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The Big Four: A Hercule Poirot Mystery (Mystery Masters)



Synopsis

When a man collapses at Poirot's door, he implicates a vicious international organization called the Big Four. Left in the care of Poirot's landlady, the man dies, and the dapper sleuth realizes this crime may be a deadly diversion. Poirot and his pal Captain Hastings are soon plunged into a complex case full of deception as they themselves dodge death. But do they really avoid the Grim Reaper? Hastings isn't sure when he's invited to Poirot's funeral. Reader Hugh Fraser captures Christie's "cozy mystery" world with his usual panache. This is the 24th title in the Agatha Christie Mystery Masters series, deemed the Best Mystery Series of the 20th Century at Bouchercon, the world's largest mystery convention (held annually). Eccentric and fastidious, egocentric and precise, the little Belgian detective with his sparkling eyes and carefully waxed moustache looks, to the uninitiated, ridiculous. Yet he is one of the most popular characters in all of literature Plump, barely over five feet, four inches tall, the vain Poirot is nevertheless eternally dignified, and always wears formal clothes, down to gleaming white spats and up to his jaunty bowler. He solves murders using, as he insists, nothing but his little grey cells.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Since there is no way to rate this novel at 2.5 stars, I will give it the benefit of the doubt with 3. This is almost certainly the worst of the Hercule Poirot novels and the only thing that redeems it at all is the familiarity and affection fans have for the little Belgian and his stalwart companion, Captain Hastings. I have no idea what Dame Agatha was thinking when she got the notion to write what is

essentially a pulp fiction book in an intentionally shallow style, replete with international criminal masterminds bent on world conquest, 'yellow peril' characteristics, infernal machines, heroes being routinely gassed and knocked on the head and the old saw, "the twins". If Christie did this 'tongue-in-cheek', it is a pretty small tongue in a very large cheek. It really does not work at all and is much of a drag to read. (Again, 3 stars for fans of Poirot, because one cannot get enough of his little grey cells). What we have here actually appear to be nine mediocre stories that Christie probably had notes on that she strung together as a Poirot novel because of his increasing popularity by 1927 (the date of the original publication of THE BIG FOUR). What holds the stories together is the concept of the Big Four, a group of sinister, wealthy and unscrupulous 'super-criminals' behind every act, action, intrigue, war, theft and jay-walking that occurs world-wide. Poirot gets a whiff of them and determines that only he can bring the nefarious quartet to heel. There are flaws aplenty in 211 pages, including the fact that these "masterminds" cannot make up their (master)minds whether to kill Poirot and Hastings, just threaten them or simply try to annoy them enough to give up the case.

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