

# Short Story 2: The Case of the Vanishing Ghost

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 26 Jun 2014

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Robert Pirkola — 26 Jun 2014, 16:46

It seems likely that “Philo Queen” is indeed a combination of Philo Vance and Ellery Queen as noted by Gerry Quinn back on March 24, 2012, but even if so, it must not have been a term coined by Wolfe himself. “I found it used in a mystery novel called *Fit to Kill* by Hans C. Owen originally published in 1937.” The following passage occurs on pg. 27 of the Wildside Press edition (ISBN-10: 143446458X) published February 29, 2008:

Mather stared at his fellow dean with admiration written on his lean bronzed face. “How did you get all that, Percy?” he asked.

“Elementary my dear Watson;” squeaked Trout delightedly. “You know my methods.” Apply them. And now, insect, turning to Cusani, “loosen up.” Tell me about the gun and the bullet.

“Okay, smart guy.” Here’s where you get a bump. The gun was in his hip pocket.

“In whose hip pocket?”

“In the Judge’s, Philo Queen. Let’s hear you deduce that one off.

The book itself seems to be a one-off about a college professor, Percival Trout, who plays at being a detective and who has a sidekick, Sergeant “Sally” Cusani. Percival Trout plays the S. Holmes part in the novel’s consciously derivative wordplay as evidenced by the above passage. One can read a good bit of the book by searching for it in Google Books. The blurb for the Wildside Press edition reads: “Sign up for the course conducted by Sergeant “Sally” Cusani and Professor Percival Trout at a famous Eastern university — whose academic serenity is shattered by a series of exceedingly brutal killings!”