



Cards on the Table

Agatha Christie

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It was the match-up of the century: four sleuths--Superintendent Battle of Scotland Yard; Mrs. Ariadne Oliver, famed writer of detective stories; Col. Race of His Majesty's Secret Service; and the incomparable Hercule Poirot - invited to play bridge with four specially invited guests, each of whom had gotten away with murder! But before the first rubber was completed, the host was dead.

Cards on the Table Details

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Author : Agatha Christie

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From Reader Review Cards on the Table for online ebook

Sophie Hannah says

Very good, focused novel, with only four suspects. I'd have enjoyed it more if I had the first clue how to play bridge! Not one of my favourite Christies, but still hugely entertaining. Loved Poirot's insistence that he could only solve the murder once he'd found out the bridge-playing technique of each suspect!

Jokoloyo says

It is not a proper review. I admit that I forgot the story.

So far, this is the only Agatha Christie's story that I could guessed the villain correctly, based on the Bridge plays. (It's hardly a spoiler clue, Poirot always asking the Bridge plays that happened at the murder scene in the story. A little experience in playing Bridge would help).

Too bad I borrowed this book from my college friend, and until now I have no chance to re-read it again. I forget who done it. it should be fun re-discovering the villain again if I could re-read it (assuming my current Bridge skill is as sharp as at my college period. LOL)

David Schaafsma says

Cards on the Table Poirot #15

“Real life’s a bit different,” said [Scotland Yard Superintendent} Battle.

“I know,” said [mystery novelist] Mrs. Oliver. “Badly constructed. . . . I could make a better murder any day than anything real. I’m never at a loss for a plot.”

Not a household name, Cards on the Table, yet it has things to recommend it, and of interest about it. First, it involves a—first time--introduction by “Agatha Chriistie,” speaking for Hercule Poirot as a “real person,” whose case we will read as one of his favorites. The core of this case is the murder of a mysterious “foreign” (always exoticizing the other, this Christie) snuff box collector, a Mr. Shaitana who organizes a bridge party to exhibit yet another “collection”—of murderers--(four people he knows who have committed murderers and gotten away with it. Shaitana also invites Scotland Yard Superintendent Battle, Colonel Race of the Secret Service, Ariadne Oliver, a famed mystery novelist, and Hercule Poirot, a semi-retired Belgian detective.

*Poirot: “It is impossible not to give oneself away—unless one never opens one’s mouth! Speech is the deadliest of revealers.”

The presumption is that between the four of these latter types we will see who is the best sleuth, and though we already know the answer to this one, the four actually work together pretty well. Battle in particular is a more than able participant in the solution to the crime, not a joke like Hastings, and I like this arrangement better. It's less insulting to the Scotland Yard. That the mystery novelist is in the hunt is a kind of joke Christie plays on herself in a homey, self-deprecating way. She's the comic relief in the story, and sort of a

star of the show, a really memorable character.

Shaitana is killed with a knife during the bridge game, so it is clear one of the others have done him in. Poirot's primarily psychological analysis (the mind at times can see more clearly than the heart) focuses on bridge moves, the extent to which each suspect recalls items in the room, and the past—did the suspects actually kill someone, and if so, how? People reveal who they are to Poirot, and they rarely surprise him, finally, after he figures them out. Logic rules. You will not figure this one out, but if you want to stay close to a solution, pay attention to watch Poirot pays attention to, and largely ignore the rest. The rest isn't boring, but it is a fair number of pages you know are not completely relevant, of course, but necessary detective work.

One feature of this one is that a confession takes place roughly fifty pages from the end (250 pages into it), a confession I completely buy, but that is just the beginning of a series of crazy surprises and pretty ingenious reversals. This is a pretty average Christie tale, for the most part, but the way it turns out reveals that “average” for Christie is spectacular for most mystery writers. I might nitpick that it goes on a bit long as they will sometimes do, but in the end, *mais oui!*

Some interesting features:

*Shaitana is referred to as Mephistophelean by several characters, with his flair for the dramatic.

*As is often the case characters are racist about Jews, but here “Dagos” are in for their share of abuse.

*But white men? Colonel Race dismisses Major Despard of suspicion: “He’s a white man, Battle.”

“Incapable of murder, you mean?” “Incapable of what I’d call murder, yes.” {by which he means justifiable homicide isn’t murder, and white men usually have perfectly good reasons for killing people.”] !!!

Writer Oliver, at the (apparent) moment of Poirot’s revelation of the murderer: “Least likely person! It seems to work out in real life just the same as in books. . .” and later, when she sees it is now someone else, she says, quite untruthfully, “I always said he did it!”

Fun times, 3.5, rounded up to 4 for the last fifty pages, for the puzzle-maker non pareil. Funny and head-shakingly clever. And I had never even heard of this one!

Arybo ? says

Stile: impeccabile.

Trama: Sembra facile, ma non lo è.

Ho ADORATO la signora Oliver. Il suo personaggio ha dato la possibilità di inserire contenuti metaletterari e riferimenti alla letteratura poliziesca in generale.

I

Non riuscirò mai a capire il bridge, ma mischiare le mosse della partita ai movimenti dei personaggi è stato geniale.

Shobhit Sharad says

I would have given this book four stars if only the end wasn't so rushed. I've always commended Agatha Christie's ability to create unique and innovative cases, and admire her approach via psychology. This was even better in this book, because physical clues were almost next to nothing.

Also, I liked how the official person involved, Superintendent Battle, was not a dim-wit or a lousy person, but actually contributed to the case. I loved Mrs. Oliver and she was written like what I imagine Agatha Christie herself was.

Mari?ina says

Cards on the Table, is my very first Agatha Christie novel and surely i made a fine choice, because the writing is excellent, the psychological games exquisite and i couldn't get enough of the tiny details and clues that were hiding in every page.

Actually, crime-mystery isn't my favorite book genre, but i love the TV-series of that kind. I've seen so many different shows that now my eye is trained enough to find the killer almost immediately. That didn't happen though in this book. I only ruled out one person but the other three kept me guessing till the last moment.

While the story unraveled and it got bigger, i couldn't keep my excitement in check. I just had to know, so i kept reading and reading for three straight hours and i was rewarded with a brilliant, classic mystery and a big surprise in the end.

All in all i'm really glad that i tapped even just a little bit into this genre and i'm sure i will do it again. Agatha Christie is a marvelous author, a true expert in weaving and exploring personalities, motives and detailed psychological profiles for her characters and surely the best one for a novice like me.

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE BOOK

- The physical clues are almost non-existent.
- It's mostly psychological in a sort of a mind game way.
- From what i gather by a self-proclaimed aficionado -yes Mom, i'm talking about you- **Cards on the Table** is definitely a must-read.
- When you take a look back at all the clues, there is only one of the suspects who could have done it. But you might miss it while reading it the first time.
- A great book to play detective.
- I was very intrigued by the story and around the 60% mark i battled with myself hard because i was almost ready to go read the ending. Thank God i didn't do it.
- Highly detailed.

Alaina Meserole says

Card on the Table was a really fun and interesting read. It starts with Shaitana having a dinner party, where he invites 4 detectives and 4 suspected murderers. One of the detectives is obviously Poirot which means that there is going to be a murder. I mean, death seems to follow this guy all the god damn time - so of course when the host of this dinner party is found dead I wasn't really shocked.

I, of course, ate this book up. I didn't even want to figure out who the murderer was until Poirot did. I really liked how Poirot worked this case with the other detectives but then he was the one who figured out who had done the dead in the end.

Christie of course tries to throw some details that would make you think it could have been one suspect or another - but ha! you didn't get me this time! Nor did you get Poirot. However, I'm not going to tell you who killed Shaitana because that would spoil all of the fun of you reading and finding out for yourself.

Overall, it was a very enjoyable read and I can totally see myself rereading this book again.

Ivonne Rovira says

I'm so torn on this book. On the one hand, how often can you say that you have four — yes, four! — of Dame Agatha Christie's sleuths in one book? On the other hand, the task they take on turns out to be a bit thin — at least at first.

A cruel globetrotter and art collector named Mr. Shaitana gathers eight people for a party. In hindsight, it turns out that he has invited four sleuths — no less than Hercule Poirot, ditzy mystery writer Ariadne Oliver; Scotland Yard's finest, Inspector Battle, and spy/troubleshooter for the Empire, Colonel Race. Shaitana has also gathered four people he believed to be people who had gotten away with murder. One of them commits yet another murder, poisoning Shaitana with a shirt stud. (Yes, I had to look it up, too.) That means that Shaitana's murderer has to be bridge wizard Mrs. Lorimer, successful Dr. Roberts, big-game hunter Major Despard, or pretty sweet young thing Anne Meredith.

Dame Agatha had a bee in her bonnet about being able to detect a murderer based on the psychological profiles of the various suspects, and she explores that idea in this 1936 novel. Perhaps, in this day of FBI profilers, other readers will think Dame Agatha was ahead of her time; however, to me, it seems like a faddish idea like eugenics or John Harvey Kellogg's crackpot health regimen that seem crazy a century later. I was all ready to slap a three-star (maybe even two-star) review on *Cards on the Table* and rank it second only to The Big Four in awfulness.

But — curse you, Dame Agatha! — two-thirds of the way in, she deviates from this crackpottery and delivers enough twists and turns for a rollercoaster. She really knows how to surprise and beguile her readers. So I'll ignore the tediousness of the middle of this novel and award four stars to the grand dame of the Golden Age, who managed to rescue and elevate this novel.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

Cards on the table (Hercule Poirot #15), Agatha Christie

Vikas Singh says

The idea is brilliant. The beginning is quite orthodox. Also this is unique novel because all four of Christie's creations- Ariadne Oliver, Col Race, Poirot and Superintendent Battle join hands to solve the murder. There is reference to a book Body in the library which Agatha later used for Miss Marple mystery. The plot is unique and investigation depends more on the psychological profiling than any other solid clue. From the beginning we know that the murderer is from among the four suspects and yet there is no clear clue. Interesting read

Rania Alessa says

Richard Derus says

Rating: 4* of five

The Publisher Says: It was the match-up of the century: four sleuths--Superintendent Battle of Scotland Yard; Mrs. Ariadne Oliver, famed writer of detective stories; Col. Race of His Majesty's Secret Service; and the incomparable Hercule Poirot - invited to play bridge with four specially invited guests, each of whom had gotten away with murder! But before the first rubber was completed, the host was dead.

My Review: This review is of Christie's novel and the tenth-season film adaptation for *Agatha Christie's Poirot*. They earn the same rating.

One of the ways couples reinforce their pair bond is shared entertainment. My Gentleman Caller and I read a lot; I'm a big mystery fan, where he is less interested in the genre. We both enjoy mystery movies a good deal, though, and the *Poirot* series especially. Through the amazing and wonderful Internet, we can watch episodes together, discussing them in real time, or just canoodling in cyberspace. I think I'd go bonkers if I didn't have my fix of looking at his face this way.

So this evening we watched two of the movies. First up was this very entertaining adaptation of Christie's novel of psychology. Ariadne Oliver, an author surrogate character for Mrs. Christie herself, makes her first filmed and literary appearance here. Zoë Wanamaker is a wonderful choice to play Mrs. Oliver, being husky-voiced and of a distinctive and memorable appearance. It's one of the pleasures of the films that the actors cast in Christie's roles are uniformly excellent craftspeople, and Wanamaker is no exception.

In watching this adaptation, I felt a wee bit seasick. All the roles were there, just as in the book; but they had different names, unrecognizable motives, and switched-up personae. Colonel Race, a recurring Christie character, is called something else although it's only his name that's different. Rhoda and Anne completely switch purposes, though I have no earthly notion why. The motivation for the central murder is *completely* unrecognizable. It would, in fact, have been impossible for Christie to write it in 1935 and get the book published. The Superintendent is renamed and good gracious me how he is changed up! I mean to tell you, Ma Christie would likely be apoplectic over this particular bit of modification.

The victim, Mr. Shaitana, is portrayed by Alexander Siddig, who enacted the role of Doctor Bashir on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* about twenty years ago. I hadn't recalled that the man was so very tall and so very lean. As Shaitana, a furriner and an ethnic in racist 1930s London, he (Siddig) is perfectly chosen: He looks exotic and strange, skin of brown and eyes of green and wardrobe chosen to exaggerate the actor's dramatic silhouette. Mrs. Oliver as a stand-in for Christie herself comments on his foreignness by saying he "gives {her} the jitters." Really. Yech.

The mundane murder motive in the novel is considerably spicier in the film, and actually more fun for this modern audience of two. The book presents a more complete Christieverse experience, drawing the four sleuths and one suspect from the well she reused freely. Each decision has its advantages; on the whole, I can't say that one of the media is preferable to the other. I, and certainly my Gentleman Caller, don't subscribe to the Purity Test for films. The source material will always be altered to suit the demands of the medium. That's the way it works, and more often than not has to; not infrequently the adapted film is superior to the source material, if rabid ardent nut-level fans would simply see it. (And of course there are reverse cases by the scores, it's not a one-way street by any means.)

This film, substantially altered from an excellent novel, finds a different and equal excellence. The spirit of the story is intact, and is well served by the changes made for film. And as always, the role of Poirot is complete and entire in David Suchet's hands. And mincing feet. And waxed mustache. The story, either medium, is delicious and savory and a treat not to be denied oneself.

The BBC radio drama is excellent as well.

Nhi Nguy?n says

Ôi tr?i, ôi tr?i ?i. C? t??ng k? gi?t ng??i ?ã ???c t?m ra r?i ch?, ai ng? kh?c cu?i ông thám t? d? th??ng vui t?nh ng??i B? Hercule Poirot tung m?t "qu?" ngo?n m?c b?t ng?, l?m h?t h?n lu?n. Th? m?i bi?t, ??ng c? ?ùa v?i Poirot v? Dame Agatha Christie :D

Lady Clementina ffinch-ffarrowmore says

Hercule Poirot is invited to dinner. When he arrives, he finds there are eight guests, four, people new to him but the others, himself included, are connected with the world of crime detection in one or the other way?Superintendent Battle of Scotland Yard, Col. Race (connected with the Secret Service), and Ariadne Oliver, author of detective fiction. Their host is Mr Shaitana (the word “shaitan” roughly translates to devil/satan or evil), a man who takes pleasure in the power he holds over others with the secrets he knows about them or even manages to worm out of them. Mr Shaitana has told Poirot something that none of the other guests know?that among them that night is a murderer, perhaps more than one. After dinner when the guests devote their attention to bridge (two tables in separate rooms have been set up?one of the detectives and one for the others), Mr Shaitana finds he may have overbid in real life, and is found with a dagger in him in the room in which the “murderers” or supposed murderers were playing their game. All four did leave the table at one or the other point in the game but there was no sound or other sign to indicate when the crime took place. All the detectives begin to look into the matter, Battle handling the official investigation of course, but we essentially follow Battle, Mrs Oliver, and Poirot. Col. Race operates off-screen so to speak and only contributes a little to the investigation. They look into the backgrounds and movements of the four suspects, and each of them it seems has much to hide, things in their past they’d much rather no one knew about. This made for a pretty exciting mystery with plenty of revelations and uncovering of secrets, right up to the denouement, where it is Poirot who solves the case, but not before another surprise twist just when you think you have the answer.

This was an interesting read both in terms of the mystery itself (I certainly didn’t guess whodunit), and the investigation?one can see the contrasts in the methods the three detectives use, Battle his more conventional skills of investigation, Mrs Oliver, her intuition, and Poirot, his grey cells. Well, aside from his grey cells, he uses ordinary conversation, about things other than the murder, the bridge games played, the suspects’ observational skills, etc. to elicit information as to their characters and find the answer. Battle, Mrs Oliver, and Col. Race are of course characters we run into in Christie’s other books as well, and it is nice seeing them work together in this one. In Mrs Oliver, AC pokes a bit of fun at herself and at the process of writing a detective novel?creating a detective from a country she knows little of (in Mrs O’s case the Finn Sven Hjerson), throwing in an additional murder or two to lengthen a book, and the process of coming up with a plot?one can see the work that goes into it of course, but I enjoyed the humour that she injected into it. (Incidentally, in this book Poirot barely knows Mrs O., while in subsequent ones, she actively seeks his help in solving cases and appears in some on her own as well.) People who play bridge would enjoy the details of the game much more than I (complete ignoramus as far as this goes) did but the lack of knowledge doesn’t come in the way of enjoying the mystery. Another minor issue I thought was the backstory of one of the characters which seemed to be told to us a little abruptly towards the end rather than coming out through investigation like in the case of the others?again, nothing that spoils the story but would have added another

layer of complexity. But a very good read nonetheless.

Erin ? *Proud Book Hoarder* says

I'm done! It feels like I am finishing books up so slowly lately - June wasn't a strong reading month.

Thanks to Hercule Poirot, it ended well - the Belgian detective dominates the story from start to finish. That may sound like it's something needless to say, but Agatha Christie did tend to have some Poirot books where the beloved detective didn't even show up until the second half or toward the end. In this case we open up with him at a party and end with him entertaining survivors.

The story was fascinating. While it wasn't her strongest mystery, who cares because I loved the general concept. Poirot was invited along with three other detectives of sorts (one mystery novelists, a Scotland Yard Detective, etc) to have dinner with four murderers who had gotten away with it. When the party host is found dead in front of all the guests, they had four suspects.

Blending the past murders with the present was interesting enough, but it was the time Christie took to dig into various motivations and personality traits that was the actual winner here. Sometimes her story takes so much focus that characters play mere backdrop counterparts, but in this case the paper people are individually drawn and convincingly motivated.

It may not be the most exciting in her library, but so far it's one of my many favorites. The story speeds by and it stays intriguing from start to finish. The ending line was just hilarious too - have to love the people who dare to tease the detective.

Carlo says

Unlike other Christie stories, at the beginning of *Cards on the Table*, we only have four suspects. I believe this is one of Christie's best works and even of the genre, since analyzing motives and studying personalities is one of the best things about detective fiction, and the book is packed with that. Christie tells us in the introduction that this case is Poirot's favorite, and of course that's no surprise.

However, the book is embedded with a huge amount of details which can be a bit overwhelming for some readers. But, I believe this is inevitable since the novel is purely psychological. At the end, you will realize that one of the four suspects only could have committed the crime the way it was committed. His or Her character can be seen in every detail of the crime. Definitely a Goodreads!

Melindam says

It is one of the great, classic Agatha Christie mysteries.

We have 4 suspects (who allegedly all successfully got away with a former murder), all of whom could have committed the crime. And we have 4 "cops": Hercule Poirot, Superintendent Battle, Colonel Race and Mrs Ariadne Oliver (alterego of AC herself).

It is a very enjoyable book and I like to think that Agatha Christie had fun writing it as there is no small amount of self-mockery & criticism possibly against her critics included.

Nandakishore Varma says

Mr. Shaitana collects murderers who have committed the act and gotten away with it. So as a challenge to Poirot, he puts four of them around a table to play bridge: on another table are seated Poirot, Mrs. Oliver the mystery writer, Colonel Race and Superintendent Battle. However, the cat-and-mouse game goes very badly for Shaitana as he gets murdered during the evening.

I don't know bridge (it is somewhat similar to 56, which we used to play in college), but I know the basics - the key factor here is that during a hand, one player becomes "the dummy" whose hand is exposed and who cannot take part. During the evening, each of the four "murderers" have been dummies, leaving them free to walk around do the act.

Now Poirot must dig into the past of each of the four suspects to come up with the solution.

The beauty of this story is the very narrow field of suspects. As the story progresses, we are forced to shift our suspicion from the one to the other. Of course, in a such story the murderer cannot be totally unexpected - but the suspense is just exquisite.

Phrynne says

This was one of the best Agatha Christie books I have yet read. Nine people at a bridge game, one murdered, four suspects and four above suspicion who investigate. I have to admit I picked the wrong person as the murderer and Christie gave me quite a surprise at the end. I liked that though because the clues had all been there and I was just not detective enough to pick up on them. Another career that is not for me!

Lindley Walter-smith says

Agatha Christie is sometimes severely underrated as both an observational writer and as a comedian. She's rarely underrated, though, for the perfection of her puzzles. *Cards on the Table* is one of my all-time favourite Christie novels, because in this one all three strengths shine.

The setup is delicious - four successful murderers playing bridge at one table, four famous detectives at another. At some point in the evening, while being dummy, one of the murderers wanders over and kills the ninth person in the room.

Detective-wise, Colonel Race is the odd-one-out here - I always quite like Race, but he seems put in here to make up the bridge table, so to speak, and doesn't have much chance to shine when luminaries like Poirot,

Inspector Battle and Mrs Adriadne Oliver are there.

In many ways, this is Mrs Oliver's book. She is the best, most self-deprecating and hilarious self-insert in all detective novels, the polar opposite of Dorothy L. Sayer's self-aggrandizing and humourless Harriet Vane, and she steals the show over and over. I still giggle out loud over her. But Battle, too, is magnificent - and Poirot is always Poirot.

My only quibble is that I don't think this particular solution would hold up in court, unless they had no laws against entrapment in those days. But for sheer enjoyment value and char, and devilish misleading of the reader, this books really sums up why I have a love for Christie that no other detective write will ever match.
