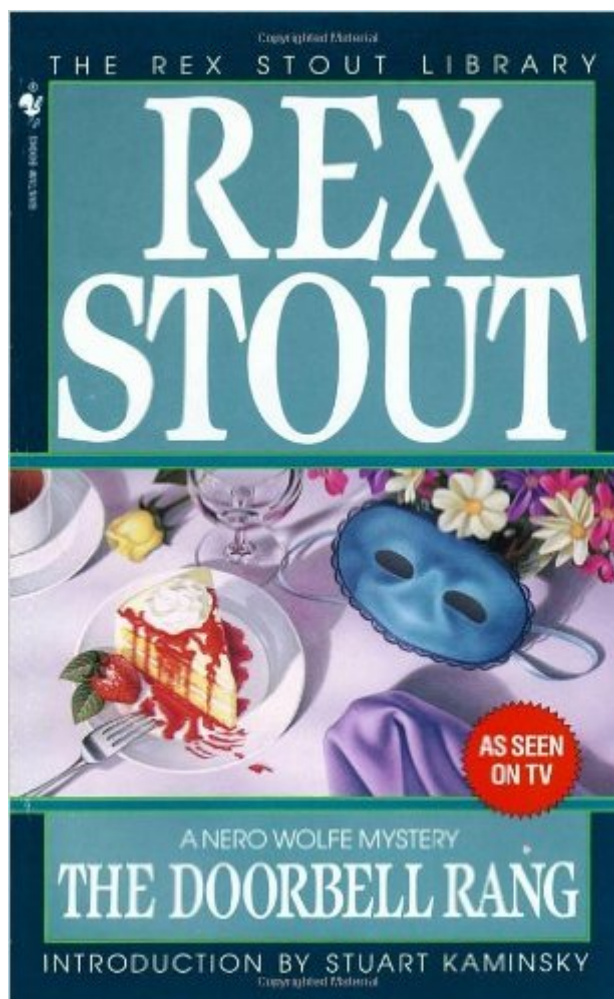


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The Doorbell Rang (Nero Wolfe)



Synopsis

Hired to help society widow Rachel Bruner foil bothersome Feds, Nero Wolfe and his able assistant Archie get in over their heads with highly trained G-men who are adept at bugs, tails, and threats.

Book Information

Series: Nero Wolfe (Book 41)

Mass Market Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: Bantam (June 1, 1992)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0553237217

ISBN-13: 978-0553237214

Product Dimensions: 4.2 x 0.5 x 6.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.1 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (70 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

This may not be the best Wolfe story to start with, because it is one of the later and greater of Stout's novels. However, if you do read this and like it, you won't be disappointed with any others in the series. Interestingly, Stout was 48 when his first Wolfe novel was published and he continued writing them until he was almost 90. This book has it all, from the usual cast of characters, Wolfe and Archie in the old brownstone, Saul, Orrie, and Fred, the freelancers hired to help on the case, Inspector Cramer, and the plot features an interesting twist on Wolfe's orchid hobby...well hobby doesn't describe 10,000 orchids in his rooftop greenhouse. You know there's a lot of commerce involved in keeping that collection going, but I'd better not say anymore about that. Wolfe is visited by a potential client with a problem that could be too hot to handle. You see, she has sent out copies of a book, "The FBI Nobody Knows" to influential people, newspaper editors, etc. Now she thinks the G-men are following her, tapping her phone and maybe worse. Most PI's wouldn't handle this case, even if the client was Cleopatra or Helen of Troy. But, a check for \$100,000 has a...powerful appeal to Wolfe (it was a lot of money in the 60's when the book was written). Has Nero Wolfe finally bitten off more than he can chew when the FBI comes calling? Read this book. I

consider it a classic, of both humor and of subtle political commentary. I give this book five of the biggest, brightest stars in the heavens.

Rex Stout has always been one of the best mystery writers. *The Doorbell Rang* is one of his best. It sprints along and gets you caught up in the story. Nero Wolfe takes a case to stop the FBI themselves from harrasing a rich woman. On the way, he encounters a murderer, lying women, lying men, and a pair of FBI agents who he uses in one of the most creative ways I have ever read. What makes this book so great is that it's different from most Nero Wolfe books. In this one, the main case is not a murder. The enemy is a huge and powerful organization. Throughout the book, special precautions are taken by Wolfe and Archie, his wisecracking assistant, because they both know that the FBI isn't above bugging. The way they fulfill their clients wishes is wonderful, but of course I won't tell you how they do it. And the very end made me laugh out loud in the middle of a crowded bus. Just wait for it and you'll see what I mean. Stout is also a great writer and *The Doorbell Rang* is full of snappy writing and Wolfe in all his eloquence. It is a great book and it is really fun to read.

This is one of Rex Stout's best Nero Wolfe novels. In my opinion, Stout improved with age, and this is one of the last titles in the series. The dynamics of the relationship between Nero Wolfe and his assistant, Archie Goodwin, are as usual, priceless. But what makes this book for me are the unexpected and highly enjoyable goodwill overtures between Wolfe, Goodwin, and police homicide Inspector Cramer. Even though Cramer's suspicions return in force at the end of the book, it's still fun to see him on Wolfe's side for once. And I think our "favorite fatty" detective's ability in this book to put one over on the FBI is a feel-good read for anyone who has had difficulty with people in positions of authority-especially when that authority is autocratic and mismanaged.

There are mystery books where the mystery is the thing and there are mystery books where the character(s) is/are the thing. With Stout, the characters are the thing. One does not read Stout to immerse oneself in an intricate mystery that one tries to solve. One reads Stout because you know you are in for a treat; not only do you get the ongoing give and take with the usual suspects; Wolfe, Archie Goodwin, he of the intrepid heart and very dry wit, Fritz and Cramer, house chef and NYPD Homicide Captain, but each book also introduces an interesting and well developed cast of secondary characters as well. And, given that Wolfe is as much a psychologist in his detecting as a detective, convincing and in depth characterization is critical to the success of any

given story. It is just after the New Year and the indolent Wolfe needs a client. A doozy shows up – a rich widow being harassed by the FBI. She offers Wolfe a \$100,000 retainer to devise a means of getting them off her back. Wolfe, with no real idea how to proceed, draws down on his credit balance with a local journalist and gets the inside poop on several FBI operations in the NYC area. Wolfe focuses on a murder where three FBI men are involved. He begins investigating the crime with an eye to setting up a situation where he can use the crime as a lever against the FBI. What makes this novel particularly interesting is the role the murder plays in the plot. Usually, the murder IS the plot. Here it is a sideshow to the main event – Nero Wolfe v. the FBI. The manner in which Wolfe succeeds in setting up and trapping the local FBI officers is brilliant and extremely entertaining. Moreover, this book features the full blown cast of Wolfe characters, a rarity for a Wolfe novel. Stout is Nero Wolfe is one of the classic 20th century detective series – and this is classic Wolfe from beginning to end.

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