



Agatha Christie

the secret of
chimneys

'Highly satisfactory.'
Times Literary Supplement

The Secret of Chimneys

Agatha Christie is known throughout the world as the Queen of Crime. Her books have sold over a billion copies in English with another billion in 100 foreign languages. She is the most widely published author of all time and in any language, outsold only by the Bible and Shakespeare. She is the author of 80 crime novels and short stories, 19 plays and six novels written under the name of Mary Westmacott.

Agatha Christie's first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, was written towards the end of the First World War, in which she served as a VAD. In it she created Hercule Poirot, the little Belgian detective who was destined to become the most popular detective in crime fiction since Sherlock Holmes. It was eventually published by The Bodley Head in 1920.

In 1926, after averaging a book a year, Agatha Christie wrote her masterpiece. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* was the first of her books to be published by Collins and marked the beginning of an author-publisher relationship which lasted for 50 years and well over 70 books. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* was also the first of Agatha Christie's books to be dramatised – under the name *Alibi* – and to have a successful run in London's West End. *The Mousetrap*, her most famous play of all, opened in 1952 and is the longest-running play in history.

Agatha Christie was made a Dame in 1971. She died in 1976, since when a number of books have been published posthumously: the bestselling novel *Sleeping Murder* appeared later that year, followed by her autobiography and the short story collections *Miss Marple's Final Cases*, *Problem at Pollensa Bay* and *While the Light Lasts*. In 1998 *Black Coffee* was the first of her plays to be novelised by another author, Charles Osborne.

The Agatha Christie Collection

The Man In The Brown Suit
The Secret of Chimneys
The Seven Dials Mystery
The Mysterious Mr Quin
The Sittaford Mystery
The Hound of Death
The Listerdale Mystery
Why Didn't They Ask Evans?
Parker Pyne Investigates
Murder Is Easy
And Then There Were None
Towards Zero
Death Comes as the End
Sparkling Cyanide
Crooked House
They Came to Baghdad
Destination Unknown
Spider's Web *
The Unexpected Guest *
Ordeal by Innocence
The Pale Horse
Endless Night
Passenger To Frankfurt
Problem at Pollensa Bay
While the Light Lasts

Poirot

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
Black Coffee *
Peril at End House
Lord Edgware Dies
Murder on the Orient Express
Three-Act Tragedy
Death in the Clouds
The ABC Murders
Murder in Mesopotamia
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

* novelised by Charles Osborne

The Hollow
The Labours of Hercules
Taken at the Flood
Mrs McGinty's Dead
After the Funeral
Hickory Dickory Dock
Dead Man's Folly
Cat Among the Pigeons
The Adventure of the Christmas Pudding
The Clocks
Third Girl
Hallowe'en Party
Elephants Can Remember
Poirot's Early Cases
Curtain: Poirot's Last Case

Marple

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
The 4.50 from Paddington
The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side
A Caribbean Mystery
At Bertram's Hotel
Nemesis
Sleeping Murder
Miss Marple's Final Cases

Tommy & Tuppence

The Secret Adversary
Partners in Crime
N or M?
By the Pricking of My Thumbs
Postern of Fate

Published as Mary Westmacott

Giant's Bread
Unfinished Portrait
Absent in the Spring
The Rose and the Yew Tree
A Daughter's a Daughter
The Burden

Memoirs

An Autobiography
Come, Tell Me How You Live

Play Collections

The Mousetrap and Selected Plays
Witness for the Prosecution and
Selected Plays

Agatha Christie

**The Secret
of Chimneys**

 HarperCollins *Publishers*

HarperCollins *Publishers*
77-85 Fulham Palace Road,
Hammersmith, London W6 8JB
www.**fireandwater**.com

This *Agatha Christie Signature Edition* published 2001

5

First published in Great Britain by
The Bodley Head Ltd 1925

Copyright © Agatha Christie 1925

ISBN 0 00 712258 6

Typeset by Palimpsest Book Production Limited,
Polmont, Stirlingshire

Printed in Great Britain by
Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or ~~otherwise~~, be lent, re-sold, hired out or ~~otherwise~~ circulated without the publisher's prior consent in ~~any~~ form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

To my nephew

In memory of an inscription
at Compton Castle and a day
at the zoo

Chapter 1

Anthony Cade Signs On

‘Gentleman Joe!’

‘Why, if it isn’t old Jimmy McGrath,’

Castle’s Select Tour, represented by seven depressed-looking females and three perspiring males, looked on with considerable interest. Evidently their Mr Cade had met an old friend. They all admired Mr Cade so much, his tall lean figure, his sun-tanned face, the light-hearted manner with which he settled disputes and cajoled them all into good temper. This friend of his now – surely rather a peculiar-looking man. About the same height as Mr Cade, but thickset and not nearly so good-looking. The sort of man one read about in books, who probably kept a saloon. Interesting though. After all, that was what one came abroad for – to see all these peculiar things one read about in books. Up to now they had been rather bored with Bulawayo. The sun was unbearably hot, the hotel was uncomfortable,

Agatha Christie

there seemed to be nowhere particular to go until the moment should arrive to motor to the Matoppos. Very fortunately, Mr Cade had suggested picture postcards. There was an excellent supply of picture postcards.

Anthony Cade and his friend had stepped a little apart.

‘What the hell are you doing with this pack of females?’ demanded McGrath. ‘Starting a harem?’

‘Not with this little lot,’ grinned Anthony. ‘Have you taken a good look at them?’

‘I have that. Thought maybe you were losing your eyesight.’

‘My eyesight’s as good as ever it was. No, this is a Castle’s Select Tour. I’m Castle – the local Castle, I mean.’

‘What the hell made you take on a job like that?’

‘A regrettable necessity for cash. I can assure you it doesn’t suit my temperament.’

Jimmy grinned.

‘Never a hog for regular work, were you?’

Anthony ignored this aspersion.

‘However, something will turn up soon, I expect,’ he remarked hopefully. ‘It usually does.’

Jimmy ~~chuckled~~.

‘If there’s any trouble brewing, Anthony Cade is sure to be in it sooner or later, I know that,’ he said. ‘You’ve an absolute instinct for rows – *and*

the nine lives of a cat. When can we have a yarn together?’

Anthony sighed.

‘I’ve got to take these cackling hens to see Rhodes’ grave.’

‘That’s the stuff,’ said Jimmy approvingly. ‘They’ll come back bumped black and blue with the ruts in the road, and clamouring for bed to rest the bruises on. Then you and I will have a spot or two and exchange the news.’

‘Right. So long, Jimmy.’

Anthony rejoined his flock of sheep. Miss Taylor, the youngest and most skittish of the party, instantly attacked him.

‘Oh, Mr Cade, was that an old friend of yours?’

‘It was, Miss Taylor. One of the friends of my blameless youth.’

Miss Taylor giggled.

‘I thought he was such an interesting-looking man.’

‘I’ll tell him you said so.’

‘Oh, Mr Cade, how can you be so naughty! The very idea! What was that name he called you?’

‘Gentleman Joe?’

‘Yes. Is your name Joe?’

‘I thought you knew it was Anthony, Miss Taylor.’

‘Oh, go on with you!’ cried Miss Taylor coquettishly.

Anthony had by now well mastered his duties.

Agatha Christie

In addition to making the necessary arrangements of travel, they included soothing down irritable old gentlemen when their dignity was ruffled, seeing that elderly matrons had ample opportunities to buy picture postcards, and flirting with everything under a catholic forty years of age. The last task was rendered easier for him by the extreme readiness of the ladies in question to read a tender meaning into his most innocent remarks.

Miss Taylor returned to the attack.

‘Why does he call you Joe, then?’

‘Oh, just because it isn’t my name.’

‘And why Gentleman Joe?’

‘The same kind of reason.’

‘Oh, Mr Cade,’ protested Miss Taylor, much distressed, ‘I’m sure you shouldn’t say that. Papa was only saying last night what gentlemanly manners you had.’

‘Very kind of your father, I’m sure, Miss Taylor.’

‘And we are all agreed that you are quite the gentleman.’

‘I’m overwhelmed.’

‘No, really, I mean it.’

‘Kind hearts are more than coronets,’ said Anthony vaguely, without a notion of what he meant by the remark, and wishing fervently it was lunchtime.

‘That’s such a beautiful poem, I always think. Do you know much poetry, Mr Cade?’

‘I might recite “The boy stood on the burning deck” at a pinch. “The boy stood on the burning deck, whence all but he had fled.” That’s all I know, but I can do that bit with action if you like. “The boy stood on the burning deck” – whoosh – whoosh – whoosh – (the flames, you see) “Whence all but he had fled” – for that bit I run to and fro like a dog.’

Miss Taylor screamed with laughter.

‘Oh, do look at Mr Cade! Isn’t he funny?’

‘Time for morning tea,’ said Anthony briskly. ‘Come this way. There is an excellent café in the next street.’

‘I presume,’ said Mrs Caldicott in her deep voice, ‘that the expense is included in the Tour?’

‘Morning tea, Mrs Caldicott,’ said Anthony, assuming his professional manner, ‘is an extra.’

‘Disgraceful.’

‘Life is full of trials, isn’t it?’ said Anthony cheerfully.

Mrs Caldicott’s eyes gleamed, and she remarked with the air of one springing a mine:

‘I suspected as much, and in anticipation I poured off some tea into a jug at breakfast this morning! I can heat that up on the spirit-lamp. Come, Father.’

Mr and Mrs Caldicott sailed off triumphantly to the hotel, the lady’s back complacent with successful forethought.

‘Oh, Lord,’ muttered Anthony, ‘what a lot of funny people it does take to make a world.’

Agatha Christie

He marshalled the rest of the party in the direction of the café. Miss Taylor kept by his side, and resumed her catechism.

‘Is it a long time since you saw your friend?’

‘Just over seven years.’

‘Was it in Africa you knew him?’

‘Yes, not this part, though. The first time I ever saw Jimmy McGrath he was all trussed up ready for the cooking pot. Some of the tribes in the interior are cannibals, you know. We got there just in time.’

‘What happened?’

‘Very nice little shindy. We potted some of the beggars, and the rest took to their heels.’

‘Oh, Mr Cade, what an adventurous life you must have led.’

‘Very peaceful, I assure you.’

But it was clear that the lady did not believe him.

It was about ten o’clock that night when Anthony Cade walked into the small room where Jimmy McGrath was busy manipulating various bottles.

‘Make it strong, James,’ he implored. ‘I can tell you, I need it.’

‘I should think you did, my boy. I wouldn’t take on that job of yours for anything.’

‘Show me another, and I’ll jump out of it fast enough.’

McGrath poured out his own drink, tossed it off with a practised hand and mixed a second one. Then he said slowly:

‘Are you in earnest about that, old son?’

‘About what?’

‘Chucking this job of yours if you could get another?’

‘Why? You don’t mean to say that you’ve got a job going begging? Why don’t you grab it yourself?’

‘I have grabbed it – but I don’t much fancy it, that’s why I’m trying to pass it on to you.’

Anthony became suspicious.

‘What’s wrong with it? They haven’t engaged you to teach in a Sunday school, have they?’

‘Do you think anyone would choose me to teach in a Sunday school?’

‘Not if they knew you well, certainly.’

‘It’s a perfectly good job – nothing wrong with it whatsoever.’

‘Not in South America by any lucky chance? I’ve rather got my eye on South America. There’s a very tidy little revolution coming off in one of those little republics soon.’

McGrath grinned.

‘You always were keen on revolutions – anything to be mixed up in a really good row.’

‘I feel my talents might be appreciated out there. I tell you, Jimmy, I can be jolly useful in a revolution

Agatha Christie

– to one side or the other. It's better than making an honest living any day.'

'I think I've heard that sentiment from you before, my son. No, the job isn't in South America – it's in England.'

'England? Return of hero to his native land after many long years. They can't dun you for bills after seven years, can they, Jimmy?'

'I don't think so. Well, are you on for hearing more about it?'

'I'm on all right. The thing that worries me is why you're not taking it on yourself.'

'I'll tell you. I'm after gold, Anthony – far up in the interior.'

Anthony whistled and looked at him.

'You've always been after gold, Jimmy, ever since I knew you. It's your weak spot – your own particular little hobby. You've followed up more wild-cat trails than anyone I know.'

'And in the end I'll strike it. You'll see.'

'Well, every one his own hobby. Mine's rows, yours is gold.'

'I'll tell you the whole story. I suppose you know all about Herzoslovakia?'

Anthony looked up sharply.

'Herzoslovakia?' he said, with a curious ring in his voice.

‘Yes. Know anything about it?’

There was quite an appreciable pause before Anthony answered. Then he said slowly:

‘Only what everyone knows. It’s one of the Balkan States, isn’t it? Principal rivers, unknown. Principal mountains, also unknown, but fairly numerous. Capital, Ekarest. Population, chiefly brigands. Hobby, assassinating kings and having revolutions. Last king, Nicholas IV, assassinated about seven years ago. Since then it’s been a republic. Altogether a very likely spot. You might have mentioned before that Herzoslovakia came into it.’

‘It doesn’t except indirectly.’

Anthony gazed at him more in sorrow than in anger.

‘You ought to do something about this, James,’ he said. ‘Take a correspondence course, or something. If you’d told a story like this in the good old Eastern days, you’d have been hung up by the heels and bastinadoed or something equally unpleasant.’

Jimmy pursued this course quite unmoved by these strictures.

‘Ever heard of Count Stylptitch?’

‘Now you’re talking,’ said Anthony. ‘Many people who have never heard of Herzoslovakia would brighten at the mention of Count Stylptitch. The Grand Old Man of the Balkans. The Greatest Statesman of Modern Times. The biggest villain unhung. The point of view

Agatha Christie

all depends on which newspaper you take in. But be sure of this, Count Stylptitch will be remembered long after you and I are dust and ashes, James. Every move and counter-move in the Near East for the last twenty years has had Count Stylptitch at the bottom of it. He's been a dictator and a patriot and a statesman – and nobody knows exactly what he has been, except that he's been a perfect king of intrigue. Well, what about him?’

‘He was Prime Minister of Herzoslovakia – that's why I mentioned it first.’

‘You've no sense of proportion, Jimmy. Herzoslovakia is of no importance at all compared to Stylptitch. It just provided him with a birthplace and a post in public affairs. But I thought he was dead?’

‘So he is. He died in Paris about two months ago. What I'm telling you about happened some years ago.’

‘The question is,’ said Anthony, ‘what *are* you telling me about?’

Jimmy accepted the rebuke and hastened on.

‘It was like this. I was in Paris – just four years ago, to be exact. I was walking along one night in rather a lonely part, when I saw half a dozen French toughs beating up a respectable-looking old gentleman. I hate a one-sided show, so I promptly butted in and proceeded to beat up the toughs. I guess they'd