-brown eyes ran over her victim with a car to hide her activities in a blackmail gang.

A man Archie described as older who had a lot of weather in his face, hair that had been brown but was now more gray, of medium size and weight and looked and who moved as if his inside springs were still lively used a silver handled knife to stab his victim so that he could inherit her money. Another was a big man with blond hair, blue eyes, handsome, a little over thirty who strangled his victim with a cord for the same reason. Another woman of middle age with a straight back, graceful and unquestionably streamlined for her age killed a man with potassium cyanide to conceal her scheme to defraud her husband's estate of money.

Another young man killed his victim with ciphogene gas when she was going to leave him and marry another man. A woman with snap and fire in her eyes and a firm pointed chin stabbed her husband with a knife because he was in love with another woman and going to leave her.

Another man medium both in age and size who wore his hairline well above his temples and had small gray eyes poetically stabbed his victim in the left middle of his back. He wanted to marry the victim's wife. A husky, middle-aged man with a wide mouth, dark-colored deep-set eyes and a full share of chin used a hardwood window pole that had a brass hook on the end. First he hit his victim with the pole and then jabbed him with the hook, all because of jealousy.

A slender woman with gray-green eyes poisoned a man to conceal a previous

murder she had committed. A man nearing fifty, medium-short with a central circumference that made it seem likely he would grunt if he bent over to tie his shoestring, strangled a woman with her own scarf to keep her from disclosing his forgery.

Murderers have used a variety of means to commit murder such as a bottle of vodka used as a bludgeon, poison placed in candy, poison placed in an aspirin bottle, dry ice, a push from a window, a push from a cliff, and a monkey wrench. The murders have taken place in apartments, on the street, at restaurants, on country estates, on a dude ranch, at a flower shop, and in Wolfe's guest room. In the end, Wolfe and Archie always earn the client's fee and Wolfe can mutter "Satisfactory."

At the close of a case life at the old brownstone goes back to its routines. Wolfe goes to the plant rooms where he and Theodore take care of the orchids. At eleven, he stops by the kitchen to discuss the menu with Fritz. Archie takes care of the errands and walks around Manhattan sidewalks. In the evening, after dinner, when Wolfe and Archie leave the dining room to cross the hall to the office, Wolfe sits in his favorite chair behind his desk and Fritz brings coffee. Either Wolfe will open his current book or if Archie has no date and is staying in, Wolfe will start a conversation. The topic maybe anything from women's shoes to the importance of the new moon in Babylonian astrology. Sooner or later a prospective client will telephone and a new case will get underway. The probability is that it will not be an ordinary case.

Once when Wolfe decided to take a train trip, Archie had so many things to do before they could depart that he said, "You might have thought we were bound for the stratosphere to shine up the moon and pick wild stars."

That would not be surprising. You never know what to expect from Wolfe and Archie.

Rex Stout died in 1975 but the paper world he created centered on the old brownstone on West Thirty-Fifth Street still endures in the pages of his timeless stories.

APPENDIX

Source material for the foregoing pages was collected from the following novels and novellas by Rex Stout listed by publication date.

NOVELS

Fer-de-Lance, Farrar & Rinehart, 1934
The League of Frightened Men, Farrar & Rinehart, 1935
The Red Box, Farrar & Rinehart, 1937
Some Buried Caesar, Farrar & Rinehart, 1939
Over My Dead Body, Farrar & Rinehart, 1940
Where There's a Will, Farrar & Rinehart, 1940
The Silent Speaker, Viking, 1946
Too Many Women, Viking, 1947
And Be a Villain, Viking, 1948
The Second Confession, Viking, 1949

In the Best Families, Viking, 1950
Murder by the Book, Viking, 1954
Prisoner's Base, Viking, 1952
The Golden Spiders, Viking, 1953
The Black Mountain, Viking, 1954
Before Midnight, Viking, 1955
Might as Well Be Dead, Viking, 1956
If Death Ever Slept, Viking, 1957
Too Many Clients, Viking, 1960
The Final Deduction, Viking, 1961
Gambit, Viking, 1962
The Mother Hunt, Viking, 1963
A Right to Die, Viking, 1964
The Doorbell Rang, Viking, 1965
The Father Hunt, Viking, 1968
Death of a Dude, Viking, 1969
Please Pass the Guilt, Viking, 1973
A Family Affair, Viking, 1975

NOVELLAS

"Bitter End," The American Magazine, Nov. 1940
"Black Orchids," in Black Orchids, Farrar & Rinehart, 1942
"Cordially Invited to Meet Death," in Black Orchids, Farrar & Rinehart, 1942

- “Not Quite Dead Enough,” in Not Quite Dead Enough, Farrar & Rinehart, 1944
 “Booby Trap,” in Not Quite Dead Enough, Farrar & Rinehart, 1944
 “Help Wanted, Male,” in Trouble in Triplicate, Viking 1949
 “Instead of Evidence,” in Trouble in Triplicate, Viking 1949
 “Before I Die,” in Trouble in Triplicate, Viking, 1949
 “Man Alive,” in Three Doors to Death, Viking, 1950
 “Omit Flowers,” in Three Doors to Death, Viking, 1950
 “Door to Death,” in Three Doors to Death, Viking, 1950
 “Bullet for One,” in Curtains for Three, Viking, 1950
 “The Gun with Wings,” in Curtains for Three, Viking, 1950
 “Disguise for Murder,” in Curtains for Three, Viking, 1950
 “The Cop-Killer,” in Triple Jeopardy, Viking, 1952
 “The Squirt and the Monkey,” in Triple Jeopardy, Viking, 1952
 “Home to Roost,” in Triple Jeopardy, Viking, 1952
 “Die Like a Dog,” in Three Witnesses, Viking 1956
 “Immune to Murder,” in Three for the Chair, Viking, 1957
 “A Window for Death,” in Three for the Chair, Viking, 1957
 “Too Many Detectives,” in Three for the Chair, Viking, 1957
 “Christmas Party,” in And Four to Go, Viking, 1958
 “Easter Parade,” in And Four to Go, Viking, 1958
 “Fourth of July Picnic,” in And Four to Go, Viking, 1958
 “Murder is No Joke,” in And Four to Go, Viking, 1958
 “Poison a la Carte,” in Three at Wolfe’s Door, Viking, 1960
 “Method Three for Murder,” in Three at Wolfe’s Door, Viking, 1960
 “The Rodeo Murder,” in Three at Wolfe’s Door, Viking, 1960
 “Death of a Demon,” in Homicide Trinity, Viking, 1962
 “Eeny Meeny Murder Mo,” in Homicide Trinity, Viking, 1962
 “Counterfeit for Murder,” in Homicide Trinity, Viking, 1962
 “Kill Now-Pay Later,” in Trio for Blunt Instruments, Viking 1964
 “Murder is Corny,” in Trio for Blunt Instruments, Viking, 1964
 “Blood Will Tell,” in Trio for Blunt Instruments, Viking, 1964
 “Frame-up for Murder,” in The Saturday Evening Post, 1958
 “Assault on a Brownstone,” in In Death Times Three, Bantam, 1985 (Story substantially similar to “Counterfeit for Murder” previously published.)