



# AGATHA

THE COMPLETE SHORT STORIES

# CHRISTIE DETECTIVES AND YOUNG ADVENTURERS

FEATURING  
TOMMY &  
TUPPENCE,  
HARLEY QUIN,  
PARKER PYNE,  
PLUS SOME  
CHRISTMAS  
RARITIES

OVER  
50  
STORIES

MASTERPIECES IN MINIATURE



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Agatha Christie

Detectives  
and  
Young Adventurers

The Complete Short Stories

HARPER

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About the Publisher

Part One  
Tommy & Tuppence: Young Adventurers Ltd

## Author's Foreword

I published a book of short stories called *Partners in Crime*. Each story here was written in the manner of some particular detective of the time. Some of them by now I cannot even recognize. I remember Thornley Colton, the blind detective – Austin Freeman, of course; Freeman Wills Croft with his wonderful timetables; and inevitably Sherlock Holmes. It is interesting in a way to see who of the twelve detective story writers that I chose are still well known – some are household names, others have more or less perished in oblivion. They all seemed to me at the time to write well and entertainingly in their different fashions. *Partners in Crime* featured in it my two young sleuths, Tommy and Tuppence, who had been the principal characters in my second book, *The Secret Adversary*. It was fun to get back to them for a change.

AGATHA CHRISTIE  
from *An Autobiography*, 1977

# Chapter 1

## A Fairy in the Flat

‘A Fairy in the Flat’ and ‘A Pot of Tea’, the two opening chapters of the 1929 book *Partners in Crime*, were first published together as ‘Publicity’ in *The Sketch*, 24 September 1924. It set the scene for a continuous run of twelve Tommy and Tuppence stories, in which Agatha Christie parodied well-known literary detectives.

Mrs Thomas Beresford shifted her position on the divan and looked gloomily out of the window of the flat. The prospect was not an extended one, consisting solely of a small block of flats on the other side of the road. Mrs Beresford sighed and then yawned.

‘I wish,’ she said, ‘something would happen.’

Her husband looked up reprovably.

‘Be careful, Tuppence, this craving for vulgar sensation alarms me.’

Tuppence sighed and closed her eyes dreamily.

‘So Tommy and Tuppence were married,’ she chanted, ‘and lived happily ever afterwards. And six years later they were still living together happily ever afterwards. It is extraordinary,’ she said, ‘how different everything always is from what you think it is going to be.’

‘A very profound statement, Tuppence. But not original. Eminent poets and still more eminent divines have said it before – and if you will excuse me saying so, have said it better.’

‘Six years ago,’ continued Tuppence, ‘I would have sworn that with sufficient money to buy things with, and with you for a husband, all life would have been one grand sweet song, as one of the poets you seem to know so much about puts it.’

‘Is it me or the money that palls upon you?’ inquired Tommy coldly.

‘Palls isn’t exactly the word,’ said Tuppence kindly. ‘I’m used to my blessings, that’s all. Just as one never thinks what a boon it is to be able to breathe through one’s nose until one has a cold in the head.’

‘Shall I neglect you a little?’ suggested Tommy. ‘Take other women about to night clubs. That sort of thing.’

‘Useless,’ said Tuppence. ‘You would only meet me there with other men. And I should know perfectly well that you didn’t care for the

other women, whereas you would never be quite sure that I didn't care for the other men. Women are so much more thorough.'

'It's only in modesty that men score top marks,' murmured her husband. 'But what is the matter with you, Tuppence? Why this yearning discontent?'

'I don't know. I want things to happen. Exciting things. Wouldn't you like to go chasing German spies again, Tommy? Think of the wild days of peril we went through once. Of course I know you're more or less in the Secret Service now, but it's pure office work.'

'You mean you'd like them to send me into darkest Russia disguised as a Bolshevik bootlegger, or something of that sort?'

'That wouldn't be any good,' said Tuppence. 'They wouldn't let me go with you and I'm the person who wants something to do so badly. Something to do. That is what I keep saying all day long.'

'Women's sphere,' suggested Tommy, waving his hand.

'Twenty minutes' work after breakfast every morning keeps the flag going to perfection. You have nothing to complain of, have you?'

'Your housekeeping is so perfect, Tuppence, as to be almost monotonous.'

'I do like gratitude,' said Tuppence.

'You, of course, have got your work,' she continued, 'but tell me, Tommy, don't you ever have a secret yearning for excitement, for things to *happen*?'

'No,' said Tommy, 'at least I don't think so. It is all very well to want things to happen – they might not be pleasant things.'

'How prudent men are,' sighed Tuppence. 'Don't you ever have a wild secret yearning for romance – adventure – life?'

'What *have* you been reading, Tuppence?' asked Tommy.

'Think how exciting it would be,' went on Tuppence, 'if we heard a wild rapping at the door and went to open it and in staggered a dead man.'

'If he was dead he couldn't stagger,' said Tommy critically.

'You know what I mean,' said Tuppence. 'They always stagger in just before they die and fall at your feet, just gasping out a few enigmatic words. "The Spotted Leopard", or something like that.'

'I advise a course of Schopenhauer or Emmanuel Kant,' said Tommy.

'That sort of thing would be good for you,' said Tuppence. 'You are getting fat and comfortable.'

'I am not,' said Tommy indignantly. 'Anyway you do slimming exercises yourself.'