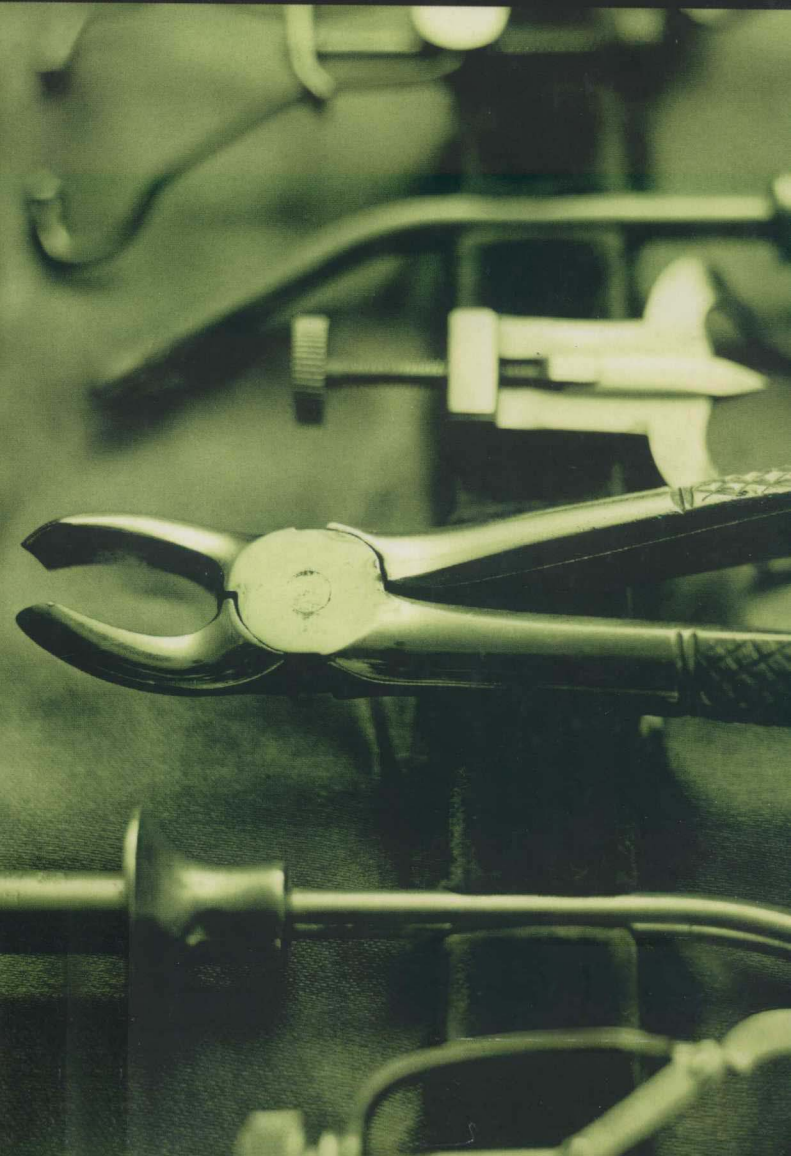


*Agatha Christie*

ONE, TWO, BUCKLE MY SHOE



## One, Two, Buckle My Shoe

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 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 - m - u*

**One, Two,  
Buckle My Shoe**

 HarperCollins *Publishers*

**HarperCollins Publishers**  
77-85 Fulham Palace Road,  
Hammersmith, London W6 8JB  
[www.harpercollins.co.uk](http://www.harpercollins.co.uk)

This *Agatha Christie Signature Edition* published 2002  
8

First published in Great Britain by Collins 1940

Copyright © Agatha Christie Mallowan 1940

ISBN 0 00 712089 3

Typeset by Palimpsest Book Production Limited,  
Polmont, Stirlingshire

Printed and bound 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 Dorothy North  
who likes detective stories and cream,  
in the hope it may make up to her for  
the absence of the latter!



One, two, buckle my shoe,  
Three, four, shut the door,  
Five, six, picking up sticks,  
Seven, eight, lay them straight,  
Nine, ten, a good fat hen,  
Eleven, twelve, men must delve,  
Thirteen, fourteen, maids are courting,  
Fifteen, sixteen, maids in the kitchen,  
Seventeen, eighteen, maids in waiting,  
Nineteen, twenty, my plate's empty . . .





## **One, Two, Buckle my Shoe**

### **I**

Mr Morley was not in the best of tempers at breakfast. He complained of the bacon, wondered why the coffee had to have the appearance of liquid mud, and remarked that breakfast cereals were each one worse than the last.

Mr Morley was a small man with a decided jaw and a pugnacious chin. His sister, who kept house for him, was a large woman rather like a female grenadier. She eyed her brother thoughtfully and asked whether the bath water had been cold again.

Rather grudgingly, Mr Morley said it had not.

He glanced at the paper and remarked that the Government seemed to be passing from a state of incompetence to one of positive imbecility!

Miss Morley said in a deep bass voice that it was Disgraceful!

As a mere woman she had always found whatever

Government happened to be in power distinctly useful. She urged her brother on to explain *why* the Government's present policy was inconclusive, idiotic, imbecile and frankly suicidal!

When Mr Morley had expressed himself fully on these points, he had a second cup of the despised coffee and unburdened himself of his true grievance.

'These girls,' he said, 'are all the same! Unreliable, self-centred – not to be depended on in any way.'

Miss Morley said interrogatively:

'Gladys?'

'I've just had the message. Her aunt's had a stroke and she's had to go down to Somerset.'

Miss Morley said:

'Very trying, dear, but after all hardly the girl's *fault*.'

Mr Morley shook his head gloomily.

'How do I know the aunt *has* had a stroke? How do I know the whole thing hasn't been arranged between the girl and that very unsuitable young fellow she goes about with? That young man is a wrong 'un if I ever saw one! They've probably planned some outing together for today.'

'Oh, no, dear, I don't think Gladys would do a thing like that. You know, you've always found her very conscientious.'

'Yes, yes.'

‘An intelligent girl and really keen on her work, you said.’

‘Yes, yes, Georgina, but that was before this undesirable young man came along. She’s been quite different lately – *quite* different – absent-minded – upset – nervy.’

The Grenadier produced a deep sigh. She said:

‘After all, Henry, girls do fall in love. It can’t be helped.’

Mr Morley snapped:

‘She oughtn’t to let it affect her efficiency as my secretary. And today, in particular, I’m extremely busy! Several *very* important patients. It is *most* trying!’

‘I’m sure it must be extremely vexing, Henry. How is the new boy shaping, by the way?’

Henry Morley said gloomily:

‘He’s the worst I’ve had yet! Can’t get a single name right and has the most uncouth manners. If he doesn’t improve I shall sack him and try again. I don’t know what’s the good of our education nowadays. It seems to turn out a collection of nit-wits who can’t understand a single thing you say to them, let alone remember it.’

He glanced at his watch.

‘I must be getting along. A full morning, and that Sainsbury Seale woman to fit in somewhere as she is in pain. I suggested that she should see Reilly, but she wouldn’t hear of it.’

'Of course not,' said Georgina loyally.

'Reilly's very able – very able indeed. First-class diplomas. Thoroughly up-to-date in his work.'

'His hand shakes,' said Miss Morley. 'In my opinion he *drinks*.'

Her brother laughed, his good temper restored. He said:

'I'll be up for a sandwich at half-past one as usual.'

## II

At the Savoy Hotel Mr Amberiotis was picking his teeth with a toothpick and grinning to himself.

Everything was going very nicely.

He had had his usual luck. Fancy those few kind words of his to that idiotic hen of a woman being so richly repaid. Oh! well – *cast your bread upon the waters*. He had always been a kind-hearted man. *And generous!* In the future he would be able to be even more generous. Benevolent visions floated before his eyes. Little Dimitri . . . And the good Constantopolus struggling with his little restaurant . . . What pleasant surprises for them . . .

The toothpick probed unguardedly and Mr Amberiotis winced. Rosy visions of the future faded and gave way to apprehensions of the immediate

future. He explored tenderly with his tongue. He took out his notebook. Twelve o'clock. 58, Queen Charlotte Street.

He tried to recapture his former exultant mood. But in vain. The horizon had shrunk to six bare words:

'58, Queen Charlotte Street. Twelve o'clock.'

### III

At the Glengowrie Court Hotel, South Kensington, breakfast was over. In the lounge, Miss Sainsbury Seale was sitting talking to Mrs Bolitho. They occupied adjacent tables in the dining-room and had made friends the day after Miss Sainsbury Seale's arrival a week ago.

Miss Sainsbury Seale said:

'You know, dear, it really *has* stopped aching! Not a twinge! I think perhaps I'll ring up -'

Mrs Bolitho interrupted her.

'Now don't be foolish, my dear. You go to the dentist and *get it over*.'

Mrs Bolitho was a tall, commanding female with a deep voice. Miss Sainsbury Seale was a woman of forty odd with indecisively bleached hair rolled up in untidy curls. Her clothes were shapeless and rather artistic,

and her pince-nez were always dropping off. She was a great talker.

She said now wistfully:

‘But really, you know, it doesn’t ache *at all*.’

‘Nonsense, you told me you hardly slept a wink last night.’

‘No, I didn’t – no, indeed – but perhaps, *now*, the nerve has actually *died*.’

‘All the more reason to go to the dentist,’ said Mrs Bolitho firmly. ‘We all like to put it off, but that’s just cowardice. Better make up one’s mind and *get it over!*’

Something hovered on Miss Sainsbury Seale’s lips. Was it the rebellious murmur of: ‘Yes, but it’s not *your* tooth!’

All she actually said, however, was:

‘I expect you’re right. And Mr Morley is such a careful man and really never hurts one *at all*.’

## IV

The meeting of the Board of Directors was over. It had passed off smoothly. The report was good. There should have been no discordant note. Yet to the sensitive Mr Samuel Rotherstein there had been *something*, some nuance in the chairman’s manner.

There had been, once or twice, a shortness, an acerbity, in his tone – quite uncalled for by the proceedings.

Some secret worry, perhaps? But somehow Rotherstein could not connect a secret worry with Alistair Blunt. He was such an unemotional man. He was so very normal. So essentially British.

There was, of course, always liver . . . Mr Rotherstein's liver gave him a bit of trouble from time to time. But he'd never known Alistair complain of his liver. Alistair's health was as sound as his brain and his grasp of finance. It was not annoying heartiness – just quiet well-being.

And yet – there was *something* – once or twice the chairman's hand had wandered to his face. He had sat supporting his chin. Not his normal attitude. And once or twice he had seemed actually – yes, *distract*.

They came out of the board room and passed down the stairs.

Rotherstein said:

'Can't give you a lift, I suppose?'

Alistair Blunt smiled and shook his head.

'My car's waiting.' He glanced at his watch. 'I'm not going back to the city.' He paused. 'As a matter of fact I've got an appointment with the dentist.'

The mystery was solved.



V

Hercule Poirot descended from his taxi, paid the man and rang the bell of 58, Queen Charlotte Street.

After a little delay it was opened by a boy in page-boy's uniform with a freckled face, red hair, and an earnest manner.

Hercule Poirot said:

'Mr Morley?'

There was in his heart a ridiculous hope that Mr Morley might have been called away, might be indisposed, might not be seeing patients today . . . All in vain. The page-boy drew back, Hercule Poirot stepped inside, and the door closed behind him with the quiet remorselessness of unalterable doom.

The boy said: 'Name, please?'

Poirot gave it to him, a door on the right of the hall was thrown open and he stepped into the waiting-room.

It was a room furnished in quiet good taste and, to Hercule Poirot, indescribably gloomy. On the polished (reproduction) Sheraton table were carefully arranged papers and periodicals. The (reproduction) Hepplewhite sideboard held two Sheffield plated candlesticks and an *épergne*. The mantelpiece held a bronze clock and two bronze vases. The windows were shrouded by