



# The Moving Toyshop

*Edmund Crispin*

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## **The Moving Toyshop** Edmund Crispin

Gervase Fen investigates an Oxford toy shop replaced overnight by a grocery store. Poetic Richard Cadogan found the apparently strangled body of an old woman upstairs, but she vanishes as well.

## **The Moving Toyshop Details**

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Author : Edmund Crispin

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# From Reader Review The Moving Toyshop for online ebook

## Justwinter says

I can't write a better review than GoodReads Librarian "Cissy Mermaid" did. She nails the charm this golden-age mystery has, and then writes a wonderful review. So I'll list all the words I'd never seen before that I encountered in *The Moving Toyshop*. Some I could figure out in context, but others I had to look up. Many are obsolete in Modern English, more the shame.

- 1) Tautologous: repeating the same thing in different words
- 2) Atrabilious: irritable, as if suffering from indigestion
- 3) Magniloquently: in a rhetorically grandiloquent manner, pompously
- 4) Myrmidons: a follower who carries out orders without question
- 5) Prognathous: having a projecting lower jaw
- 6) Perorate: deliver an oration in grandiloquent style, harangue
- 7) Accretions: increasing by natural growth
- 8) Godelpus: ha! slang: 'God help us!'
- 9) Cachinnation: loud, convulsive laughter; hideous grimace
- 10) Disapprobation: expression of strong disapproval
- 11) Suiline: of or pertaining to a hog or the Hog family
- 12) Debouches: to march out from a confined spot into open ground
- 13) Bowdlerized: to expurgate, as a book, by omitting or modifying the parts considered offensive
- 14) Expurgated: having material deleted
- 15) Parturition: the process of giving birth
- 16) Illimitable: incapable of being limited or bounded; immeasurable
- 17) Saturnine: bitter or scornful, a brooding ill-humor
- 18) Insuperably: incapable of being passed over or surmounted
- 19) Argal: a ludicrous corruption of the Latin word, ergo

Lord how I love a well-written British book!

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## Tfitoby says

### #10 Favourite Read of 2012

By my paws and whiskers this was quite simply brilliant.

Listed in Keating's 100 Best Crime and Mystery Books, *Moving Toyshop* is "*a froth of bubbling spirits, a sparkling example of the donnish detective story*", at its heart is the absurd disappearance of a toyshop visited in midnight Oxford, which is explained with perfect plausibility by the time of the denouement. One night, Richard Cadogan, poet and would-be bon-vivant, finds the body of an elderly woman in an Oxford toyshop, and is hit on the head. When he comes to, he finds that the toyshop has disappeared and been replaced with a grocery store. Turns out his old friend Professor Gervase Fen has a penchant for investigating unusual crimes.

The premise alone was enough to get me hooked, I went from knowing nothing of Crispin to being desperate

to read more in just a few short passages. Both the style of writing and the main character of Gervase Fen reminded me of Douglas Adams and specifically Dirk Gently in Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency, the influence is quite obvious I think.

That such a quirky self referential novel was written in 1946 astounds me. It reads like a modern day farce that Jasper Fforde or even Stephen Fry would be proud of, the quality of writing and humour is that high. There aren't many laugh out loud moments but the entire book is filled with joy that will keep a smile on your face.

The delightful play on words and genre conventions that litter the novel are a particular delight.

"The Blood on the Mortarboard, Fen Strikes Back" said Fen

"What's that you're saying?" gurgled Cadogan

"My dear fellow, I was making up titles for Crispin"

Is just one of a series of moments where the characters "break the fourth wall" of the narrative and/or draw attention to the tools of writing a mystery novel.

An interesting aspect of this title is the, almost, backgrounding of the detective Gervase Fen, star of the Edmund Crispin series of whodunnit novels. Whilst he is obviously the character that leads the hunt for the murderer it is Cadogans story from start to finish. He's not exactly a Dr Watson character so in my experience this makes him it a rarity.

For fans of the classic mystery this is an essential read and a gateway in to the work of Crispin, for those of you who find the English sense of humour appealing you really can't go wrong with this one. A book so good that a year and nearly 250 (mostly crime) books later it is still as memorable and enjoyable to think about as when I first read it.

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## Amy says

I'm not going to bother telling you what this book is about. It doesn't matter. All right, it's sort of a murder mystery. But you won't care who was murdered, or why, and it won't matter particularly the identity of the killer. All you'll care about is getting to follow these two brilliant characters around as they make wisecracks, argue with one another, and get into trouble.

I learned about Edmund Crispin from P.D. James, who wrote about him in her book Talking About Detective Fiction. Crispin is incredibly funny and erudite, and really more interested in making fun of crime fiction than contributing to the genre. This one is his most popular, but it's his third in the series and now I want to read them all.

Example of what I love about this book: Two old friends are sitting around in a bar in Oxford, waiting for the next plot point to happen. One proposes that they play "Detestable Characters in Fiction." The rules: both players must agree, each player has five seconds in which to think of a character, and if he can't, he misses a turn. Three missed turns and he loses. They must be characters the author intended to be sympathetic. So here's how the game goes:

"Those awful gabblers, Beatrice and Benedick."

"Yes. Lady Chatterly and that gamekeeper fellow."

"Yes. Britomart in The Faerie Queene."

"Yes. Almost everyone in Dostoevsky."

"Yes. Er--"

"Got you! You miss your turn. Those vulgar little man-hunting minxes in Pride and Prejudice."

At that point, a bar fight breaks out over The Immortal Jane.

So. Witty, mid-century, British. Are you in?

OK, then here's your drink:

They do quite a bit of drinking in this book, and it's mostly beer and whiskey. Combine them and you've got a Beggar's Banquet.

2 oz whiskey  
.75 oz maple syrup  
.25 oz fresh-squeezed lemon juice  
2 dashes Angostura bitters  
Pale ale  
Orange slice for garnish

Shake everything but the beer over ice, then pour into a tall glass filled with ice. Top with beer, garnish with orange, and go be British and witty with Mr. Crispin.

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## **Ceci says**

The Moving Toyshop is one of my all time favourites. I remember making a presentation on it at school, when I was about 12 years old. And having re-read it now, I see it has lost none of its unique charm. Edmund Crispin is the most adorable of the mystery authors of the golden age. He (or, rather, the narrator) often speaks to the readers directly, as when the attractive sleuth, an Oxford lit prof, Gervase Fen mentions he's inventing book titles for Crispin. The book is farcical, delightful, a true treasure.

As Julian Symons says in Bloody Murder (1985), "Crispin's work is marked by a highly individual sense of light comedy, and by a great flair for verbal deception rather in the Christie manner... At his weakest he is flippant, at his best he is witty, but all his work shows a high-spiritedness rare and welcome in the crime story." I simply love this book, and that's not solely for the brilliant locked room mystery (in the Dickson Carr style) but also for the wonderful personality of the sleuth, Gervase Fen, and his staple comments, such as "Oh, my paws!" and "Oh, my furs and whiskers!" (Those derive from the expostulations made by the Cheshire Cat in Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll.) It is a wonderful mystery novel, highly exceptional and most enjoyable.

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## **Emilia Barnes says**

What a piece of misogynistic nonsense!

Since this book saw it fit to do some Jane Austen bashing, I think it is fit that I point out the beautiful ironies that would have made that lady laugh about this very book (though irony not in the literary sense but in the situational sense):

1) According to Edmund Crispin the ladies in Jane Austen are not very well constructed, while his own view of women is as follows: when Fen asks a womanising undergrad how come he is so successful with the ladies, he says, and I quote: "I quieten their fears and give them sweet things to eat. It seems never to fail."

Yes, Crispin, you are a fucking ladies genius!

2) Nobody fucking knows who the fuck Edmund Crispin is, whereas you'd have to be a mutant locked in a cellar not to know who Jane Austen is.

But anyway, I should not get so annoyed about some idiot nobody's views on women, especially since that idiot nobody is from the 1930s. I can, and do, however, fail to enjoy stories, which are patently inferior to the output of women of the same time in the same genre, when said stories are bigoted, poorly written, and not as funny as they clearly think they are. What a lesson to all the bigots today: if you espouse stupid, prejudiced views in your writing about whole groups of people, people a hundred years from now reading you will think you a backward, unsophisticated moron who had the education to know better.

As to the story, well: Gervase Fen is an annoying bully whose method is spurious though he is such a genius, apparently, whose sense of humour is lacking, though he thinks it is ever present. A coward, an idiot and not a pleasant person to follow in a story. I cannot stress enough how inferior he is to, say, Hercules Poirot or Lord Peter Wimsey, or Miss Marple or a thousand other detectives. The mystery is stupid and not very engaging. I have a feeling that unless you're one of Edmund Crispin's friends from Oxford of that time you will find it hard to understand what he thinks is so funny about the many observations about the city. The whole is just such an unimpressive piece of silliness, that I would read and forget the next day were it not for the women hating and the Jane Austen bashing.

DNF

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## **Karin says**

If you enjoy funny mysteries, this book is for you, and even more so if you like them set in twentieth century England. This is my first time reading a book by Edmund Crispin (pen name of RR Montgomery) and I doubt it will be my last.

Poet Richard Cadogan has found the apparently strangled body of a woman in a toyshop late one night when he saw a shop door left open. He is bopped on the head and wakes up in a closet with an open window, but when he brings the police there the toy shop is gone and a grocery store in its place, plus no sign of a body anywhere. When he finishes his journey to his alma mater, Oxford, and pours out his take, his friend Professor Gervase Fen (apparently this series stars him, but I had no idea when I started it) helps him take up

the search. Not only is it funny, but there are plenty of books mentioned for metafiction fans. No, not five stars for me (it is a mystery, for one thing), but I have no doubt it is for others.

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## **Mariano Hortal says**

Publicado en <http://lecturaylocura.com/la-jugueter...>

Si no fuera por Sir Arthur Conan Doyle y Agatha Christie, gracias a sus detectives más famosos y paradigmáticos del género como son Sherlock Holmes y Hercule Poirot, la novela más tradicional de género como es la novela de detectives, hoy en día estaría más que olvidada; no porque no guste, que no es así, sino más bien debido al auge tremendo de la novela negra, que ahoga las pretensiones de un tipo de libros que no buscaba tanto lo negro del asunto sino crear una trama ingeniosa en la que un detective era capaz, mediante la deducción, a través de todos los detalles de la situación, de resolver un asesinato (u otro conflicto) aparentemente irresoluble.

Uno de los grandes hitos de la novela de detectives fue la creación del famoso "Detection Club" en Londres en 1930, entre los fundadores de este selecto club estuvieron los archiconocidos Agatha Christie, Gilbert Keith Chesterton y Dorothy Leigh Sayers, y que permanece aún activo hoy en día.

Edmund Crispin, seudónimo de Rober Bruce Montgomery, es un escritor inglés heredero de esa época e, influenciado por dicho club, creó novelas de detectives basadas en la verdadera tradición inglesa, aunque alejado de sus reglas. Su detective es el ingenioso Gervase Fen ("El excéntrico comportamiento de Gervase Fen, profesor titular de Inglés y Literatura en St. Christopher, no se ajustaba en absoluto a los modelos tradicionales del profesorado") que recorre las calles de Oxford ("el único lugar de Europa donde un hombre puede hacer cualquier cosa e incurrir en cualquier excentricidad y no despertar ningún interés ni emoción en absoluto en nadie") sobre su deportivo que él llama Lily Christine III.

La premisa inicial de "La juguetería errante" es tan ingeniosa como retadora: una juguetería con un cadáver en su interior que aparece y desaparece para consternación del poeta Richard Cadogan, amigo de Gervase, y que desencadenará todo el meollo. Es mejor no contar nada más sobre la historia para que cada uno pueda ir descubriéndola. Sí es inevitable mencionar que la novela se lee con adicción, que la trama es muy ingeniosa, ya que desde la premisa inicial llegamos a un típico caso de "habitación cerrada" habitual en novela de detectives; pero no faltan persecuciones, no faltan personajes a cuál más divertido (como el peculiar camionero que lee a D. H Lawrence), ni humor en cada página que va pasando ("Entre los bajos que ululaban malhumorados como barcos perdidos en la niebla del Canal de la Mancha - que es como suenan todos los bajos en todas las orquestas del mundo").

Si a eso añadimos todos los juegos literarios que se trae entre manos Crispin en la boca de su detective Gervase y el poeta Cadogan ("Vamos a jugar a los libros infumables. -De acuerdo. El Ulises. - Vale. Todo Rabelais. -Vale. El Tristram Shandy") y las constantes referencias literarias que pueblan la obra, la novela se convierte en una delicia para disfrutar sin prejuicios.

Necesitamos más novelas de Edmund Crispin ("Mi querido amigo, ¿te encuentras bien? - Estaba pensando títulos para las siguientes novelas de Crispin"), entretenimiento imprescindible, disfrutable a todos los niveles y, en definitiva, diversión de esa que te ayuda a amar cada vez más la literatura, no todo tiene que ser denso, sesudo y cerebral. Reír es bueno y, desde luego, hay que hacerlo siempre.

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## Tracey says

It has taken me many years to begin to undo the habits authors like Edmund Crispin set me into. My motto has been for many years that of *The West Wing's* Jed Bartlett: never say in one word what you can say in one hundred. I also follow *Dead Poets Society's* Mr. Keating's advice to avoid common phrasing. So when Edmund Crispin trots out words like "steatopygic" or "suilline", I'm content (even if I have to look them up). And when someone not only explained, but "He explained at great length. He explained with a sense of righteous indignation and frustration of spirit" – well, that's a kindred spirit, that is. And when Fen uses variations on the White Rabbit's exclamations, I sigh and know that yes, Crispin is in part to blame for the fact that I don't speak – or write – like anyone else I know. It takes great concentration to write an email shorter than a thousand words (or in one draft).

Maybe books like this are one reason I didn't swear for a good portion of my life (at least until I started driving regularly). "'– you,' Mr Sharman said viciously."

Maybe books like this are one reason I love a pretty simile. I love an "open window where the porter leaned, like a princess enchanted within some medieval fortalice". And "Wordsworth resembled a horse with powerful convictions".

And I don't read like anyone else I know, not in "real life" at least. That's why blogs and book-centric sites are so valuable – I know there are people out there whose standards are – well, Edmund Crispin high and not Stephanie Meyer high.

"'Sorry. It was a quotation from Pope.'

"'I don't care who it was a quotation from. It's really rather rude to quote when you know I shan't understand. Like talking about someone in a language they don't know.'"

- I wonder if that's a backhanded slap at Dorothy L. Sayers and Lord Peter's habit of pulling out mass tonnages of quotes, often in random languages. In the only other Crispin I've read in recent years, *The Case of the Gilded Fly*, there was a remark I very definitely took as such. (I wonder if the "speaking disrespectfully of the immortal Jane" was indicative of the author's real feelings.

It felt very much like the moving toyshop of the title was merely a vehicle (so to speak) for Fen to sail through and show off his effortless brilliance. And for various characters to break the third wall with disconcertingly hilarious references to the author, the publisher, and the fact that they're not, technically, real persons. ("'Let's go left,' Cadogan suggested. 'After all, Gollancz is publishing this book.'" That would have flown about fourteen miles over my head when I originally read this, lo those many years ago.) The flippancy flows fast and glittery – and then when you least expect it comes a deeper stretch that achieve deadly seriousness. "Euthanasia, Cadogan thought: they all regard it as that, and not as wilful slaughter, not as the violent cutting-off of an irreplaceable compact of passion and desire and affection and will; not as a thrust into unimagined and illimitable darkness."

'Sauve qui peut', mes amis – save yourself if you can. If you want to sound like everyone else, it's probably best not to steep yourself in clever, eccentric, carelessly witty British Golden Age mysteries. Oh, my ears and whiskers, it's not easy fending off the philistine.

The usual disclaimer: I received this book via Netgalley for review.



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## Susan says

This is the third Gervase Fen mystery, following on from *The Case of the Gilded Fly* and *Holy Orders*, and is generally considered the best of the series. This is very much a light hearted, Golden Age mystery, with liberal literary quotes and references to the author - at one point Fen is making up possible book titles for 'Crispin' for example. It is set in 1938, but was written in 1945 and contains a magical and unreal storyline which does require a certain amount of 'joining in' with the sense of the impossible and madcap qualities of the novel.

The story begins with poet Richard Cadogan, a poet, who goes to Oxford for a holiday. However, with the last train halting at Didcot, he hitches a lift and then begins to walk. On the way he comes across an open toyshop and, on investigating, finds the body of a murdered woman upstairs. Of course, he contacts the police, who go back with him in the morning, only to find there is no toyshop and no body. Cadogan goes to his old friend Gervase Fen for help, who happily helps him in a madcap investigation concerning eccentric wealthy ladies, legacies, a sinister lawyer and lots of chasing various people around Cambridge. Of course, there is a pretty girl to protect and, also of course, Fen is impatient that nobody else seems to have worked out who committed the crime and wraps the mystery up prettily by the end of the book. Great fun and a good example of the authors work.

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## Kay says

When it comes to mysteries, I think I began with the creme de la creme -- a friend introduced me to Dorothy Sayers, Edmund Crispin, Ngaio Marsh, and a few other select authors in my mid-twenties -- I'd never read *any* mysteries until that time.

*The Moving Toyshop* is a favorite mystery, and one I've read several time. It's fast-paced, witty, and chock full of the eccentric English characters that have become stock-in-trade for such writers as Martha Grimes and other "cozy" mystery writers -- but this was the original deal, done with inimitable panache.

Since I've also a big Edward Lear fan, this Gervase Fen episode hits all the right notes. While it's true that confirmed anglophiles will probably enjoy this the most, anyone with a taste for wordplay is bound to enjoy it.

Oh, and the "mystery" part is quite clever, too. Almost forgot about that!

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## Trelawn says

This is the third book in the Gervase Fen series, but my first. I don't think I missed anything by not having read the previous ones. This mystery is definitely all about the main character, Fen, and how he goes about his investigation. The revelation of the murderer didn't particularly shock me, nor did I find the method for the murder particularly novel but no matter because this was a very enjoyable read. Lots of great characters, cheeky dialogue, a Jane Austen fanatic and some fun fourth wall moments. I really did enjoy my first

## Lauren says

*'Well, I'm going to the police,' said Cadogan. 'If there's anything I hate, it's the sort of book in which characters don't go to the police when they've no earthly reason for not doing so.'*

*'You've got an earthly reason for not doing so immediately.'*

*'What's that?'*

*'The pubs are open,' said Fen, as one who after a long night sees dawn on the hills. 'Let's go and have a drink before we do anything rash.'*

What an odd, charming, sharp confection this book is. I don't usually consider words like "quirky" and "romp" a recommendation, but here we are. *The Moving Toyshop* is a fun, quirky romp with a few unexpectedly dark shadows.

Richard Cadogan is a renowned and therefore slightly broke poet who wheedles a fifty pound advance out of his publisher so that he can go on holiday to Oxford. He's desperate for novelty, but gets too much of it when he winds up walking into a darkened toyshop and stumbling upon a body. (There's a great, chilling bit here where Cadogan goes back for his flashlight and realizes someone has taken the batteries out of it. Then he hears footsteps coming toward him--) In the morning, he notifies the police, but the body is gone. So, for that matter, is the toyshop.

Enter Gervase Fen, an Oxford don and old friend of Cadogan's. Fen is acerbic and seemingly scatterbrained, but he has some experience with mysteries, and he volunteers to help Cadogan unravel the case of the murder in the missing toyshop. The mystery, for the most part, doesn't matter. Crispin apparently delighted in coming up with bizarre locked-room murder scenarios, and the plot of *The Moving Toyshop* accordingly depends upon there being a wealthy old woman obsessed with the comic poetry of Edward Lear and a terror of being murdered and... so on. Plausibility is not something the novel is overly concerned with. Often, its tongue is firmly in its cheek. It even breaks the fourth wall--at one point, Fen kills time by coming up with titles for his own author; at another, he tries to anticipate someone's movements by remembering who's publishing the book he's in. This doesn't actually ruin the novel's sense of reality, because (1) it barely has one to begin with and (2) the absurd universe of the book makes it seem perfectly reasonable. This is a novel where you have to take into account that chasing your suspect down with a horde of drunken undergraduates is probably not the best idea and where bicycle chases run into nude beaches. An amiable, mild-mannered Casanova succeeds with women by always carrying around chocolates. Multiple rides are hitched with a friendly truck driver who discourses at length on the works of DH Lawrence:

*'We've lost touch,' he continued, 'with sex--the grand primeval energy; the dark, mysterious source of life. Not,' he added confidentially, 'that I've ever exactly felt that--beggin' your pardon--when I've been in bed with the old woman. But that's because industrial civilization 'as got me in its clutches.'*

All of this is fun--if you like these excerpts, you'll like the book. But Crispin goes an extra step and gives all of this a surprising sense of morality. About the only thing here that's taken seriously is the death at the center of the novel: every time it's mentioned, the horror and squalid sadness of it is emphasized:

*Euthanasia, Cadogan thought: they all regard it as that, and not as a willful slaughter, not as the violent cutting-off of an irreplaceable compact of passion and desire and affection and will; not as a thrust into*

*unimagined and unlimited darkness.*

Fen's hard-edged crusade is enjoyable for him, of course, but it's also driven by conviction, and the moments where that comes through are affecting and effective. Beneath all this silliness, there's something that matters, and that lingers alongside the jokes.

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### **Scott says**

I knew I was going to like this book when I opened it to the section where the two sleuths, Cadogan and Gervase Fen, find themselves bound and locked in a closet. The rest of the college is away at lunch, and with no one to rescue them, they must amuse themselves with a game called "Unreadable Books."

'All right. *Ulysses*.'

'Yes. Rabelais.'

'Yes. *Tristram Shandy*.'

'Yes. *The Golden Bowl*.'

'Yes. *Rasselas*.'

'No. I like that.'

'*Clarissa*, then.'

'Yes. *Titus* ....'

Ugh ... how spot on! Within the last year, I've started and abandoned all of these titles (except *Clarissa*, which is too heavy to either hold aloft or rest on the belly without damaging one's vitals and entrails).

Is *The Moving Toyshop* a good mystery? Well, yes ... at times you may wonder who committed the murder ... but that's not the point. Mostly, it's just pure entertainment, a rambustious farce so well larded with literary allusions and aspersions that you will spend more time wondering about "Who said that?" than about "Who done it?"

If you read and enjoyed Milne's *Red House Mystery* for its wit and occasional silliness, then by all means pick up this seriously comic crime classic. You'll enjoy its zany characters, slapstick humor, and self-incriminating tone.

So, let's play "Unreadable books" ... *Pickwick Papers*.

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### **K.D. Absolutely says**

Excellent and definitely interesting old (1946-published) thriller. I closed this book last week wondering how could Edmund Crispin (1921-1978) pull off a riveting denouement while operating on a tight plotline. While reading, I was wondering how would he tie up the loose ends but the ending was just believable that I had the urge to read it once again.

Why do the current mystery-thriller writers don't write this way anymore? In 2006, P.D. James picked it as one of her five most riveting crime novels but I read one of his novels and did not find any trace of Crispin's

ingenuity.

The story is about a lost toy shop. Poet **Richard Cadogan** sees an open toy one evening and intrigued why it is felt open, he enters and sees a dead old woman. He leaves the scene and comes back the following morning and it is gone. He seeks the help of his friend, Oxford Professor of English Language and Literature and an amateur detective, **Gervase Fen** and together, *akin to Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson*, they unravel the mystery of the toy shop.

They say that if you want to develop your skill as a writer in weaving plots, go for mystery-thrillers like those of Agatha Christie. I have read her *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (3 stars) but I liked this one of Crispin better. In both instances, I had no idea, even a remotest one, who could be the culprit but in this case by Crispin, the mystery of the lost toy shop (replaced by a grocery), was even more intriguing than its whodunnit.

Masterful handling of the plot. Remarkable twists. The best thriller I've read so far.

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### **Bill Kerwin says**

If you like vintage British mysteries and vintage British silliness, *The Moving Toyshop* (1946) is a book for you. Like most vintage mysteries, it is cleverly plotted, yet the puzzle at the core of *Toyshop* is ridiculous, its dialogue (though witty and funny) improbable, and its resolution absurd. But if you enjoy Gilbert and Sullivan's comic operas, Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Saki's short stories, and P.G. Wodehouse's tales of Jeeves and Wooster, you will find this book a delight.

The premise is intriguing. Poet Richard Cadogan goes on holiday to Oxford, his alma mater. While taking a late night walk into the city, he passes a toyshop with its door ajar and decides to take a look around. He finds a corpse (of course!), and, after excitedly informing the police of his discovery, he leads them to the scene of the crime. There he meets with an even more disturbing surprise: not only is no corpse to be found within the building, but the building itself is no longer a toyshop. It has transformed itself into a grocery instead.

Cadogan seeks out eccentric Oxford Don Gervase Fen, amateur detective and professor of English, and together they set out to solve the “mystery of the moving toyshop.” Since the two main characters are a poet and an English professor, the dialogue is studded with wit (“this is a book everyone can afford to be without”), obscure allusions (“Empedocles on Etna”), and literary games (“Unreadable Books”). All this, however, gives the reader much pleasure. There is a smile on almost every page, and more than an occasional laugh.

I thought the solution too labored and the climax too frenetic—more Pythonesque than Wildean, I'm afraid. Still, although the imperturbable mask of British farce may be knocked askew by the ending, the prose remains elegant and the tone good-humored throughout this unique—and essential--comic mystery.

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### **Paromjit says**

This is a golden era classic comic crime novel set in 1938 Oxford from the series featuring Gervase Fen, an Oxford professor, who has a penchant for investigating the strange and the odd. This is the third and I have to say that I loved it. Poet Richard Cadogan is on vacation in Oxford, and is walking around at night when he spots a toy shop with an open door. His curiosity overwhelms him, and he finds himself going into the toy shop. And would you believe it, he spies the dead body of a murdered woman. He returns in the morning with the police, and there is a slight problem. There is now no toy shop and no dead body. Instead, in its place is a grocery shop.

A perplexed Richard calls on our amateur detective, Gervase Fen, and the two of them start pulling at the threads of this bizarre mystery. They riff really well off each other, and their relationship with each other is a joy to behold. They find themselves travelling all round the city, encountering weird rich women, a lawyer to beware of, legacies, and, of course, have a maiden to protect. There is plenty of humour throughout the novel. The writing is wonderful and there are literary quotations and word play scattered throughout. It is artfully plotted, more than a trifle bonkers and a great deal of fun. It might also improve your vocabulary! Providing you are not looking for logic, this is a delightful classic crime read. Recommended. Thanks to Bloomsbury for an ARC.

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## **Miriam says**

I haven't started yet and already I like it:

"NOTE None but the most blindly credulous will imagine the characters and events in this story to be anything but fictitious."

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## **Oscar says**

El británico Edmund Crispin, seudónimo de Bruce Montgomery, nos ofrece una aventura de detectives con toques de humor al más puro estilo de Arthur Conan Doyle y G.K. Chesterton. Crispin, licenciado en Lenguas Modernas en Oxford, únicamente publicó nueve novelas y dos colecciones de cuentos, todas ellas de género policíaco y con Gervase Fen como protagonista. El excéntrico Gervase Fen es todo un hallazgo: profesor de literatura inglesa en el ficticio St. Christopher's College de Oxford, y detective aficionado, se mueve en el terreno del humor británico más clásico, delirante por momentos, pero siempre divertido y entretenido.

‘La juguetería errante’ (The Moving Toyshop, 1946), sigue el patrón de averiguar quién es el asesino de la historia. Richard Cadogan, la misma noche que llega a Oxford, se encuentra un cadáver en una juguetería; sufre un percance, y no puede acudir a la policía hasta el día siguiente, con la sorpresa de que no solo ha desaparecido el cadáver, sino también el lugar del crimen. Esto se cuenta en el primer episodio. Ante tal misterio, Cadogan decide acudir a su amigo Fen.

A partir de aquí, se nos muestra toda una galería de personajes a cuál más peculiar, aderezado de diálogos brillantes, referencias literarias, citas, persecuciones delirantes, burlas sobre el pedante ambiente de Oxford, etc., todo desde el humor más *british*.

En resumen, una gran novela de misterio, muy entretenida, que prácticamente se lee sola.

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**K.J. Charles says**

When Stephen VI became Pope, he had the corpse of his predecessor Pope Formosus dug up and put on trial; a further Pope dug him up again and this time had him beheaded. This has always seemed a peculiar way to go on, but having read this book, I have to admit that if someone did disinter the author to give him a slap, I'd see their point.

I have honestly never read anything so intolerably smug and self-satisfied in my life. It's basically an entire book about how people who went to Oxford are charmingly eccentric and marvellously superior to everyone else, strung on a truly shitty and predictable murder mystery with which the author can barely be bothered anyway because it's more important to go on about how great Oxford alumni are in their delightful oblivious selfishness and hilarious privileged twattery.

Recommended for anyone who went to Oxford 40 years ago but can't stop going on and on and ON about it.

(Yes, I feel strongly about this. I had two hours and hadn't brought anything else to read.)

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**Arpita (BagfullofBooks) says**

Crispin makes it possible to solve a mystery and have a lot of fun while doing it. I loved the mad caper that our detective Gervase Fen led us on in the university city of Oxford. The premise of the story is that a body is found by the protagonist- Richard Cadogan, in a toyshop. He is hit on the head and passes out. The next day when he returns to the shop he finds the body missing and the shop converted to a grocery shop!

I enjoyed the humor in this book. The irreverent references to Jane Austen ( although I do regard myself as a Janeite) and the digs at other authors made me smile. The mystery aspect was not bad either. Fen was as eccentric and funny as ever - I did appreciate that I had been introduced to him already in the Gilded Fly before I read this book.

One of the most enjoyable mysteries I have ever read. Five stars for this one. If I had more this would be a book that would get it.

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