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# POIROT INVESTIGATES



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## THE MYSTERY OF HUNTER'S LODGE

‘After all,’ said Poirot. ‘I will probably not die this time.’  
He had been sick with the flu and was recovering. He was now in bed, sitting up against pillows, with a woolen shawl around his head. He was slowly drinking a special tea that I had prepared. He looked at the empty medicine bottles on the bedside table.

‘Yes, yes,’ he said. ‘I will be healthy again. I am the great Hercule Poirot, the terror of evil people!’

I laughed. ‘Good for you, Poirot. You are becoming quite famous. And you haven’t missed anything interesting while you were sick in bed.’

‘That is true.’

Our landlady came in.

‘There’s a gentleman downstairs. He says he must see Monsieur Poirot or you, Captain Hastings. He is dressed well and looks like a gentleman. This is his card.’ She handed the card to me. ‘Mr Roger Havering,’ I read.

Poirot asked me to get ‘Who’s Who’<sup>1</sup> from the bookcase. I gave it to him. He found the name.

‘Roger Havering. Second son of fifth Baron Windsor. Married 1913 Zoe, fourth daughter of William Crabb.’

‘That’s the girl who used to be an actress,’ I said. ‘Her name then was Zoe Carrisbrook.’

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<sup>1</sup> Who’s Who: a book of facts about famous people



*'Good for you, Poirot. You are becoming quite famous.'*

‘Please go downstairs and talk to our visitor, Hastings. Find out what his trouble is. Tell him I am sorry that I cannot meet him.’

Roger Havering was a man of about forty. He was well-built and had a smart appearance. He looked tired and anxious.

‘Captain Hastings? You are Monsieur Poirot’s partner, I understand. He must come with me to Derbyshire today.’

‘I’m sorry, but that’s impossible,’ I said. ‘Poirot is ill in bed with the flu.’

His face fell. ‘Oh no. That’s terrible.’

‘What did you want to talk to him about?’

‘My uncle, the best friend I have in the world, was murdered last night.’

‘Here in London?’

‘No, in Derbyshire. I was here in London and received a telegram from my wife this morning. I came here to ask Monsieur Poirot to take on the case.’

I asked him to wait. I ran upstairs and **informed** Poirot.

‘I see. I see. You want to go yourself, don’t you?’ he said. ‘Well, why not? You know my methods. But you must report to me fully every day, and you must follow the instructions I send you.’

I agreed.

\* \* \*

An hour later, Mr Havering and I were on the train in a first-class carriage, leaving London.

‘Captain Hastings,’ he explained. ‘We are now going to Hunter’s Lodge, where the murder took place. It is a small country house that we use for our shooting parties. Our real home is near Newmarket and at some weekends, we go to Hunter’s Lodge. We have a housekeeper, Mrs Middleton, who takes care of the place. We take some of our own servants from Newmarket during shooting season. My uncle, Mr Harrington Pace has lived with us for the last three years. He never got on well with my father or my elder brother, but he liked me. Of course, I am a poor man, and my uncle was a rich man. He was a difficult man in many ways, but we got on well. The three of us lived together happily. Two days ago, my uncle said that we should go to Hunter’s Lodge for a day or two. My wife sent a telegram to Mrs Middleton, and we went there that same afternoon. Yesterday evening, I had to return to London, but my wife and my uncle stayed. This morning I received this telegram.’

I read the telegram.

*‘Come at once. Uncle Harrington murdered last night. Bring good detective if you can - Zoe.’*

‘You don’t know the details, then?’ I asked.

‘No. The police must be **in charge**.’

We arrived at the little station of Elmer’s Dale at three o’clock. From there we drove for ten minutes and arrived at Hunter’s Lodge. It was a small grey stone building in the middle of the countryside.

‘A lonely place,’ I said.

Havering nodded his head. ‘I will get rid of it. I could never live here again.’

We opened the gate and started walking up the narrow path to the



*'I will get rid of it. I could never live here again.'*



oak door of the house. A figure appeared and came to meet us. It was my old friend Inspector Japp from Scotland Yard<sup>2</sup>.

‘Japp!’ I screamed.

He smiled at me in a friendly way and turned to Mr Havering.

‘Mr Havering? I’ve been sent from London to take charge of this case. I’d like to talk to you, sir.’

‘My wife...’

‘I’ve seen your wife, sir, and the housekeeper. I won’t keep you long, but I want to get back to the village now. I’ve seen everything here.’

‘I don’t know anything yet.’

‘Yes,’ said Japp. ‘But I’d like to hear your opinion about one or two points. Captain Hastings knows me. He’ll go to the house and tell them you’re coming. Where is the little man, by the way, Captain Hastings?’

‘He’s ill in bed with the flu,’ I said.

‘I’m sorry to hear that,’ he said.

I went to the house and rang the bell. A middle-aged woman dressed in black opened the door. It was the housekeeper, Mrs Middleton.

‘Mr Havering will be here very soon,’ I said to her. ‘He is talking to the inspector. I have come down with him from London to look into the case. Can you tell me what happened last night?’

‘Come inside, sir,’ she said. She closed the door behind me, and we stood in the poorly lit hall.

‘It was after dinner last night, sir, when a man came. He asked to see Mr Pace, sir. He spoke the same way as Mr Pace, so I thought it was an American friend of his. I showed him into the gun-room. He didn’t tell

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<sup>2</sup> Scotland Yard: the main office of the London police, especially the department that deals with serious crimes in London

me his name, which was a bit strange. Then I went to tell Mr Pace. He seemed puzzled, but he turned to Mrs Havering and said, 'Excuse me, Zoe. I must see what this fellow wants.' He went to the gun-room, and I went back to the kitchen. After a while, I heard loud voices. I thought that perhaps they were quarrelling, and I came out into the hall. At the same time, the mistress came out too, and at that moment there was a shot and then a terrible silence. We ran to the gun-room, but the door was locked. We had to go outside to the window. It was open. When we went inside, we found Mr Pace, shot and bleeding.'

'What happened to the man?'

'He must have **escaped** through the window, sir.'

'And then?'

'Mrs Havering sent me to get the police. I walked for five miles. They came back with me, and an officer stayed here all night. This morning the police gentleman from London arrived.'

'The man who came to see Mr Pace. What did he look like?'

The housekeeper thought for a moment. 'He had a black beard, sir. He was middle-aged. He had a light overcoat. He had an American accent. I didn't **notice** anything else about him.'

'I see. Now can I see Mrs Havering?'

'She's upstairs, sir. Shall I tell her?'

'Please tell her that Mr Havering is outside with Inspector Japp and that I would like to speak to her as soon as possible.'

Mrs Middleton went. I was **impatient** to get all the facts. Japp had started two or three hours before me. I wanted to find out the truth before him.

A few minutes later, Mrs Havering appeared on the stairs. I looked up to see a beautiful young woman coming downstairs. She wore a red jumper, and on her dark head was a little red hat. She was full of life even on a sad day like this. I introduced myself.

‘Of course, I have often heard of you and your colleague, Monsieur Poirot. You have done some wonderful things together, haven’t you? I am glad that you are here to help us. Will you ask me questions?’

‘Yes, thank you, Mrs Havering. Now what time did this man arrive?’

‘It was just before nine o’clock. We had finished dinner and were having coffee.’

‘Your husband had already left for London?’

‘Yes, he had taken the 6:15 train.’

‘Did he go by car to the station, or did he walk?’

‘We don’t have a car here at Hunter’s Lodge. We had a car come from the garage in Elmer’s Dale to take him to the train station.’

‘And what about Mr Pace? Did he look normal?’

‘Yes. He was normal in every way.’

‘Can you describe this visitor?’

‘I’m afraid I can’t. I didn’t see him. Mrs Middleton showed him into the gun-room and then came to tell my uncle.’

‘What did your uncle say?’

‘He seemed annoyed, but went to see him. About five minutes later, I heard the loud voices. I ran out into the hall and saw Mrs Middleton coming out of the kitchen. Then we heard the shot. The gun-room door was locked on the inside, and we had to go around the house to the

window. Of course, that took some time, and the murderer had been able to get away easily. My poor uncle had been shot through the head. I saw that he was dead. I sent Mrs Middleton to get the police. I did not touch anything in the room. I left it exactly as I found it.'

I nodded. 'Now, what about the weapon?'

'Well, I can make a guess, Captain Hastings. My husband had two revolvers on the wall. One of them is missing. I told the police about this, and they took the other one away with them. When they **remove** the bullet from the body, they will know.'

'May I go to the gun-room?' I asked.

'Certainly. The police have finished with it. But the body has been removed.'

She walked with me to the gun-room. At that moment Havering entered the hall, and his wife ran to him. I was left alone to do my **investigations**.

I was quite upset. In detective novels, there are many **clues**, but here I could find nothing special. There was a large bloodstain on the carpet where the dead man must have fallen. I examined everything very carefully and took pictures of the room with my little camera. I also examined the ground outside the window, but there were too many footprints on it. I decided that it was useless to waste time over it. I had seen everything Hunter's Lodge could show me. Now I had to go back to Elmer's Dale and get in touch with Japp. I said goodbye to the Haverings and was driven off in the car that had brought us from the station.

I found Japp, and he took me to see the body. Harrington Pace was a small, thin, clean-shaven man. He had been shot through the back of the

head. The revolver had been fired from a close distance.

‘He turned away for a moment,’ said Japp, ‘and the other man took a revolver and shot him. The one Mrs Havering gave to us was fully loaded, and I suppose the other one was also. People sometimes do stupid things. Keeping two loaded revolvers hanging up on your wall is a stupid thing to do.’

‘So, what do you think?’ I asked.

‘Well, first I **suspected** Havering.’

I was surprised to hear this.

‘Havering has a few dark events in his past. When he was a young man at Oxford, there was some problem about the signature on one of his father’s checks. Also, he’s heavily in **debt** now. The uncle’s will<sup>3</sup> could be very helpful. Yes, I suspected him at first. That’s why I wanted to speak to him before he saw his wife. But their stories agree. Besides, I went to the station, and it is certain that he left by the 6:15 train. That arrives at London around 10:30. He says that he went directly to his club. If we can **prove** that, it means that it was impossible for him to shoot his uncle here at nine o’clock in a black beard!’

‘Ah, yes, I was going to ask you what you thought about that beard?’

‘Americans that I’ve met don’t have beards,’ said Japp. ‘We will look at Mr Pace’s American friends. I questioned the housekeeper first and then her mistress, and their stories agree. But Mrs Havering didn’t see the man. She’s a smart woman, and she might have noticed something important that could help us.’

Later that day, I was able to find out more about the case:

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<sup>3</sup> will: a legal document that says what is going to happen to somebody’s money and property after they die

Firstly, the bullet was removed. It had been fired from a revolver that was identical with the one the police had. Secondly, Mr Havering's movements on the night were checked. He had actually arrived in London by the 6:15 train. And, thirdly, something important happened. A city gentleman living in Ealing, London, who was on his way to the District Railway Station that morning, had found a brown-paper parcel stuck between the railings. In it was a revolver. He handed the parcel over to the police, who found out that it was the one we were looking for. One bullet had been fired from it.

I sat down and wrote a long report to Poirot. I posted the letter. The following morning at breakfast I received a telegram from him:

*'Black bearded man was not Havering. Write to me description of housekeeper and what clothes she wore. Also write a description of Mrs Havering and her clothes. Do not waste time taking photographs.'*

It seemed silly to me that Poirot had asked for a description of the two women's clothes, but I sent him the information. At eleven, a reply telegram came from Poirot:

*'Tell Japp to arrest housekeeper before it is too late.'*

I was shocked, and I took the telegram to Japp.

'Monsieur Poirot knows what he is talking about. If he says so, there must be something in it. I didn't even pay attention to the woman. I don't think that I can arrest her, but she will be watched. We'll go to Hunter's Lodge now and take another look at her.'

But it was too late. Mrs Middleton, that quiet middle-aged woman, who had looked so normal and respectable, had **disappeared**. Her box had been left behind. In it we found only ordinary clothes. There was no clue to who she was or where she could be.

We asked Mrs Havering about Mrs Middleton. This is what she told us:

‘I hired her about three weeks ago when Mrs Emery, our former housekeeper, left. Mrs Middleton came to me from the Selbourne Agency, which is a very well-known place in London. I get all my servants from there. They sent several women to see me, but Mrs Middleton seemed the nicest, and she had very good references. I hired her immediately. I can’t believe that there was anything wrong with her. She was such a nice woman.’

The thing was a **mystery**. It was clear that the woman could not have killed Mr Pace herself because when the shot was fired Mrs Havering was with her in the hall. But she had to have some connection with the murder, or why had she run away?

I wrote to Poirot about Mrs Middleton’s disappearance. I told him I could go to London and make an investigation at the Selbourne Agency.

Poirot replied quickly:

*‘It is useless to go to the agency. They have never heard of her. Find out what vehicle took her up to Hunter’s Lodge when she first arrived there.’*

I was puzzled, but I did what he told me. The means of transport in Elmer’s Dale were limited. The local garage had two old Ford cars, and there were two horse carriages that waited at the station. None of these had been used on the day when Mrs Middleton first arrived. Mrs Havering said that she had given the woman the money for her travels to Hunter’s Lodge. One of the Ford cars usually stayed at the train station in case anyone needed it. Nobody at the station had noticed a stranger on the evening of the murder. It seemed that the murderer had come to Hunter’s Lodge in a car, which had been waiting to help his escape. The

same car had brought the mysterious housekeeper to Hunter's Lodge. We asked the people at the Selbourne Agency in London, and we found out that Poirot was right. They had never had a woman called 'Mrs Middleton' on their list.

I returned to London. I found Poirot sitting in an arm-chair by the fire. He greeted me warmly.

'My dear friend Hastings! I am glad to see you. Have you enjoyed yourself? You have been running up and down with Inspector Japp. You have questioned and investigated as you liked.'

'Poirot,' I said. 'The thing's a dark mystery! It will never be solved.'

'It is true that we are not going to celebrate our success.'

'No, we're not. It's impossible to solve.'

'Oh, but I am very good at solving impossible problems! I know who killed Mr Harrington Pace.'

'You know? How did you find out?'

'Your answers to my telegrams gave me the truth. Now, Hastings, let us look at the facts carefully and in order. Point No. 1: Mr Harrington Pace has great wealth, which will pass to his nephew after his death. Point No. 2: His nephew, Roger Havering, is known to be badly in need of money. Point No. 3: Roger Havering is also known to have a weak character.'

'But it has been proven that Roger Havering travelled to London.'

'Exactly. Mr Havering left Elmer's Dale at 6:15. Mr Pace was killed after he left. The doctor agreed with the time of the crime when he examined the body. Therefore, we conclude that Mr Havering did not shoot his uncle. But there is Mrs Havering.'



‘Impossible!’ I said. ‘The housekeeper was with her when the shot was fired.’

‘Ah, yes, the housekeeper. But she has disappeared.’

‘She will be found.’

‘I don’t think so. There is something very strange about that housekeeper, Hastings.’

‘She played her part and then escaped.’

‘And what was her part?’ Poirot asked.

‘Well, to let the black-bearded man into the house.’

‘Oh, no, that was not her part! Her part was to provide an alibi<sup>4</sup> for Mrs Havering. And no one will ever find her, my friend, because she does not exist!’

‘What do you mean, Poirot?’

‘Zoe Havering was an actress before her marriage. You and Japp only saw the housekeeper in a dark hall, a middle-aged figure in a black dress with a gentle voice. Neither you nor Japp, nor the local police ever saw Mrs Middleton and Mrs Havering at the same time. It was a piece of cake for that clever woman. She tells you she will get her mistress, runs upstairs, puts on a bright jumper and a hat. She removes her makeup, adds some lipstick, and she becomes the wonderful Zoe Havering. Nobody looks at the housekeeper. Why should they? There is nothing to connect her with the crime.’

‘But the revolver that was found at Ealing? Mrs Havering could not have placed it there.’

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<sup>4</sup> alibi: evidence that proves that a person was in another place at the time of a crime and so could not have committed it

‘No, that was Roger Havering’s job. But it was a mistake. It helped me solve the crime. A man who **commits** a murder with a revolver will get rid of it immediately. He will not carry it up to London with him. No, they wanted the police to focus on a spot far away from Hunter’s Lodge. Of course, the revolver which was found at Ealing was not the one which shot Mr Pace. Roger Havering fired one shot from it, brought it to London, went to his club for his alibi, then went quickly to Ealing, placed the parcel between the railings and went back to town. Meanwhile, his wife quietly shot Mr Pace after dinner. You remember he was shot from behind? She reloaded the revolver and put it back in its place.’

‘It’s incredible,’ I said. ‘But...’

‘But it is true. Of course, it is true, my friend. I have solved the crime. But to bring the murderers to justice is another matter. Well, I have written to Japp in detail. He will do what he can, but I’m afraid that there isn’t much we can do. We will have to leave them to fate.’

Poirot’s fears proved to be true. Japp was unable to find the necessary **evidence** to put the murderers in jail.

Mr Pace’s huge fortune passed into the hands of his murderers. However, years later, I read in the paper that Roger and Mrs Havering were killed in a plane crash. I knew that justice was reached.



**ACTIVITIES**

**A. Word Search: Find the 5 verbs from the chapter. The definitions are given below.**

E	X	U	L	P	B	P	I	D	J	R	U
Y	S	B	A	M	Z	N	Y	T	O	E	Z
I	T	C	H	V	F	T	Q	Q	F	M	Q
Z	P	O	A	O	E	V	O	R	P	O	Z
E	V	S	R	P	P	O	E	K	J	V	Q
X	N	M	G	S	E	Y	A	O	T	E	E
S	U	S	P	E	C	T	M	U	K	N	X
K	H	T	M	Z	U	V	Z	Q	O	J	B

- get away, run away from a place
- take away, take out
- tell, let someone know
- show something is true by using evidence and facts
- believe someone is guilty without proof

**B. Match the nouns on the left with their definitions on the right.**

<b>1. debt</b> ____	<b>a.</b> an official examination of the facts about a situation, crime, etc.
<b>2. evidence</b> ____	<b>b.</b> money that you owe someone
<b>3. investigation</b> ____	<b>c.</b> something that is not understood or known about
<b>4. mystery</b> ____	<b>d.</b> the facts, signs or objects that make you believe that something is true

**C. True or False?**

1. Roger Havering said that he was in London when he learned about the death of his uncle. \_\_\_\_
2. The Haverings lived in Hunter's Lodge during the winter months. \_\_\_\_
3. Inspector Japp had already talked with Mrs Havering and Mrs Middleton when Hastings went to Hunter's Lodge. \_\_\_\_
4. Mrs Havering and Mrs Middleton had both seen Mr Pace's visitor. \_\_\_\_

**D. Discuss the following questions.**

1. How did Hastings describe Mrs Middleton? How did he describe Mrs Havering?
2. What did Mrs Havering say about the murder weapon?
3. According to Mrs Havering, when had Mrs Middleton started working for her?
4. What was Mrs Middleton's role in the crime?
5. Who had put the revolver between the railings in the railway station in Ealing, London? Was it the real murder weapon?

## GLOSSARY

### Chapter 1 - The Mystery of Hunter's Lodge

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**clue** (n) a fact or a piece of evidence that helps you discover the answer to a problem

**commit** (v) If someone commits a crime or a sin, they do something illegal or bad. If someone commits suicide, they deliberately kill themselves.

**debt** (n) a sum of money that you owe someone

**disappear** (v) to become impossible to see

disappearance (n)

**escape** (v) to get away from an unpleasant or dangerous situation

**evidence** (n) the facts, signs or objects that make you believe that something is true; the information that is used in court to try to prove something

**impatient** (adj) wanting to do something soon; wanting something to happen soon

impatiently (adv)

**in charge** having the responsibility, control, or supervision

take charge of: make yourself responsible for someone or something and take control over them

**inform** (v) to tell somebody about something

**investigation** (n) a careful search or examination in order to discover facts, etc.

investigate (v)

**mystery** (n) something that is difficult to understand or to explain

mysterious (adj)

**notice** (v) to see or hear somebody/something; to become aware of somebody/something

**prove** (v) If you prove that something is true, you show by means of argument or evidence that it is definitely true

proof (n)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dame Agatha Christie (1890-1976) was an English mystery writer and playwright known as the Queen of Crime. Her books have sold more than 100 million copies and have been translated into more than 100 languages.

She was educated at home by her mother and began writing detective fiction while she was working as a nurse during World War I. In her first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920), she introduced the Belgian detective Hercule Poirot. The character appeared in about 25 novels and many short stories. In *Murder at the Vicarage* (1930), she introduced the elderly lady Jane Marple, another important detective figure.

Christie wrote some 75 novels that made best-seller lists and were serialized in popular magazines. Her plays include *Murder on the Orient Express* (1933), *Death on the Nile* (1937), *The Mousetrap* (1952), and *Witness for the Prosecution* (1953). Many of her works were adapted into movies and television series.

Agatha Christie was made a 'Dame of the British Empire' in 1971.

### Sources:

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