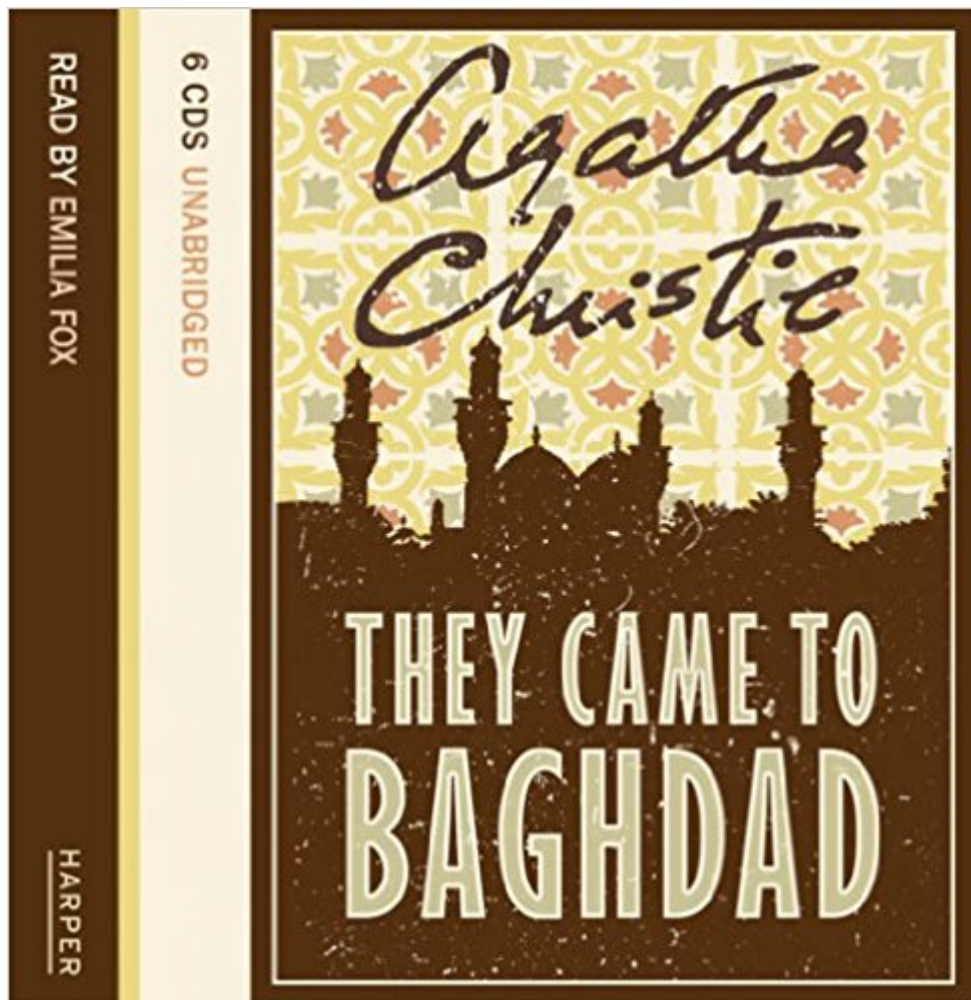




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They Came To Baghdad



Synopsis

A new audio edition of the Agatha Christie thriller. Baghdad is the chosen location for a secret summit of superpowers, concerned but not convinced, about the development of an, as yet, unidentified and undescribed secret weapon. Only one man has the proof that can confirm the nature of this fantastic secret weapon - a British agent named Carmichael. Unfortunately the criminal organisation responsible for the weapon's development will stop at nothing to prevent him entering Baghdad and presenting his proof to the assembled delegates. Can Carmichael enter the city against such odds? Into this explosive situation appears Victoria Jones, a girl with a yearning for adventure who gets more than she bargains for when a wounded Carmichael dies in her arms in her hotel room. Now, if only she could make sense of his last words '...Lucifer...Basrah...Lefarge...'

Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd; Unabridged edition edition (July 1, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0007206720

ISBN-13: 978-0007206728

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.6 x 5.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.8 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 335 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,264,191 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #35 in [Books > Books on CD](#)
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Customer Reviews

'A very human heroine, whose powers of invention, just like those of her creator, never fail her'
Times Literary Supplement
'The acknowledged queen of detective fiction.'
The Observer

Baghdad is holding a secret superpower summit, but the word is out, and an underground organization in the Middle East is plotting to sabotage the talks. Into this explosive situation appears Victoria Jones, a young woman with a yearning for adventure who gets more than she bargains for when a wounded spy dies in her hotel room. The only man who can save the summit is dead. Can Victoria make sense of his dying words: Lucifer, Basrah, Lefarge. --This text refers to an alternate Audio CD edition.

"They Came to Baghdad" is not a Hercule Poirot or Miss Marple mystery. It is really more of a thriller. Victoria Jones, an indifferent London typist loses her job in a typing pool for impersonating her boss's wife and meets a charming young man in a park. Only, he is about to leave for Baghdad. Parting is such sweet sorrow! Not so, thinks Victoria. Undeterred by this obstacle to romance, the resourceful Londoner secures a job paying her passage out East. There she becomes embroiled in international espionage, is forced to flee people who are out to kill her, and finds herself working on an archeological dig. Christie writes in a mature and witty style. The descriptions of post WWII Baghdad and Basrah are fascinating, as are the fully-fleshed (for Christie) cast of characters. Does Victoria ultimately find love? Yes, but not where she expects it. A thoroughly absorbing read for any Christie fan. For another exotic A.C., check out *Murder On the Orient Express* (The Agatha Christie Mystery Collection)

Very enjoyable mystery that takes place around 1950. A young girl, Victoria Jones, who works as a not so good typist in London is caught mimicking the boss' wife. When her boss is on the verge of firing her, she decides that she needs a change and allows herself to be fired, but not before getting the boss to write a good recommendation letter for her. She goes to the park and is wondering what she should do when a young, good looking man approaches her and begins a conversation. The two of them seem to hit it off, but the man, Edward, explains that of all the ill gotten luck, he's leaving the country to go to Baghdad shortly. He mentions where he will be working and the name of his boss, but no last name. Victoria decides to take control of her life. Even though he's going to Baghdad, she's not going to let that stop her from pursuing the relationship, and she is persistent in finding a way to get to Baghdad herself, which she does by assisting an Englishwoman who had broken her arm and needed help. Once there, she has no means of support and tries every which way to locate her Edward. She finally does so but discovers that he's in a neighboring town. She was staying in a room in a fine hotel that was arranged by the woman who brought her to Baghdad, when a man knocks and staggers into her room and asks to be hidden. Her sense of adventure again takes hold of her, and she has him go into her bed under the covers to hide him. The police come but don't think to look for him there. When the police leave, she tells the man to get up, but there's no response. She repeats herself in a more persistent manner but again no response. When she removes the covers she finds that he was killed - stabbed in the chest. Another knock brings another man to her door, and this time, it's someone who is from some type of British government organization and she becomes embroiled in a plot to prevent the assassination of several political

figures who will be coming to Baghdad, including the President of the United States. As she innocently tries to uncover information that would be helpful, she finds herself getting deeper into trouble, but she turns out to be extremely resourceful and quick thinking. She gets kidnapped, but manages to escape; she finds herself posing as an anthropologist assisting her "uncle" in various digs; and all the while, she keeps picking up on clues that others around her did not notice, to uncover the plot. Very well done, and it's a joy to follow how she finds herself moving from one situation to the next and how she keeps saving herself. Excellent story.

I have tended to avoid most of Christie's post-World War II novels. Partly because as she grew older her skills began to fade. Several of her last books are really pretty perfunctory. Mainly, though, I think Christie belongs to the pre-1945 world when the Empire was still intact and high tax rates and changed social attitudes had not yet taken their toll on the British upper classes, who are the focus of most of her books. So, I picked up a copy of this book, first published in 1951, without great expectations ... and was in for a terrific surprise. While I would rank this book below her true masterpieces, such as "The Murder of Roger Ackroyd" or "The A.B.C. Murders," I found it to be one of her most entertaining books. Christie spent some time in the Middle East with her archeologist husband and mined the setting for several earlier books, mostly featuring Hercule Poirot. This book is unusual both in not featuring one of her series detectives and in being a spy thriller rather than a murder mystery. It takes the form of a "North by Northwest" style thriller with an innocent person being swept up in a tale of international intrigue. The setting of Iraq must have seemed exotic and unfamiliar to readers in the U.S. and U.K. in 1951. Unfortunately, events of the last decade have made Baghdad, Basra, Kirkuk, and some of the other cities mentioned all too familiar. It's rather ironic to have the Iraq of those days described as well-policed and perfectly safe for a young Englishwoman to travel through alone. Although I very much enjoyed the book, it has a few weaknesses. Both the British intelligence service and its opponents seem fantastically well-organized and effective. Much more so than any real world spy service -- although this is a failing the book shares with most spy thrillers. In addition, key plot developments are telegraphed in a way that even I was able to pick up and I tend to be pretty weak in solving mysteries. In summary, while this book is far from the typical Christie, I think most of her fans, as well as fans of period spy thrillers, will find it very entertaining. One last point: I like these new Harper reprints. Although paperbacks, they can be read easily without breaking the binding and they should hold up to rereading. A word of warning, though, the blurb on the back cover gives away a plot point that doesn't occur until more than half way through the book!

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