The Nero Wolfe series
by Rex Stout (1886-1975)

**Fer-de-Lance** [1934]

As any herpetologist will tell you, the fer-de-lance is among the most dreaded snakes known to man. When someone makes a present of one to Nero Wolfe, Archie Goodwin knows he's getting dreadfully close to solving the devilishly clever murders of an immigrant and a college president. As for Wolfe, he's playing snake charmer in a case with more twists than an anaconda -- whistling a seductive tune he hopes will catch a killer who's still got poison in his heart.

**The League of Frightened Men** [1935]

Paul Chapin’s college cronies never quite forgave themselves for instigating the tragic prank that left their friend a twisted cripple. Yet with their hazing days at Harvard far behind them, they had every reason to believe that Paul himself had forgiven them—until a class reunion ends in a fatal fall, and the poems, swearing deadly retribution, begin to arrive. Now this league of frightened men is desperate for Nero Wolfe’s help. But are Wolfe’s brilliance and Archie’s tenacity enough to outwit a killer so cunning he can plot and execute in plain sight?

**The Rubber Band** [1936]

What do a Wild West lynching and a respected English nobleman have in common? On the surface, absolutely nothing. But when a young woman hires his services, it becomes Nero Wolfe’s job to look deeper and find the connection. A forty-year-old pact, a five-thousand-mile search, and a million-dollar murder are all linked to an international scandal that could rebound on the great detective and his partner, Archie, with fatal abruptness.

**The Red Box** [1937]

A lovely woman is dead, and the fortunes of overextended theatrical producer Llewellyn Frost depend on solving the mystery of the red box: two pounds of candied fruits, nuts and creams, covered with chocolate -- and laced with potassium cyanide. When Nero Wolfe's suspicion falls on Frost's kissing cousin, Frost wants the detective to kill the sickly sweet case--before it kills him.

**Too Many Cooks** [1938]

Everyone knows that too many cooks spoil the broth, but you'd hardly expect it to lead to murder. But that's exactly what's on the menu at a five-star gathering of the world's greatest chefs. As guest of honor, Wolfe was lured from his brownstone to a posh southern spa to deliver the keynote address. He never expected that between courses of haute cuisine he and Archie would be compelled to detect a killer with a poison touch—a killer preparing to serve the great detective his last supper.

**Some Buried Caesar** [1939]

An automobile breakdown strands Nero Wolfe and Archie in the middle of a private pasture—and a family feud over a prize bull. A restaurateur’s plan to buy the stud and barbecue it as a publicity stunt may be in poor taste, but it isn’t a crime . . . until Hickory Caesar Grindon, the soon-to-be-beefsteak bull, is found pawing the remains of a family scion. Wolfe is sure the idea that Caesar is the murderer is, well, pure bull. Now the great detective is on the horns
of a dilemma as a veritable stampede of suspects—including a young lady Archie has his eye on—conceals a special breed of killer who wins a blue ribbon for sheer audacity.

**Over My Dead Body** [1939]

When a Balkan beauty gets in trouble over some missing diamonds, whom else can she turn to but the world-famous Nero Wolfe? Especially since she claims to be Wolfe's long lost daughter! The stakes are suddenly raised when a student at this woman's fencing school ends up dead after a pointed lesson. As Wolfe and his sidekick, Archie, thrust and parry into a tangle of documents, identities and international intrigue, another student body turns up, expertly skewered through the heart. Is Wolfe's long lost daughter the black sheep of the family, a hot-blooded mistress of murder?

**Where There's a Will** [1940]

Why did the late multimillionaire Noel Hawthorne leave his sisters, April, May, and June, a peach, a pear, and an apple? Why did he will the bulk of his considerable estate to a woman who was most definitely not his wife? Now Nero Wolfe, able, astute, and unscrupulous detective that he is, must get to the bottom of a will that's left a whirlpool of menace . . . and a legacy of murder that's about to be fulfilled.

**Black Orchids** [1942]

Not much can get Wolfe to leave his comfortable brownstone, but the showing of a rare black orchid lures him to a flower show. Unfortunately, the much-anticipated event is soon overshadowed by a murder as daring as it is sudden. It's a case of weeding out a cunning killer who can turn up anywhere—and Wolfe must do it quickly. Because a second case awaits his urgent attention: a society widow on a mailing list of poison-pen letters leading to a plot as dark as any orchid Wolfe has ever encountered.

**Not Quite Dead Enough** [1944]

The army wants Nero Wolfe urgently, but he refuses their clarion call to duty. It takes Archie Goodwin to titillate Wolfe’s taste for crime with two malevolent morsels: a corpse that refuses to rest in peace and a sinister "accident" involving national security. It's up to the Grandiose Master himself, Nero Wolfe, to set the traps to catch a pair of wily killers—as Archie lays the bait on the wrong side of the law.

**The Silent Speaker** [1946]

When a powerful government official, scheduled to speak to a group of millionaires, turns up dead, it is an event worthy of the notice of the great Nero Wolfe. Balancing on the edge of financial ruin, the orchid-loving detective grudgingly accepts the case. Soon a second victim is found bludgeoned to death, a missing stenographer’s tape causes an uproar, and the dead man speaks, after a fashion. While the business world clamors for a solution, Nero Wolfe patiently lays a trap that will net him a killer worth his weight in gold.

**Too Many Women** [1947]

Who murdered Waldo Wilmot Moore? Well, there were five hundred female employees at the Wall Street firm where poor Waldo had worked. Any one of them might have done it. And there was also the beautiful lady stockholder who tried to bribe Archie. And the dark-haired lovely who simply couldn't talk to a man until she kissed him. And the girl who filed a murder complaint in the office suggestion box. And the girl who got jilted by death.

**And Be a Villain** [1948]

Madeline Fraser, radio talk show host extraordinaire, had a natural dread of dead air. So when one of her on-air guests signed off at the mike after drinking a glass of a sponsor’s
beverage, it was a broadcaster’s nightmare come true. Enter Nero Wolfe. He agrees to take the case, with his sizable fee contingent on his solving the murder. But to Wolfe’s surprise, everyone connected to the case now lies in unison about it. And as the portly detective soon discovers, the secret worth lying about only hides another worth killing for.

Trouble in Triplicate [1949]
Dazy Perrit was an underworld kingpin until a hail of bullets sent him underground. Ben Jensen was a well connected publisher until a persistent gunman unplugged him. Eugene Poor made novelties like exploding cigars until one of them blew him to bits. All three men had a premonition they would die, and now Nero Wolfe and Archie, his ever-faithful sidekick, must figure out why. It’s a deadly equation of murder times three.

The Second Confession [1949]
When a millionaire businessman hires Nero Wolfe to probe the background of his daughter’s boyfriend, it seems like just another case of an overprotective father. But when a powerful gangland boss “counsels” the detective to drop the matter, Wolfe receives a warning: a burst of machine-gun fire through the windows of his orchid room. Then the lawyer boyfriend turns up dead, leaving Archie the number one suspect. Throw in drugged drinks, two man-killing debutantes, and officials of a highly un-American party and Wolfe finds himself involved in a case where he must quickly solve one murder to prevent another: his own.

Even in the Best Families (a.k.a. In the Best Families) [1950]
The aging millionairess has a problem: where is her young playboy husband getting all his money? To help find the answer, Archie infiltrates a party at her palatial estate. But her late-night murder ruins the festive mood . . . and a letter bomb from a powerful crime boss makes Nero Wolfe do the unthinkable—run for his life. Suddenly Archie finds himself on his own, trying to find a killer without the help of his old mentor. For to all appearances, Wolfe has vanished. The career of the world’s most famous detective has ended in cowardice and disgrace . . . or has it?

Three Doors to Death [1950]
One by one they knock on the door of the incomparable Nero Wolfe, each with a case more perplexing than the one before. First comes the niece of a man who committed suicide by jumping naked into a geyser, only to return just in time to be murdered. Then it’s the strange case of the murder victim’s family covering up for the real killer, while a chef stews in jail. Finally a master horticulturist discovers the woman he wants to marry: dead and cooling in a hothouse. Three knocks on the door. Three cases of crime. Enter a world of mendacity, mixed motives, and masterful detection on West Thirty-fifth Street, where murder is always at home.

Curtains for Three [1950]
In these three baffling mysteries of motive and murder, even the great Nero Wolfe finds himself stumped. First there is the case of the two passionate lovebirds who want to make sure that neither is a cold-blooded killer. Then it’s off to the races, where Wolfe must choose from a stable of five likely suspects to corral a killer on horseback. And finally the detective finds himself the confidant of a distraught, self-described grifter who claims a murderer is stalking Wolfe’s own brownstone. Through brilliant deduction is determined to expose the truth behind the veils of illusion—and bring down the curtain on three all-too-clever murderers.

Murder By the Book [1951]
It wasn’t Leonard Dykes’s writing style that offended. But something in his unpublished tome seemed to lead everyone who read it to a very unhappy ending. Now four people are dead,
including the unfortunate author himself, and the police think Nero Wolfe is the only man who can close the book on this novel killer. So the genius sleuth directs his sidekick to set a trap . . . and discovers that the truth is far stranger—and far bloodier—than fiction.

**Prisoner’s Base [1952]**

When Priscilla Eads, heiress to cotton-towel millions, first pleads for Nero Wolfe’s assistance, the portly detective decides to wash his hands of a case that has more than its share of dirty laundry. Just hours later Miss Eads and her maid are found strangled to death under circumstances that don’t quite wash. Now, to the dismay of a greedy board of directors and a fortune-hunting South American ex-husband, the astute Wolfe feels, on second thought, a certain responsibility to dip into Priscilla’s case and scrub away the stain—of murder!

**The Black Mountain [1954]**

When evil strikes a loved one, it can make us crazy. We can't think rationally enough to get revenge ourselves, so we shouldn’t. But Nero Wolfe ignores reason when someone guns down a close friend in cold blood. He vows to collar the killer personally, and it thrusts him into the gravest danger of his career. The case takes him 4,000 miles across the ocean to the hazardous mountains of Montenegro, where Communist cutthroats have also disposed of Wolfe's adopted daughter. Now they zero in on the world-famous detective himself.

**Triple Jeopardy [1952]**

Don't tempt Nero Wolfe to find the culprit. When foul play's the game, he always wins—and in these three crime puzzles, the stakes are high. First, there's little nourishment for the detective when someone drops a poison pellet into a vitamin addict's pillbox. Then, a murdered policeman leaves a clue folded in a newspaper, and Wolfe has to read the fine print to decipher his killer's identity. And what do you do when a chimp is the only witness to a crime? This is no time for monkeyshines from the world's most celebrated armchair detective.

**Three Men Out [1954]**

The legendary Nero Wolfe finds himself deep in foul territory in these three baffling cases of murder and mayhem. In the first, some sharp questions about a poisoning come to an abrupt end—as in death by a blunt instrument. Then Wolfe must decode the last message of a competitor who pencils in the name of his killer just before he's rubbed out with one shot in his soundproof office. Finally, the stay-at-home sleuth deigns to attend a World Series game where a rookie's struck out before he gets to bat. Wolfe is left to prove that when it comes to detection he's in a league by himself.

**The Golden Spiders [1953]**

Nero Wolfe was almost as famous for his wealthy clients and extravagant fees as for his genius at detection. So why has he accepted a case for $4.30? And why have the last two people to hire him been ruthlessly murdered? Wolfe suspects the answers may lie in the story of a twelve-year-old boy who turns up at the door of his West Thirty-fifth Street brownstone. In short order, Wolfe finds himself confronted by one of his most perplexing and pressing cases, involving a curious set of clues: a gray Cadillac, a mysterious woman, and a pair of earrings shaped like spiders dipped in gold. The case is all boiling down to a strange taste of greed—and a grumpy gourmand’s unappeasable appetite for truth.

**Before Midnight [1955]**

The scent of murder is in the air at the great Pour Amour perfume contest, and the incomparable Nero Wolfe is intent on sniffing out the killer. The foul deed is committed during the contest’s final round. Only five riddles separate the contestants from the million-dollar cash prize when someone finds the sweet smell of success too intoxicating to leave to chance. Now the contest creator is dead and
the answers stolen from his wallet, and it’s up to Wolfe to follow the trail of clues to a source disturbingly close to home.

**Might as Well be Dead [1956]**

Eleven years ago, wealthy Nebraska businessman James Herold gave his only son, Paul, a very raw deal. Now he wants Nero Wolfe to track Paul down so that he can make amends. But what if the young man doesn’t want to be found . . . and what if he’s the same P.H. who’s currently on trial for cold-blooded murder? It’s a case that will draw the great detective and his dedicated sidekick into a sticky web of deceit, one that will tax their resources to the utmost, and even cost them one of their own.

**Three Witnesses [1956]**

Did the dead millionaire who suddenly came back to life—only to end up dead again—write his own death warrant years before? Will the black Labrador retriever who follows Archie home prove that man’s best friend is a killer’s worst enemy? And in a case involving a telephone answering service with three very untalkative operators, could the great detective himself be the witness who will save an innocent man from the chair?

**If Death Ever Slept [1957]**

Murder lurks in the wings of the sprawling Fifth Avenue penthouse of multimillionaire Otis Jarrell, who has just retained the incomparable Nero Wolfe on a case of the utmost confidentiality. But even the master detective cannot prevent tragedy when it inevitably arrives wielding Jarrell’s missing revolver. Soon a second victim meets his maker, and Wolfe must piece together the truth behind Jarrell’s scandalously ill-behaved family. And for one member of that charmed circle—a two-time killer sleeping the fitful sleep of the guilty—it could prove a deadly awakening.

**Three For the Chair [1957]**

The trail of bodies begins with the death of a self-made millionaire, a fortune in uranium, and the perfect weapon . . . which no longer exists. Then it’s on to a rural lodge to teach two arrogant billionaires, a foreign ambassador, and a famous diplomat that murder is bad for business. Finally, it’s a case of politics making the strangest of bedfellows when a fake millionaire becomes a real corpse in the state capital and the evidence has Nero and Archie in the hot seat.

**And Four to Go [1958]**

Nero Wolfe and his assistant, Archie Goodwin, star in these four gems. In "The Christmas Party" Archie and his fiancee attend an office party where Wolfe condescends to uncharacteristic theatrics. His dramatic technique is good, but it isn’t enough to clear him from suspicion of murder. The "Easter Parade" tempts Wolfe to commit petty larceny for an orchid. Though that crime goes unpunished, the inevitable murder doesn’t. "A Fourth of July Picnic" has Wolfe scheduled for an unprecedented appearance as orator. But his day in the sun is rained out - - by murder. The last selection, "Murder Is No Joke" is a whodunit in a couturier’s salon, where a murderer is dressed to kill -- and kill again.

**Champagne for One [1958]**

Faith Usher had a decidedly morbid personality. She talked about taking her life, and kept cyanide in her purse. So when she collapses and dies from a lethal champagne cocktail in the middle of a high society dinner party, everyone calls it suicide—including the police. But Archie was watching it all, and suspects it was murder. So does Nero Wolfe, especially after he’s warned by four men against taking the case. For the world’s most formidable detective it is a tantalizing puzzle involving an unlikely combination of philanthropy, deception, blackmail, and an unrepentant killer who just may have committed the perfect crime.
Plot It Yourself  [1959]

When a group of publishers and writers hires Wolfe to solve a case of false plagiarism, it’s time for the great detective to hit the books. Four unrelated accusers—including a down-and-out hack writer and a lady poet with a penchant for nude sunbathing—have been fleecing bestselling authors, claiming the authors have stolen their work and ingeniously planting evidence to back up their claims. But when punctuation gives way to puncture, Wolfe knows this is no simple case of extortion. This time he’ll need all the critical skills at his disposal to close the book on a killer well versed on the ABCs of murder.

Three at Wolfe’s Door  [1960]

In Three at Wolfe’s Door, death comes a-calling not once but three times in this murderous collection of cases from the files of the world’s greatest detective. First there is the exclusive dinner party where the guests are gourmets, arsenic is the appetizer, and the suspects are five of the most gorgeous gals in New York. Next, a wandering cab pulls up to Wolfe’s door, containing a laddy driver who doesn’t belong... and a comely corpse with a knife between her ribs. And finally, a championship rodeo roars into town, featuring square-jawed cowboys, bright-eyed cowgirls, and a dead millionaire with a fancy lariat for a necktie. Nero Wolfe, the 286 pound beer consuming marvel, who wears yellow silk pajamas, loves orchids and rarely leaves home has been a popular character for seventy years in Rex Stout's books, films and recently a successful television series. His sidekick Archie Goodwin helps prod Wolfe into action.

Two Many Clients  [1960]

The dead man had one too many lovers. Nero Wolfe's resourceful assistant Archie Goodwin finds that out when he stumbles into the room where the businessman has been murdered: a love nest lined with red satin and fleshy paintings. Besides the decor—and the trove of women's slippers—another notable feature of the room is the absence of police. So Nero Wolfe has a healthy head start on solving the crime. Then comes a snag: a bidding war erupts for the reclusive sleuth’s services. Suddenly Wolfe has too many clients, including one who's party to murder...

The Final Deduction  [1961]

As the usual suspects in Nero Wolfe's latest case - involving taxes and kidnapping - become victims, Wolfe breaks tradition, leaving his comfortable New York brownstone to do some legwork of his own. When Wolfe and Archie Goodwin become involved in a high-society kidnapping, the case is complicated by two bizarre, unexpected murders.

Homicide Trinity  [1962]

It’s a wily killer who dares to strike on Nero Wolfe’s hallowed turf—and leave a corpse strangled with Wolfe’s own soup-stained tie. But no sooner does the gourmandizing sleuth clean up this first course of murder than he faces a gun-toting wife who serves up a confession of homicidal intent—only to become the sole suspect when the corpus delicti is found. It’s murder à la carte when the third course is served: a cop-hating landlady brings Wolfe counterfeit cash—that leads to genuine murder. It’s up to Wolfe to see that the malefactors get their just desserts.

Gambit  [1962]

Jerin is a mental freak—a man capable of successfully playing a dozen simultaneous chess games against first-rate players while he himself is out of sight of any of the boards. It is while thus engaged that he is killed. A millionaire—his opponent in more realms than chess—is accused, and Nero Wolfe is given what appears to be the most hopeless case he and Archie Goodwin have ever tackled. You wouldn't expect a very public murder in a very private chess club. But that's what happens when someone stirs up an arsenic cocktail for one of the
members. Police have a suspect, but his daughter knows he's a pawn. She calls on Nero Wolfe, who checkmates the cops as well as the killer.

**The Mother Hunt** [1963]

When an abandoned baby is left on her doorstep, the young socialite widow knows only too well the identity of the father: her deceased philanderer of a husband. But who is the mother? The case seems like child’s play to Nero Wolfe, until the first dead body. While the police nurse their grudges against him, and the widow nurses Archie, the genius sleuth and his sidekick look for the hand that rocked the cradle. But nothing can pacify the killer, who's found the formula for murder—and is determined to milk it for all it's worth.

**Trio for Blunt Instruments** [1964]

Nero Wolfe, a genius at detection, prefers gourmet food and prize-winning orchids to damsels in distress. But at the prodding of his confidential assistant, Archie Goodwin, he opens his office door to three beautiful women, who usher in three of the most intriguing cases of Wolfe's career. With them come three baffling clues -- a shoeshine, an ear of corn, and a bloodstained tie. The killers in question turn out to be virtuos in the use of instruments -- blunt instruments, that is. This medley of malice, mayhem, and premeditated murder comes courtesy of Rex Stout, among the greatest of all mystery writers.

**A Right to Die** [1964]

When a bright young heiress with a flair for romance and one too many enemies is found brutally murdered, Nero Wolfe and his sidekick, Archie, find themselves embroiled in a case that is not as black and white as it first appears. Although the clues seem to indicate that black, well-educated Dunbar Whipple is the murderer of his beautiful white fiancee Susan, Nero Wolfe uncovers a startling new motive for the crime.

**The Doorbell Rang** [1965]

There's no one or nothing the great detective Nero Wolfe wouldn't take on if the price was right. That's something wealthy society widow Rachel Bruner is counting on when she writes him a check for a whopping hundred grand. The oversize genius and his able assistant Archie Goodwin soon find out why the prize is so generous as they lock horns with the FBI. And these highly trained G-men have a way with threats, tails, and bugs that could give even sedentary sleuth Nero Wolfe a run for his money.

**Death of a Doxy** [1966]

With a rich man footing the bills and a handsome lover on the side, Isabel Kerr seemed to have the perfect setup. Now the well-kept lady is stone-cold dead, and the cops have nabbed a Manhattan private eye who just happens to be an acquaintance of Nero Wolfe. Unable to refuse a friend in need, the great detective deigns to get the gumshoe off the hook. Little does Wolfe realize that in a matter of hours he’ll be entertaining a party of fools and lovers connected with the doxy’s death, including a mystery blackmailer, a sexy lounge singer, and a cold-blooded lady-killer.

**The Father Hunt** [1968]

Twenty-two-year-old Amy Denovo needs Nero Wolfe's help. She is determined to learn the identity of her father, a secret her mother scrupulously guarded -- and took to her grave when struck by a hit-and-run driver. Now Wolfe and his sidekick, Archie, have just one clue to go on: a note from Amy's mother and a box with over $250,000. Seems every month since Amy's birth, her mother received $1,000 from an unknown source and saved it for Amy's future. It's easy enough for Amy to afford Wolfe's services, and he grudgingly agrees. But as the weeks go by, Wolfe realizes this may be one of his most challenging cases ever. Someone doesn't want Amy's pedigree discovered, and that someone appears to
wield great power. It isn't long before Wolfe and Archie come to believe that Amy's mother was murdered -- and that Amy could be next.

**Death of a Dude** [1969]

The mountain couldn’t come to Wolfe, so the great detective came to the mountain—to Lame Horse, Montana, to be exact. Here a city slicker got a country girl pregnant and then took a bullet in the back. Wolfe’s job was to get an innocent man exonerated of the crime and catch a killer in the process. But when he packed his silk pajamas and headed west, he found himself embroiled in a case rife with local cynicism, slipshod police work, and unpleasant political ramifications. In fact, Nero Wolfe was buffaled until the real killer struck again, underestimating the dandified dude with an unerring instinct for detection.

**Please Pass the Guilt** [1973]

A Mets fan with a phony name and a millionaire client arrive just in time to provide a case for Nero Wolfe to pay the rent. A bomb explodes in the desk drawer of a top TV executive. Was it intended for him or the man who opened the drawer? They each had enemies enough to die a dozen times over. Was it the jealous wife or the ambitious partner? The secretary who got passed around like an inter-office memo? Or the man who couldn’t wash the blood off his hands? Nero Wolfe didn’t want any part of it—but he was up to his neck in the toughest case of his career!

**Death Times Three** [1985]

This collector's edition showcases Nero Wolfe's uncanny crime-solving ability--as well as his incredible appetite--when he tackles murder three times over. Features an introduction by Rex Stout biographer John J. McAleer.

Beginning in 1986, the Nero Wolfe series has been continued by Robert Goldsborough, with 13 new additions as of 2018...

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*Just Desserts Mystery Fiction Discussion Group*

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