

Book of the Week

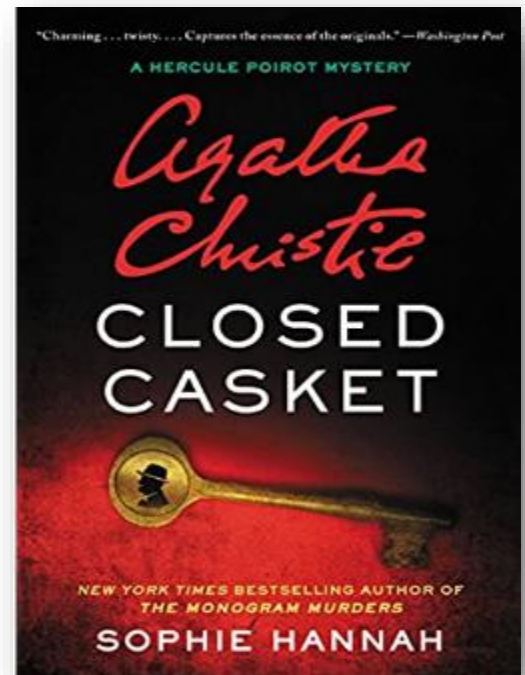
***Agatha Christie Closed Casket* by Sophie Hannah**

Book Review by Sherrie Welch

First, I will make a confession: I love mysteries, and Agatha Christie is one of my favorite mystery writers. So when I saw that one of the monthly offerings from Kindle books was described as a new Hercule Poirot mystery, how could I resist another adventure with that super sleuth with the egg-shaped head, mincing walk, magnificently large mustache and even larger ego, and those wonderful "little gray cells" that can solve any mystery placed before him?

This story includes several of Christie's trademark elements. One of those elements is the setting: It is 1929 at Lillieoak, an isolated stately manor on 800 acres in County Cork, Ireland, home of widowed viscountess Lady Athelinda Playford, a successful writer of children's detective stories; her daughter Claudia, engaged to be married to Randall Kimpton, a wealthy pathologist who works with the police department in London and is visiting Claudia; her son Harry, who would have assumed the position of the next Viscount Playford if not for a provision in his late father's will leaving the entire estate to Lady Playford; Harry's wife Dorothy; and a house staff including Joseph Scotcher, Lady Playford's secretary who is described as being seriously ill with only weeks to live; Sophie Bourlet, Scotcher's private nurse; and a cook, maid, and butler. Lady Playford has invited her estate attorneys for a visit, as well as Edward Catchpool, a Scotland Yard detective who acts as our narrator and Hercule Poirot, a detective of great renown and old friend of Catchpool.

As the story opens the reader learns that Lady Playford has decided to change her will to leave her entire estate to her secretary and make attorney Michael Gathercole her literary executor, thus disinheriting her children. She has told no one of her decision except Gathercole, who opposes the change, but is powerless to stop it. She announces her decision that night at dinner, and Scotcher is



found dead a few hours later by his nurse, who insists she saw Claudia killing him with the souvenir club laying next to his body.

But did she? The investigation begins, with Poirot and Catchpool working together to discover the killer despite, instead of with the local authorities. Throw in backstories for several of the characters to better tie the plot together and Shakespeare references from *King John*, and you have your mystery to solve. What does the title of the story mean? Can the reader determine the killer's identity before the last Christie element, the final gathering of the suspects and revelations of means, motive, and opportunity by Poirot? All I can add is good luck!

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