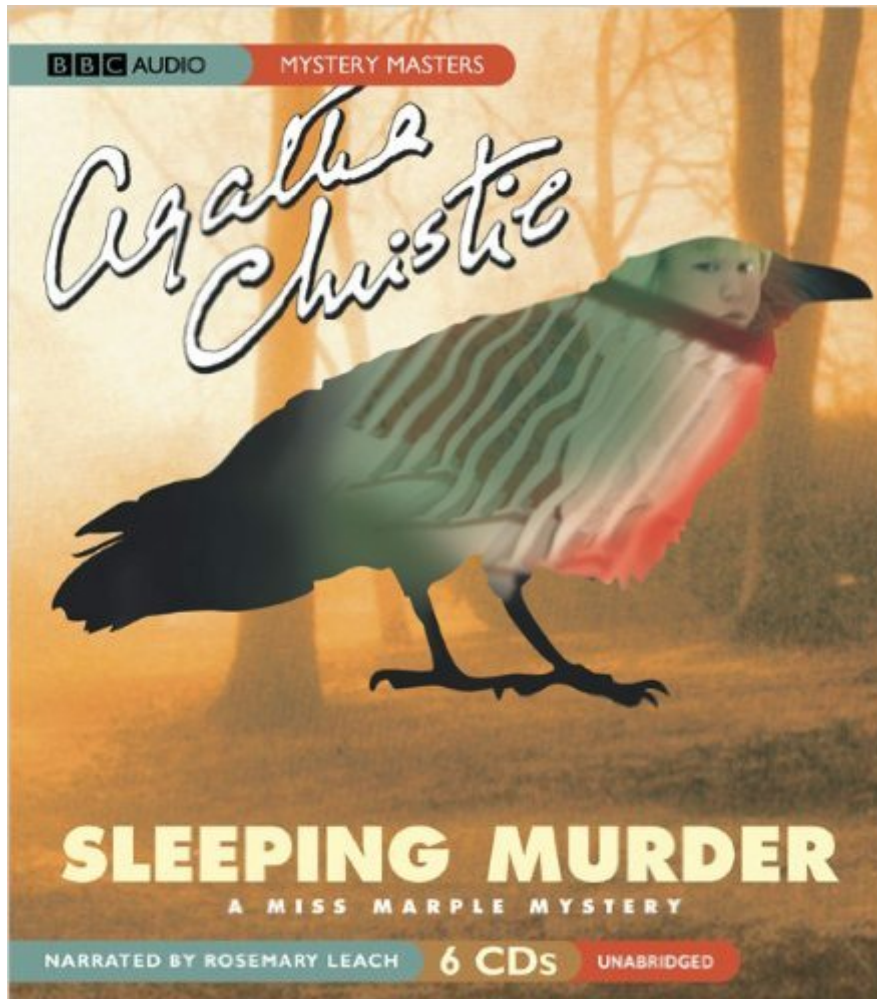


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Sleeping Murder: A Miss Marple Mystery



Synopsis

When pretty, young newlywed Gwenda Reed travels from New Zealand to England ahead of her new husband, she encounters a series of strange déjà vu's. First there's the Victorian coastal house that feels disturbingly familiar. Then a line of dialogue heard at a London play triggers a terrifying vision of a dead woman's body with the killer poised over her, sending Gwenda running in terror into the streets. Fortunately, Miss Marple is also at the theater and, curious, she pursues Gwenda. What follows is one of the intrepid investigator's most engaging cases as she ignores her own advice to Gwenda to "let sleeping murder lie."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gwenda and Giles Reed surely must be ranked as two of Agatha Christie's most endearing characters. Too bad they didn't have their own series like Tommy and Tuppence. As young newlyweds fresh from New Zealand, they come to Giles native England looking for their first home. Gwenda is immediately captivated by a Victorian villa known as Hillside, but after she moves in, strange feelings of déjà vu grip the young bride. Has she been here before? Is the house haunted? And who is the woman she can see lying strangled in the front hall? Refusing the advice of kindly Jane Marple to let sleeping murder lie, Gwenda and Giles embark on an investigation to clear up the alleged murder of Gwenda's stepmother and put to rest her eerie feelings that her own father may have been the killer. As memories of past events flash through her mind, she and her husband chase a trail of clues involving letters from abroad, a retired doctor, a former housemaid, a jilted boyfriend, and a mysteriously torn tennis net. Miss Marple is at the peak of her powers as she helps

the couple unravel the clues and see clearly what is right before them. "It really is very dangerous to believe people," she informs them. "I never have for years." But you can believe that when Miss Marple is present, the plot is thick with excitement, red herrings, and her uncanny ability to read human nature. Perhaps the best of the Miss Marple series, this is a fitting farewell to Christie's universally beloved spinster. In 1987, an excellent adaptation of this novel was filmed for TV with Joan Hickson portraying Jane Marple.

This was definitely not the first Agatha Christie book I ever read and I know it won't be the last. But it was the first one that made me realize just what a talented writer she was. All the others I had read began to run together in my mind over the years, but with this one I still remembered "who done it" YEARS later. I'll never forget! It was also the first time that the main character, Gwennie in this book, seemed like someone who could have existed outside of Agatha's head. From the moment I picked this book up, I was good and hooked. I finished it in one sitting because I had to know what was happening to Gwennie. It reminded me a little of the movie *Gaslight*. You just KNOW that there is more going on than anyone is aware of. If you've never read an Agatha Christie book before, this is the perfect place to start. If you have read her, but not this particular book, don't wait any longer. You'll never regret it.

Like many other writers, Christie went through an apprentice period during which she created the particular style we recognize as unique to her work. Novels from this early period are hit and miss--and *MURDER AT THE VICARAGE*, which introduces the famous Miss Marple, might best be described as a bit of both. *VICARAGE* offers the story of the widely unpopular Col. Protheroe, who seems determined to vex every one he encounters--including his daughter from a former marriage and his current wife, the latter of which has undertaken a liaison with a local artist. One evening the Colonel pays a call to vicarage only to find the Vicar out on a call... and while waiting is shot dead under what seem impossible circumstances. No sooner is the body discovered than people who could not possibly have committed the crime begin to confess, and the Vicar and his neighbor, the meddling Miss Marple, form a somewhat uneasy alliance to ferret out the truth. The Miss Marple of this particular novel is not the character we know from later books; although the outlines of the character are well established, she is not greatly sympathetic and she lacks the disconcerting twinkle found in such works as *THE BODY IN THE LIBRARY* and *A MURDER IS ANNOUNCED*. Moreover, the other characters, the setting, and the plot seem extremely stiff. The solution, when it comes, is also rather gimmicky in a way which Christie cannot yet make entirely plausible. I would

not recommend this particular Christie to newcomers--but I do recommend it longtime fans, who will enjoy seeing how Christie developed the character of Miss Marple and how she herself evolved as a writer, particularly since the outline of the plot is a device to which she would return with considerably greater effect in later and more substantial novels.GFT, Reviewer

"The Murder at the Vicarage" is memorable because it introduces the delightful Miss Jane Marple. With her love of gardening, binoculars for bird-watching close-at-hand, and an uncanny ability to find similarities between the present situation and her past experiences and acquaintances, Miss Marple is introduced in her home village of St. Mary Mead. We will return here many times and reacquaint ourselves with the characters introduced in this mystery---the vicar Leonard Clement and his wife Griselda, Mrs. Price Ridley, Colonel Melchett, Dr. Haydock, and others. The murder victim, Colonel Protheroe, is a hateful man disliked by everyone he had dealings with. Therefore, the list of suspects is much longer than usual. There is the victim's second wife, the visiting artist she loves, a mysterious lady with the telling name of Mrs. Lestrangle, a teenage daughter, an archaeologist, and a secretary. There are plenty of red herrings in this one and it is up to Miss Marple to reveal if the most likely suspect is also the guilty one in this cozy read for those of us who thrive on evil in small village life.

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