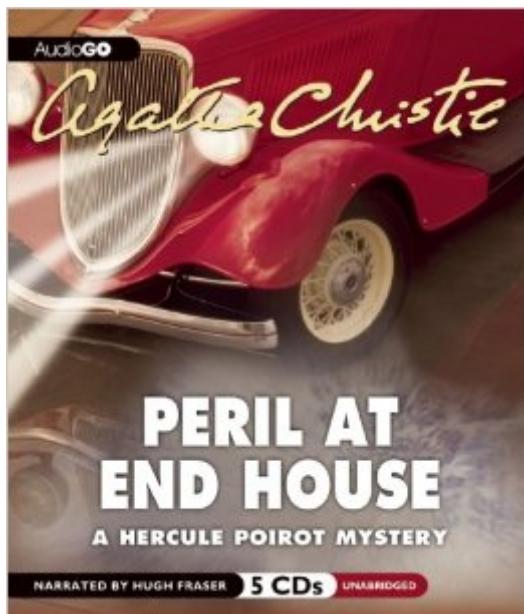


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Peril At End House: A Hercule Poirot Mystery (Hercule Poirot Mysteries)



Synopsis

Hercule Poirot's relaxing holiday on the Cornish coast takes an unexpected turn when he meets young and beautiful Nick Buckley. Though Nick tries to shrug off the bullet that barely missed her as an accident, just one more event in her recent chain of bad luck, Poirot is convinced she needs his protection. After a fatal attack, apparently aimed at Nick but gone awry, Poirot spirits her away to a nursing home for her protection. Yet even this doesn't prevent another attempt on her life, and Poirot is driven to staging a séance with Nick's friends and relatives to uncover the murderer.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This mystery is less a who-done-it than it is a who's-gonna-do-it. Attempts are being made on the life of Nicky Buckley, the pert proprietress of End House. Poirot sets out to foil the would-be murderer, but feels that he's failed miserably when Nicky's cousin dies instead. Poirot redoubles his efforts to save Nicky and to solve the cousin's murder, but he finds himself in a quandary. As Poirot fruitlessly attempts to discern a motive and discover the murderer, Nicky has another narrow escape from a poisoning attempt. Poirot finally decides that the only way to flush the murderer out is to fake Nicky's death. The denouement is both surprising and satisfying. Another nice thing about the story is the glimpse into the mind of Poirot as he sorts out the clues. In this case he does not keep his thoughts and surmises secret from Captain Hastings, and we follow him step by step as he winnows through the evidence to come to his conclusions. He does, however, hold back enough to surprise the reader in the final chapter. Now for the critique: [1] Christie either knows nothing about the

behavior of bullets or expects her readers to know nothing. Her description of the near fatal shooting of Nicky is as full of holes as Nicky's hat. Poirot took no notice of the fact that there was no noise from the report of the pistol, no noise from the ricochet of the bullet, and no scuff mark on the wall. No mention was made of the bullet being deformed by striking the wall. This is not the first time Christie has betrayed such ignorance. In the short story "Dead Man's Mirror", a bullet struck a gong without denting the gong, deforming the bullet, or depositing a lead scuff on the gong.

One of the early Poirot novels (the seventh to be exact), and once again narrated by Poirot's faithful companion Hastings, "Peril at End House" is a classic Agatha Christie mystery. In fact, it's so "classic" that it's one of the few mysteries that I managed to puzzle out before the denouement, though this in no way impinges on the reading experience (and takes my grand total of outwitting Christie up to three). Poirot and Hastings are enjoying a break at the Cornish resort of St Loo when they meet a vivacious young woman known as "Nick". Her real name is Magdala Buckley, but her nickname derives from her grandfather, who was called Old Nick on account of his devilish nature. Both men are enchanted by her, but Poirot is gravely concerned when Nick lightly tells him that she's had three near-death encounters in as many days. That very day, someone takes a shot at her and leaves a bullet hole through the brim of her hat, though Nick doesn't take it very seriously until she realizes that her gun is missing. Yet she can't think of a single reason why anyone would want to kill her, even though Poirot suspects that the constant nature of the attacks point to someone in her inner circle. Various lodgers, servants, friends and family members regularly converge on End House where Nick lives, and so Poirot asks her to send for a trusted family relation to stay with her at all times. Yet a case of mistaken identity means that Nick's cousin ends up dead, and Poirot is beside himself with guilt. Somewhere out there is a murderer who has not yet achieved his/her objective, and Nick's life still hangs in the balance - especially when it comes to light that there is a very good reason why someone would want her dead.

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