



*Agatha  
Christie*

**MASTERPIECES  
IN MINIATURE**

---

**THE HOUSE OF  
LURKING  
DEATH**

---

**TOMMY &  
TUPPENCE**

**Agatha Christie**  
**The House of Lurking Death:**  
**An Agatha Christie Short Story**

**Аннотация**

A classic Agatha Christie short story, available individually for the first time as an ebook. Throwing on an almost convincing French accent, Tommy is determined to be the great Hanaud to his and Tuppence's latest, rather lovely client. Miss Hargreaves has recently received a box of chocolates from nobody knows who, and due to her dislike of the treat was the only one to not fall foul of the arsenic spiked treats. But, Miss Hargreaves is not the first recipient of such a gift; three other large country houses have received arsenic laced chocolates. But Miss Hargreaves is holding something back, and it will take Tommy and Tuppence to take up residence at the old house to discover the true culprit, but will they find out the truth in time?

# The House of Lurking Death

A Short Story

by Agatha Christie



HarperCollins*Publishers*

Copyright

Published by HarperCollins*Publishers* Ltd 1 London Bridge Street London SE1 9GF [www.harpercollins.co.uk](http://www.harpercollins.co.uk)

Copyright © 2011 Agatha Christie Ltd.

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the nonexclusive, nontransferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse-engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of HarperCollins e-books.

EPub Edition © 2011 ISBN: 9780007452095

Version: 2017-04-18

Contents

[Cover](#)

[Title Page](#)

Copyright

The House of Lurking Death

[Related Products](#)

[About the Publisher](#)

The House of Lurking Death

‘The House of Lurking Death’ was first published in The Sketch, 5 November 1924. Inspector Hanaud was created by A. E. W. Mason (1865–1948).

‘What –’ began Tuppence, and then stopped.

She had just entered the private office of Mr Blunt from the adjoining one marked ‘Clerks,’ and was surprised to behold her lord and master with his eye riveted to the private peep-hole into the outer office.

‘Ssh,’ said Tommy warningly. ‘Didn’t you hear the buzzer? It’s a girl – rather a nice girl – in fact she looks to me a frightfully nice girl. Albert is telling her all that tosh about my being engaged with Scotland Yard.’

‘Let *me* see,’ demanded Tuppence.

Somewhat unwillingly, Tommy moved aside. Tuppence in her turn glued her eye to the peep-hole.

‘She’s not bad,’ admitted Tuppence. ‘And her clothes are simply the latest shout.’

‘She’s perfectly lovely,’ said Tommy. ‘She’s like those girls Mason writes about – you know, frightfully sympathetic, and beautiful, and distinctly intelligent without being too saucy. I

think, yes – I certainly think – I shall be the great Hanaud this morning.’

‘H’m,’ said Tuppence. ‘If there is one detective out of all the others whom you are most unlike – I should say it was Hanaud. Can you do the lightning changes of personality? Can you be the great comedian, the little gutter boy, the serious and sympathetic friend – all in five minutes?’

‘I know this,’ said Tommy, rapping sharply on the desk, ‘I am the Captain of the Ship – and don’t you forget it, Tuppence. I’m going to have her in.’

He pressed the buzzer on his desk. Albert appeared ushering in the client.

The girl stopped in the doorway as though undecided. Tommy came forward.

‘Come in, mademoiselle,’ he said kindly, ‘and seat yourself here.’

Tuppence choked audibly and Tommy turned upon her with a swift change of manner. His tone was menacing.

‘You spoke, Miss Robinson? Ah, no, I thought not.’

He turned back to the girl.

‘We will not be serious or formal,’ he said. ‘You will just tell me about it, and then we will discuss the best way to help you.’

‘You are very kind,’ said the girl. ‘Excuse me, but are you a foreigner?’

A fresh choke from Tuppence. Tommy glared in her direction out of the corner of his eye.

‘Not exactly,’ he said with difficulty. ‘But of late years I have worked a good deal abroad. My methods are the methods of the Sûreté.’

‘Oh!’ The girl seemed impressed.

She was, as Tommy had indicated, a very charming girl. Young and slim, with a trace of golden hair peeping out from under her little brown felt hat, and big serious eyes.

That she was nervous could be plainly seen. Her little hands were twisting themselves together, and she kept clasping and unclasping the catch of her lacquered handbag.

‘First of all, Mr Blunt, I must tell you that my name is Lois Hargreaves. I live in a great rambling old-fashioned house called Thurnly Grange. It is in the heart of the country. There is the village of Thurnly nearby, but it is very small and insignificant. There is plenty of hunting in winter, and we get tennis in summer, and I have never felt lonely there. Indeed I much prefer country to town life.

‘I tell you this so that you may realise that in a country village like ours, everything that happens is of supreme importance. About a week ago, I got a box of chocolates sent through the post. There was nothing inside to indicate who they came from. Now I myself am not particularly fond of chocolates, but the others in the house are, and the box was passed round. As a result, everyone who had eaten any chocolates was taken ill. We sent for the doctor, and after various inquiries as to what other things had been eaten, he took the remains of the chocolates away with him,

and had them analysed. Mr Blunt, those chocolates contained arsenic! Not enough to kill anyone, but enough to make anyone quite ill.'

'Extraordinary,' commented Tommy.

'Dr Burton was very excited over the matter. It seems that this was the third occurrence of the kind in the neighbourhood. In each case a big house was selected, and the inmates were taken ill after eating the mysterious chocolates. It looked as though some local person of weak intellect was playing a particularly fiendish practical joke.'

'Quite so, Miss Hargreaves.'

'Dr Burton put it down to Socialist agitation – rather absurdly, I thought. But there are one or two malcontents in Thurnly village, and it seemed possible that they might have had something to do with it. Dr Burton was very keen that I should put the whole thing in the hands of the police.'

'A very natural suggestion,' said Tommy. 'But you have not done so, I gather, Miss Hargreaves?'

'No,' admitted the girl. 'I hate the fuss and the publicity that would ensue – and you see, I know our local Inspector. I can never imagine him finding out anything! I have often seen your advertisements, and I told Dr Burton that it would be much better to call in a private detective.'

'I see.'

'You say a great deal about discretion in your advertisement. I take that to mean – that – that – well, that you would not make

anything public without my consent?’

Tommy looked at her curiously, but it was Tuppence who spoke.

‘I think,’ she said quietly, ‘that it would be as well if Miss Hargreaves told us *everything*.’

She laid especial stress upon the last word, and Lois Hargreaves flushed nervously.

‘Yes,’ said Tommy quickly, ‘Miss Robinson is right. You must tell us everything.’

‘You will not –’ she hesitated.

‘Everything you say is understood to be strictly in confidence.’

‘Thank you. I know that I ought to have been quite frank with you. I have a reason for not going to the police. Mr Blunt, that box of chocolates was sent by someone in our house!’

‘How do you know that, mademoiselle?’

‘It’s very simple. I’ve got a habit of drawing a little silly thing – three fish intertwined – whenever I have a pencil in my hand. A parcel of silk stockings arrived from a certain shop in London not long ago. We were at the breakfast table. I’d just been marking something in the newspaper, and without thinking, I began to draw my silly little fish on the label of the parcel before cutting the string and opening it. I thought no more about the matter, but when I was examining the piece of brown paper in which the chocolates had been sent, I caught sight of the corner of the original label – most of which had been torn off. My silly little drawing was on it.’

Tommy drew his chair forward.

‘That is very serious. It creates, as you say, a very strong presumption that the sender of the chocolates is a member of your household. But you will forgive me if I say that I still do not see why that fact should render you indisposed to call in the police?’

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.