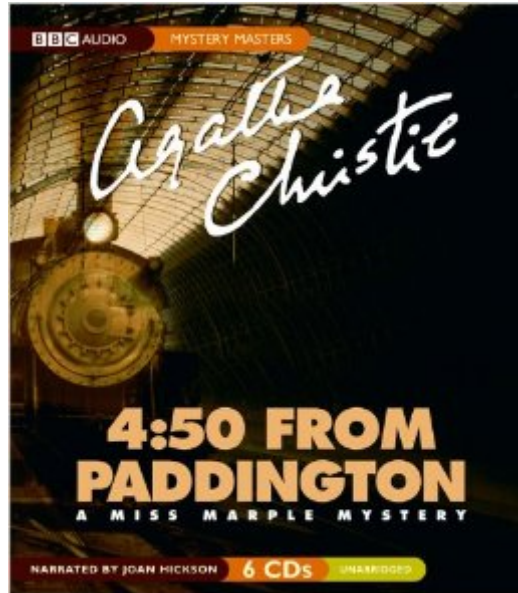


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4:50 From Paddington: A Miss Marple Mystery (Mystery Masters)



Synopsis

While two trains idle next to each other, Elspeth McGillicuddy sees a strangulation taking place from her compartment. Only the persistent Miss Jane Marple takes Elspeth's report seriously. Reader Joan Hickson was personally selected by Christie to play Miss Marple on the stage.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In "The 4:50 From Paddington" Agatha Christie gives us another in her long list of detective stories involving a large family at their estate. This is, in my opinion, one of the best, and begins when Elspeth McGillicuddy, a friend of Miss Marple's, is returning from Christmas shopping in London and on her way to visit Jane in St. Mary Mead. Her train is running alongside another one on a nearby track, and Mrs. McGillicuddy has an excellent view inside the parallel carriage of the other train. What she sees is the back of a man strangling a woman. No one believes Mrs. McGillicuddy since no corpse is found and no injured woman turns up at any hospital. Only Miss Marple believes her friend. Although Mrs. McGillicuddy is leaving for Ceylon to spend Christmas with her son, Miss Marple continues her quest to prove her friend's story. First she books passage on the same train and narrows the search for where a body should have been thrown to the area around Rutherford Hall, the large family estate of the Crackenthorpes. The family consists of the semi-invalided and grouchy Mr. Crackenthorpe, his daughter Emma, three sons, a son-in-law, and a grandson. At least four of the men are likely candidates for the strangler. Because Miss Marple is not young enough to physically search for the body in unknown territory, she engages Lucy Eyelesbarrow, one of

Christie's most interesting female creations. Lucy quickly gains employment at Rutherford Hall as a domestic and busily does all the legwork for Miss Marple. Meanwhile, Jane Marple has taken up residence at a nearby home and advises and assists Lucy. In 1961, this became the basis for "Murder, She Said," the first of four films starring Margaret Rutherford as Miss Marple. Although it deviates from the book, most notably in the omission of Lucy, it is enjoyable and worth viewing.

What "improvements" have been made for the Bantam edition? There are already major differences in punctuation, word choices, and scene breaks between the original Collins (4:50 FROM PADDINGTON) and Dodd Mead editions of this novel. There are further differences between the Dodd Mead editions republished by Random House/Avenel and the Dodd Mead editions republished by Simon & Shuster/Pocket. There are further additions still in the Signet, Berkley, and Black Dog & Leventhal editions. For every publishing house putting out her works, there seem to be a new batch of editors altering Agatha Christie's words and the sound of her voice. What's the matter with these publishers? Whose voice do they think we want to hear when we sit down to a novel by Agatha Christie? And what will she sound like twenty years from now? It's frightening that her estate has failed to see the importance of guarding her words as she wrote them. Please tell me I'm not the only one here who senses that a crime has been committed.

Old and new readers of Agatha Christie's whodunits will not be disappointed with her 1957 puzzler. It has an unforgettable opening sequence, an ingenious denouement, and an interesting sleuth, especially created for the occasion, named Lucy Eylesbarrow. Although it is the elderly Jane Marple who exerts her powers of detection, she does it by remote control while her much younger friend does the spadework - or the domestic work. As Agatha Christie explains, "The point about Lucy Eylesbarrow was that all worry, anxiety, and hard work went out of a house when she came into it." Accordingly, the tertiary-trained domestic, Lucy, is soon installed in Rutherford Hall, where Jane Marple believes a body thrown from a train might be hidden. Surprises, further murders, gossip, marriage proposals, and poisonings follow in rapid succession, so that before you know it, the hours have sped by, the murderer is revealed, and you admit that once again you were quite unable to guess whodunit. Agatha Christie adds to the usual cozy elements of her murder mysteries a heavy involvement with passenger trains, timetables and railway matters so beloved of the British. Otherwise you'll find the book fits into the pattern of the dysfunctional family's struggles being worked out with a particularly stubborn, callous and crusty old man as the family's head. Feature film and TV adaptations of this novel have been made, the most faithful to the text featuring Joan

Hickson who also can be heard in an unabridged reading on audiotapes.

Elsbeth McGillicuddy had spent a busy day Christmas shopping in London so when she settled into her comfortable 1st class train compartment on her way to visit her friend it was natural that she dozed off for a few minutes. It was most unsettling that she woke up just in time to see a murder being committed in a passing train. It was understandable that the train conductor did not believe this elderly lady's fantastic story. It was fortunate that Mrs. McGillicuddy's friend was none other than Jane Marple. Miss Marple believed her friend was not imagining whole thing. When the police found no evidence of the crime Miss Marple began to investigate for herself. She located the most likely place a body could be disposed of, a large estate owned by the Crackenthorpe family and arranged for a confederate, Lucy Eyelesbarrow to work for the family. The Crackenthorpe family is another of Christie's large dysfunctional families dominated by a disagreeable father (Luther), downtrodden daughter (Emma), ambitious son (Harold) and a pair of blacksheep - the artistic Cedric and the slightly crooked Alfred. Two other siblings have died, Edmund and Edith. Edith's husband, Bryan and son, Alexander are also part of the household. The body is found, more murders committed, the culprit unmasked and the true motive revealed in dramatic fashion by Miss Marple. Along the way romance flourishes and leaves the reader with an unanswered question. The family is very much like characters from similar families in other books, (HERCULE POIROT'S CHRISTMAS, A POCKET FULL OF RYE, CROOKED HOUSE and others). This, coupled with the various titles this story has had over the years - WHAT MRS. MCGILLICUDDY SAW, EYEWITNESS TO MURDER and MURDER SHE SAID, could lead a reader to think they had read this one before. Do not pass this one by, it is worth reading for the delightful Lucy Eyelesbarrow alone!

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