

# Cigarette Christie



Lord  
Edgewise  
Dies

## Lord Edgware Dies

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 story collections, 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.

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## 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 \*  
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Ordeal by Innocence  
The Pale Horse  
Endless Night  
Passenger To Frankfurt  
Problem at Pollensa Bay  
While the Light Lasts

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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  
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They Do It With Mirrors  
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The 4.50 from Paddington  
The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side  
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At Bertram's Hotel  
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By the Pricking of My Thumbs  
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Unfinished Portrait  
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The Rose and the Yew Tree  
A Daughter's a Daughter  
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### *Memoirs*

An Autobiography  
Come, Tell Me How You Live

### *Play Collections*

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

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**To Dr and Mrs Campbell Thompson**





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## Chapter 1

### **A Theatrical Party**

The memory of the public is short. Already the intense interest and excitement aroused by the murder of George Alfred St Vincent Marsh, fourth Baron Edgware, is a thing past and forgotten. Newer sensations have taken its place.

My friend, Hercule Poirot, was never openly mentioned in connection with the case. This, I may say, was entirely in accordance with his own wishes. He did not choose to appear in it. The credit went elsewhere – and that is how he wished it to be. Moreover, from Poirot's own peculiar private point of view, the case was one of his failures. He always swears that it was the chance remark of a stranger in the street that put him on the right track.

However that may be, it was his genius that discovered the truth of the affair. But for Hercule Poirot I doubt if the crime would have been brought home to its perpetrator.

I feel therefore that the time has come for me to set down all I know of the affair in black and white. I know the ins and outs of the case thoroughly and I may also mention that I shall be fulfilling the wishes of a very fascinating lady in so doing.

I have often recalled that day in Poirot's prim neat little sitting-room when, striding up and down a particular strip of carpet, my little friend gave us his masterly and astounding résumé of the case. I am going to begin my narrative where he did on that occasion – at a London theatre in June of last year.

Carlotta Adams was quite the rage in London at that moment. The year before she had given a couple of matinees which had been a wild success. This year she had had a three weeks' season of which this was the last night but one.

Carlotta Adams was an American girl with the most amazing talent for single-handed sketches unhampered by make-up or scenery. She seemed to speak every language with ease. Her sketch of an evening in a foreign hotel was really wonderful. In turn, American tourists, German tourists, middle-class English families, questionable ladies, impoverished Russian aristocrats and weary discreet waiters all flitted across the scene.

Her sketches went from grave to gay and back again. Her dying Czecho-Slovakian woman in hospital

brought a lump to the throat. A minute later we were rocking with laughter as a dentist plied his trade and chatted amiably with his victims.

Her programme closed with what she announced as 'Some Imitations'.

Here again, she was amazingly clever. Without make-up of any kind, her features seemed to dissolve suddenly and reform themselves into those of a famous politician, or a well-known actress, or a society beauty. In each character she gave a short typical speech. These speeches, by the way, were remarkably clever. They seemed to hit off every weakness of the subject selected.

One of her last impersonations was Jane Wilkinson – a talented young American actress well known in London. It was really very clever. Inanities slipped off her tongue charged with some powerful emotional appeal so that in spite of yourself you felt that each word was uttered with some potent and fundamental meaning. Her voice, exquisitely toned, with a deep husky note in it, was intoxicating. The restrained gestures, each strangely significant, the slightly swaying body, the impression even, of strong physical beauty – how she did it, I cannot think!

I had always been an admirer of the beautiful Jane Wilkinson. She had thrilled me in her emotional parts, and I had always maintained in face of those who

## *Agatha Christie*

admitted her beauty but declared she was no actress, that she had considerable histrionic powers.

It was a little uncanny to hear that well-known, slightly husky voice with the fatalistic drop in it that had stirred me so often, and to watch that seemingly poignant gesture of the slowly closing and unclosing hand, and the sudden throw back of the head with the hair shaken back from the face that I realized she always gave at the close of a dramatic scene.

Jane Wilkinson was one of those actresses who had left the stage on her marriage only to return to it a couple of years later.

Three years ago she had married the wealthy but slightly eccentric Lord Edgware. Rumour went that she left him shortly afterwards. At any rate eighteen months after the marriage, she was acting for the films in America, and had this season appeared in a successful play in London.

Watching Carlotta Adams' clever but perhaps slightly malicious imitation, it occurred to me to wonder how much imitations were regarded by the subject selected. Were they pleased at the notoriety – at the advertisement it afforded? Or were they annoyed at what was, after all, a deliberate exposing of the tricks of their trade? Was not Carlotta Adams in the position of the rival conjurer who says: 'Oh! this is an old trick! Very simple. I'll show you how this one's done!'

I decided that if *I* were the subject in question, I should be very much annoyed. I should, of course, conceal my vexation, but decidedly I should not like it. One would need great broadmindedness and a distinct sense of humour to appreciate such a merciless exposé.

I had just arrived at these conclusions when the delightful husky laugh from the stage was echoed from behind me.

I turned my head sharply. In the seat immediately behind mine, leaning forward with her lips slightly parted, was the subject of the present imitation – Lady Edgware, better known as Jane Wilkinson.

I realized immediately that my deductions had been all wrong. She was leaning forward, her lips parted, with an expression of delight and excitement in her eyes.

As the ‘imitation’ finished, she applauded loudly, laughing and turning to her companion, a tall extremely good-looking man, of the Greek god type, whose face I recognized as one better known on the screen than on the stage. It was Bryan Martin, the hero of the screen most popular at the moment. He and Jane Wilkinson had been starred together in several screen productions.

‘Marvellous, isn’t she?’ Lady Edgware was saying. He laughed.

‘Jane – you look all excited.’



‘Well, she really is too wonderful! Heaps better than I thought she’d be.’

I did not catch Bryan Martin’s amused rejoinder. Carlotta Adams had started on a fresh improvisation.

What happened later is, I shall always think, a very curious coincidence.

After the theatre, Poirot and I went on to supper at the Savoy.

At the very next table to ours were Lady Edgware, Bryan Martin and two other people whom I did not know. I pointed them out to Poirot and, as I was doing so, another couple came and took their places at the table beyond that again. The woman’s face was familiar and yet strangely enough, for the moment I could not place it.

Then suddenly I realized that it was Carlotta Adams at whom I was staring! The man I did not know. He was well-groomed, with a cheerful, somewhat vacuous face. Not a type that I admire.

Carlotta Adams was dressed very inconspicuously in black. Hers was not a face to command instant attention or recognition. It was one of those mobile sensitive faces that preeminently lend themselves to the art of mimicry. It could take on an alien character easily, but it had no very recognizable character of its own.

I imparted these reflections of mine to Poirot. He listened attentively, his egg-shaped head cocked slightly