



In the Teeth of the Evidence

Dorothy L. Sayers

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All that was left of the garage was a heap of charred and smouldering beams. In the driving seat of the burnt-out car were the remains of a body...

An accident, said the police.

An accident, said the widow. She had been warning her husband about the danger of the car for months.

Murder, said the famous detective Lord Peter Wimsey--and proceeded to track down the killer.

This is vintage Sayers, a collection of her finest crime and detection stories.

In the Teeth of the Evidence Details

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From Reader Review In the Teeth of the Evidence for online ebook

Nandakishore Varma says

A good mystery story is like a magic trick. We all try to find out what the secret is, but we are happy if we are defeated, and a trifle disappointed if we win. The only difference is that the mystery writer reveals her trick at the end, while the magician does not.

If a full length mystery novel is a grand illusion with all the props, the detective short is a parlour trick. The illusion is cumbersome to set up and execute, but when properly done, very effective and hard to see through: the parlour trick, on the other hand, depends entirely on the speed of the magician's hand, and there is a greater chance of failure and embarrassment as the cards come slipping out of the sleeve.

Which is why, I think, that there are very few "great" detective short stories compared to novels by the great authors. Dorothy Sayers is no exception.

The present collection, even though enjoyable, fails to present us with any "great stories" (except one - *Suspicion* - which is excellently spine-chilling). The first two stories, featuring the famous Lord Peter Wimsey, are only average: in fact, the mystery in the first can be solved by any discerning reader immediately. The next five, featuring the travelling salesman Montague Egg, are only interesting with regard to their unusual sleuth - the stories are rather pedestrian. The remaining tales are all stand-alone stories, with two or three humorous ones where a dire secret is promised only to end in a comic whimper. While this is enjoyable once or twice, it does become stale when repeated too often.

The last two stories do not belong to the conventional mystery canon. The penultimate one straddles reality and fantasy: the last one is an out-and-out horror story. They are interesting, but nothing to write home about.

Overall verdict: a nice book to curl up with at the end of a tiring day.

Diane says

A good mix of Sayers' short fiction, which is not limited to her Wimsey stories.

In the title story, Lord Peter Wimsey is called upon by his fellow club member - and dentist - Mr Lamplough is called in by Scotland Yard to help identify a body:

"Apparently this man Prendergast was all alone there - and just going off for a holiday or something -and he contrived to set himself and his car and his garage alight last night and was burnt to death. In fact, when they found him, he was so badly charred that they couldn't be sure it was he. So, being sticklers for routine, they had a look at his teeth."

Wimsey steers the detectives and Mr Lamplough towards the truth, which they are completely overlooking. There are references to a real life murder that, unfortunately, give away what happened if you're familiar with historic crimes like I am. An excellent story, though, with humor and good supporting characters.

In "Absolutely Elsewhere," Wimsey investigates the murder of a wealthy moneylender. The complication is

that all the suspects seem to have an alibi - they were all somewhere else at the time. Or were they? It got a little confusing at times, and I think the trick involved is rather dated now, but it is a good job of misdirection.

There are five stories involving a lesser-known Sayers detective, Montague Egg, a wine salesman. He reminded me of Jessica Fletcher - wherever he goes, people turn up dead ;) The stories are amusing and clever and have a light touch, but they don't really stand out like the Wimsey/Vane stories do.

"Dilemma" - A group of people discusses the case of a young doctor who had the choice of saving priceless papers that could lead to a cure for a deadly disease, or he could save the drunken butler who probably started the fire in the first place. He choose the papers and left the butler to his death. His act earns him widespread derision and hatred, and completely ruins him. Was his decision right or wrong?

"Nebuchadnezzar" is a party game similar to charades:

"You choose a name - and unless your audience is very patient, it had better be a short one - of some well-known character. Say, Job. Then you act in dumb show a character beginning with J, then one beginning with O, then one beginning with B. Then you act Job, and the spectators guess that Job is what you mean and applaud kindly."

Cyril Markham is attending the birthday party of one of his late wife's friends. The other guests are also her friends. They are not Cyril's friends. He has never fit in amongst them. He has always felt apart, especially since his wife's death. Why did they invite him to the party? Do they have an ulterior motive? A good psychological suspense story with a twist at the end.

"The Inspiration of Mr Budd" - a meek little barber hits upon a wonderful idea to catch a murderous fugitive - something that will definitely make the killer stand out. Very humorous, especially the ending.

All in all, a good mix of stories that show how versatile Sayers was as a writer.

Ralph B Tacoma says

Sir Peter always a delight. I just met Monty Egg. The other stories are also new to me, giving a different views of "quiet" English life.

My review is above. Here you meet new Sayers characters. All very different from Harriet Vane and Sir Peter. Very good short stories for the reader, whose reading time comes in bits and snatches. My friends always know when I have been in Dorothy Land. My phrasing and cadences change for a while.

Jimmy Lee says

I've never read a Dorothy Sayers book before - although I've got a huge stack of them, having inherited no end of mysteries from various relatives. I figured the best way to start was with this collection of short stories. And a lovely introduction it was.

I found the two Lord Peter Wimsey stories included - 'In The Teeth Of Evidence' (a death leaving only dental evidence) and "Absolutely Elsewhere" (murder in a locked room) delightful. Even though 'teeth' was predictable, I enjoyed the interaction and dialogue. More than Wimsey (apologies to all Wimsey fans), I loved Montague Egg, a 'commercial traveler' (salesman) who uses his salesman's guide to help him solve crimes, in 'A Shot at Goal,' 'Dirt Cheap,' "Bitter Almonds," 'False Weight' and 'The Professor's Manuscript.' His quiet yet persistent assistance as murder occurs at yet another hotel where he is staying (one does wonder at the seemingly endless number of murders that England must bear) is engaging and unobtrusive.

The additional stories - 'Nebuchadnezzar,' 'Blood Sacrifice,' 'The Leopard Lady,' and particularly 'Dilimma,' 'Suspicion' and 'The Inspiration of Mr. Budd' were exceptional. Very strongly written, with inspired conclusions.

Some of the stories do require what is now considered obsolete knowledge, such as the use of complex phone exchanges in "Absolutely Elsewhere" and the deciphering of clock weights and works in "False Weights." Unfortunately I'm not as up on those areas as I should be, and had trouble enjoying the denouement to the stories as much as perhaps I otherwise would have. With those exceptions, I greatly enjoyed Ms. Sayers and am looking forward to more.

(I should note that my edition was an Avon 1943 edition, omitting the following stories noted in Wikipedia as published under this title: 'The Milk Bottles,' 'Scrawns,' 'An Arrow O'er the House,' and 'The Cyprian Cat.' Can't underscore enough, if you're a meticulous fan, the need to always verify in the table of contents if that particular story you're looking for is actually in the edition you're about to purchase.)

Sadie Slater says

In the Teeth of the Evidence is a collection of short stories by Dorothy L Sayers. The cover features Lord Peter Wimsey's name prominently (and the edition I had has the same Elizabeth George introduction as the recent editions of the Wimsey novels), but in fact only two of the stories feature Wimsey. Several more feature the travelling salesman Montague Egg (whose frequent references to the Salesman's Handbook set me musing about a Ferengi detective who frequently refers to the Laws of Acquisition), and about half of the stories are standalones, several quite creepy and Gothic in tone and including a couple which definitely verge on the supernatural. I prefer my detective fiction novel-length really, but this was quite good fun.

Chris says

Another collection of short stories from the author of the Lord Peter Wimsey mysteries. His Lordship makes a brief appearance at the beginning of the collection, in the first two stories. The travelling salesman with a talent for detection, Montague Egg, takes over for a bit, then a further ten tales independent of either sleuth. They are extremely varied, but all having in common the whiff of death about them. There may or may not be a twist in the tail, but in either case, the endings rather disappoint, which is a shame as the stories are quite involving and quirky.

An interesting departure from the novels she is better known for, and which remain, for this reader anyway, her best work.

Georgene says

This is an interesting collection of short stories by Dorothy L. Sayers. There's a few with Lord Peter Wimsey, a couple with Montague Egg and the rest are a lovely collection of various short stories. A couple of these I have read before, but most were new to me. Since the first copyright date is 1940, I assume these stories were written in the 1930s.

Dave says

Rating is for the book as a whole. In addition to a few good Wimsey and Montague Egg stories, it mops up a lot of non-series stories by Sayers, all of which are well-written, but most of which are just okay. This distracts from the last three great stories--two supernatural mysteries ("The Leopard Lady" and "The Cyprian Cat"), and one of the greatest short mysteries ever written, "Suspicion." The latter has a last line I remembered from reading it for the first time thirty years ago.

Wal.li says

Removals

In dieser Sammlung von Kurzgeschichten gibt es Auftritte von Lord Peter Wimsey, Montague Egg und anderen. Dabei macht sich Lord Peter in gewohnter Manier an die Arbeit und mit seinem scharfen Verstand löst Rätsel, die die Polizei vor Probleme stellen. Montague Egg, mit ähnlich scharfen Verstand ausgestattet, aber weniger bekannt, ist als Handlungsreisender unterwegs. Als solcher kommt er viel rum und in seinem Buch für Handlungsreisende werden viele Tipps gegeben, die helfen die Menschen zu durchschauen. Und so kann er die Menschen einschätzen, die seine Waren kaufen oder auch solche, die ein Verbrechen planen. Manche Geschichten drehen sich einfach nur um sich selbst. Ein geschickt eingefädelter Plot führt nach ein paar Verwicklungen zu einem überraschenden Ende.

Ein kleines Büchlein aus einem öffentlich Büchertauschregal erneut abgedruckt im Jahr 1980 da kann man eigentlich nicht viel verkehrt machen. Zumal wenn es eine Autorin verfasst hat, deren Geschichten um Lord Peter wohlbekannt und gerne gelesen sind. Das gewisse Flair der Zeit zwischen den Kriegen ansprechend eingefangen. Allerdings sind Kurzgeschichten für mache Leser eine kleine Herausforderung, insbesondere, wenn diese doch lieber die ausgefeilteren und auch langsamer aufgebauten Romane lesen. Dennoch sind einige der hier zusammengestellten Geschichten schnell auf dem Punkt, überraschend und manchmal geradezu fies.

Liebhaber von Kriminalkurzgeschichten kommen hier sicherlich auf ihre Kosten, andere können wenigstens versuchen, sich auf diese Form einzulassen.

Jj Li says

Readers coming into this expecting Lord Peter Wimsey will be disappointed, as there are only a few stories with him, but Montague Egg and the standalone stories are excellent. Egg is hilarious and yet a fresh spin on the detective story. I wish he had a full novel series, but he's still amusing. The short stories had my hair standing on end, because you had no idea whether it was serious or not.

Katie says

Only two Peter stories and they were rather meh. More Montague Egg, who I still enjoy! You know what his stories kind of remind me of? Encyclopedia Brown. Not that readers are asked to solve the puzzle at the end, but it's the same kind of set up, where there isn't really detection most of the time, just a recitation of facts and our hero is able to brilliantly put them all together.

I do not like Sayers' stand alones though. They are often unpleasant and almost creepy. Not nice people, not nice events, not satisfying conclusions.

Vít says

Sbírka krátkých povídek, tentokrát hlavn? s Montague Eggem, ale potkáte i lorda Petera a nebo i p?íb?hy "bez detektiva". Hezká oddychovka.

Cheryl says

A collection of short stories, some involving Lord Peter Wimsey, some another recurring detective character, and some stand alones. I like the ones that involved the other detective the best (I forget his name -- he's a traveling salesman) and the stand alone one that will haunt me was Blood Sacrifice. The short story aspect was appreciated given all of the upheaval going on during the weeks I was reading it.

May Grider says

This book of short stories is only for the diehard Dorothy Sayers fan. If you're a completist, then you have to read it. Otherwise, I'd suggest not. I haven't researched the stories but many seem to be from Ms. Sayers' very early career. There are two Lord Peter Wimsey stories. There are several featuring Montague Egg, and the rest were probably written for magazines. Not at all compelling.

Susan says

This collection of short stories includes two Lord Peter Wimsey Stories ("In the Teeth of the Evidence," and

“Absolutely Elsewhere”), five Montague Egg stories (“A Shot at Goal,” “Dirt Cheap,” “Bitter Almonds,” “False Weight,” and “The Professor’s Manuscript”). There are also several stories which feature neither of Dorothy L. Sayers main characters – “The Milk Bottles,” “Dilemma,” “An Arrow O’er the House,” “Scrawns,” “Nebuchadnezzar,” “The Inspiration of Mr Budd,” “Blood Sacrifice,” “Suspicion,” “The Leopard Lady,” and “The Cyprian Cat.”

I am not a great fan of short stories, but am reading all of the Wimsey books in order and so, as this contained stories featuring him, it was on my list. I have to say that I am very fond of travelling salesman, Montague Egg, as well and so all of those stories were of interest to me. I also enjoyed the non character stories and my favourites included, “The Milk Bottles,” about a young couple who have been seen arguing and, after the husband leaves after a row, the milk bottles remain on the step; causing concern about whether a crime has been committed. I also enjoyed, “The Inspiration of Mr Budd,” about a hairdresser spying a wanted man and, “The Leopard Lady,” about a sinister, ‘removal company.’ A good collection of stories, with a good mix of characters.

Bev says

Just finished up *In the Teeth of the Evidence* by Dorothy L Sayers. This collection represents the last bit of Sayers' fiction that I wanted to read...just so I could say I'd re-read all of her fiction this year. The collection is okay. Decent. But I don't think it represents her best work. I much prefer her earlier collections (*Lord Peter Views the Body* and *Hangman's Holiday*) and even her final stories found in *Striding Folly*. The writing itself isn't at fault--it's terrific as always--but the stories seem more contrived and almost as if she were pushing a bit to produce them. Here's a brief run-down of the stories:

Wimsey stories (read in the previous month):

“In the Teeth of the Evidence”: Lord Peter goes to his dentist for a filling and finds himself involved in a mystery he can really sink his teeth into. His dentist is called in to identify a man who has died in a blazing fire...only his dental records can prove his identity. And it's up to Lord Peter to help prove if it was death by accident or suicide....or even murder.

“Absolutely Elsewhere”: In which Lord Peter proves that a murderer just might be able to travel at the speed of light.

Montague Egg stories:

“A Shot at Goal”: The boss at the local mill is murdered and Monty shows that the solution depends on an error in spelling.

“Dirt Cheap”: A case of murder and missing jewels. Monty's evidence makes it seem impossible for anyone to have done it.

“False Weight”: Where the clue rests with a grandfather clock--is it telling the truth or not?

“The Professor's Manuscript”: Is the professor really who he says he is? And, if not, who is he?

Others:

"The Milk Bottles": Hector Puncheon, intrepid reporter, is pulled into an odd story of the milk bottles. For there's something decidedly fishy when the bottles start piling up outside the apartment where a man and his wife regularly quarreled--and now he's gone and she hasn't been seen for a week.

"Dilemma": This one is more a human interest story than a mystery. A night of tale-telling helps one man regain his self-respect.

"An Arrow O'er the House": What happens when a crime author's story is a bit too much like real life?

"Scrawns": Where Susan learns that appearances can be deceiving.

"Nebuchadnezzar": Can a murderer stand to watch his deed acted out before him? Or will he break under pressure?

"The Inspiration of Mr. Budd": Mr. Budd, hairdresser, uses an ingenious method to help catch a crook. His fellow barbers will soon be green with envy.

"Blood Sacrifice": Would a man give his own life, his own blood to be sure someone else would...die?

"Suspicion": Mr. Mummery suspects that he's harboring a poisoner in his house. It could be that he's right.

"The Leopard Lady": How to effect the removal of extraneous people. 1,000 pounds payable in one lump sum--no questions asked.

"The Cyprian Cat": A very strange story about a man who can't abide cats and shoots one. Or did he?

Gillian Kevern says

I haven't read any Dorothy L. Sayers in a while, so this was a nice reminder of just what a polished author she is! In this collection of 17 stories, I loved 15 of them and the remaining two were average. just a little too melodramatic for my tastes.

Although I am a huge fan of Wimsey, my absolute favourites this time round were the stories starring Travelling Salesman Egg. These were quick reads, enjoyable reads that unfolded very naturally. A reminder of how much is possible in the short story format.

Anna Hepworth says

In the Teeth of the Evidence contains ~16 stories (there is no table of contents, so counting was done via a quick flick through). Only the first of these is flagged as a Wimsey story, the following five are identified as Montague Egg stories (more on that later), and the remainder were a fruit salad of protagonists and plots, none quite the same. I think my favourite of these, "The Inspiration of Mr Budd" started out as a loving character study on a perfectionist barber and his frustration with the half-assed but much better patronised premises across the street, and then when the plot actually arrives, the reader is presented with a finely

sketched drama, in which Mr Budd is presented with the opportunity to turn in a wanted man, but finds himself afraid of the immediate consequences if he were to try and call for the authorities, and how he manages to leverage the situation anyway.

Other than that, I did like the character of Montague Egg, travelling salesman, and the way that the solution to each of the mysteries is framed with a quote from his constant companion, *The Salesman Handbook*.

I think that several of the plots have been replicated in other situations, variations on a theme in television crime shows, and so forth. But even when the solution was obvious from previous reading, or from telegraphed details in the text, I still find the unwinding of the solution to be enjoyable - the story and its telling was sufficient, and the suspense of the mystery was not necessary.

Robyn says

Early Bird Flash Sale | This wasn't available when I was reading the series, I enjoyed getting to revisit Lord Peter and Montague Egg, but wish there had been more stories including either of them. | A good collection, enjoyable, several had a light-hearted twist that was nice, but it was presented as a Lord Peter Wimsey collection with Monty Egg stories, so to have so few with either of them was disappointing. It does include a "preview" of another collection, which allowed me to read the entire first short story in that book, so that was kind of a bonus Wimsey story.

Trudy Pomerantz says

I loved this collection of short stories by Dorothy Sayers - more particularly the ones that are not Wimsey or Montague Egg. They are probably my favourite Sayers' stories.
