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Hercule Poirot's Christmas



Synopsis

The latest in this classic unabridged Agatha Christie audio collection, read by Hugh Fraser. It is Christmas Eve. The Lee family reunion is shattered by a deafening crash of furniture, followed by a high-pitched wailing scream. Upstairs, the tyrannical Simeon Lee lies dead in a pool of blood, his throat slashed. But when Hercule Poirot, who is staying in the village with a friend for Christmas, offers to assist, he finds an atmosphere not of mourning but of mutual suspicion. It seems everyone had their own reason to hate the old man...

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Customer Reviews

'You yearned for a "good violent murder with lots of blood". So this is your special story - written for you.' Agatha Christie
There is irresistible simplicity and buoyancy of a Christmas treat about it all
Times Literary Supplement

Christmas Eve, and the Lee family's reunion is shattered by a deafening crash of furniture and a high-pitched wailing scream. Upstairs, the tyrannical Simeon Lee lies dead in a pool of blood, his throat slashed. When Hercule Poirot offers to assist, he finds an atmosphere not of mourning but of mutual suspicion. It seems everyone had their own reason to hate the old man. . . . --This text refers to an alternate Audio CD edition.

One of my favorite Christies and one I haven't read in quite a while. I remember the cover of my old paperback had the gruesome image of a screaming, skeletal old man in chair surrounded by flying

objects. Ugh. That's the main reason I gave the book away. The murder is one of Christie's more interesting, not to mention puzzling. The story revolves around the Lee family. The Lee patriarch is the colorful, cruel, and charismatic Simeon, who sadistically toys with his children, none of whom have lived up to his expectations. Things come to a head one fateful Christmas when all of his surviving children converge for a nice family get together - the ever faithful Alfred, the eldest son and resident doormat, and his cool, elegant wife, Lydia; the rakish Harry, the family blacksheep (who always reminds me of George Sanders for some reason); miserly politician George with his much younger (and quite expensive) wife Magdalene; David, an artistic, overly sensitive Mama's boy who still mourns his mother and hates his father a passion; David's loyal, very motherly wife Hilda; and Pilar, the half-Spanish daughter of Simeon's only daughter, Jennifer, who passed away a year earlier. Also entering the mix is the mysterious Stephen Farr, son of Simeon's former business partner in South Africa. Then, of course, there are the servants, especially the very loyal, ever present butler, Tressilian, and the valet, Horbury, who is described by Magdalene as "Sneaking round like a cat and smirking."

Once the family is assembled, old Simeon lets loose and tells them all what he thinks of them. "You're not worth a penny piece, any of you! I'm sick of you all! You're not men! You're weaklings - a set of namby -pamby weaklings. Pilar's worth any two of you put together! I'll swear to heaven I've got a better son somewhere in the world than any of you, even if you are born the right side of the blanket!" His daughter-in-law Hilda tries to warn him: "Hilda Lee said slowly: 'I'm afraid. . . .' Simeon said: 'You're afraid of me?' Hilda said: 'Not of you. I'm afraid for you!'" Like a judge who has delivered sentence, she turned away. She marched, slowly and heavily, out of the room. . . .

Of course, Simeon gets his comeuppance in a surprisingly dramatic and violent - for Christie anyway - manner. This is one of the more enjoyable Poirot outings and is really a lot of fun. The murderer is very surprising and Christie does an excellent job with the clues. Very recommended.

In today's era of international turmoil, secret agents, lurid love affairs and high tech munitions and explosions, Agatha Christie still reigns as the queen of mystery writers. Nothing exceeds her well planned tightly constructed plots.

Hercule Poirot's Christmas was written by Agatha Christie and published in 1938. The book was

also titled *Murder for Christmas* and *A Holiday for Murder*. This novel is a classic locked room murder mystery and your challenge, as always, is to figure out who did the deed and how it was done. Of course, you have the help of Hercule Poirot, for whom Agatha Christie gave little background (perhaps thinking readers in 1938 were well acquainted with the sleuth from her prior 19 books and short stories). Poirot is "helping" two members of the local constabulary solve the crime. The family household, including servants and guests, totals 20 people, so like other Agatha Christie novels, I kept notepaper at my side to keep them well identified in my mind. I managed to guess correctly who was responsible for the crime, the how was much more difficult. See if you can figure out the mystery before Hercule Poirot did. This book is well worth your time and relatively small investment.

(This book was originally titled "*Murder for Christmas*", which I like better.) If you're looking for a sentimental holiday read....this isn't it! If you're looking for a murder mystery that will have you scratching your head and gasping at the end, you're in the right place. The story focuses on the murder of patriarch Simeon Lee, a bitter and hateful old man who traumatizes his children and is brutally murdered in a locked room. This has all the other classic markers of a Christie tale: unlikeable victim that many people would want to kill; murder in a sealed room; family that hate one another; secret siblings and offspring; family secrets; secret family treasure, etc. World-famous detective Hercule Poirot is on the case, but acts much different than his usual *modus operandi*. He holds all the cards close to his chest and gives us, the readers, very little to go on. The ending was complete shock. While I had plenty of guesses, none of them even came close. I loved the way this book starts. It opens with an unknown character and the reader watches and watches for him/her to return and tries to figure out how all these pieces fit together. I am not one of those really smart readers who keep track of all the clues and try to solve the mystery. For most mysteries, I'm just in it for the ride and this one is no exception. What a thrill ride from beginning to end! *The Dame* does it again.

If there's one guy who Santa should give a lump of coal in his Christmas stocking, it would be Simeon Lee. Just by the nature of how Agatha Christie depicts the odious old man, you know he's going to meet an untimely end. The story takes place in 1938 London. There are a mixture of clearly distinct suspects so the reader will not become confused as to who is whom. It also helps that the author continues to revisit and summarize what is known at certain points in the story when it comes to clues. '*Hercule Poirot's Christmas*' is a quick whodunit that will keep many readers in the dark until

the very end. However, one important clue in the solution was obscure to me and I had to look it up on the Internet. It may have been a common item in 1938 when Ms. Christie wrote it, but it does not hold up well in 2014. I enjoyed the book except for the aforementioned outdated clue. As usual, the colorful vain Hercule Poirot is a delight.

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