

THE CLUE



A FLEMING STONE
MYSTERY

CAROLYN WELLS

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On the eve of her wedding, stunning heiress Madeleine Van Norman is found stabbed to death in the library of her palatial country mansion, killed by a single thrust from her Venetian letter opener. Suspicion falls by turns to the groom who loved another, the cousin who stands to inherit her fortune, the woman the groom loves, the murdered woman's secretary, and the former lover of the murdered woman's uncle who will inherit the mansion. A suicide note is found next to her body, but the evidence points to murder. The house had been securely locked with no sign of a break in.

A classic from the Golden Age of Detective Fiction, *The Clue* falls squarely in the tradition of two favorite mystery sub-genres – the Big House Mystery and the Locked Room Mystery. Detective Fleming Stone is cool and methodical, not unlike his more famous fictional contemporaries, Hercule Poirot and Sherlock Holmes. The twist is that he doesn't appear until the second half of the story.

The Clue Details

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From Reader Review The Clue for online ebook

Joan - xstitchfan says

I became interested in Carolyn Wells after reading that she was from New Jersey - my home state. I've enjoyed learning how people lived in NJ during the early 1900's. Unlike many books from this time period, the flowery language is kept to a minimum while giving the reader some very interesting mystery puzzles to ponder.

"The Clue", published in 1909, is the first book in the Detective Fleming Stone series. A bride is murdered in her home some time during the night before her wedding. The suspects are the usual members of a well to do household, plus the guests who came to attend the wedding. This book has one of the great mystery endings. I can't say anymore without giving too much away. Let me know if you were as awestruck as I was while reading the end of this book. I'm sure my mouth was actually dropped open! Enjoy!

Julie says

A bride is killed the day before her wedding. At first, it appeared to be suicide, but on further investigation, it turns out to be murder. Bob Fessenden, a lawyer and amateur detective, takes on the job of trying to find out what happened. There are several suspicions about different people involved that Mr. Fessendon follows up on. In the end, they have to call in Fleming Stone to catch the murderer.

Good classic mystery--more of a police procedural--figuring out each character's story and their place in the household at the time of the murder.

Empress Reece (Hooked on Books) says

BORING! The house guests just went round and round and round in circles, repeating the same useless bits of information about why so & so couldn't be the murderer. Then they *finally* bring Detective Stone in during the very last chapter and he solves the mystery and gets a confession in like three pages. Which wasn't hard to do. I mean, I even guessed correctly from the beginning.

I'm sorry but it was awful! She has absolutely nothing on Agatha Christie! Don't waste your time!

Pat says

This book was written in 1909, and at first the antiquated writing style intrigued me. Halfway through the book, with the same silly conversations going on and on, I jumped 10 chapters, read the last two, mystery solved. Couldn't really recommend it.

Tonya Mathis says

I liked it.

Suzanne says

It's warmed-over Christie with a slight flavoring of Jane Austen. But even warmed-over Christie is still a pretty tasty dish.

Andrew Austin says

Easy read - good for relaxing somewhere, not a lot of thought is needed. Enjoyable old school murder mystery. Agatha Christie-light, if there could be such a think. Very light.

Carol says

If you like classic BW movies of the 30's and 40's, you'll like this book.

Estott says

Carolyn Wells was a very intelligent woman, and she had a sound grasp of the theoretical technique of writing mysteries. How sad that when she put pen to paper she wrote such awful ones. This one is a rambling affair that loses the detection thread in a romance (a common fault of the period)

The only part I liked was when the young couple searching for clues trade a few barbs about detection in novels: :

"And so," said Rob, as they turned back homeward, "I'm going to work upon this line. I'm going to look for clues; real, material, tangible clues, such as criminals invariably leave behind them."

"Do!" cried Kitty. "And I'll help you. I know we can find something."

"You see," went on Fessenden, his enthusiasm kindling from hers, "the actual stage of the tragedy is so restricted. Whatever we find must be in the Van Norman house."

"Yes, and probably in the library."

"Or the hall," he supplemented.

"What kind of a thing do you expect to find?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. In the Sherlock Holmes stories it's usually cigar ashes or something like that. Oh, pshaw! I don't suppose we'll find anything."

"I think in detective stories everything is found out by footprints. I never saw anything like the obliging way in which people make footprints for detectives."

"And how absurd it is!" commented Rob. "I don't believe footprints are ever made clearly enough to deduce the rest of the man from."

"Well, you see, in detective stories, there's always that 'light snow which had fallen late the night before.'"

"Yes," said Fessenden, laughing at her cleverness, "and there's always some minor character who chances to time that snow exactly, and who knows when it began and when it stopped."

"Yes, and then the principal characters carefully plant their footprints, going and returning—overlapping, you know—and so Mr. Smarty-Cat Detective deduces the whole story."

"But we've no footprints to help us."

"No, we couldn't have, in the house."

"But if it was Schuyler—"

"Well, even if,—he couldn't make footprints without that convenient 'light snow' and there isn't any."

"And besides, Schuyler didn't do it."

Leslie says

Another entertaining Golden Age mystery. An heiress is stabbed on the night before her wedding. Who killed her - the cousin who loved her but had been rejected; her fiancé, who was in love with another woman; her secretary, who loved the fiancé; the eccentric spinster who stood to inherit her property? (I have to say, though - that I couldn't understand why *three* women found the fiancé, who seemed like a bit of a stick, frankly so irresistible.) Really more of a 2.5, but I'll be generous and round up. The women in these books are usually pretty vapid, but I did like Kitty, even though she started out looking that way, although unfortunately she did seem to disappear about 4/5 of the way through the book.

Sue J says

Book first published in 1909. Good mystery. Many suspects ... An it had me speculating throughout the book. Some of these old books are refreshing.

Moonlight Reader says

This is a rare classic mystery that I just really didn't enjoy at all, even taking into consideration the differences in the way that classic mysteries are plotted/presented. It took me nearly a month to finish this slender, 225 page book, which probably tells you everything you need to know.

The writing was stiff and the characters were universally wafer thin. It purports to be an entry in the "Fleming Stone" series, but the great detective himself isn't even mentioned until the 87% mark, and he essentially swans into the story at around 90%, receives all of the information from the individuals who have collected it, pronounces a rather preposterous solution, obtains a confession from the evil-doer and it's a wrap.

The representation of female characters is absolutely terrible - even worse than is often the case in books published during early twentieth century (this book was published in 1909). Each woman had some assigned trait from which she was forbidden to stray: the victim was majestic and haughty; Kitty, the apparent love interest, was bewitching and clever; there was a genuine French maid, who was stormy and dramatic; and Dorothy was the clinging rosebud (whatever the hell that is), timid and appealing.

I am willing to concede that, perhaps, every book written by Carolyn Wells wasn't as awful as this one. I'm not entirely certain, however, that I'm prepared to read any more so as to find out.

Lisa Kucharski says

I am a fan of some of the Fleming Stone mysteries. You need to embrace the period it was written though, and I always find the earlier ones a bit... fluffy. The women faint and have hysterics and the men try valiantly to be stoic but their hearts flutter when see a pretty woman... the later ones do not have this degree of female hysterics.

However, in this mystery, we follow a man and woman who want to "play" detective and try and find the killer of a woman on the night before her wedding. The entire book follows them searching for clues and interviewing persons of interest. Then in the last chapter of the book, Fleming Stone enters and solves the case in 24 hours.

The Fleming Stone popping in and saving the day happens in some of the series but not all. I would say the more interesting books have Fleming Stone in them more. The best way to tell which one of these stories you have is to flip through the book and usually there will be a chapter entitled- Fleming Stone Arrives... or something like that. The sooner you see this, the better.

Beautiful cover work.

Bandit says

Some oldies are golden and some are just old. Regrettably this one firmly belongs in the latter category. The quaint charms of bygone era lie almost exclusively with the hilariously dated attitudes toward women as the helpless dainty dears are excused one after another from the murder of an heiress. Although in all fairness the

men in the book aren't that effective either. The murder takes place early on and from that point it's just one circumlocutory interview after another, solving nothing. Not until the great detective shows up. Of course, there is a great detective, most of the mysteries of the day had one and yet Mr. Stone lacks any quirks or specific character traits that would make him either interesting or memorable. In fact he is as convivial, chatty and mild as the rest of the cast. Crazy thing is he isn't even mentioned until 85% into the book, doesn't physically show up at the scene until 89% into the book. He does solve the murder with his brief cameo like appearance, but then again who wouldn't. WARNING, don't read further if you haven't read the book. The crime (gasp, stunned reaction) has been committed by the only person who stood to benefit from it, the incestuous cousin. No duh. Cheesy confession/post confessional suicide. The end. WARNING OVER. Surely, this is meant to be a cozy mystery, nothing too exciting by definition, but this is just too silly. In substance and execution reminiscent most of a decorative doily. At least it was a quick read.

Nancy Oakes says

<http://www.crimesegments.com/2018/05/...>

Seriously, when I got to the end of this book, my first reaction was "that's it?" To say I was disappointed is an understatement. As it turns out, *The Clue* (1909) is the first of a long lineup of books to feature Detective Fleming Stone. In this particular story, Stone comes in towards the end and triumphs in solving the case, a feat that neither the police detective nor an attorney/amateur detective has managed to pull off before his arrival. Hmmm.

While I'm happy to have read this book because it was written by a woman whose work seems to have faded into obscurity, I have to say that it would likely be more at home in the library of a cozy reader -- the romance keeps it light in tone as does the amateur detecting going on. And even though all is put right once again in this house, the ending is a bit over-the-top melodramatic, actually causing a true eyeroll on my part. But it does have its moments, for example, in an interchange between two characters who make fun of detective stories; ironically that discussion ends up with talk of a "Mr. Smarty-Cat Detective," who "deduces the whole story." I say ironically because that is precisely what happens here, with the arrival of Fleming Stone. He is like the living *deus ex machina* who comes in, takes a look around and solves the entire case in a short time. I'd try another one just to see if this is his pattern, just out of pure interest. I suppose, like many mystery novels, the fun is in the getting there, complete with a host of suspects with motive, a few red herrings, and a crime that borders on the impossible.

It's crime light, to be sure. I don't know that I'd recommend it for any other reason than it appeared on the Haycraft-Queen Definitive Library of Detective, Crime, and Mystery Fiction, and, as I said, it was written by a woman author who was once very popular but whose works have long gone by the wayside into obscurity.
