

# The Monogram Murders: A New Hercule Poirot Mystery

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"I'm a dead woman, or I shall be soon . . ."

Hercule Poirot's quiet supper in a London coffeehouse is interrupted when a young woman confides to him that she is about to be murdered. Though terrified, she begs Poirot not to find and punish her killer. Once she is dead, she insists, justice will have been done. Later that night, Poirot learns that three guests at a London Hotel have been murdered, and a monogrammed cufflink has been placed in each one's mouth. Could there be a connection with the frightened woman? While Poirot struggles to put together the bizarre pieces of the puzzle, the murderer prepares another hotel bedroom for a fourth victim.

S.J. Watson Interviews Sophie Hannah

S.J. Watson is the New York Times bestselling author of *Before I Go to Sleep*.

SJ

: In *The Monogram Murders*, you channeled the voice of the legendary Hercule Poirot. How was writing a longstanding character invented by someone else different from writing your own?

Sophie

: Not as different as you might think. I know Poirot so well, from reading all the Christie Poirot novels lots of times. In a way, writing this book felt similar to writing about a real person I was very familiar with. It was a bit like writing an episode in the biography of someone I greatly admire.

SJ

: What is your all-time favorite Agatha Christie mystery?

Sophie

: That's a tough one. Currently, *Sparkling Cyanide* - so clever and surprising - but I change my mind all the time. My favorite Poirot novel is *After The Funeral*.

SJ

: What kind of research did you do prior to sitting down and writing *The Monogram Murders*?

Sophie

: I reread all the Christie Poirots, and I booked a week's holiday at Greenway, Agatha Christie's former holiday home in Devon. I hoped that inspiration would strike if I went there, and it did. On the first night there, I propped myself up in bed with my laptop, about five metres away from an enormous portrait of Agatha, and starting putting together my plot. By the time I left at the end of the week, I had the whole story in my mind and on my

computer - every last detail. If I were a superstitious person, I would say that Agatha helped me...but of course I'm far too sensible and rational to suggest that! (Or am I?)

SJ

: What do you think are some of the quintessential traits of an Agatha Christie mystery? Did you try to incorporate any into The Monogram Murders?

Sophie

: I tried to incorporate what I think of as all the crucial ingredients of a Christie/Poirot novel: a gleeful delight in storytelling; an outlandish/apparently impossible opening scenario that is later revealed to be eminently possible; the perfect combination of ease and pleasure for the reader with a challenging intellectual puzzle; a profound intelligence that at no point makes the reader feel stupid or condescended to; the centrality of motive and psychology; the combination of a light/feel-good experience for readers with a sophisticated awareness of the dark depravity of human beings. Christie, more than any other crime writer, is able to include polar opposites in her novels - light-dark, easy-difficult - without either ever detracting from the other.

SJ

: Do you think Agatha Christie would have been pleased with The Monogram Murders?

Sophie

: I can't speak for her. I fervently hope so! Wherever she is, I hope she's pleased!

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Later that night, Poirot learns that three guests at a fashionable London Hotel have been murdered, and a cufflink has been placed in each one's mouth. Could there be a connection with the frightened woman? While Poirot struggles to put together the bizarre pieces of the puzzle, the murderer prepares another hotel bedroom for a fourth victim...

### Other Books

Hurting Distance, A psychological thriller from the New York Times-bestselling author: "No one writes twisted, suspenseful novels quite like Sophie Hannah" (Liane Moriarty). Naomi Jenkins, a successful professional woman prone to panic attacks, has a terrible secret she's been keeping for three years. Also secret is Naomi's current relationship with Robert Haworth, who is married, albeit unhappily. When Robert doesn't show up for one of their trysts, Naomi fears for him—but the police don't take it seriously, since Robert's wife claims he isn't missing. Naomi is desperate, and comes up with a plan: If she convinces the police that Robert is a danger to others, they will have to track him down. Using details from her own troubled past, she spins a story for them—but twists and turns lie ahead that she never expected. "Naomi's concern for her married lover's well-being grows when his wife insists he is fine, just away. Naomi uses the story of a rape from her past to get the police to sit up and take notice. What makes this novel work so well is that more than one character has a bit of a screw loose—even the detectives on the case are grappling with some crippling personal issues—and it takes the full ride of the novel to find out who is playing whom." —Time Out

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