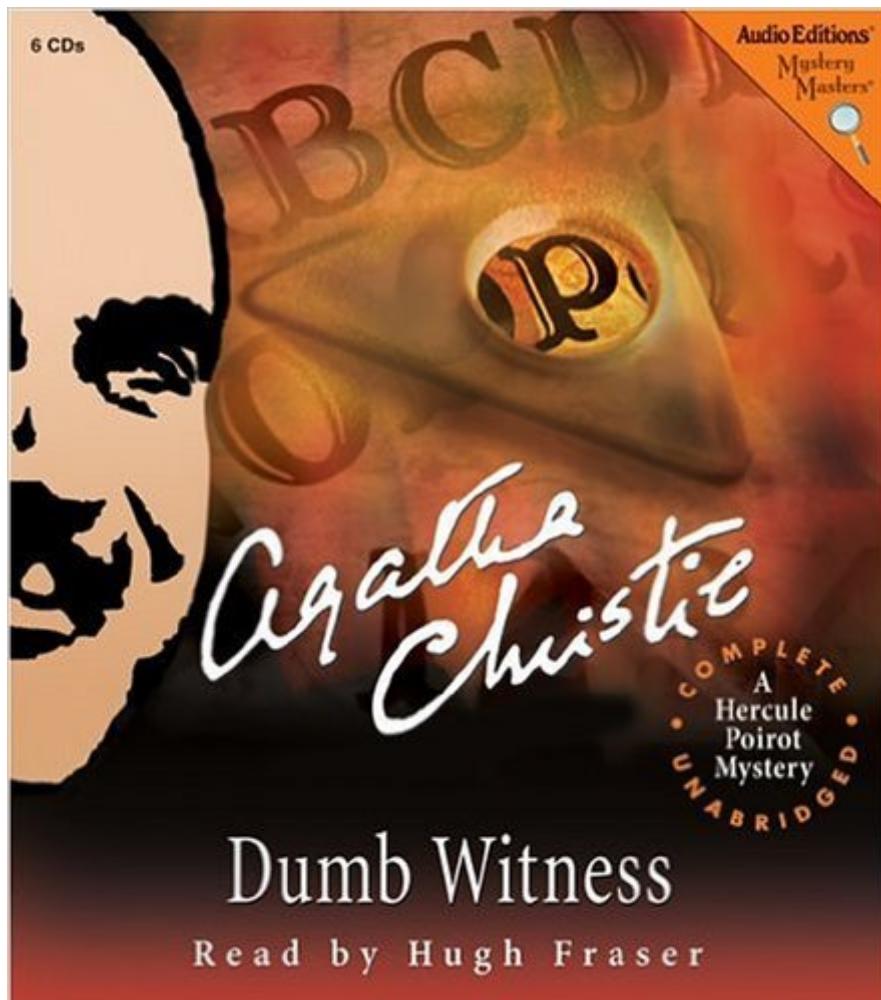


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Dumb Witness: A Hercule Poirot Mystery



Synopsis

In this intricate mystery first published in 1937, Poirot receives a letter ; two months after it was written ; from rich spinster Emily Arundell about a possible attempt on her life. Suspicious, Poirot heads for her hometown of Market Basing to find her already dead. A now cold trail of clues leads Poirot through a colorful cast of characters and one of Christie's typically cozy villages as he attempts to solve a murder that confounds even his superior skills. Reader Hugh Fraser masterfully evokes Christie's distinctive world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book, published also under the title "Poirot Loses A Client," has all the ingredients of an outstanding Christie tale: a domestic murder which could have been committed by any of several people close to the victim, a charming look at life in a small English village, a delightful and well-bred elderly lady, a fatal poisoning, and lots of clues. Poirot is brought into this case in an unusual manner. He receives a letter from the elderly lady in which she hints at a possible attempt on her life. When Poirot realizes the letter had been written two months before he receives it, his little grey cells are alerted. He takes a trip to Market Basing only to find the writer of the letter, Miss Arundell, is dead. Since he considers her still his client, he is determined to prove her death was not accidental, but a deliberate murder. The cold trail of clues leads to a beautiful society lady, a handsome scientist, a faithful servant, and a pair of specialists in the occult. Will Poirot be able to unmask the killer before another death occurs? A dog's bouncing ball, a strange spiritual manifestation, and a mirror reflection of a brooch are all pivotal to solving this mystery. This book is

notable in that it will be the last of the Poirot books to be narrated by Captain Hastings until "Curtain" ends the series decades later. His narrative style, always pleasing, is especially well-done in this one. Also notable in this story is the importance of a cute wire-haired terrier named Bob who will form a special bond with Captain Hastings. If greed, deception, and jealousy are your cup of cocoa, you'll love matching wits with Hercule Poirot as he tries to stop a brilliant and baffling killer who is about to strike again.

In this book Agatha Christie refers to the murderers in Death in the Clouds, the Murder of Roger Ackroyd, Mysterious Affair at Style and the Mystery of the Blue Train, so make sure you have read all of these before you read this one, or your fun will be spoilt! Dumb Witness is one of my top ten favourite Agatha Christie novels. Dame Christie has expressed the character of Hastings better here than in any of the other seven novels in which he appears. It is also one of the most amusing. One thing I enjoy about this book is that we are given a fair crack at the whip - everything that Poirot sees we see, there are no last minute envelopes arriving (which often irritates me). His explanation is convincing. Go ahead and read it! But don't forget to read the books mentioned above first.

This is an excellent mystery, first published in 1937, which was the heart of Agatha Christie's prime. Hercule Poirot receives a letter from an elderly woman who is seeking to hire him, but it turns out the woman had passed away several weeks before. Was her death from natural causes or was it murder? Not hard to guess the answer to that one! I found the mystery sufficiently baffling and the resolution satisfying. Captain Hastings also appears in this novel, playing -- as always -- Watson to Poirot's Holmes. I've never quite figured out whether there is a way of accounting for Hastings's appearances -- he's there in most of the short stories, but in relatively few of the novels. At one point, if I'm remembering correctly, he shares a flat with Poirot, although not in this novel. Hastings is presumably living off a private income with plenty of time on his hands because he is always available to travel with Poirot in unraveling the mystery. Where he lives and what he does when he is not with Poirot is not discussed. In fact, the details of Poirot's life when he is not detecting are left unmentioned in this novel, and barely discussed in any of the others. Clearly, it wasn't Christie's style to get into what she surely must have considered nonessential issues. While I would not put this among the very best of Christie's books -- The Murder of Roger Ackroyd, The A.B.C. Murders, or And Then There Were None would rank above it, in my view -- it is still very good and I would highly recommend it. Finally, you should note that this book was originally published under the title "Poirot Loses a Client."

At first the title intrigued me, but as i got down to reading the book, I found that the title had nothing much to do with the story. But nevertheless, i enjoyed the book. It's about the murder of an old lady, and the suspects are the relatives after her money. So what's the title have to do with the book? Simple. Only one witness was there to this murder...and the witness is dumb. yep... we're talking about her pet dog here. The irony to the story is that inspite of having a witness, Poirot has to unravel the mystery, with hardly any clues. But poirot being poirot solves the mystery....making another good book to read. Most of christie's books are a bit similar, but not exactly same, making it possible to read most of her books without getting bored. While this sounds like one of those typical books, it's really not. Read it...then you'll see.

The story itself is fairly routine (and bears more than a couple of similarities to "Murder on the Links", one of Christie's earliest works). However, the reader is advised to avoid the Berkley editions at all cost; they are sloppily edited and are full of mistakes that anyone with even a basic knowledge of Agatha Christie (or, for that matter, the English language) wouldn't make. The St. Martin's Press editions are much better.

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