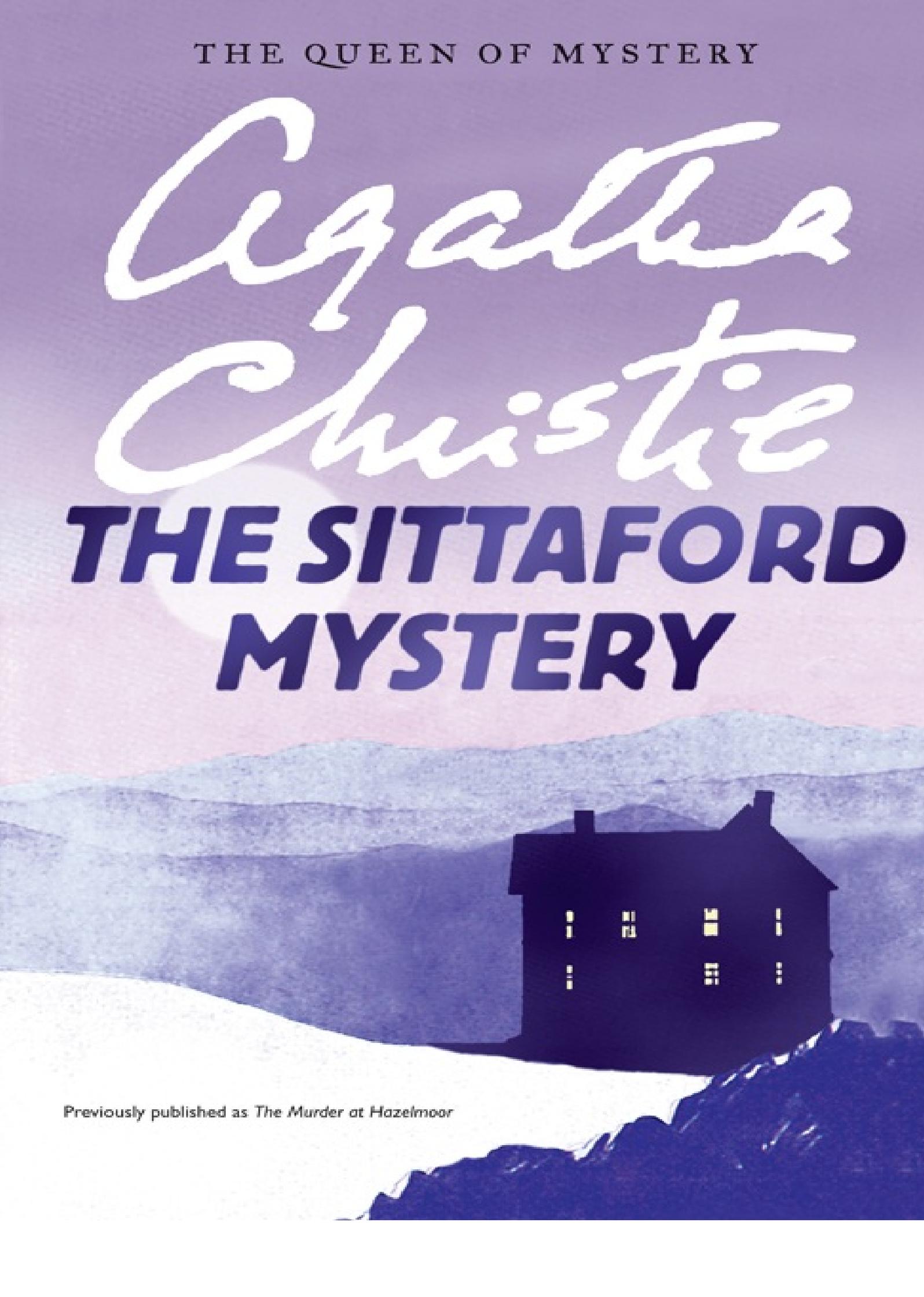


THE QUEEN OF MYSTERY

Agatha
Christie

**THE SITTAFFORD
MYSTERY**

Previously published as *The Murder at Hazelmoor*



Agatha Christie

The Sittaford
Mystery

wm

WILLIAM MORROW

An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers

Dedication

*To M.E.M.
with whom I discussed the plot of this book,
to the alarm of those around us.*

[Title Page](#)

[Dedication](#)

1 [Sittaford House](#)

2 [The Message](#)

3 [Five and Twenty Past Five](#)

4 [Inspector Narracott](#)

5 [Evans](#)

6 [At the Three Crowns](#)

7 [The Will](#)

8 [Mr. Charles Enderby](#)

9 [The Laurels](#)

10 [The Pearson Family](#)

11 [Emily Sets to Work](#)

12 [The Arrest](#)

13 [Sittaford](#)

14 [The Willetts](#)

15 [Visit to Major Burnaby](#)

16 [Mr. Rycroft](#)

17 [Miss Percehouse](#)

18 [Emily Visits Sittaford House](#)

19 [Theories](#)

20 [Visit to Aunt Jennifer](#)

21 [Conversations](#)

22 [Nocturnal Adventures of Charles](#)

23 [At Hazelmoor](#)

24 [Inspector Narracott Discusses the Case](#)

25 [At Deller's Café](#)

26 [Robert Gardner](#)

27 [Narracott Acts](#)

28 [Boots](#)

29 [The Second Séance](#)

30 [Emily Explains](#)

31 [The Lucky Man](#)

[About the Author](#)

[The Agatha Christie Collection](#)

[Related Products](#)

[Copyright](#)

[About the Publisher](#)

[SITTAFFORD HOUSE](#)

Major Burnaby drew on his gum boots, buttoned his overcoat collar round his neck, took from a shelf near the door a hurricane lantern, and cautiously opened the front door of his little bungalow and peered out.

The scene that met his eyes was typical of the English countryside as depicted on Xmas cards and in old-fashioned melodramas. Everywhere was snow, deep drifts of it—no mere powdering an inch or two thick. Snow had fallen all over England for the last four days, and up here on the fringe of Dartmoor it had attained a depth of several feet. All over England householders were groaning over burst pipes, and to have a plumber friend (or even a plumber's mate) was the most coveted of distinctions.

Up here, in the tiny village of Sittaford, at all times remote from the world, and now almost completely cut off, the rigours of winter were a very real problem.

Major Burnaby, however, was a hardy soul. He snorted twice, grunted once, and marched resolutely out into the snow.

His destination was not far away. A few paces along a winding lane, then in at a gate, and so up a drive partially swept clear of snow to a house of some considerable size built of granite.

The door was opened by a neatly clad parlourmaid. The Major was divested of his British Warmsuit, his gum boots and his aged scarf.

A door was flung open and he passed through it into a room which conveyed all the illusion of a transformation scene.

Although it was only half past three the curtains had been drawn, the electric lights were on and a huge fire blazed cheerfully on the hearth. Two women in afternoon frocks rose to greet the staunch old warrior.

"Splendid of you to turn out, Major Burnaby," said the elder of the two.

"Not at all, Mrs. Willett, not at all. Very good of you to ask me." He shook hands with them both.

"Mr. Garfield is coming," went on Mrs. Willett, "and Mr. Duke, and Mr. Rycroft *said* he would come—but one can hardly expect him at his age in such weather. Really, it is *too* dreadful. One feels one *must* do something to keep oneself cheerful. Violet, put another log on the fire."

The Major rose gallantly to perform this task.

"Allow me, Miss Violet."

He put the log expertly in the right place and returned once more to the armchair his hostess had indicated. Trying not to appear as though he were doing so, he cast surreptitious glances round the room. Amazing how a couple of women could alter the whole character of a room—and without doing anything very outstanding that you could put your finger on.

Sittaford House had been built ten years ago by Captain Joseph Trevelyan, R.N., on the occasion of his retirement from the Navy. He was a man of substance, and he had always had a great hankering to live on Dartmoor. He had placed his choice on the tiny hamlet of Sittaford. It was not in a valley like most of the villages and farms, but perched right on the shoulder of the moor under the shadow of Sittaford Beacon. He had purchased a large tract of ground, had built a comfortable house with its own electric light plant and an electric pump to save labour in pumping water. Then, as a speculation, he had built six small bungalows, each in its quarter acre of ground, along the lane.

The first of these, the one at his very gates, had been allotted to his old friend and crony, John Burnaby—the others had by degrees been sold, there being still a few people who from choice or necessity like to live right out of the world. The village itself consisted of three picturesque but dilapidated cottages, a forge and a combined post office and sweet shop. The nearest town was Exhampton, six miles away, a steady descent which necessitated the sign, “Motorists engage your lowest gear,” so familiar on the Dartmoor roads.

Captain Trevelyan, as has been said, was a man of substance. In spite of this—or perhaps because of it—he was a man who was inordinately fond of money. At the end of October a house agent in Exhampton wrote to him asking if he would consider letting Sittaford House. A tenant had made inquiries concerning it, wishing to rent it for the winter.

Captain Trevelyan’s first impulse was to refuse, his second to demand further information. The tenant in question proved to be a Mrs. Willett, a widow with one daughter. She had recently arrived from South Africa and wanted a house on Dartmoor for the winter.

“Damn it all, the woman must be mad,” said Captain Trevelyan. “Eh, Burnaby, don’t you think so?”

Burnaby did think so, and said so as forcibly as his friend had done.

“Anyway, you don’t want to let,” he said. “Let the fool woman go somewhere else if she wants to freeze. Coming from South Africa too!”

But at this point Captain Trevelyan’s money complex asserted itself. Not once in a hundred times would you get a chance of letting your house in mid-winter. He demanded what rent the tenant was willing to pay.

An offer of twelve guineas a week clinched matters. Captain Trevelyan went into Exhampton, rented a small house on the outskirts at two guineas a week, and handed over Sittaford House to Mrs. Willett, half the rent to be paid in advance.

“A fool and her money are soon parted,” he growled.

But Burnaby was thinking this afternoon as he scanned Mrs. Willett covertly, that she did not look a fool. She was a tall woman with a rather silly manner—but her physiognomy was shrewd rather than foolish. She was inclined to overdress, had a distinct Colonial accent, and seemed perfectly content with the transaction. She was clearly very well-off and that—as Burnaby had reflected more than once—really made the whole affair more odd. She was not the kind of woman one would credit with a passion for solitude.

As a neighbour she had proved almost embarrassingly friendly. Invitations to Sittaford House were rained on everybody. Captain Trevelyan was constantly urged to “Treat the house as though we hadn’t rented it.” Trevelyan, however, was not fond of women. Report went that he had been jilted in his

youth. He persistently refused all invitations.

Two months had passed since the installation of the Willetts and the first wonder at their arrival had passed away.

Burnaby, naturally a silent man, continued to study his hostess, oblivious to any need for small talk. Liked to make herself out a fool, but wasn't really. So he summed up the situation. His glance shifted to Violet Willett. Pretty girl—scraggy, of course—they all were nowadays. What was the good of a woman if she didn't look like a woman? Papers said curves were coming back. About time too.

He roused himself to the necessity of conversation.

"We were afraid at first that you wouldn't be able to come," said Mrs. Willett. "You said so, you remember. We were so pleased when you said that after all you would."

"Friday," said Major Burnaby, with an air of being explicit.

Mrs. Willett looked puzzled.

"Friday?"

"Every Friday go to Trevelyan's. Tuesday he comes to me. Both of us done it for years."

"Oh! I see. Of course, living so near—"

"Kind of habit."

"But do you still keep it up? I mean now that he is living in Exhampton—"

"Pity to break a habit," said Major Burnaby. "We'd both of us miss those evenings."

"You go in for competitions, don't you?" asked Violet. "Acrostics and crosswords and all those things."

Burnaby nodded.

"I do crosswords. Trevelyan does acrostics. We each stick to our own line of country. I won three books last month in a crossword competition," he volunteered.

"Oh! really. How nice. Were they interesting books?"

"Don't know. Haven't read them. Looked pretty hopeless."

"It's the winning them that matters, isn't it?" said Mrs. Willett vaguely.

"How do you get to Exhampton?" asked Violet. "You haven't got a car."

"Walk."

"What? Not really? Six miles."

"Good exercise. What's twelve miles? Keeps a man fit. Great thing to be fit."

"Fancy! Twelve miles. But both you and Captain Trevelyan were great athletes, weren't you?"

"Used to go to Switzerland together. Winter sports in winter, climbing in summer. Wonderful man on ice, Trevelyan. Both too old for that sort of thing nowadays."

"You won the Army Racquets Championship, too, didn't you?" asked Violet.

The Major blushed like a girl.

"Who told you that?" he mumbled.

"Captain Trevelyan."

"Joe should hold his tongue," said Burnaby. "He talks too much. What's the weather like now?"

Respecting his embarrassment, Violet followed him to the window. They drew the curtain aside and looked out over the desolate scene.

"More snow coming," said Burnaby. "A pretty heavy fall too, I should say."

“Oh! how thrilling,” said Violet. “I do think snow is so romantic. I’ve never seen it before.”

“It isn’t romantic when the pipes freeze, you foolish child,” said her mother.

“Have you lived all your life in South Africa, Miss Willett?” asked Major Burnaby.

Some of the girl’s animation dropped away from her. She seemed almost constrained in her manner as she answered.

“Yes—this is the first time I’ve ever been away. It’s all most frightfully thrilling.”

Thrilling to be shut away like this in a remote moorland village? Funny ideas. He couldn’t get the hang of these people.

The door opened and the parlourmaid announced:

“Mr. Rycroft and Mr. Garfield.”

There entered a little elderly, dried-up man and a fresh-coloured, boyish young man. The latter spoke first.

“I brought him along, Mrs. Willett. Said I wouldn’t let him be buried in a snowdrift. Ha, ha. I say, this all looks simply marvellous. Yule logs burning.”

“As he says, my young friend very kindly piloted me here,” said Mr. Rycroft as he shook hands somewhat ceremoniously. “How do you do, Miss Violet? Very seasonable weather—rather too seasonable, I fear.”

He moved to the fire talking to Mrs. Willett. Ronald Garfield buttonholed Violet.

“I say, can’t we get up any skating anywhere? Aren’t there some ponds about?”

“I think path digging will be your only sport.”

“I’ve been at it all the morning.”

“Oh! you he-man.”

“Don’t laugh at me. I’ve got blisters all over my hands.”

“How’s your aunt?”

“Oh! she’s always the same—sometimes she says she’s better and sometimes she says she’s worse, but I think it’s all the same really. It’s a ghastly life, you know. Each year, I wonder how I can stick it—but there it is—if one doesn’t rally round the old bird for Xmas—why, she’s quite capable of leaving her money to a Cat’s Home. She’s got five of them, you know. I’m always stroking the brutes and pretending I dote upon them.”

“I like dogs much better than cats.”

“So do I. Any day. What I mean is a dog is—well, a dog’s a dog, you know.”

“Has your aunt always been fond of cats?”

“I think it’s just a kind of thing old maids grow into. Ugh! I hate the brutes.”

“Your aunt’s very nice, but rather frightening.”

“I should think she was frightening. Snaps my head off sometimes. Thinks I’ve got no brains, you know.”

“Not really?”

“Oh! look here, don’t say it like that. Lots of fellows look like fools and are laughing underneath.”

“Mr. Duke,” announced the parlourmaid.

Mr. Duke was a recent arrival. He had bought the last of the six bungalows in September. He was a big man, very quiet and devoted to gardening. Mr. Rycroft who was an enthusiast on birds and wh

lived next door to him had taken him up, overruling the section of thought which voiced the opinion that of course Mr. Duke was a very nice man, quite unassuming, but was he, after all, quite—well, quite? Mightn't he, just possibly, be a retired tradesman?

But nobody liked to ask him—and indeed it was thought better not to know. Because if one did know, it might be awkward, and really in such a small community it was best to know everybody.

“Not walking to Exhampton in this weather?” he asked of Major Burnaby.

“No, I fancy Trevelyan will hardly expect me tonight.”

“It's awful, isn't it?” said Mrs. Willett with a shudder. “To be buried up here, year after year—must be ghastly.”

Mr. Duke gave her a quick glance. Major Burnaby too stared at her curiously.

But at that moment tea was brought in.

THE MESSAGE

After tea, Mrs. Willett suggested bridge.

“There are six of us. Two can cut in.”

Ronnie’s eyes brightened.

“You four start,” he suggested. “Miss Willett and I will cut in.”

But Mr. Duke said that he did not play bridge.

Ronnie’s face fell.

“We might play a round game,” said Mrs. Willett.

“Or table-turning,” suggested Ronnie. “It’s a spooky evening. We spoke about it the other day, you remember. Mr. Rycroft and I were talking about it this evening as we came along here.”

“I am a member of the Psychical Research Society,” explained Mr. Rycroft in his precise way. “I was able to put my young friend right on one or two points.”

“Tommy rot,” said Major Burnaby very distinctly.

“Oh! but it’s great fun, don’t you think?” said Violet Willett. “I mean, one doesn’t believe in it or anything. It’s just an amusement. What do you say, Mr. Duke?”

“Anything you like, Miss Willett.”

“We must turn the lights out, and we must find a suitable table. No—not that one, Mother. I’m sure it’s much too heavy.”

Things were settled at last to everyone’s satisfaction. A small round table with a polished top was brought from an adjoining room. It was set in front of the fire and everyone took his place round it with the lights switched off.

Major Burnaby was between his hostess and Violet. On the other side of the girl was Ronnie Garfield. A cynical smile creased the Major’s lips. He thought to himself:

“In my young days it was Up Jenkins.” And he tried to recall the name of a girl with fluffy hair whose hand he had held beneath the table at considerable length. A long time ago that was. But Up Jenkins had been a good game.

There were all the usual laughs, whispers, stereotyped remarks.

“The spirits are a long time.”

“Got a long way to come.”

“Hush—nothing will happen unless we are serious.”

“Oh! do be quiet—everyone.”

“Nothing’s happening.”

“Of course not—it never does at first.”

“If only you’d all be quiet.”

At last, after some time, the murmur of talk died away.

A silence.

“This table’s dead as mutton,” murmured Ronnie Garfield disgustedly.

“Hush.”

A tremor ran through the polished surface. The table began to rock.

“Ask it questions. Who shall ask? You, Ronnie.”

“Oh—er—I say—what do I ask it?”

“Is a spirit present?” prompted Violet.

“Oh! Hullo—is a spirit present?”

A sharp rock.

“That means yes,” said Violet.

“Oh! er—who are you?”

No response.

“Ask it to spell its name.”

The table started rocking violently.

“*A B C D E F G H I*—I say, was that *I* or *J*?”

“Ask it. Was that *I*?”

One rock.

“Yes. Next letter, please.”

The spirit’s name was *Ida*.

“Have you a message for anyone here?”

“Yes.”

“Who is it for? Miss Willett?”

“No.”

“Mrs. Willett?”

“No.”

“Mr. Rycroft?”

“No.”

“Me?”

“Yes.”

“It’s for you, Ronnie. Go on. Make it spell it out.”

The table spelt “*Diana*.”

“Who’s *Diana*? Do you know anyone called *Diana*?”

“No, I don’t. At least—”

“There you are. He does.”

“Ask her if she’s a widow?”

The fun went on. Mr. Rycroft smiled indulgently. Young people must have their jokes. He caught one glance of his hostess’s face in a sudden flicker of the firelight. It looked worried and abstracted. Her thoughts were somewhere faraway.

Major Burnaby was thinking of the snow. It was going to snow again this evening. Hardest winter he ever remembered.

Mr. Duke was playing very seriously. The spirits, alas, paid very little attention to him. All the messages seemed to be for Violet and Ronnie.

Violet was told she was going to Italy. Someone was going with her. Not a woman. A man. His name was Leonard.

More laughter. The table spelt the name of the town. A Russian jumble of letters—not in the least Italian.

The usual accusations were levelled.

“Look here, Violet,” (“Miss Willett” had been dropped) “you are shoving.”

“I’m not. Look, I take my hands right off the table and it rocks just the same.”

“I like raps. I’m going to ask it to rap. Loud ones.”

“There should be raps.” Ronnie turned to Mr. Rycroft. “There ought to be raps, oughtn’t there, sir?”

“Under the circumstances, I should hardly think it likely,” said Mr. Rycroft drily.

There was a pause. The table was inert. It returned no answer to questions.

“Has Ida gone away?”

One languid rock.

“Will another spirit come, please?”

Nothing. Suddenly the table began to quiver and rock violently.

“Hurrah. Are you a new spirit?”

“Yes.”

“Have you a message for someone?”

“Yes.”

“For me?”

“No.”

“For Violet?”

“No.”

“For Major Burnaby?”

“Yes.”

“It’s for you, Major Burnaby. Will you spell it out, please?”

The table started rocking slowly.

“*T R E V*—are you sure it’s *V*? It can’t be. *T R E V*—it doesn’t make sense.”

“Trevelyan, of course,” said Mrs. Willett. “Captain Trevelyan.”

“Do you mean Captain Trevelyan?”

“Yes.”

“You’ve got a message for Captain Trevelyan?”

“No.”

“Well, what is it then?”

The table began to rock—slowly, rhythmically. So slowly that it was easy to count the letters.

“*D*—” a pause. “*E—A D*.”

“Dead.”

“Somebody is dead?”

Instead of Yes or No, the table began to rock again till it reached the letter *T*.

~~“T—do you mean Trevelyan?”~~

“Yes.”

“You don’t mean Trevelyan is dead?”

“Yes.”

A very sharp rock. “Yes.”

Somebody gasped. There was a faint stir all round the table.

Ronnie’s voice as he resumed his questions held a different note—an awed uneasy note.

“You mean—that Captain Trevelyan is dead?”

“Yes.”

There was a pause. It was as though no one knew what to ask next, or how to take this unexpected development.

And in the pause, the table started rocking again.

Rhythmically and slowly, Ronnie spelled out the letters aloud. . . .

M-U-R-D-E-R. . . .

Mrs. Willett gave a cry and took her hands off the table.

“I won’t go on with this. It’s horrible. I don’t like it.”

Mr. Duke’s voice rang out, resonant and clear. He was questioning the table.

“Do you mean—that Captain Trevelyan has been murdered?”

The last word had hardly left his lips when the answer came. The table rocked so violently and assertively that it nearly fell over. One rock only.

“Yes. . . .”

“Look here,” said Ronnie. He took his hands from the table. “I call this a rotten joke.” His voice trembled.

“Turn up the lights,” said Mr. Rycroft.

Major Burnaby rose and did so. The sudden glare revealed a company of pale uneasy faces.

Everyone looked at each other. Somehow—nobody quite knew what to say.

“All rot, of course,” said Ronnie with an uneasy laugh.

“Silly nonsense,” said Mrs. Willett. “Nobody ought to—to make jokes like that.”

“Not about people dying,” said Violet. “It’s—oh! I don’t like it.”

“I wasn’t shoving,” said Ronnie, feeling unspoken criticism levelled at him. “I swear I wasn’t.”

“I can say the same,” said Mr. Duke. “And you, Mr. Rycroft?”

“Certainly not,” said Mr. Rycroft warmly.

“You don’t think I’d make a joke of that kind, do you?” growled Major Burnaby. “Rotten bad taste.”

“Violet dear—”

“I didn’t, Mother. Indeed, I didn’t. I wouldn’t do such a thing.”

The girl was almost tearful.

Everyone was embarrassed. A sudden blight had come over the cheerful party.

Major Burnaby pushed back his chair, went to the window and pulled aside the curtain. He stood there looking out with his back to the room.

“Twenty-five minutes past five,” said Mr. Rycroft glancing up at the clock. He compared it with his own watch and somehow everyone felt the action was significant in some way.

“Let me see,” said Mrs. Willett with forced cheerfulness. “I think we’d better have cocktails. Will you ring the bell, Mr. Garfield?”

Ronnie obeyed.

Ingredients for cocktails were brought and Ronnie was appointed mixer. The situation grew a little easier.

“Well,” said Ronnie, raising his glass. “Here’s how.”

The others responded—all but the silent figure by the window.

“Major Burnaby. Here’s your cocktail.”

The Major roused himself with a start. He turned slowly.

“Thank you, Mrs. Willett. Not for me.” He looked once more out into the night, then came slowly back to the group by the fire. “Many thanks for a very pleasant time. Good night.”

“You’re not going?”

“Afraid I must.”

“Not so soon. And on a night like this.”

“Sorry, Mrs. Willett—but it’s got to be done. If there were only a telephone.”

“A telephone?”

“Yes—to tell you the truth—I’m—well. I’d like to be sure that Joe Trevelyan’s all right. Still, superstition and all that—but there it is. Naturally, I don’t believe in this tommy rot—but—”

“But you can’t telephone from anywhere. There’s not such a thing in Sittaford.”

“That’s just it. As I can’t telephone, I’ll have to go.”

“Go—but you couldn’t get a car down that road! Elmer wouldn’t take his car out on such a night.”

Elmer was the proprietor of the sole car in the place, an aged Ford, hired at a handsome price by those who wished to go into Exhampton.

“No, no—car’s out of the question. My two legs will take me there, Mrs. Willett.”

There was a chorus of protest.

“Oh! Major Burnaby—it’s *impossible*. You said yourself it was going to snow.”

“Not for an hour—perhaps longer. I’ll get there, never fear.”

“Oh! you can’t. We can’t allow it.”

She was seriously disturbed and upset.

But argument and entreaty had no more effect on Major Burnaby than if he were a rock. He was an obstinate man. Once his mind was made up on any point, no power on earth could move him.

He had determined to walk to Exhampton and see for himself that all was well with his old friend and he repeated that simple statement half a dozen times.

In the end they were brought to realize that he meant it. He wrapped himself up in his overcoat, lighted the hurricane lantern, and stepped out into the night.

“I’ll just drop in to my place for a flask,” he said cheerily, “and then push straight on. Trevelyan will put me up for the night when I get there. Ridiculous fuss, I know. Everything sure to be all right. Don’t worry, Mrs. Willett. Snow or no snow—I’ll get there in a couple of hours. Good night.”

He strode away. The others returned to the fire.

Rycroft had looked up at the sky.

“It *is* going to snow,” he murmured to Mr. Duke. “And it will begin long before he gets to Exhampton. I—I hope he gets there all right.”

Duke frowned.

“I know. I feel I ought to have gone with him. One of us ought to have done so.”

“Most distressing,” Mrs. Willett was saying, “most distressing. Violet, I will not have that silly game ever played again. Poor Major Burnaby will probably plunge into a snowdrift—or if he doesn’t, he’ll die of the cold and exposure. At his age, too. Very foolish of him to go off like that. Of course Captain Trevelyan is perfectly all right.”

Everyone echoed:

“Of course.”

But even now they did not feel really too comfortable.

Supposing something *had* happened to Captain Trevelyan. . . .

Supposing. . . .

FIVE AND TWENTY PAST FIVE

Two and a half hours later, just before eight o'clock, Major Burnaby, hurricane lantern in hand, his head dropped forward so as not to meet the blinding drive of snow, stumbled up the path to the door of "Hazelmoor," the small house tenanted by Captain Trevelyan.

The snow had begun to fall about an hour ago—great blinding flakes of it. Major Burnaby was gasping, emitting the loud sighing gasps of an utterly exhausted man. He was numbed with cold. He stamped his feet, blew, puffed, snorted and applied a numbed finger to the bell push.

The bell trilled shrilly.

Burnaby waited. After a pause of a few minutes, as nothing happened, he pushed the bell again.

Once more there was no stir of life.

Burnaby rang a third time. This time he kept his finger on the bell.

It trilled on and on—but there was still no sign of life in the house.

There was a knocker on the door. Major Burnaby seized it and worked it vigorously, producing a noise like thunder.

And still the little house remained silent as the dead.

The Major desisted. He stood for a moment as though perplexed—then he slowly went down the path and out at the gate, continuing on the road he had come towards Exhampton. A hundred yards brought him to the small police station.

He hesitated again, then finally made up his mind and entered.

Constable Graves, who knew the Major well, rose in astonishment.

"Well, I never, sir, fancy you being out on a night like this."

"Look here," said Burnaby curtly. "I've been ringing and knocking at the Captain's house and can't get any answer."

"Why, of course, it's Friday," said Graves who knew the habits of the two pretty well. "But you don't mean to say you've actually come down from Sittaford on a night like this? Surely the Captain would never expect you."

"Whether he's expected me or not, I've come," said Burnaby testily. "And as I'm telling you, I can't get in. I've rung and knocked and nobody answers."

Some of his uneasiness seemed to communicate itself to the policeman.

"That's odd," he said, frowning.

"Of course, it's odd," said Burnaby.

"It's not as though he's likely to be out—on a night like this."

"Of course he's not likely to be out."

"It is odd," said Graves again.

Burnaby displayed impatience at the man's slowness.

"Aren't you going to do something?" he snapped.

"Do something?"

"Yes, do something."

The policeman ruminated.

"Think he might have been taken bad?" His face brightened. "I'll try the telephone." It stood at his elbow. He took it up and gave the number.

But to the telephone, as to the front door bell, Captain Trevelyan gave no reply.

"Looks as though he *has* been taken bad," said Graves as he replaced the receiver. "And all alone in the house, too. We'd best get hold of Dr. Warren and take him along with us."

Dr. Warren's house was almost next door to the police station. The doctor was just sitting down to dinner with his wife and was not best pleased at the summons. However, he grudgingly agreed to accompany them, drawing on an aged British Warm and a pair of rubber boots and muffling his neck with a knitted scarf.

The snow was still falling.

"Damnable night," murmured the doctor. "Hope you haven't brought me out on a wild goose chase. Trevelyan's as strong as a horse. Never has anything the matter with him."

Burnaby did not reply.

Arriving at Hazelmoor once more, they rang again and knocked, but elicited no response.

The doctor then suggested going round the house to one of the back windows.

"Easier to force than the door."

Graves agreeing, they went round the back. There was a side door which they tried on the way, but it too was locked, and presently they emerged on the snow-covered lawn that led up to the back windows. Suddenly, Warren uttered an exclamation.

"The window of the study—it's open."

True enough, the window, a French one, was standing ajar. They quickened their steps. On a night like this, no one in his senses would open a window. There was a light in the room that streamed out as a thin yellow band.

The three men arrived simultaneously at the window—Burnaby was the first man to enter, the constable hard on his heels.

They both stopped dead inside and something like a muffled cry came from the ex-soldier. In another moment Warren was beside them, and saw what they had seen.

Captain Trevelyan lay on the floor, face downwards. His arms sprawled widely. The room was in confusion—drawers of the bureau pulled out, papers lying about the floor. The window beside them was splintered where it had been forced near the lock. Beside Captain Trevelyan was a dark green baize tube about two inches in diameter.

Warren sprang forward. He knelt down by the prostrate figure.

One minute sufficed. He rose to his feet, his face pale.

"He's dead?" asked Burnaby.

The doctor nodded.

Then he turned to Graves.

“It’s for you to say what’s to be done. I can do nothing except examine the body and perhaps you rather I didn’t do that until the Inspector comes. I can tell you the cause of death now. Fracture of the base of the skull. And I think I can make a guess at the weapon.”

He indicated the green baize tube.

“Trevelyan always had them along the bottom of the door—to keep the draught out,” said Burnaby.

His voice was hoarse.

“Yes—a very efficient form of sandbag.”

“My God!”

“But this here—” the constable broke in, his wits arriving at the point slowly. “You mean—this here is murder.”

The policeman stepped to the table on which stood a telephone.

Major Burnaby approached the doctor.

“Have you any idea,” he said, breathing hard, “how long he’s been dead?”

“About two hours, I should say, or possibly three. That’s a rough estimate.”

Burnaby passed his tongue over dry lips.

“Would you say,” he asked, “that he might have been killed at five twenty-five?”

The doctor looked at him curiously.

“If I had to give a time definitely, that’s just about the time I would suggest.”

“Oh my God,” said Burnaby.

Warren stared at him.

The Major felt his way blindly to a chair, collapsed onto it and muttered to himself whilst a kind of staring terror overspread his face.

“*Five and twenty past five—*Oh my God, then it was true after all.”

Four

INSPECTOR NARRACOTT

It was the morning after the tragedy, and two men were standing in the little study of Hazelmoor.

Inspector Narracott looked round him. A little frown appeared upon his forehead.

“Ye-es,” he said thoughtfully. “Ye-es.”

Inspector Narracott was a very efficient officer. He had a quiet persistence, a logical mind and keen attention to detail which brought him success where many another man might have failed.

He was a tall man with a quiet manner, rather faraway grey eyes, and a slow soft Devonshire voice.

Summoned from Exeter to take charge of the case, he had arrived on the first train that morning. The roads had been impassable for cars, even with chains, otherwise he would have arrived the night before. He was standing now in Captain Trevelyan’s study having just completed his examination of the room. With him was Sergeant Pollock of the Exhampton police.

“Ye-es,” said Inspector Narracott.

A ray of pale wintry sunshine came in through the window. Outside was the snowy landscape. There was a fence about a hundred yards from the window and beyond it the steep ascending slope of the snow-covered hillside.

Inspector Narracott bent once more over the body which had been left for his inspection. An athletic man himself, he recognized the athlete’s type, the broad shoulders, narrow flanks, and the good muscular development. The head was small and well set on the shoulders, and the pointed nose and beard was carefully trimmed. Captain Trevelyan’s age, he had ascertained, was sixty, but he looked not much more than fifty-one or two.

“Ah!” said Sergeant Pollock.

The other turned on him.

“What is your view of it?”

“Well—” Sergeant Pollock scratched his head. He was a cautious man, unwilling to advance further than necessary.

“Well,” he said, “as I see it, sir, I should say that the man came to the window, forced the lock, and started rifling the room. Captain Trevelyan, I suppose, must have been upstairs. Doubtless the burglar thought the house was empty—”

“Where is Captain Trevelyan’s bedroom situated?”

“Upstairs, sir. Over this room.”

“At the present time of year it is dark at four o’clock. If Captain Trevelyan was up in his bedroom the electric light would have been on, the burglar would have seen it as he approached this window.”

“You mean he’d have waited.”

“No man in his senses would break into a house with a light in it. If anyone forced this window—”

he did it because he thought the house was empty.”

Sergeant Pollock scratched his head.

“Seems a bit odd, I admit. But there it is.”

“We’ll let it pass for the moment. Go on.”

“Well, suppose the Captain hears a noise downstairs. He comes down to investigate. The burglar hears him coming. He snatches up that bolster arrangement, gets behind the door, and as the Captain enters the room strikes him down from behind.”

Inspector Narracott nodded.

“Yes, that’s true enough. He was struck down when he was facing the window. But all the same, Pollock, I don’t like it.”

“No, sir?”

“No, as I say, I don’t believe in houses that are broken into at five o’clock in the afternoon.”

“We-ell, he may have thought it a good opportunity—”

“It is not a question of opportunity—slipping in because he found a window unlatched. It was deliberate housebreaking—look at the confusion everywhere—what would a burglar go for first? The pantry where the silver is kept.”

“That’s true enough,” admitted the Sergeant.

“And this confusion—this chaos,” continued Narracott, “these drawers pulled out and the contents scattered. Pah! It’s bunkum.”

“Bunkum?”

“Look at the window, Sergeant. *That window was not locked and forced open!* It was merely shattered and then splintered from the outside to give the appearance of forcing.”

Pollock examined the latch of the window closely, uttering an ejaculation to himself as he did so.

“You are right, sir,” he said with respect in his voice. “Who’d have thought of that now!”

“Someone who wishes to throw dust in our eyes—and hasn’t succeeded.”

Sergeant Pollock was grateful for the “our.” In such small ways did Inspector Narracott endear himself to his subordinates.

“Then it wasn’t burglary. You mean, sir, it was an inside job.”

Inspector Narracott nodded. “Yes,” he said. “The only curious thing is, though, that I think the murderer did actually enter by the window. As you and Graves reported, and as I can still see for myself, there are damp patches still visible where the snow melted and was trodden in by the murderer’s boots. These damp patches are only in this room. Constable Graves was quite positive there was nothing of the kind in the hall when he and Dr. Warren passed through it. In this room he noticed them immediately. In that case it seems clear that the murderer was admitted by Captain Trevelyan through the window. Therefore it must have been someone whom Captain Trevelyan knew. You are a local man, Sergeant, can you tell me if Captain Trevelyan was a man who made enemies easily?”

“No, sir, I should say he hadn’t an enemy in the world. A bit keen on money, and a bit of a martinet—wouldn’t stand for any slackness or incivility—but bless my soul, he was respected for that.”

“No enemies,” said Narracott thoughtfully.

“Not here, that is.”

“Very true—we don’t know what enemies he may have made during his naval career. It’s my experience, Sergeant, that a man who makes enemies in one place will make them in another, but we all agree that we can’t put that possibility entirely aside. We come logically now to the next motive—the most common motive for every crime—gain. Captain Trevelyan was, I understand, a rich man?”

“Very warm indeed by all accounts. But close. Not an easy man to touch for a subscription.”

“Ah!” said Narracott thoughtfully.

“Pity it snowed as it did,” said the Sergeant. “But for that we’d have had his footprints for something to go on.”

“There was no one else in the house?” asked the Inspector.

“No. For the last five years Captain Trevelyan has only had one servant—retired naval chap. Up at Sittaford House a woman came in daily, but this chap, Evans, cooked and looked after his master. About a month ago he got married—much to the Captain’s annoyance. I believe that’s one of the reasons he let Sittaford House to this South African lady. He wouldn’t have any woman living in the house. Evans lives just round the corner here in Fore Street with his wife, and comes in daily to do for his master. I’ve got him here now for you to see. His statement is that he left here at half past two yesterday afternoon, the Captain having no further need for him.”

“Yes, I shall want to see him. He may be able to tell us something—useful.”

Sergeant Pollock looked at his superior officer curiously. There was something so odd about his tone.

“You think—” he began.

“I think,” said Inspector Narracott deliberately, “that there’s a lot more in this case than meets the eye.”

“In what way, sir?”

But the Inspector refused to be drawn.

“You say this man, Evans, is here now?”

“He’s waiting in the dining room.”

“Good. I’ll see him straight away. What sort of a fellow is he?”

Sergeant Pollock was better at reporting facts than at descriptive accuracy.

“He’s a retired naval chap. Ugly customer in a scrap, I should say.”

“Does he drink?”

“Never been the worse for it that I know of.”

“What about this wife of his? Not a fancy of the Captain’s or anything of that sort?”

“Oh! no, sir, nothing of that kind about Captain Trevelyan. He wasn’t that kind at all. He was known as a woman hater, if anything.”

“And Evans was supposed to be devoted to his master?”

“That’s the general idea, sir, and I think it would be known if he wasn’t. Exhampton’s a smart place.”

Inspector Narracott nodded.

“Well,” he said, “there’s nothing more to be seen here. I’ll interview Evans and I’ll take a look at the rest of the house and after that we will go over to the Three Crowns and see this Major Burnaby.”

That remark of his about the time was curious. Twenty-five past five, eh? He must know something he hasn't told, or why should he suggest the time of the crime so accurately?"

The two men moved towards the door.

"It's a rum business," said Sergeant Pollock, his eye wandering to the littered floor. "All this burglary fake!"

"It's not that that strikes me as odd," said Narracott, "under the circumstances it was probably the natural thing to do. No—what strikes me as odd is the window."

"The window, sir?"

"Yes. Why should the murderer go to the window? Assuming it was someone Trevelyan knew and admitted without question, why not go to the front door? To get round to this window from the road on a night like last night would have been a difficult and unpleasant proceeding with the snow lying thick as it does. Yet there must have been some reason."

"Perhaps," suggested Pollock, "the man didn't want to be seen turning in to the house from the road."

"There wouldn't be many people about yesterday afternoon to see him. Nobody who could help was out of doors. No—there's some other reason. Well, perhaps it will come to light in due course."

EVANS

They found Evans waiting in the dining room. He rose respectfully on their entrance.

He was a short thickset man. He had very long arms and a habit of standing with his hands clenched. He was clean shaven with small, rather piglike eyes, yet he had a look of cheerfulness and efficiency that redeemed his bulldog appearance.

Inspector Narracott mentally tabulated his impressions.

“Intelligent. Shrewd and practical. Looks rattled.”

Then he spoke:

“You’re Evans, eh?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Christian names?”

“Robert Henry.”

“Ah! Now what do you know about this business?”

“Not a thing, sir. It’s fair knocked me over. To think of the Capting being done in!”

“When did you last see your master?”

“Two o’clock I should say it was, sir. I cleared away the lunch things and laid the table here as you see for supper. The Capting, he told me as I needn’t come back.”

“What do you usually do?”

“As a general rule, I come back about seven for a couple of hours. Not always—sometimes the Capting would say as I needn’t.”

“Then you weren’t surprised when he told you that yesterday you wouldn’t be wanted again?”

“No, sir. I didn’t come back the evening before either—on account of the weather. Very considerate gentleman, the Capting was, as long as you didn’t try to shirk things. I knew him and his ways pretty well.”

“What exactly did he say?”

“Well, he looked out of the window and he says, ‘Not a hope of Burnaby today.’ ‘Shouldn’t wonder,’ he says, ‘if Sittaford isn’t cut off altogether. Don’t remember such a winter since I was a boy.’ That was his friend Major Burnaby over to Sittaford that he was referring to. Always comes on Friday, he does, he and the Capting play chess and do acrostics. And on Tuesdays the Capting would go to Major Burnaby’s. Very regular in his habits was the Capting. Then he said to me: ‘You can go now, Evans, and you needn’t come till tomorrow morning.’ ”

“Apart from his reference to Major Burnaby, he didn’t speak of expecting anyone that afternoon?”

“No, sir, not a word.”

“There was nothing unusual or different in any way in his manner?”

sample content of The Sittaford Mystery (Agatha Christie Mysteries Collection (Paperback))

- [read King of Zunga \(Blade, Book 12\) pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub, doc, mobi](#)
- [Inside Out online](#)
- [download online The Mammoth Book of Sorceror's Tales](#)
- [download online Wanderlove pdf](#)
- **[read online Improve Your IELTS: Writing Skills](#)**

- <http://honareavalmusic.com/?books/King-of-Zunga--Blade--Book-12-.pdf>
- <http://studystategically.com/freebooks/Sourcery--Discworld--Book-5-.pdf>
- <http://www.satilik-kopek.com/library/The-Mammoth-Book-of-Sorceror-s-Tales.pdf>
- <http://deltaphenomics.nl/?library/Wanderlove.pdf>
- <http://yachtwebsitedemo.com/books/Improve-Your-IELTS--Writing-Skills.pdf>