



The Wolfe Pack
The Nero Wolfe
Literary Society

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KINGS FULL OF ACES

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KINGS FULL OF ACES: A NERO WOLFE OMNIBUS
by Rex Stout. 472 pages. Viking. \$4.50

Novice Wolfeans are better advised to start with *Kings Full of Aces*, published simultaneously with Baring-Gould's "biography." It brings together three of the better Wolfe books from among the 43 that have been published since 1933. In *Too Many Cooks* (1938), Wolfe is guest of honor at a meeting of top international chefs, one of whom, naturally, gets murdered. Wolfe manages to trap the culprit while discoursing on U.S. haute cuisine and recounting such favorite recipes as sauce printemps and shad roe mousse Pochontas. *Plot It Yourself* (1959) offers a revealing satire of the publishing industry as Wolfe uses literary detection to expose a plagiarist-killer. *Triple Jeopardy* (1952) is a collection of three taut novellas, of which the most intriguing is *The Squirt and the Monkey*, in which Wolfe's only witness to a murder is a monkey.

All the stories abound in the qualities that have made Wolfe's creator, now an active 82, one of the few detective writers with a wide appeal to the serious fiction reader. Stout serves up lean, lucid prose, masterly narrative construction, intricate yet gimmick-free plotting. To this may be added the flavor of what Ian Fleming called "one of the most civilized minds that has ever been applied to the art of the thriller."