

## Содержание:

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## Agatha Christie 1890-1976

Agatha Christie is known throughout the world as the Queen of crime. Her books have sold over a billion copies in the English language with another billion in 44 foreign languages.

She is the most widely published author of all time in any language, out-sold only the Bible and Shakespeare. She is the author of 79 crime novels and a short collections, 19 plays, and 6 novels written under the name of Mary Westmacott.

She was born Agatha Miller on September 15, 1890, in Torquay, in Devon, England. After her father's death she accompanied her mother on a trip to Egypt and shortly after her return she met her first husband, Colonel Archibald Christie. In 1914 they married in Bristol. Her husband was posted abroad and Agatha became a nurse in a surgical ward, tending the casualties sent back from the front. Then she transferred to the dispensary where she gained a rudimentary knowledge of poisons - a knowledge which she later used in her books.

Their only child Rosalind was born in 1919. After 1922 the marriage started to break up and in 1926 the stress led to Agatha's disappearance for ten days. She never explained the full story of those ten days which culminated in her discovery in a Harrogate hotel. Two years later, in 1928, she divorced him, still keeping his name professionally.

On a trip to Baghdad she met the archaeologist Max Mallowan, whom she accompanied on his excavations in Syria and Iraq, spending several months a year there. They married in 1932. The marriage was a great success. They lived happily together for forty-six years until Agatha's death.

Her first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, introduced the Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot, the little Belgian detective who was destined to become the most popular detective in crime fiction since Sherlock Holmes. Hercule Poirot would appear in about 25 of Christie's later novels. He died in *Curtain*, written in 1975. The other principal detective, Mrs. Jane Marple, a elderly spinster, first appeared in *Murder at the Vicarage*, in

1930. Following these, she wrote 66 of the most popular detective novels ever written.

To take a break from murder, Christie wrote six romance novels under the pseudonym of Mary Westmacott; two memoirs, one of which recounts her experiences in Syria with her second husband; and an autobiography, aptly entitled, *An Autobiography*, published after her death.

Mrs. Christie had many of her books turned into plays, and she eventually got so fed up with how other people adapted her books, that she decided to try for herself. *The Moustrap* (1952), is the longest running play in history with the record of 8862 performances at one theater.

In her books, her misdirection of the reader through dialogue and pointless hints captivate the reader, and force one think on a certain path while the murderer(s) stays out of suspicion. The interesting web of plots and foreshadowing once inside the book involve the reader, and keep the suspenseful atmosphere. Because of all these qualities in her writing, she became internationally successful, having her books translated into more languages than the works of Shakespeare were. Her books have sold over 100,000,000 copies throughout the world.

In recognition of her achievements she was created a Dame Commander of the British Empire in 1971. Five years later, when she died, Dame Agatha was, and still remains to this day, the most successful murder mystery writer in the world.

Agatha died at Wallingford in Oxfordshire on January 12, 1976.

## **Agatha Christie's work**

'Poirot' Novels: *The Mysterious Affair at Styles; The Murder on the Links; Poirot Investigates; The Murder of Roger Ackroyd; The Big Four; The Mystery of the Blue Train; Peril at End House; Lord Edgware Dies; Murder on the Orient Express; Three-Act Tragedy; Death in the Clouds; The A.B.C. Murders; Murder in Mesopotami; Cards on the Table; Murder in the Mews; Dumb Witness; Death on the Nile; Appointment with Death; Hercule Poirot's Christmas; Sad Cypress; One, Two, Buckle My Shoe; Evil under the Sun; Five Little Pigs; The Hollow; The Labours of Hercules; Taken at the Flood; Mrs. McGinty's Dead; After the Funeral; Hickery, Dickery, Dock; Dead Man's Folly; Cat among the Pigeons; The Adventure of the Christmas Pudding and a Selection of Entrees; The Clocks; Third Girl;*

*Hallowe'en Party; Elephants Can Remember; Poirot's Early Cases; Curtain: Poirot's Last Case; A Poirot Quintet; The Best of Poirot;*

'Miss Marple' Novels: *The Murder at the Vicarage; The Thirteen Problems; The Body in the Library; The Moving Finger; A Murder is Announced; They Do It with Mirrors; A Pocket Full of Rye; 4.50 from Paddington; The Mirror Cracked from Side to Side; A Caribbean Mystery; At Bertram's Hotel; Nemesis; Sleeping Murder; Miss Marple's Final Cases;*

Other Novels: *The Secret Adversary; The Man in the Brown Suit; The Secret of Chimneys; The Seven Dials Mystery; Partners in Crime; The Mysterious Mr Quinn; the Sittaford Mystery; The Hound of Death; The Listerdale Mystery; Why Didn't They Ask Evans?; Parker Pyne Investigates; Murder is Easy; Ten Little Niggers; N or M?; Towards Zero; Death Comes as the End; Sparkling Cyanide; Crooked House; They Came to Baghdad; Destination Unknown; Ordeal by Innocence; The Pale Horse; 13 for Luck!; Endless Night; By the Pricking of My Thumbs; Passenger to Frankfurt; Postern of Fate;*

## **The Five Little Pigs**

**Main characters:** Hercule Poirot

Carla Lemarchant

Philip Blake

Meredith Blake

Lady Dittisham = Elsa Greer

Cecilia Williams

Angela Warren

A young woman, Carla Lemarchant, comes to England to ask Hercule Poirot to investigate a murder that took place sixteen years ago. Her father, Amyas Crale, had been poisoned, and her mother, Caroline Crale, was tried and convicted for the murder and died in prison. But she wrote a letter to Carla telling her that she was not guilty and Carla had got that letter when she turned twenty-one. But now she is engaged to be married and wants her husband to know that she is not the daughter of a murderess.

That's why she asks Poirot to roll up the case again and to find the real murderer. Poirot starts his investigations at the Counsel for the Defence and the Prosecution. There he is getting information about the lifestyle of Amyas Crale. Hercule gets to know that Mr. Crale was an excellent painter, who had some affairs with young girls, which Mrs. Crale disliked very much. The stormy affairs blew over very fast, but there were rows all right between the couple. But he always came back to her in the end.

The detective also asks the solicitors and the Police Superintendent. Everybody tells him that it was unbelievable for them that Mrs. Crale could poison her husband, but who else could it be and for what motive?

After visiting all the other persons who had been in to the crime he gets more information about the case.

Philip Blake, for example, didn't like Mrs. Crale and so he thinks that she was the murderer.

Meredith Blake, his brother, feels guilty, because the poison was from his chemistry lab, where someone had stolen it the day before the crime.

Lady Dittisham, whose name was Elsa Greer sixteen years ago, loved Amyas Crale and wanted to marry him. Mrs. Crale knew that Elsa was her husband's mistress and so Lady Dittisham thinks that she had killed him, because she would never give him up to Mrs. Greer.

Cecilia Williams, the governess of Mrs. Crale's younger sister, had always admired Mrs. Crale, because she knew about the affairs and didn't say anything about it. She loved the strong woman.

Angela Warren, cannot believe that her sister, Mrs. Crale was the murderess. She was always so friendly and helpful towards her.

Hercule Poirot asks everyone to write a short summary of the events and to give them to him. All of the summaries sound alike, but each one is written from a personal point of view.

Poirot visits each author of the summaries, as he wants to ask them some additional questions. On that occasion he invites them to the place of the crime in order to reveal the solution of the case. It comes to the typical reconstruction of the case, where all the persons, including Carla Lemarchant with her fiancée, gather in one room, where Hercule starts:

Elsa Greer was just a victim of Mr. Crale's egoism, because he never loved her. He told his wife about that the day he was murdered. By coincidence Elsa Greer could hear everything; that is why she poisoned her lover. Mrs. Crale didn't know this and accused her sister of the murder, especially that one day before the murder witnessed an argument between her husband and Angela.

Now that the case is solved Carla Lemarchant and her boyfriend can get married.

## **Murder on the links**

**Main characters:** Hercule Poirot

Captain Hastings

Monsieur Hautet

Mr. Bex

Family Renault

Family Daubreuil

Captain Hastings, Hercule's best friend, makes an unforgettable experience on the train, where he meets a wonderful woman, called Cinderella. Upon arrival Captain Hastings tells Poirot how impressed he was by the new acquaintance. As usual Hercule pays attention to his friend's narration.

Poirot is worried as he views his daily mail. Someone urgently needs Poirot's help.

The detective and Captain Hastings leave immediately, but unfortunately when they arrive the author of the letter is already dead.

The victim is a gentleman named Mr. Renault. His corpse was found in a ditch near his house. He was stabbed on his back, which indicates a brutal murder.

When Hercule and Hastings enter the victim's house the examining magistrate Monsieur Hautet and the commissary Mr. Bex are already there. The latter seem quite surprised to see the famous Belgian detective. Poirot explains briefly the reason of his visit and they begin with the investigation. According to the staff the night before, Mr. Renault was visited by a female person. This visitor left Renault's house in a big hurry. Finally Renault went to bed. Mrs. Renault said that at night two masked men came into their

bedroom and bound her hands and feet. They dragged Mr. Renauld out of the bedroom, as they wanted him to reveal some "secret". In the morning Mrs. Renauld was released by her staff.

After this story Mrs. Renauld has to identify her husband. She walks out and seems to be in a stable condition, though when she sees her husband's body she faints.

Since it is a rather complicated case Mr. Giraud from Sûrete Paris is assigned to support the investigating team. Poirot cannot stand this young man, because he has a completely different opinion as far as solving of criminal cases is concerned.

After the interrogation of the staff, one finds out that Mr. Renauld had a love affair with his neighbour, Madame Daubreuil. Mr. Renauld's son who was supposed to be travelling to South America shows suddenly up and confirms a big quarrel he had with his father the day before his father was killed. After the argument, Mr. Renauld changed his testament and appointed Mrs. Renauld to be the only heir.

One morning Captain Hastings meets outside the house the beautiful woman, whom he met before on the train. She explains to be there only by coincidence. Hastings tells the lady about the case. When she sees the corpse of Mr. Renauld she faints as well. Captain Hastings runs into the house for a glass of water. After a few minutes Cinderella feels better and leaves right away. Captain Hastings finds out that the weapon is missing and begins to suspect Cinderella. Somehow embarrassed he tells Hercule the latest news. Poirot is sure to have had a similar case before.

In order to refresh his memory he leaves for London, where he continues his investigations. While he is away a second identically murdered corpse is being found.

This time it is an old man who can't be identified by anybody. Poirot is surprised, still he thinks he can reconstruct the chronology of the murders. He tells Hastings what he was able to find out:

Indeed there was an identical case before. Also here two men in disguise broke into a bedroom, tied the woman and took with them her husband in order to find out a "secret". The day after the people would find a stabbed corpse. After long investigations the wife admitted her involvement in that crime. She encouraged her lover Georges Conneau to have this plan of killing her husband. Finally she was acquitted of that crime and George Conneau was nowhere to find.

Poirot finds out that this woman is Madame Daubreuil and Mr. Conneau was Mr. Renauld. As a wanted murder he left the country for the time being and came back after some time. Unfortunately after he had returned he bought his new house near his former love. Madame Daubreuil took an advantage of the situation and started to blackmail Mr. Conneau - Renauld. Poirot finds out that Mr. Renauld's son had an affair with Mrs. Daubreuil's daughter. This explains the argument between Mr. Renauld and his son.

Everything seems to indicate that Jack Renauld (the son) is guilty, that is why Giraud arrests the young man. Poirot knows that there were two people involved, and he is convinced that Jack Renauld was not one of them. He finds in Jack Renauld's room a photograph of an attractive woman. When he shows that photo to Hastings the latter becomes pale, because the picture shows Cinderella. Poirot and Hastings try to find Cinderella and they succeed.

Finally Poirot knows how everything happened:

Madame Daubreuil blackmailed Mr. Renauld. He refused to continue payments and wanted to disappear. In order to do it in a perfect way he would have to be dead.

One day some beggar appeared at Mr. Renauld's property: This was a perfect opportunity for Mr. Renauld. He killed the intruder and afterwards he put his victim's clothes on. He didn't know that Madame Daubreuil's daughter saw the whole incident. In the evening Cinderella's twin sister came to see Mr. Renauld to tell him that she was in love with his son. He tried to get rid of her because he wanted to throw the corpse into the ditch, and then disappear afterwards.

Mrs. Renauld tells a lie about the two men, the same story which Mr. Renauld invented years back.

Now Poirot has to prove that Madame Daubreuil's daughter was the one who stabbed Mr. Renauld, because he was against her affair with Jack. Hercule Poirot asks Mrs. Renauld to tell her son that he would be excluded from the testament. The next night Poirot catches Madame Daubreuil's daughter as she tries to kill Mrs. Renauld.

Poirot is very proud to teach the young and arrogant Giraud a lesson.

## **Hercule Poirot**

He is an extraordinary little man! Height, five feet four inches, egg-shaped head carried a little to one side, eyes that show green when he is excited, stiff military moustache, air of dignity immense! He is neat and dandified in appearance. For neatness of any kind he has an absolute passion. To see an ornament set crookedly, or a speck of dust, or a slight disarray in one's attire, is torture to the little man until he can ease his feelings by remedying the matter. "Order" and "Method" are his gods. He has a certain disdain for tangible evidence, such as footprints and cigarette ash, and will maintain that, taken by themselves, they will never enable a detective to solve a problem. Then he will tap his egg-shaped head with absurd complacency, and remark with great satisfaction: *"The true work, it is done from within. The little grey cells - remember always the grey cells, mon ami."*

Statement of Poirot: *"One does not, you know, employ merely the muscles. I do not need to bend and measure the footprints and pick up the cigarette ends and examine the bent blades of grass. It is enough for me to sit back in my chair and think. It is this" - he taps his egg-shaped head - "this that functions!"*

Poirot does his job without any emotions and that's why his opponent never knows what he is thinking about!

## **The Body in the library**

**Author's Foreword:** *There are certain clichés belonging to certain types of fiction. The 'bold bad baronet' for melodrama, the 'body in the library' for the detective story. For several years I treasured up the possibility of a suitable 'Variation on a well-known Theme'. I laid down for myself certain conditions. The library in question must be a highly orthodox and conventional library. The body, on the other hand, must be wildly improbable and highly sensational body. Such were the terms of the problem, but for some years they remained as such, represented only by a few lines of writing in an exercise book. Then, staying one summer for a few days at a fashionable hotel by the seaside I observed a family party of a younger generation. Fortunately they left the next day, so that my imagination could get to work unhampered by any kind of knowledge. When people ask 'Do you put real people in your books?' the answer is that, for me, it is quite impossible to write about anyone I know, or have ever spoken to, or indeed have even heard about! For some reason, it kills them for me stone dead. But I can take a 'lay figure' and endow it with qualities and imaginings of my own.*



*So an elderly crippled man became the pivot of the story. Colonel and Mrs Bantry, those old cronies of my Miss Marple, had just the right kind of library. In the manner of a cookery recipe add the following ingredients: a tennis pro, a young dancer, an artist, a girl guide, a dance hostess, etc., and serve up à la Miss Marple!*

**Main characters:** Mrs. Bantry  
Colonel Bantry  
Colonel Melchett  
Inspector Slack  
Mrs. Marple  
Basil Blake  
Ruby Keene  
Josephine Turner  
Conway Jefferson  
Adelaide Jefferson  
Mark Gaskell  
Pamela Reeves  
Superintendent Harper

Mrs. Bantry is interrupted in her dreams by her maid. The latter tells the old lady, that there is a body in the library. Completely shocked Mrs. Bantry wakes up her husband, Colonel Bantry. He goes downstairs and finds a body of a girl. He calls the police, but in the meantime his wife takes an independent action and gets in touch with her best friend, Mrs. Marple.

Colonel Bantry suspects Basil Blake, a famous film star, who didn't like the Bantrys at all.

Colonel Melchett, the Chief Constable of the county, and Inspector Slack arrive soon and begin with their investigations. They find out that the young blonde girl was strangled and they take the body away with them. In the course of the investigations it comes out that another blonde is missing. One of the girls is Pamela Reeves who is sixteen and

missing for one day: The other one is Ruby Keene, aged eighteen and a professional dancer at the Majestic Hotel in Danemouth. Danemouth is a large and fashionable holiday resort on the coast. Ruby Keene's closest relative, Josephine Turner, called Josie, comes to the police station to identify the dead body and confirms that this is Ruby. Still Melchett and Slack have no slightest idea who killed the girl. In order to solve the clue both policemen decide to go to Danemouth.

At the same time Mrs. Bantry and Miss Marple stay at the Majestic Hotel because Miss Marple wants to start her investigations. Here the ladies get to know some new people. One of those people is a crippled man, called Conway Jefferson. He was very keen of Ruby Keene. Jefferson's daughter-in-law, Adelaide Jefferson, and his son-in-law, Mark Gaskell, both lost their spouses in an accident. They have been living with Conway since the accident of his children, although they are not his relatives, still they feel responsible for him.

Melchett and Slack get support from Superintendent Harper from the local police.

Ruby was supposed to come to work instead of Josie who twisted her ankle. Josie was a girl guide whose task was to keep the hotel guests in a good mood and to dance with them. That particular evening Ruby was going to perform together with Raymond Starr; the dance and tennis trainer. When Ruby didn't show up Josie had to dance even though her ankle was injured. Since Ruby couldn't be found anywhere, Conway Jefferson alarmed the police. Ruby used to spend a lot of time with the old man who liked her very much. This was an advantage for Mr. Gaskell and Mrs. Jefferson as each one of them could pursue their own interest without having the feeling of neglecting Conway Jefferson.

Miss Marple starts her own investigations asking the people a lot of questions. The next day it comes out that the second girl Pamela Reeves died in a burning car. The body cannot be identified at all. The only object left behind is the girl's shoe. Miss Marple ferrets out that Pamela wanted to have a date with Basil Blake. She also works out that Conway Jefferson wanted to adopt Ruby Keene and bequeath her everything. Last but not least Jane Marple finds out that Ruby Keene was in love with Basil Blake.

That is why everybody suspects Blake. The police arrest him but they still cannot find Blake's motives for that crime. Miss Marple is convinced of Blake's innocence and invents a smart plan. The next evening Conway Jefferson announces to his son- and daughter-in-law that he would bequeath all his money to finance a hostel for young girls working as professional dancers in London. When Mr. Gaskell hears the news he leaves in his car to London.

At night somebody attempts to kill Conway Jefferson, but Superintendent Harper can intervene, because Miss Marple gave him a hint that this could happen.

Josie (Josephine Turner) tried to murder Mr. Jefferson because she had a love affair with Mr. Gaskell. When she realized that Ruby would get all the money as the adoptive daughter of the old man, she knew that Gaskell and she would not get a penny. Josie wanted to eliminate Ruby but didn't know how. She knew though that Ruby was in love with Basil Blake and this way she could direct all the accusations to Basil. For her plan she needed another blonde girl. The innocent Pamela Reeves was her choice. Josie told the poor girl that Basil Blake wanted to meet her. After that she strangled the girl and with Gaskell's help she moved the body to Blake's house. Basil Blake came back home late at night and discovered the body in his house. He didn't quite know what to do so he transported the girl's body to the Bantroy's and placed it in their library. Ruby was also strangled and finally burned in the car. Before putting the car on fire she changed the clothes of both girls. When identifying the body at the police station she lied. It was Pamela Reeves and not Ruby Keene.

Josephine Turner did everything in the hope of sharing Gaskell's money as part of the heritage.

## **The moving finger**

**Main characters:** Jerry Burton  
Joanna Burton  
Emily Barton  
Megan Hunter  
Aimée Griffith  
Elsie Holland  
Richard Symmington  
The Calthrops  
Jane Marple

After a flying accident, the pilot Jerry Burton from London is rather badly injured. That's why his doctor Markus Kent advises him to spend some time in the country in order to promote the healing process. Jerry and his younger sister Joanna, who wants to accompany and look after him, choose the villa Little Furze in Lymstock, a quiet little town. The house belongs to Miss Emily Barton who will be staying at a friend's, meanwhile. She leaves her servant Patridge behind, to work for Jerry and Joanna. They soon get to know some inhabitants of the "village" as they call Lymstock. There are Mr. and Mrs. Symmington, for example. Richard Symmington is the solicitor of Lymstock. He and his wife have two sons, Brian and Colin, and Mrs. Symmington has another daughter from her first marriage, Megan Hunter. Even though Megan is already twenty years of age she is quite childish and immature and people even say she has got a low mind. Then there is Owen Griffith, the local doctor, and his sister Aimée. Further village inhabitants are Elsie Holland and Agnes Woddell, both maids at the Symmingtons', Mr. Caleb Calthrop the vicar, and his wife Dane as well as a rather odd man, Mr. Pye. One week after their arrival Jerry and Joanna get an anonymous letter saying nasty things about them. Having found out that this anonymous letter writing has been going on for some time, Jerry Burton gets more and more interested in trying to find out who is responsible for them. While discovering local scandals and so on, he gets to know Megan better. He realises that she is quite an intelligent and nice girl, though hardly anyone- except Joanna- thinks the same. And then, one day, Mrs. Symmington is found dead in her bedroom, cause of death cyanide as one knows from the inquest, holding as scrap of paper in her hand, saying "I can't go on". Everybody thinks she has committed suicide due to an anonymous letter which has been found right beside her body. So they are not searching for a lunatic who writes anonymous letters, but for an- at least indirect- murderer. After this shock Jerry and Joanna invite Megan to stay at their place for some time in order to recover a bit. After Mrs. Symmington's death Jerry Burton gets even more interested in the whole affair and often interferes with Superintendent Nash's investigations with which one must say that he welcomes Jerry's help. Questioning a lot of Lymstock's inhabitants he discovers that most of them accuse Mrs. Cleat, the witch of the village as they call her. Admittedly she is odd, but Jerry and Superintendent Nash agree that she is very unlikely to be the one they are after. The letter writer, however, doesn't stop his nasty business. Superintendent Nash is quite sure it must be a woman because of certain clues. They still don't have any concrete suspicions, when a week after Mrs. Symmington's death Megan returns home from Little Furze and the next day she finds Agnes Woddell's body in a cupboard below the stairs. Symmington's maid has rung Patridge the day before and has told her she was worried about something and would be coming round, but she never came. Another inspector arrives to enlighten the crime. This

inspector Graves and Superintendent Nash suppose that Agnes Woddell had to die because she had seen the letter writer and therefore the indirect murderer of Mrs Symmington. It was her day out and she went to see her boyfriend, but they had a row and so she returned early. Sitting by the window and waiting for her boyfriend to come and apologize she must have seen a person putting a letter into the letterbox. That's why, a week later, getting all this straight, she had to die before she could say anything. What follows is a number of suspicions. But all this seems to have a good side as well: Megan and Jerry get to know each other even better when he takes her for a trip to London one day (he has to see his doctor Marcus Kent). This trip changes Megan in a very positive way, and just as nobody expects it, Superintendent Nash proclaims that they have got her. Aimée Griffith is the one they have been after for so long. But is she really able to kill somebody? Miss Marple, who is visiting the Calthrops at the moment, doubts it and wants to know everything about the murder. The Calthrops invite Jerry and his sister to tea and he tells Miss Marple a dream he had some days ago. These words mix Miss Marple a little bit up, and she starts to think. After some more investigations, she knows who the murderer is and tries to explain it to the others. Jerry had indicated the whole thing to her. He saw perfectly the relationship of one thing to the other, but he just hadn't enough self-confidence to see what those feelings of his meant.

It is for her so absurdly simple, because you have to keep an absolutely open mind. It comes out that Mr. Symmington murdered his wife because he was in love with Elsie Holland, his maid. He wanted everything, his home, his children, his respectability and Elsie. Therefore he created a non-existent anonymous letter writer. That's why the police suspected a woman and not him. He just put the cyanide in the top cachet of the ones she took in the afternoon when her sciatica came on after lunch.

When he heard that Agnes Woddell wanted to tell something to Partridge, he thought she knew something. That's why he killed her!

So the mystery of the anonymous letter writer and the murder was solved and the daily humdrum returned to Lymstock.

## **Jane Marple**

Miss Marple first appeared in a series of six short stories in Britain's *The Sketch* magazine. She was a member of the Tuesday Club, a discussion group that met in the quiet Kentish village of St. Mary Mead to discuss unsolved crimes. Other members included the vicar; Miss Marple's nephew, a successful novelist; his fiancée Joyce, an artist; and others.

However, it was Miss Marple who always arrived at the solutions to the crimes.

These short stories were collected with seven others written especially for the volume as *The Thirteen Problems*, two years after Miss Marple's first novel appearance, in *Murder at the Vicarage*.

Miss Marple was not the first spinster detective - that honour belonged to Anna Katherine Green's Amelia Butterworth - but she is the one everyone thinks of when the concept arises. Miss Marple was based on Christie's own grandmother, a pleasant woman who nevertheless, according to Christie, "expected the worst of everyone and everything" and was usually right. A precursor of the character in Christie's own work is Caroline Shepherd in the Hercule Poirot novel *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. A spinster like Marple, Shepherd has the same interest in gossip and the same knack for knowing what's going on.

When we first meet Miss Jane Marple she is very much the stereotypical spinster of the last century - blue-eyed and frail, wearing a black lace cap and mittens, and constantly knitting. She is also a gleeful gossip and not especially nice. She modernizes and becomes nicer over the years - there are twelve years between the first Marple novel and the second, *The Body in the Library*, although some short appearances intervened.

Miss Marple is able to solve difficult crimes not only because of her shrewd intelligence, but because St. Mary Mead, over her lifetime, has put on a pageant of human depravity rivalled only by that of Sodom and Gomorrah. No crime can arise without reminding Miss Marple of some parallel incident in the history of her time.

## **The Seven dials mystery**

**Main characters:** Gerry Wade

Lorraine Wade

Jimmy Thesiger

Eileen Brent = Bundle

Bill Eversleigh

Ronald Devereux

The Cootes

Lord Caterham

Superintendent Battle

George Lomax

A group of young people are enjoying a short stay at Lord Caterham's house.

Oswald Coote is taking care of this house while, the Lord is away. Gerry Wade, a champion sleeper, is going on Oswald Coote's nerves. He sleeps much too long.

Jimmy Thesiger, Bill Eversleigh, Ronald Devereux and some others want to play a practical joke on Gerry. They set up eight loud alarm clocks to ring one after the other, starting from 6:30 a.m. The attempt to wake Gerry up doesn't work. In the morning they find out that Gerry is dead due to an overdose of chloral, which is a kind of soporific. Everyone is shocked to hear the news of Gerry's sudden death. The young people leave Lord Caterham's house as their stay comes to an end.

Lord Caterham returns with his daughter Eileen Brent, whom everybody calls just Bundle. She is a very lively and curious person. When she hears the news of Gerry Wade's death, she wants to see the room in which he was found dead.

What attracts her attention is the fact that seven alarm clocks are arranged in an even row on the mantelshelf. She also finds Gerry's letter to his half-sister, Loraine Wade in which he mentions a "Seven Dials business".

Eileen decides to drive to town. She is driving rather fast, when suddenly a young man coming from the back of the hedge appears right in front of her car. With a risky manoeuvre Eileen manages not to hit the young man. When she looks back, the man is lying on the road without a motion. She runs to him immediately and finds him to be still alive. The young man whispers "Seven Dials.tell.tell.Jimmy Thesiger" and closes his eyes. Eileen puts the casualty into her car and rushes to the local doctor. After a short examination the doctor says that the patient was shot and is dead. The young man's name is Ronald Devereux. Bundle realizes that this person lived in her house when Gerry died. She intends to find out more about the "Seven Dials" and meets Superintendent Battle. Battle is surprised that Eileen is familiar with the "Seven Dials" but isn't much of a help. He suggests Eileen should contact Bill Eversleigh. Bill knew Gerry, Ronny and he also knows Jimmy Thesiger.

Bill tells Eileen where Jimmy lives. When meeting Jimmy, Bundle gets acquainted with Loraine Wade. Bundle tells the two what exactly happened and also about the "Seven

Dials".

Jimmy explains that "Seven Dials" is an international criminal organisation. He is convinced that Gerry, who worked for the Foreign Office knew too much about this organisation, that is why he had to die. Also Bill works for the Foreign Office.

Jimmy knows, that Bill's boss, George Lomax is planning a party. It is a meeting of important businessmen, who intend to negotiate regarding a secret formula.

George Lomax received a threat letter. Something is supposed to go wrong during the planned party.

Bundle, Jimmy and Loraine want to start their own investigations. Jimmy thinks it could be too dangerous for Bundle and Loraine. Bundle begins her independent investigations. Somehow she manages to find the Seven Dials Club and hide herself in the room where the meeting should take place. Altogether seven well dressed persons appear at the meeting. All of them wear masks.

The mask is a mere piece of material hanging in front of the features like a curtain in which two slits are pierced for the eyes. In shape it is round and on it is the representation of a clock face.

From the conversation Bundle finds out that there will something happen at Lomax's party. After this discovery Bundle meets Jimmy. They both tell Bill Eversleigh the latest news. They plan to go to the party. Loraine has to stay home as Jimmy doesn't want to put her in jeopardy. Trying to convince Bundle to stay away from the party would be useless.

Superintendent Battle is also at the party. George Lomax invited him for the peoples' security. A lot of dramatic things happen during the party. One tries to steal the secret formula, someone shoots at Jimmy, a Hungarian Countess faints and finally Loraine, who was supposed to stay at home, saves the package with the secret formula. Battle asks some of the people several questions but the facts don't make much sense.

Jimmy is sure that Sir Oswald Coote, who was also at the party is involved. After further research everything speaks against Oswald Coote.

Bill meets Jimmy and informs him that he knows who is responsible for everything.

Soon after that Jimmy calls Bundle and asks her to come together with Loraine to the club where she saw the Seven Dials the other day. Bundle and Loraine drive to the club but it



is not yet open, still they manage to enter the club. After a short while Jimmy shows up at the location. Bill is still in the car because Jimmy wanted to check first if everything was in order at the club. When Jimmy finds out that there is no danger he asks Loraine to go to the car to bring Bill along with her. Loraine can't believe her eyes when she sees Bill sitting motionlessly in the car. She alarms Jimmy immediately. Fortunately Bill is alive, so they carry him into the club. Jimmy wants to call for a doctor. In the meantime Bundle hears some noise upstairs, she climbs up the stairs and suddenly someone hits her from the back.

When she wakes up there is an answer to all the questions:

The Seven Dials is an organisation to fight criminality. Superintendent Battle is the leader of this organisation and he explains Bundle all the details:

Jimmy Thesiger has been after the secret formula all the time. Lorraine was his accomplice and could provide him various details as Gerry Wade, her brother, was one of the Seven Dials. Both Gerry and Ronny Devereux had to die since they knew that Jimmy was the criminal they were looking for. When Bill told Jimmy that he knew everything, the latter wanted to eliminate Bill and Bundle.

Finally Bundle gets a proposal to join the Seven Dials and to take responsibility for the Security of the country.

## **Opinion**

I am fascinated by the works of Agatha Christie. She manages to attract ones attention and develop growing tension. Everyone who reads these books speculates from the very beginning who the murderer could be. Only in the last chapter we get the answer to all our questions and doubts. Finally when the case is solved and everything that happened is reconstructed the whole sequence seems logical. Still the majority of readers would never solve such cases by themselves. Usually the little hints which one finds irrelevant or overlooks them when reading Agatha Christie's books are crucial to solving the cases. That is why it is important to concentrate oneself when reading her books. You have to have a dear mind, or you will never know who's the murderer.

## **References**

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