



Mrs. McGinty's Dead

Agatha Christie

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Mrs. McGinty is dead and everyone suspects James Bentley, her slightly shifty lodger, but Superintendent Spence is suspicious enough to ask for Hercule Poirot's assistance. Soon, the seemingly simple situation turns into a complex web of lies and hidden identities. Unabridged. 5 CDs.

Mrs. McGinty's Dead Details

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Author : Agatha Christie

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From Reader Review Mrs. McGinty's Dead for online ebook

Obsidian says

This book went on forever. Past the point of anything making sense with so many things thrown at the reader I was past the point of keeping straight anything that was happening. It was a relief when the end came just because I was heartily sick of reading this book at that point. The only saving grace I really found was that we had Poirot in this book from beginning to end and not just his usually "spotlight" appearances in the book.

We begin with Hercule Poirot being visited by Superintendent Spence who believes that the wrong man (James Bentley) was tried and convicted for the murder of Mrs. McGinty. Spence is worried that he is sending an innocent man to his death and induces Poirot to investigate for him.

Poirot goes to the local village and begins stirring things up after he starts visiting the late woman's employers. It was interesting to see Poirot in a village and lamenting about how miserable he was, but that was interesting for all of five minutes. Poirot whined incessantly. I don't know if it's because I have the character of Poirot tied up with David Suchet's portrayal or what, but I initially loved this character. However, after reading so many books, I heartily dislike Poirot a great deal.

I was a fan of Miss Marple except in one case (Nemesis) and the further I go with Poirot I am flummoxed how anyone would go to him to do anything. He doesn't seem to come to deductions as much as he just asks a lot of questions to see if he can force a reaction out of people.

There are so many other characters in this book it was trying to keep them all straight. We have the re-appearance of Ariadne Oliver (Cards on the Table) who is still freaking aggravating. I know that Mrs. Oliver was styled along the lines of Agatha Christie (she writes mystery novels) but she just runs around sticking her nose in where it's not wanted and actually doesn't do anything at all, unlike the role she played in Cards on the Table.

The character of James Bentley is despised by Poirot because he is a man who has been run over by his now deceased mother and doesn't seem capable of anything without a woman telling him what to do. He doesn't even sound attractive, yet he has a potential for two love interests in this book. Yeah I laughed for a while at that one.

I really can't speak much about the writing, it is typical Christie. The flow was bad in this one. Due to the number of suspects and possibilities of who people are I found myself having to stop and re-remember who certain people were and where they were at certain times. I finally decided to stop trying to figure out who did what and just get to the end.

The setting of the village for this one from beginning to end was marked by many as being typical for Miss Marple (which it is) and not really something that Poirot ever did. However, we have had Poirot go and stay in villages before when investigating (Dumb Witness, Sad Cypress, etc) but I think many reviewers from when this book was initially published found this to be more humorous than other Poirot novels.

The ending when explained made absolutely no sense. We are left with Poirot trying to match make which also was something that Miss Marple would tend to do in her books, though in this case I just wanted Poirot to shut up and go back to his flat with his valet George.

Simona Bartolotta says

“The truth is I’m not very good with people.”

“I adore people, don’t you?” said Robin happily.

“No,” said Mrs. Oliver firmly.”

Mrs. McGinty's Dead is, as far as I can tell, a unique product of Christie's prolific mind. To begin with, it's **unusually funny and ironic**, far more (good-naturedly) mocking toward the Adorable Egg-Head than I would have expected from the book that initiates the final phase of his career. Secondly, in a few occasions it offers delicious examples of **meta-talk** between Christie and the readers through the character of our dear old **Ariadne Oliver**, to whom is not granted enough screen-time to be called a proper sidekick, but who nonetheless is charismatic enough to pull her weight beautifully, again with no little humour.

The mystery, in truth, didn't particularly impress me, though the solution really was unexpected. I guess I don't exactly love when big facts necessary to find the culprit are revealed only during the dénouement ((view spoiler)), but it's a narrative choice like any other, after all. It happens.

Vikas Singh says

Hercule Poirot at his best. A gripping story that leaves you in amazed at how skillfully the ace detective with little luck to support manages to solve the crime. Agatha Christie paints a rich tapestry of a small English village with its distinct population. Slowly and slowly she builds each character and as a reader you feel satiated that the author could fulfill your desire to know the real characters. That a crime could be solved after so many years tells a lot about the author's ability to weave the plot so well

Sumit RK says

An interesting plot, enough suspects to keep you guessing till the end & a satisfying end (with a usual twist) to tie all ends up. Overall a enjoyable murder mystery that keeps you engaged till the end.

Nandakishore Varma says

"Mrs. McGinty's dead. How did she die?
Sticking her neck out, just like I."

Dame Agatha's penchant to use children's rhymes as an underlying theme for mysteries, enhancing the creepy aspect of many of them, coming to the fore once again. (Really, I hope someone would do a monograph on this quirky aspect of her novels one day.)

Mrs. McGinty was a charwoman - at the beginning of the story, she is dead, bludgeoned to death apparently by her lodger who has been convicted of the crime. But Superintendent Spence who is investigating the case

thinks otherwise, even though the circumstantial evidence is substantial: and seeks the help of none other than Hercule Poirot.

As Poirot investigates, it becomes evident that matters are not as simple as one thinks it is. It seems that Mrs. McGinty "stuck her neck out" and got it cut off...

This was one of the most humorous books from Christie: the tone resembled that of Wodehouse at times. Poirot's experience in the horrible boarding house run by the Summerhayes, especially being forced to eat raspberries with mould on them and beans which have been bloodstained from his hostess's cut finger, was hilarious. So also Superintendent Spence's exasperation at Poirot's close-mouthed nature and cryptic remarks. I still remember once sentence which doubled me up. At the darkest hour in the investigation, when Spence remarks that the case is puzzling him to death, the Belgian sleuth says: "Ah, *mon ami*, it is simple, is it not?" Dame Agatha writes:

After that remark there was nearly a third murder - the murder of Hercule Poirot by Superintendent Spence in Kilchester Police Headquarters.

Not one of Agatha Christie's best, but worth a read.

Pranta Ghosh Dastider says

Mind-blowing.

Annetta says

Well,i did not enjoy this very much.Sometimes it felt confusing and kind of rushed,though i was not able to guess the muderer.Once again Agatha Christie caught me by surprise with the explanation which was unexpected!Three stars from me!!!

Litzy says

él primer libro que leo de Agatha Christie. y la verdad me esta gustando como escribe.

Un libro magnifico, no he descubierto quien era el asesino hasta que lo ha dicho Poirot.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

Mrs. McGinty's Dead is a work of detective fiction by Agatha Christie first published in the US by Dodd, Mead and Company in February 1952 and in the UK by the Collins Crime Club on 3 March the same year. An old woman apparently struck dead by her lodger for thirty pounds that she kept under a floorboard. When, however, he is asked by the investigating officer to take another look at the case to stop an innocent man going to the gallows, he realises that things may not be as simple as they first appear to be.

[illegible]

Fussy. Fastidious. Vain. Brilliant. Poirot's back, but is a little bored, and spends his time carefully considering his meals. And then Superintendent Spence discusses a case with Poirot of a man who was convicted for bashing his landlady on the head. Spence isn't comfortable with the verdict, and gets Poirot to revisit the case for him. Poirot goes to the town of the murder and must stay in a dreadful bed & breakfast, while interviewing the neighbours and generally getting people agitated about the situation. And wonderful Ariadne Oliver shows up in the same town to work with a local playwright to dramatize one of her books and totally misrepresent her story's detective (Christie must have been griping through Ariadne about Poirot). I found this story enjoyable and with Ariadne's presence funnier than some of the other Poirot stories.

'I should, perhaps, madame, tell you a little more about myself. I am Hercule Poirot.'
The revelation left Mrs Summerhayes unmoved.
'What a lovely name,' she said kindly. 'Greek, isn't it?'

Eh bien, let's start with the weakest part - the crime/mystery:

'I don't know what you'll go there as,' continued Spence doubtfully as he eyed Poirot. 'You might be some kind of an opera singer. Voice broken down. Got to rest. That might do.'

'I shall go,' said Hercule Poirot, speaking with accents of royal blood, 'as myself.'

Spence received this pronouncement with pursed lips. 'D'you think that's advisable?'

From there on, the typical sleuthing adventure ensues, except that there are a lot - and I do mean way too

many - characters that are part of the investigation, a few red herrings, Ariadne Oliver - whose involvement in the book has less to do with the plot (I'll get to that later) -, and an ending that seems to have been rather far-fetched.

In fact, by the time the mystery was resolved, I had kinda lost interest in the whodunit part and really enjoyed the characters interacting with each other.

This book is really not about the mystery, which, in my opinion, was rather sub-par. No rather, the book seems to have been a self-reverential celebration of all things Poirot. And this may or may not be to readers tastes. I quite liked it in this case.

We have a lot of details about Poirot himself:

In his early days, he had seen plenty of crude brutality. It had been more the rule than the exception. He found it fatiguing, and unintelligent.

My work has enslaved me just as their work enslaves them. When the hour of leisure arrives, they have nothing with which to fill their leisure.

We have a couple of tips of the hat to The Murder of Roger Ackroyd, which was published 25(!) years before Mrs. McGintys Dead, when Poirot discussed gardening with Spence:

Me, once I decided to live in the country and grow vegetable marrows. It did not succeed. I have not the temperament.'

In many of the details that describe Poirot in this book, Christie seems to take a retrospective stance, It serves as a celebration of his previous adventures, but I also could not help feeling that Christie took the opportunity to have some fun herself and poke her famous character at every opportunity. Not only, does she send Poirot to the country - and we all know how much Poirot hates the country -

It's not really a Guest House, just a rather decrepit country house where the young couple who own it take in paying guests. I don't think,' said Spence dubiously, 'that it's very comfortable.'
Hercule Poirot closed his eyes in agony. 'If I suffer, I suffer,' he said. 'It has to be.'

And Christie makes sure of it his suffering. This was one of my favourite parts and I am sure anyone who has ever been exasperated by Poirot's eccentricities would chuckle about the following scene of Poirot taking up lodgings at a country inn:

The room was large, and had a faded Morris wall-paper. Steel engravings of unpleasant subjects hung crookedly on the walls with one or two good oil paintings. The chair-covers were both faded and dirty, the carpet had holes in it and had never been of a pleasant design. A good deal of miscellaneous bric-à-brac was scattered haphazard here and there. Tables rocked dangerously owing to absence of castors. One window was open, and no power on earth could, apparently, shut it again. The door, temporarily shut, was not likely to remain so. The latch did not hold, and with every gust of wind it burst open and whirling gusts of cold wind eddied round the room.

'I suffer,' said Hercule Poirot to himself in acute self-pity. 'Yes, I suffer.'

The door burst open and the wind and Mrs Summerhayes came in together. She looked round the room,

shouted 'What?' to someone in the distance and went out again.

Mrs Summerhayes had red hair and an attractively freckled face and was usually in a distracted state of putting things down, or else looking for them.

Hercule Poirot sprang to his feet and shut the door.

A moment or two later it opened again and Mrs Summerhayes reappeared. This time she was carrying a large enamel basin and a knife.

A man's voice from some way away called out: 'Maureen, that cat's been sick again. What shall I do?'

Mrs Summerhayes called: 'I'm coming, darling. Hold everything.' She dropped the basin and the knife and went out again.

Poirot got up again and shut the door. He said: 'Decidedly, I suffer.'

As I said I really enjoyed this part of the story but I did keep wondering why Christie took to treating Poirot in such a way. Was it to celebrate him or was she falling out with him as a character that had become so famous that he had a life of his own - just as Arthur Conan Doyle fell out with Holmes?

Which brings me to the third part - Ariadne Oliver. Ariadne is basically Christie's way of injecting a fictionalised version of herself into the Poirot stories, and in this one Ariadne enters the scene - nearly knocking Poirot over with her car - and spends a lot of time agonising over how her own fictional creation - Sven Hjerson - is being changed inappropriately by theatre and film producers.

Robin continued blithely: 'What I feel is, here's that wonderful young man, parachuted down—'

Mrs Oliver interrupted: 'He's sixty.'

'Oh no!'

'He is.'

'I don't see him like that. Thirty-five— not a day older.'

'But I've been writing books about him for thirty years, and he was at least thirty-five in the first one.'

'But, darling, if he's sixty, you can't have the tension between him and the girl— what's her name? Ingrid. I mean, it would make him just a nasty old man!'

'It certainly would.'

'So you see, he must be thirty-five,' said Robin triumphantly.

'Then he can't be Sven Hjerson. Just make him a Norwegian young man who's in the Resistance Movement.'

'But darling Ariadne, the whole point of the play is Sven Hjerson. You've got an enormous public who simply adore Sven Hjerson, and who'll flock to see Sven Hjerson. He's box office, darling!'

Yeah, I can see Christie having exactly this sort of conversation with agents and producers about Poirot and Marple, and I can see Christie using this particular book as a dig at people trying to exploit her characters. And given the resolution of the plot, what a dig this is!!! If only it had deterred her estate to employ Charles Osborne to adapt her plays as novels!

So, while the mystery plot is rather mediocre, the context this novel provides for Poirot as a character that has developed a public persona outside of the books is just marvelous.

David Schaafsma says

Mrs. McGinty's dead. How did she die?

Sticking her neck out, just like I."

“Had Mrs. McGinty a drab life?” (Poirot)

“Ghastly, I expect,” said Mrs. Summerhayes vaguely. “Always on your knees scrubbing. And then piles of other people’s washing-up waiting for you on the sink when you arrive in the morning. If I had to face that every day, I’d be positively relieved to be murdered. I really would.”

After 2-3 books of literary pretension (Hercules Poirot as Hercules, on a quest for detective greatness!), Christie lightens up a bit and tries to get silly again about the vain Poirot, with an array of supporting comical characters, some of them—and this is pretty rare, since she typically writes of the upper class—working class women! There are writers of mysteries, and playwrights, that are also targets of satire, but none greater targets than Hercules Poirot, who Christie has a famous love-hate relationship with in full swing at this point in her career (in 1952, this book was published). In this one, she’s having fun with him, poking fun at his snobbery more than usual, but lightly. Has a P. G. Wodehouse feel to it at times.

In this one James Bentley awaits capital punishment, convicted of killing his landlord, Mrs. McGinty, but Poirot is engaged to find out who really dunnit. The solution involves photographs, a sugar cutter, gender-bending names such as Evelyn and Craig. Maybe my favorite aspect of it is the character Ariadne Oliver, a mystery writer, a kind of caricature of Christie herself.

“Authors were shy, unsociable creatures, atoning for their lack of social aptitude by inventing their own companions and conversations.”

Not my favorite Poirot, but it is still clever.

Siavash Fathali says

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Carol. says

Alas, Mrs. McGinty; we hardly knew you.

Really. I mean that. She was a widow, a woman who cleaned houses and took in lodgers to make ends meet; had a niece whom she saw at holidays, and was perhaps a bit of a nosy parker; nothing extraordinary to fill the obituary. When Inspector Spence visits the retired Poirot, he shares his troubling concern that the man he arrested for murdering Mrs. McGinty, and who is now facing the death penalty, is not truly guilty. Yes, yes; the circumstantial evidence was damning, but James Bentley’s milquetoast personality seems so wrong for the deed. Could dear Poirot perhaps put his little grey cells to work? But the clues won’t be found in McGinty’s past; as Hercule Poirot points out **“For, you see, Mon cher Spence, if Mrs. McGinty is just an ordinary charwoman—it is the murderer who must be extraordinary.”**

It is true; the murderer is a bit extraordinary. The plotting has an interesting premise, albeit perhaps hard to understand in the modern age. A second murder (because there always is one, isn't there?) was unsurprising. Overall, the book reminded me more than a bit of *A Murder Is Announced*, so perhaps take a break between if you are on a Christie binge, or perhaps visit one of her more exotic locales in between.

For once, Christie leads with Hercule instead of consulting him later, providing an enjoyable stroll down nostalgia lane. Poirot laments the loss of Hastings as a sounding board and audience, but since Poirot's investigative strategy is to stir up the village, he ends up 'confiding' in a number of people. We are treated to Christie's standard cast of the post-war English village: a penniless but connected couple with a shabby family manse, a overly dramatic woman who enjoys her own tales of woe, the dutiful but repressed daughter, a bold young woman emblematic of the new age, an insecure, unsmart woman attempting to climb the social ladder, a postmistress with a penchant for gossip. All standard in many Christies, along with the semi-invalid elderly woman and her playwright son, echoes of Marple's nephew Raymond.

"Mrs. Sweetiman imparted all this information with relish. She prided herself on being well informed. Mrs. Weatherby whose desire for knitting needles had perhaps been prompted by a desire to know what was going on, paid for her purchase."

Tone seems on the playful side, which self-referential remarks on writing, appreciation and performance. When Mrs. Oliver and her apples make an appearance, it becomes quite clear that Christie is taking an authorial aside to muse on readers who obstinately prefer troublesome characters and playwrights who take license with an author's characters. **"How do I know?" said Mrs. Oliver crossly. 'How do I know why I ever thought of the revolting man? I must have been mad!... Why all the idiotic mannerisms he's got? These things just happen. You try something--and people seem to like it--and then you go on--and before you know where you are, you've got someone like that maddening Sven Hjerson tied to you for life.'**

Poor Dame Christie. She seems to have had at least a gastronomic sort of revenge on Poirot at least, by boarding him at the worst guest-house possible: **"I thought I would open a bottle of those raspberries I put up last summer. They seem to have a bit of mould on top but they say nowadays that that doesn't matter... --practically penicillin."** If it is any post-humous consolation, in my old age, I prefer Miss Marple to the conceited Poirot, but I enjoy them both. *Mrs. McGinty's Dead* is one worth adding to the library.

Three and a half self-referential stars.

Laurel Young says

This is really a **fun** mystery--I don't normally think of Dame Agatha as funny, but she is quite capable of delightfully dry British humor, and by the time she wrote this novel (in the 1950s) she was well into her long career and comfortable/confident enough to play with a lighter tone when she felt like it. I don't mean that poor Mrs. McGinty's death is treated lightly; it isn't. In fact, few of Dame Agatha's novels feature working-class protagonists, and so I was struck by her sympathetic portrayal of a charwoman and the sense that justice needs to be done here as surely as for an earl. No, the humor comes from the wonderful interaction between Mrs. Oliver and Poirot, and becomes almost slapstick when fussy Poirot goes to stay at what has to be the most slapdash B&B in England.

I liked the characters except when I wasn't meant to, and having an unlikeable man framed for murder really highlighted the theme of justice for all--regardless of class or personal charm. I found the denouement very clever, if rather overly involved. Overall, one sees that Christie had hit her stride by this point, and that is a pleasant sight indeed.

Mike says

I mean the title kind of gives it away: Mrs. McGinty's Dead. Dead as a door nail. She was a rather boring woman who lead a boring life in a seemingly boring town. There was literally nothing that made her special, she was just a charwoman with no close family and few friends. And yet her murder just didn't seem to add up to Superintendent Spence who, finding his old friend Hercule Poirot otherwise unengaged, enlists his help to figure out just what happened and why. and the stakes are high, her boarder has already been convicted and is slated for hanging. Can Poirot get to the bottom of this seemingly mundane murder?

Yes. I mean, this is Hercule Poirot and his famous grey cells we are talking about here, of course he figures everything out, it is what he does.

But the charm of this story isn't in Poirot's inevitable success, but all the characters Christie populates the story with, from Robin Upward, a deliciously annoying playwright to Christie stand in Mrs. Oliver (who has to put up with Upward's constant changing of her famous Finnish detective for the purposes of a play he is writing) to Summerhayes's who seem incapable of running anything resembling an organized house and many more. Some are what they appear to be while others harbor dark pasts that may or may not be related to the murder of Mrs. McGinty.

I think what I liked most about this story (apart from the indomitable Hugh Fraser doing the voices) was the mystery Christie weaves for this particular story. It is one that stretches back decades and has enmeshed several of the story's characters. The final reveal, which I woefully missed, made sense and all the clues were there if one just applied their little grey cells properly. All in all a very enjoyable listening experience!

mark monday says

Choose Your Own Adventure!

You are Mrs. McGinty.

If you are not Mrs. McGinty, choose <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

If you are not Mrs. McGinty, and you killed Mrs. McGinty, choose <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>

Marco Tamborrino says

Come un libro ti possa tenere incollato fino all'ultimissima pagina.

Agatha Christie era un genio. Un genio della trama. È capace di creare dal nulla, ma veramente dal nulla, un meccanismo che ti porta all'esasperazione, all'incredulità. Vorresti sapere chi è l'assassino, vorresti capirlo anche tu, insieme a Poirot, chi è questo benedetto assassino. Ma spesso gli indizi sono comprensibili solo all'autore stesso, il lettore non può far altro che seguire, sconcertato, il succedersi degli eventi, chiedendosi, ogni due pagine, se è veramente lui o lei l'assassino, e venendo poi contraddetto nella riga successiva.

Non succede come in tanti gialli che dove arriva l'investigatore muore qualcuno. In "Fermate il boia" il qualcuno è già morto, e l'unico sospettato è coperto da prove schiaccianti. Sarà impiccato di lì a poco. Qualcuno però, crede che sia innocente. E allora ecco che Hercule Poirot, personaggio molto autocompiacente, mette in moto il suo meccanismo, fino ad arrivare al colpevole, che è forse il meno sospetto di tutti.

È stato un libro molto piacevole da affrontare per staccare un po' dal romanzone di Llosa.

Poonam says

Such an engaging story with soo many suspicious characters and soo many options for the motive of the murder.

Veronique says

This was a fun read to start the year. Once more we are faced with a puzzling murder. Was the man arrested and charged the murderer, or was he framed? The latter of course, which brings our favourite mustachioned Belgian detective to the scene. As you expect, Agatha offers us plenty of red herrings...

However, the reason I enjoyed this novel was for the whole comic angle the author added. Our poor Poirot has to suffer by staying in accommodations that are less than suitable, with nothing that could be called food. How he suffers, to our delight :0) If this wasn't enough, Ariadne makes an entrance with her apples of course, and views. Do I have to say that I love that character!? In this instance, Christie has a field day, using Ariadne as her spokesperson, voicing her feelings about being an author, about adaptations, and most telling, about her creation:

"How do I know why I ever thought of the revolting man? I must have been mad! Why a Finn when I know nothing about Finland? Why a vegetarian? Why all the idiotic mannerisms he's got? These things just happen. You try something – and people seem to like it – and then you go on – and before you know where you are, you've got someone like that maddening Sven Hjerson."

Priceless! :0)

P.S. I shall be reading Christie's autobiography next month and look forward to finding more about her views on Poirot. Well... On everything, really :0)
