



The Incident at Fives Castle

Clara Benson

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It is Hogmanay, and Angela Marchmont is at Fives Castle, the Scottish seat of the Earl of Strathmerrick, to see in the start of 1928. But when she finds out that the Foreign Secretary, the American Ambassador and the Head of British Intelligence are also among the guests, Angela begins to suspect that something momentous is afoot. Before long, they are all snowed in and a body is discovered, and Angela soon finds suspicion directed against herself...

The Incident at Fives Castle Details

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From Reader Review The Incident at Fives Castle for online ebook

Teddi says

Not my favorite. The actual plot was good but it was mired down by, a lot of wordiness in between happenings. Also, I'm never crazy about politics in general, that being a large part of this plot.

Niki says

as usual a good plot and a series of interesting characters, among which of course the clever mrs marchmont - again I discovered the culprit rather soon, but i still enjoyed the reading

Andrea says

In which we spent time in a snow-bound castle, learn a little bit more about Angela's past, discover the game 'sardines', and admire the number of self-determined women Benson puts into her stories - and their flexible range of morals.

I must admit to wondering if these really are the trunk novels of someone born in 1890 and written when she was a young woman, or if that's merely an author identity constructed for the books.

Maureen Hetzel says

Delightful version of trapped by snow in a Scotland castle in 1930s England...a death! Who did it and why?? Intrigue, espionage, and a pluckily, elegant woman to help in the answer.

Gabi Eagon says

I'm hooked

I'm hooked on Clara Bensons books. Her Angela Marchmont stories are full of wit and mystery Angela is a smart woman who uses her intellect to solve the puzzle within the story. This book has important government secrets and traitors within. Plus there's a castle in Scotland that is the icing on the cake.

ELizabeth Livingstone says

Good read

I really enjoyed the latest adventure (out of sequence) I know but such 'polite society' I always find fascinating and a challenge as to who are the 'baddies'.

kay whitlock says

Pleasant and lighthearted

Well written and slightly quirky series. I am always searching for English mysteries set in the early 1900's and these fit right in.

Elizabeth says

It was good, but not one of the best of the series.

Joan says

Mrs Marchmont is invited to a Scottish castle during the holidays and gets caught up in political intrigue and spies. They get snowed in with a killer on the loose.

Michael says

Too much diversion

This is the third book in the Angela Marchmont series which I have read. I enjoyed the first two much more. It seemed more like a novella stretched into a novel. One theme disappeared entirely--the discovery of atomic energy. Too many false leads were included, and I felt like the real villain was picked out of a hat. I haven't decided whether to read the next in the series. We will have to see.

PeterK B says

Barely a 3 star rating. This is a murder mystery why does the author spend so many pages introducing characters, showing interaction (building a snowman?? This is a murder mystery!)

There are too many characters, all confined to the castle due to a snowstorm, a very old and tired concept. Still, why not have the murder occur much earlier? I have read the previous books and like the primary character Angela, but someone new to the series may not read very far into the book. Nothing much happens for a long time. This is true of several of the books.

The long delay in getting to the meat of the plot is true of several of the books. The best of the series is

Riddle at Gipsy's Mile (Book #4). It starts with the plot (discovery of the body) and introduces the secondary characters later. This is the way to organize a murder mystery. Not with page after page of people chatting, dining, drinkingGet to the murder and make the book about the plot ... not about Angela Marchmont and her interactions with others.

Damaskat says

If you like nineteen twenties mysteries then you will probably enjoy this one. It was actually written during that era but is only now seeing the light of day. Modern readers may find it difficult to understand the worry about spies but at the time this was a huge concern. Angela Marchmont - that enigmatic and well off widow - is invited to Fives Castle to celebrate New Year 1928. Thanks to a chapter of incidents which seems to follow her around she manages to make an unfortunate impression on her hostess, Lady Strathmerrick, who is convinced she is a man eater and after all her male guests.

But there is serious business afoot at the castle where an ill assorted group of guests is snowed in for several days. The American Ambassador and the Foreign Secretary are expecting to meet a nuclear scientist who is going to hand over details of his research before the 'other side' can get their hands on it but they suspect at least one traitor in their midst. When the Professor they are expecting to meet is found dead during a game of sardines Angela herself comes under suspicion.

I really enjoyed this book. It is well written with plenty of humour and marvellous characters and plot. It has an authentic period feel to it as might be expected from a book written in the era in which it is set. While the plot may seem dated to some modern readers I feel it stands the test of time very well and brings to life the country house weekend and the way government business was transacted on an informal basis then - and probably still is now to a certain extent.

If you like conventional crime novels set in country houses where circumstances conspire to keep the suspects in close proximity to each other for a short period then you may well enjoy this latest of Clara Benson's novels to be released.

Pauline Ross says

The fifth twenties murder mystery in the *Angela Marchmont* series, this time set in a Scottish castle at Hogmanay, where a murder takes place while the occupants are cut off by snow. And wouldn't you know it, but Angela is the one to discover the body (again).

This one was great fun. Spies, a missing scientist, hidden documents, secret meetings and lots of rushing about in the snow. And a whole ocean full of red herrings. I didn't guess this one at all, but it didn't matter, it was great fun watching the story unfold, Angela beetle about being helpful and Freddy get his nose (or his ear!) into everything. Since the American Ambassador was one of those present, we also learned a little bit more about Angela's past, which, far from being illuminating, actually makes her even more mysterious. I'd love to know more about the not-spoken-of Mr Marchmont. I'd begun to think he was just a convenient fiction, but seemingly not.

Living in Scotland myself gives me the opportunity to chuckle at the author's mistakes. It's obvious Clara

Benson never spent a Hogmanay in the Highlands. Even supposing Angela's Bentley managed to make the border by mid-afternoon (a feat which would be quite impressive even today, with reliable cars and motorways, unless she lived a long way north already), its arrival at the castle in the Cairngorms before it was fully dark would be nothing short of miraculous. The sun sets at 3pm at that time of year, and the castle would be several hours' drive north of the border. But it really doesn't matter, and it doesn't impact the plot at all.

The charm of these books is in the period setting, and the lives of the wealthy upper classes, very reminiscent of vintage Agatha Christie. There must be an army of servants, both indoor and outdoor, but they rarely get a mention, apart from Angela's chauffeur and lady's maid, and one or two references to the 'men' deployed to remove a fallen tree and clear snow. And it was wonderful how, in the midst of murder, political disaster and general mayhem, everyone still felt it necessary to dress for dinner and sit around in the drawing room making polite conversation about the weather. It reminded me of (I think) Murder on the Orient Express where one character is looking for some of the others and is told: it's four o'clock, naturally the English passengers are all in the restaurant car having tea.

A light but very enjoyable read. A good four stars.

Di Worley says

Angels sorts of out

Never disappoints! Have read the previous in the series and looking forward to Angela's next adventure. Thoroughly recommend this series

Whistlers Mom says

What! The missing plans aren't under the globe?

This one owes so much to Arthur Conan-Doyle I was expecting Holmes and Watson to show up any minute. The setting is an ancient castle in Scotland so sturdy that gunshots can't be heard in the next room. It's the home of an Earl who's a mover-and-shaker in the British government and the frequent host of high-level secret meetings. So where better for the Foreign Secretary (and his beautiful, nervous wife) and the American ambassador (and his glamorous, blonde wife) and a high-ranking civil servant known to be in "intelligence" (and who's intelligent enough to leave HIS wife at home) to meet with a mysterious scientist who is bringing his SECRET PLANS to show them?

It's 1928 and this scientist has solved the puzzle of how to make atoms react and create a super weapon. The possession of this super bomb will eliminate future wars and save both the British and U.S. governments lots of money because they will no longer need to maintain armies. [That worked out well, didn't it?]

To disguise the purpose of the meeting (did these men EVER go to their offices?) a large house party is gathered. There's a madcap heiress (obligatory in 1920's novels) and a wide-awake, slangy reporter and a scatty old-maid governess-turned-companion to provide comic relief. It's Hogmanay (Scotland's New Year) so there's a huge feast and a dance for the villagers and the two young sons are home from their boarding

schools to complicate matters. Then a blizzard cuts them off and knocks out the telephone service!

This is my second Clara Benson and I'm getting quite fond of her. She isn't above giving a whopper of a clue in the middle of the book and she has a nice way with red herrings. Angela Marchmont is a stunner of an amateur detective. She's intelligent, witty, and kindhearted like Gladys Mitchell's Mrs. Bradley and she treats men with outward deference and inward condescension like Christie's Miss Marple. She's still mysterious, although we do learn that she has a brother, served in British Intelligence in WWI, and that she has had at least one husband. She's also wealthy enough to afford a personal maid, a Bentley and a driver, a must for crime-solving among the aristocracy.

I'm trying to make up my mind about the odd story put forth to explain the sudden appearance of five mysteries written in the 1920's and not published until now. Would this very traditional Earl and Countess really have sent their daughters to boarding school because their governess couldn't control them? And would even the feminist Angela have been enthusiastic about Lady Clemmie going to university at a time when educated women were called "BlueStockings" and roundly denounced?

As for the idea that the Countess was reconciled to her daughter being educated as long as she became a nurse, it's preposterous. Nurses in that era were very much looked down on and considered little better than prostitutes by many. In spite of Clara Barton and Florence Nightingale, nursing didn't become respectable until WWII.

On the other hand, the long-winded explanation of the danger posed by communist Russia really does sound authentic to the period. The murders of the Russian royal family (both Czar and Czarina cousins to the King of England) weighed heavily on the English aristocracy and outshone their fears of German rearmament. Even a dopey Limousine-Leftist like St. John can't be safely ignored.

Still, it's a good mystery in a great setting with some fascinating characters. I'm in.
