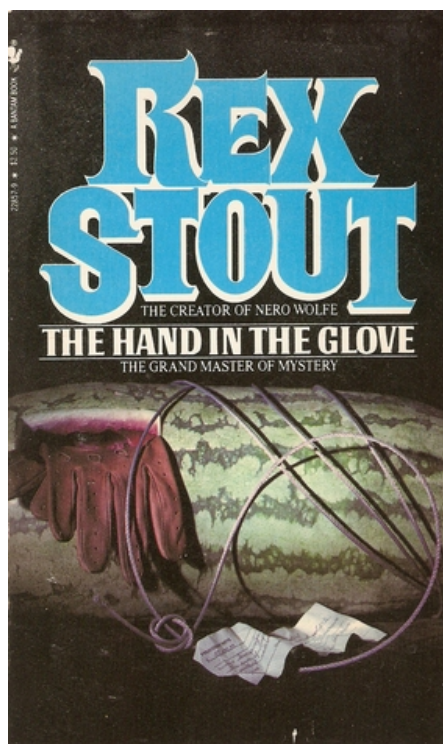




The Hand in the Glove

Rex Stout

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Wealthy industrialist P. L. Storrs has never approved of lady detectives, and he normally would not have made an exception of Theodolina "Dol" Bonner. But faced with a very delicate problem and surprisingly impressed, he hires her instantly.

It seems that Storrs' bird-witted wife has fallen under the spell of a smooth-talking religious charlatan, and now Storrs wants Dol to get the goods on him. But when the gorgeous gumshoe arrives at Storrs' picturesque country estate, Birchhaven, to meet the scoundrel, she finds more than she bargained for; namely, the corpse of her client and a garden party teeming with suspects!

Bibliographical note: This title was first published in Great Britain in 1939 as 'Crime on Her Hands'.

The Hand in the Glove Details

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Author : Rex Stout

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From Reader Review The Hand in the Glove for online ebook

Heidi says

I actually feel guilty giving this two stars. I worship Rex Stout and as much as I love the fact that he was writing about an intelligent and skilled female private detective in 1937...I just didn't enjoy the book. Of course it was well written but I wasn't engaged or entertained the way I've come to expect from Stout. I think other mystery lovers probably will like it but it just didn't do it for me. Give me my Nero and Archie any day.

Adam Graham says

Hand in the Glove features Dol Bonner, a young woman who has started her detective agency with the financial help of wealthy heiress Sylvia Raffray, who is on the cusp of taking over her family fortune. Her Guardian, P.L. Storrs, objects to Sylvia's involvement in the detective business as it's created some bad publicity. He persuades Sylvia to agree to quit the agency and her professional association with Dol which will essentially for Dol into a far less plush and favorable position.

However, Dol gets her first solo job when P.L. hires her to rid his family of a cult leader who is draining his wife financially. She heads to P.L.'s home in Connecticut with this goal, but everything changes when she finds P.L. strangled and hung up by a wire. Dol sets out to solve the murder of her friend's ward and prove herself as a detective.

Nero Wolfe doesn't appear in this story, but Inspector Cramer does make a cameo. Bonner actually shares one key feature with Nero Wolfe: a contempt for the opposite sex, though her's is not so severe as to prevent her from having men work for her or from being a caring sister. She also has a verbal feature in common with Wolfe: how she tells subordinates to take notes. When I read her saying to a male detective, "Your notebook..." I got de javu. I wonder if this was intentional or if Stout couldn't think any other way a detective might tell someone to take notes.

In other ways, they are mirror images. Wolfe an experienced late middle aged man and Bonner a young pretty woman feeling her way in the art of detection. While Wolfe remains reticent about his past and we only get tiny glimpses throughout the Corpus, Bonner tells straight up her backstory and why she thinks so little of men: she was jilted by one. Bonner's efforts to solve the case are met with sarcasm, annoyance, and amusement. A police officer smirks when he sees Bonner getting her detection kit out of the car and Sylvia tells her to put it away. Even Bonner's not so sure. She puts forth a strong front of absolute confidence, she's riddled with self-doubt. Is she really a detective or is she "just playing." Thus Bonner mission is to prove herself to herself.

The story is weakened by a forgettable cast of 1930s stereotypes, the occultic huckster, the heavy-drinking newsman, the dutiful butler, and the aloof bohemian poet daughter. Only the psychologist who is in need of a psychologist provides any spark and not enough of that. Sylvia Raffray fills the part of spoiled rich kid and is completely useless to Dol. While everyone seems to like her, it's a mystery to me why they do.

Even with a stronger cast of supporting characters, it's doubtful Bonner would have ever made it in a series. Her disrespect for men was unlike to make her popular with men or women. Plus, her uncertainty in the face of challenge is unlikely to connect with modern women in the age of girl power. Hand in the Glove is a serviceable 1930s mystery. What sets it apart from other 1930s mystery that are gathering dust in libraries

across America is that it was written by one of America's most talented mystery writers and featured a character who would go on to appear as a supporting character in the greatest detective series ever.

I should also note that a TV adaptation of Hand in the Glove was produced by NBC in 1992 called Lady Against the Odds that featured Crystal Bernard (Wings) as Dol Bonner and is available on Netflix. The TV movie made a number of departures. The time period was changed to World War II (which is far more exciting to most viewers than 1937), rather than having the case confined to the estate as the book does, Dol travel back and forth questioning witnesses. It also changed the character of Dol Bonner and removed the man-hating elements. While there was a bit of melodrama and some things that didn't ring true to the period, after reading the book, I think they probably did the best they could with it.

B.V. says

Rex Stout is best known for his iconic Nero Wolfe character, but he also created the female detective Theodolinda "Dol" Bonner, who came to being in the standalone novel "The Hand in the Glove" in 1937, one of the very first female private eyes.

Although Stout only gave Bonner one solo outing, she also guest-starred in some of the Nero Wolfe stories, one of the few women Wolfe tolerated perhaps because she herself claimed to have been "inoculated against" men, even her suitor, the newspaperman Len Chisholm. Although The Hand in the Glove is a contemporary of the Nero Wolfe/Archie Goodwin titles, it was written in the third person narrative, not Archie's sarcastic first-person. Even so, it still has some of the hallmark wit that graces the Wolfe/Goodwin novels.

In the book, a religious charlatan has charmed the wife of wealthy industrialist, P.L. Storrs, who decides he needs a private investigator to look into the man and hires Bonner, even though he doesn't approve of female detectives. But when she arrives at Storrs' country estate, she instead finds the body of her client and a garden party filled with a bouquet of suspects.

Bonner isn't quite the fully realized, tough-as-nails P.I. of the 21st century, sending out mixed messages about her ability to do the job as a woman, perhaps mirroring the changing-but-still-traditional views of women in Stout's day. Bonner begins the novel as part of a two-woman firm, Bonner and Raffray, although the Raffray half soon dissolves, Bonner being disgusted about Raffray's submissiveness to her fiancée.

Yet, Bonner concedes she herself decided to be a detective on flimsy grounds, adding, "I made a long list of all the activities I might undertake on my own. They all seemed monotonous or distasteful except two or three, and I flipped a coin to decide between detective and landscape design." Although she's a smart cookie and solves the crimes where the male detectives in the case don't, she's also squeamish about seeing corpses and faints after she shoots a criminal.

Laura Rye says

Wonderful!...Too bad it seems to be the only book he wrote in this series...I would definitely have read the rest of the series. It was nice to have a young female private investigator who still made mistakes but gets the job done when all others are running around like headless chickens. Highly recommend.

Katherine Rowland says

In which we meet Dol Bonner, one of the few women that Nero Wolfe respects. Wolfe does not appear in this story; it's fun to see how Stout writes a character who isn't sure of herself. Stout's writing mostly makes up for a slightly-unsavory ending.

Joanna says

a very quick and intriguing read

Cheryl Neer says

Having long been a fan of the Nero Wolfe mysteries, I recently listened to this dramatization on a road trip and am eager to read other Dol Bonner mysteries by Rex Stout.

Sarah says

It was an interesting mystery, but not the same kind of humor and character-driven entertainment of the Nero Wolfe series.

CQM says

I've never read any other Rex Stout books, not one Nero Wolfe have I perused.

Dol Bonner is the detective of this story and she's great. She was far from being the first female detective in fiction but when this was published in 1937 it was still a fairly outlandish idea. Apparently Dol appeared in a couple of Nero Wolfe books but why Stout didn't persevere with Dol in her own series is a mystery in itself. She's smart, sexy and takes no nonsense from anyone. I could picture Carole Lombard playing her in a film version. In fact it reads very much like an old movie.

Tip top stuff!

Michael Connick says

I love Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe series of mysteries and was quite happy to stumble upon this Dol Bonnor book by him. It seemed like the start of new series by this author, but it was the only Dol Bonnor book he wrote, although she does have minor roles in some of the Nero Wolfe mysteries. Perhaps he gave up on the idea. The protagonist is a woman who owns a detective agency - a fairly unusual role for a woman in 1937, when this book was written. Although the book was a little dated, I nevertheless found it to be an excellent whodunit. In fact, I found it to be quite a charming little mystery. I'd strongly recommend it to all Rex Stout fans.

Lisa Kucharski says

Much to my delight, I discovered two books that are a part of the Nero Wolfe series, this one does not include Nero Wolfe though it briefly features Inspector Cramer.

This one features Dol (Theodolinda) Bonner and her partner who appear to actually appear in the Nero Wolfe series, and Dol is respected completely by Wolfe.

Here in this mystery, her partner is told to get out of the detecting biz or funds will be cut off until she is of age by her guardian. Then the guardian hires Dol to find the dirt on a guy leeching off his wife and turning her into a religious groupie. Shortly after appearing on the "job" Dol finds the man who hired her killed, in a really unusual manner.

Not many suspects and it was a real head-twister to figure out who and then why. Because in some way all benefited from his death but not necessarily well enough to require his death... or so it seems.

This is Dol's big first murder case, that she assigns herself to and she does figure it out and finds her footing and grit. A great way to introduce a character who we see later much more sure-footed.

If you're a Nero Wolfe fan, and know the series it will be a fun story. I looked to see if there were any others like this and there is one other: The Red Thread featuring Inspector Cramer.

Interestingly enough, Dol feels about men a similar way that Wolfe feels about women. Perfect that they gravitate toward each other in respect. It is also an early part of the series, and feels a bit different than the Wolfe series. Here there is no "Archie" and there is a lot more dialogue than usual. Would have liked this to be completely told via Dol's point of view. But in retrospect, I think this story feels a bit like the Alphabet Hicks stories more than the Wolfe series.

A.G. Lindsay says

I stumbled upon this book at a used bookstore, and since Dol Bonner had appeared on several occasions, I thought I'd read it.

First of all, the formula Stout had developed with Wolfe, really doesn't work well in this case. The middle seems to drag and the denouement seems too quick.

Given that this is Dol Bonner's first murder case (and a very early case for her detective agency), I can understand all the "buck up, Dol, you can do it" internal dialogue that this book is riddled with, but it became repetitive after a while. It is nowhere near as witty as Archie's banter to the audience (and himself.) Also the constant mentioning that Dol disliked men and why should have only been mentioned once or twice, and not the half-dozen or more times it was brought up.

The mystery itself was good, including Dol's detective work and her handling of the clues, but I can't rate this story as highly as Stout's Wolfe books (still, it was better than "Under the Andes"...)

Bayneeta says

Mildly satisfying murder at a Connecticut mansion in 1937. Dol Bonner is sort of a grown up Nancy Drew. Homicide Detective Cramer of the Nero Wolfe series puts in an appearance, and I gather Dol will make a future appearance or two in later Wolfe series entries, but this lacks the sparkle and shine of the Archie/Wolfe banter. Seems more dated; in at least one of Dol's monologues I can clearly hear the voice of a young Katherine Hepburn in one of those earnest 1930s movie roles.

"--I could work with you, Mr. Sherwood, if you would let me. I think I'm clever. I'm quite young, and it may turn out that I'm merely conceited and my pride has been hurt, but I think I'm clever. I'm going to try to be."

Rickelectic says

Dol Bonner is the main character of this mystery. Lesser Rex Stout

Molly Hansen says

I am a huge Rex Stout fan, and this is the first of his books that I had to push myself to complete. Here he gives most of the characters introduced in the Nero Wolfe books a rest (including Nero and Archie), and introduces female detective Dol Bonner. It is a pretty drastic deviation from the seemingly easy style used in the Nero Wolfe books, and came relatively early in his writing career -- i.e., just three years after his first Nero Wolfe novel, *Fer-de-Lance*.

In the words of Amazon reviewer John P Bernat: "Rex felt like exploring nonconventional religion, nonconventional relationships and nonconventional detectives, but the guy's just way too conventional for the job. It's a noble experiment, but it failed. Stout knew; he never tried again."

Bottom line: If you're interested in reading all of Rex Stout's work, this is a must. But, if you're looking for another great adventure with Nero and Archie, you'll want to skip this one.
