

# The First Among Giants

By Carolyn Hart

Agatha Christie, the first Grand Master, is, was, and will always be the world's greatest mystery writer. Her professional achievements and stratospheric sales are known by all. But who was Agatha Clarissa Miller Christie Mallowan? We can glimpse the woman behind the fame through the words of her characters:

Anne Beddingfield in *The Man in the Brown Suit*: "I had the firm conviction that, if I went about looking for adventure, adventure would meet me halfway. It is a theory of mine that one always gets what one wants."

The young nurse in *Towards Zero* speaking to a would-be suicide bitter at being saved: "It may be just by being somewhere—not doing anything—oh, I can't say what I mean but you might just—just walk along a street someday and just by doing that accomplish something terribly important—perhaps without even knowing what it was."

Virginia Revel in *The Secret of Chimneys*: "It's just as exciting to buy a new experience as it is to buy a new dress—more so, in fact."

John Christow in *The Hollow* speaking to his lover, Henrietta, a sculptor: "If I were dead, the first thing you'd do, with tears streaming down your face, would be to start modeling some damned mourning woman or some figure of grief."

Ariadne Oliver in *Mrs. McGinty's Dead* commenting on the misery of having a book adapted to the stage: "...you've no idea of the agony of having your characters taken and made to say things they never would have said and do things they never would have done."



Maureen Summerhayes in *Mrs. McGinty's Dead*: "I never think it matters much what one eats...or what one wears...or what one does. I don't think things matter—not really."

Hester Argyle in *Ordeal by Innocence*: "It's not the guilty who matter. It's the innocent."

Miss Marple in *The Mirror Crack'd*: "Children feel things, you know. They feel things more than the people around them ever imagine."

Mrs. Crabtree in *The Hollow* to Henrietta Savernake, mourning the loss of her lover: "Don't fret, ducky - what's gorn's gorn. You can't have it back."

Miss Marple in *The Body in the Library*: The truth is, you see, that most people—and I don't exclude policemen—are far too trusting for this wicked world. They believe what is told to them. I never do. I'm afraid I always like to prove a thing for myself."

Agatha Christie is to be found in Tommy and Tuppence's insouciance, in Hercule Poirot's cold-eyed appraisal, in Miss Marple's uncanny perceptions, in laughing quips and telling comments. She's there to admire and enjoy and know, Agatha Christie, the world's greatest mystery writer.



Carolyn Hart's fifty-sixth mystery, *Don't Go Home*, will be published May 5. She was named a 2014 MWA Grand Master.