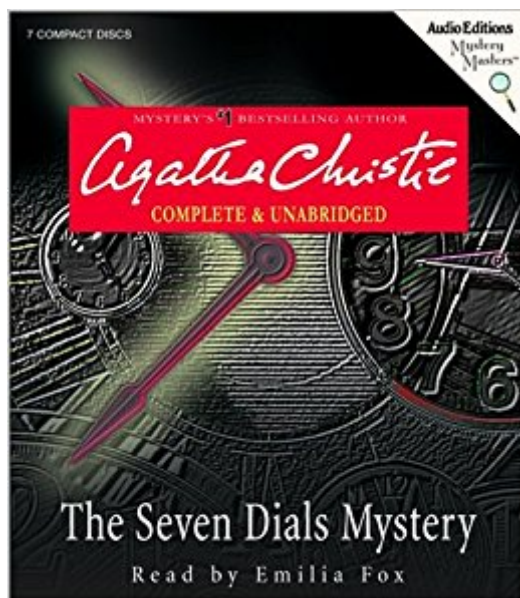


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The Seven Dials Mystery (Mystery Masters)



Synopsis

At the home of Lord Caterham and his daughter, Lady Eileen Brent (aka Bundle), Sir Oswald and Lady Maria Coote throw a party for some weekend guests. But the young guests play a practical joke on someone who turns up murdered the following morning. It's up to Bundle and her friends to solve the case, which only gets worse with the appearance of a second corpse. The trail of bodies leads to the mysterious Seven Dials Club. Actress Emilia Fox's exciting reading brings Christie's vivid mystery, first published in 1929, to scintillating life. Read by Emilia Fox.

Book Information

Series: Mystery Masters

Audio CD

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Customer Reviews

Something of a pseudo-sequel to *The Secret of Chimneys*, only in the sense that it is set in the same location and features a few of the same characters, "The Seven Dials Mystery" is less of a mystery than it is an espionage thriller, reminiscent of Christie's *Tommy & Tuppence* books. And yet despite containing all the ingredients of a typical 1920s thriller (including secret societies and international documents) "The Seven Dials Mystery" ends up being more of a parody of the genre, with plenty of pokes and winks at the use of its various clichés. There's also fun to be had at the expense of the aristocracy, such as the egocentric Lord Caterham and the foolish George Lomax, and the nouveau riche, in the form of the woebegone Lady Coote, whose husband has risen up in the world, but who is bullied by the servants and secretly longs for the old bicycle shop that she shared with her husband when they first married. When contemplating Agatha Christie, many can forget just how wickedly satirical she could be, and that aspect of her writing is in fine form

throughout "The Seven Dials Mystery." At a gathering at the historical mansion of Chimneys, a group of young men and women decide to play a joke on their friend who is prone to oversleeping. Buying eight alarm clocks in the village, they wait until he's asleep and carefully arrange them in his room, timed to go off simultaneously in the morning.

At the start of my version of Agatha Christie's "The Seven Dials Mystery," there's an Introduction that talks about how Christie wrote this book as a farce that makes fun of the thriller/mystery genre of the time. I suppose what that Introduction is saying is true. But, it really doesn't help me accept the book. Yes, Christie is sticking her tongue out at the genre with this book. But, reading it feels like watching a Scooby Doo cartoon complete with meddling kids (well, I'm guessing they're actually in their mid- to late-20s -- but their behavior is certainly childish). The humorous aspect of a farce is almost entirely absent and is overridden with the ridiculous aspect. The utter stupidity of the protagonists and the things they do is just unacceptable. Many were the times that I was sorely tempted to put the book down incomplete. But, I persevered and got through the twist ending that made what had just happened make sense. Still, that ending doesn't counteract the ridiculousness of the earlier 98% of the book. Plus, the ending Christie provides is of a type without evidence. It's merely someone in the know explaining what "really" happened. The "answer" to the mystery could just as validly be one of several obvious alternatives that we go through in our own minds on the way to the end (very much like the alternative endings to the "Clue" movie). There's no process of discovery that we go through so we can make an attempt to figure things out on our own. Instead, we're just provided with an answer. I think my biggest complaint, though, is that in order to preserve her surprise, Christie puts us in the heads of several characters but, essentially, lies to us about what we find while we're in there. Because of this, I can only rate the book at an OK 3 stars out of 5.

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