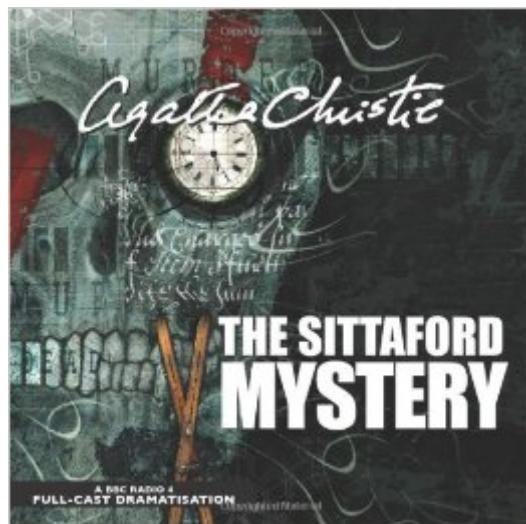


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The Sittaford Mystery (BBC Audio Crime)



Synopsis

A blizzard has hit England. In the tiny village of Sittaford, on the fringes of Dartmoor, a party of six is gathered in Sittaford House, home of Captain Trevelyan. He has rented the house out for the winter and is staying in a nearby village. As evening draws in, a séance is proposed. The lights are lowered and the table turning begins: various questions are asked, and the guests are delighted when the table jerks and rocks, revealing the answers. But the game turns sour when the board spells out a terrible message: "TREVELYAN DEAD. As the horrified participants look on, the table begins to rock again, and fear grips the party as the sinister word appears: "MURDER. Is it a macabre joke, black magic, or the truth? And who would kill a man who doesn't have an enemy in the world? 2 CDs. 2 hrs 20 mins.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

US readers used to know this one as "Murder at Hazelmoor," but nowadays they call it by the name Christie used, "The Sittaford Mystery." What a dull title! I guess the experience of slow sales with "The Listerdale Mystery" didn't teach her much, for this one also seems often to fall between the cracks when fans compile lists of Christie's best books, and I think it's the colorless title that does it, for otherwise this book is nearly the equal of the two midperiod masterpieces that followed it, CARDS ON THE TABLE and DEATH ON THE NILE. It lacks the complete assurance of the sleight-of-hand play of CARDS, and of course it is entirely missing the tragic dimension of the opera that is DEATH ON THE NILE, but THE SITTAFORD MYSTERY is indeed a wonderful treat for

Christie readers. I wonder, if Poirot was in it, if it would be better known? Instead we have the admirable Inspector Narracott, and his opposite number, the inventive, spirited, dazzling heroine Emily Trefusis, a sparkling Katharine Hepburn type no man can resist or outwit. Things look bleak of Emily at the beginning of the story as her sad sack boyfriend, Jim Pearson, is arrested for the murder of his uncle, Captain Trevelyan, in a little English village near Dartmoor--Sittaford--or Hazelmoor--one of them, I suppose. All I remember is that the book begins with a spooky seance of table turning, when the table raps, raps, raps, revealing Trevelyan's name and to the surprise of almost everyone present, the spirit voices say he has died! Six miles away, his body lies on the floor of his home, sandbagged, in the middle of a ferocious, historic blizzard.

Ahhh. This is more like! A mystery reader/fan must, every now and then, return to the books of the great Dame Agatha. Yet, it becomes harder and harder to find one that perhaps hasn't been read for a while. It's important also, not to get sucked into a recently read title now masquerading under a new name. I'm sure that at some time in my past, I've read *The Murder at Hazelmoor*, but not recently enough to have given the subsequently-named *The Sittaford Mystery* a familiar aura. S'wonderful, indeed. No one captured the thirties quite so eloquently as did Christie, and this book is a prime example of her art. There is no Miss Marple or Hercule Poirot in this episode, however. Rather we have an intrepid young woman named Emily Trefusis, who has the misfortune to be engaged to the nephew of a man who is found murdered, after his death had been exposed by a 'table turning.' This is a version of the Ouija Board, which was enormously popular in the first decades of the 20th century. Captain Trevelyan, who was rather fond of money, had been prevailed upon to let out his own Sittaford House to a widow and her daughter, apparently just arrived from South Africa. Never married, the Captain had few heirs: one sister and the three children of another, now deceased. It is James Pearson, one of this latter group, who has captured the fair Emily, and finds himself in jail under suspicion of having done in his uncle. Emily knows better, however, and with the aid and assistance of a live-wire newspaper reporter, Charles Enderby, sets out to prove his innocence. Emily and Charles quite put in me mind of Tommy and Tuppence with their humorous bantering. (Perhaps they were the inspiration for Dame Agatha, as well.

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