



Beware of the Trains

Edmund Crispin

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Who burglarised the train heading for Victoria Station, and whatever became of its conductor?

Did the village idiot or Mrs Foley murder the mean-spirited Edgar Foley, or could the constable be responsible for the devious deed?

Who on Earth will be able to untangle the affair of the disappearing car, the black necktie, and the abortive theft?

Enter Gervase Fen, Oxford professor and sometime super-sleuth, an expert at solving cases that baffle even the most astute policemen. These sixteen short classics by a master of the modern detective story will test *your* crime solving abilities as well; Edmund Crispin has provided all the clues you need to detect the solution, using logic and common sense. Can *you* meet the challenge?

Contents: Beware of the trains — Humbleby Agonistes — The drowning of Edgar Foley — “*Lacrimae rerum*” — Within the gates — Abhorred shears — The little room — Express delivery — A pot of paint — The quick brown fox — Black for a funeral — The name on the window — The golden mean — Otherwhere — The evidence for the Crown — Deadlock

Beware of the Trains Details

Date : Published July 7th 1987 by Penguin Books (first published 1953)

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Author : Edmund Crispin

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From Reader Review Beware of the Trains for online ebook

Leslie says

I am glad that I read these short stories but more for the sake of completing the Fen series. The stories were fine but I think Crispin does better in the full length books.

Judy Lesley says

Edmund Crispin wrote unusual short stories. They were unusual for me because of their brevity. The mysteries in this collection, first published in 1953, are of the anecdote variety, meaning they are told from the viewpoint of someone who knew the circumstances surrounding the crime to someone else with little or no knowledge of it. Crispin didn't go into a lot of detail in these sixteen short stories so if you want atmosphere from descriptions of locations or the site of the murder you will be disappointed. Instead you will find the circumstances given for a crime which most often has not yet been solved or proved by the authorities. Gervase Fen, a Professor of English Language and Literature in the University of Oxford, is most often discussing the case with Detective Inspector Humbleby of Scotland Yard, but this is not always the case in this collection. Fen has always been one of my favorite fictional crime solvers because he is written in such a sparse, clean way without many personal attachments to take focus away from the case.

This is a short collection of stories from the standpoint of page count, but the temptation was there for me to treat this book with the bon-bon effect: if one is good, then surely another one can't hurt me. I probably would have read the whole book at one sitting if I had been allowed to.

Thank you to NetGalley and Bloomsbury USA for the digital galley of this collection.

S Dizzy says

These were some very twisty mysteries. I enjoyed reading them.

Bev says

Beware of Trains by Edmund Crispin. This is a collection of short stories--with all but two of the sixteen featuring that delightful Oxford don, Gervase Fen. It would be difficult to give you a run-down without spoiling the stories. Let me just say that they are almost all extraordinarily good. We have everything from the story of the missing train conductor to the affair of the disappearing car, black necktie and abortive theft. There's the ex-army man who takes pot-shots at Inspector Humbleby and the drowned man who lost everything but his boots and the locked room that wasn't. And more. And all of them told in the fabulously witty Crispin style. I'm so very glad that I chose it as my last read of 2011. Four stars.

And a favorite quote:

"Discretion," said Fen with great complacency, "is my middle name." "I dare say. But very few people use their middle names." [Inspector Humbleby}
~from the short story "Within the Gates"

Bill Lancaster says

The short stories in 'Beware of Trains' by Edmund Crispin mostly feature Gervase Fen, the Oxford don and amateur detective. If you know of Fen from the full-length novels ('The Moving Toyshop', 'Holy Disorders' and several others), you won't recognize him here.

In the novels, Fen is an irascible, slightly annoying, yet brilliant and articulate solver of crimes. In these stories, his personality takes a back seat. Instead, we have relatively complex plot lines (many of the stories are of the "locked room" category) that read quickly but bear little of Gervase Fen's outgoing personality. But that's okay. The stories are still fascinating to read.

Marie says

3.5 stars.

Good short story collection. Well-written and enjoyable.

Jen says

Thanks to NetGalley for the ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Beware the Trains is a collection of short stories written by Edmund Crispin, (mostly) featuring Oxford don and amateur criminologist Gervase Fen, each of which feature clever puzzles and "impossible" murders. While trains do not feature prominently in any of the stories (only one of the 16 tales) the stories were charming, with clues strewn about to give the reader a fair chance in attempting to solve the mystery before the story's end. I enjoyed the banter and comfortable friendship (of a kind) between Fen and Inspector Humbleby, who is among the few police detectives with whom Fen interacts; their relationship is akin to the Poirot / Japp dynamic. As these short stories tell snippets of their lives and adventures, I'd be interested in reading more of Crispin's books.

Joan says

DO NOT BUY THIS BOOK UNTIL YOU HAVE LOOKED INSIDE!!!

This was given to me as a Christmas present - the 'Bloomsbury Reader' edition with the cover as shown.

I want to read this book. I'd LOVE to give it five stars

BUT

I CAN'T READ THE SODDING PRINT!!

It's the smallest font I have EVER seen in a book. And yes, I am 'of an age' and my eyesight isn't as good as it used to be but dammit - this is just pathetic.

Bloomsbury **NON**-Reader is more appropriate.

And this isn't a cheap mass-produced paperback -even though it looks like it. (The paper looks like its been hanging around on a bookshelf for years - that slightly dirty cream colour.) This book costs £8.99, which is a hell of a lot for what is a badly produced and (to me) unreadable book.

Not a happy bunny.

And for comparison, I was also given (paperback, price £7.99) which is clearly printed and easy on the eye with a decent font and white paper!

Whistlers Mom says

Edmund Crispin's career as a mystery writer always took a back seat to his career as a composer and both careers were hindered by his alcoholism. In spite of this, he wrote nine quirky, erudite, and sometimes hilarious mysteries featuring Professor Gervase Fen of Oxford. He wrote back in the day when there were magazines a-plenty and all paid good money for short stories. His shorts were published in two volumes - FEN COUNTRY and this one. Ironically, many of the stories in FEN COUNTRY don't have Fen in them at all, but most of these do.

There are fifteen stories in all. In some of them, Fen is entertaining his Oxford colleagues (who seem to be as irritable and self-absorbed as he is) with tales of crime. In others, his good friend Inspector Humbleby of Scotland Yard solicits his help on a particularly puzzling case. I think Humbleby is a wonderful character - as intelligent, forceful, and eccentric as Fen himself. Trust me, this is no Japp or Lestrade, but a damned good detective and a likeable man.

Two of the stories don't involve Fen at all. One features a low-key, but shrewd country Inspector named Copperfield. I wish Crispin had been more energetic. I would love to have more stories about him. The other is totally atypical for Crispin - a haunting tale narrated by a young boy. It's the story of a murder in which the reader feels much more sympathy for the murderer than for the victim. Unusual for the 1950's, when most writers took a dim view of murder.

Crispin was a fine writer and I'm glad to be able to read his books and stories on my Kindle. Whoever prepared the Ebook edition of this one was very sloppy and there are numerous typos and stupid mistakes that didn't come from the printed version. It's a shame, but it doesn't take away from a great read.

Bandit says

Not just trains to watch out for. Actually, mostly individuals with murderous agendas of their own. This was such a great concept, mystery stories one can play along with, the ones where the reader is given all the information to crime solve on their own or read along and see how the professionals do it. Gervase Fen, the intrepid protagonist, author's very own Sherlock, actually isn't a professional detective, but an English and literature college professor. Nevertheless he possesses a brain prone to analysis and deduction and solving crimes comes naturally to him, even the cases that stump the detectives. All but the last two stories in this collection feature Fen. And the stories are entertaining and fun and not at all tediously dated, despite their advance years. The narratives are light and quite funny and clever at times. I wish I'd enjoyed them more, but alas my severely sleep deprived brain did not rise up to the challenges of detecting (although was able to puzzle out some things here and there and uncover a bunch of clues) and the quaintness of the golden age mysteries became monotonous after a while. I'm convinced a more alert state of mind and the right mood are needed to appreciate this and many old fashioned mystery fans would relish this collection. Thanks Netgalley.

Alaina Sloo says

Crispin is always wonderful and I enjoyed these stories, but I've never found short story-length mysteries to be very satisfying, and these leave me similarly unengaged, though definitely amused.

Toby says

Edmund Crispin and Gervase Fen, what a team! If between the writer and the detective they don't produce the most fascinating (largely locked room) crimes I don't know who does.

The foreword of this collection of short stories states "the reader is given all the clues needed to enable him to anticipate the solution by the exercise of his logic and common sense," however either the intervening 60 years has caused general knowledge to be lost to the populous or I have no real logic or common sense as most of the mysteries seemed to require a prior knowledge of things that were beyond me.

The style of outlining the mystery was conversational and in this I was reminded of a book of mysteries I bought as a 10 year old, Two-Minute Mysteries, a collection of mysteries for children that didn't provide enough information to enable you to actually solve the puzzle. In both cases it was enjoyable to puzzle through it before accepting that the detective was a genius and moving on to the next one in the hope that *this time I'll solve it first*. For my limited knowledge of this style of mystery, I do not know whether this is a genre staple or just a happy coincidence.

Gervase Fen, that great and eloquent wit from The Moving Toyshop among others, was not really required for these stories as at no point did he ever really get to run around spouting catchphrases and showing off whilst being altogether zany, his history goes before him and allows the softening of the readers incredulity at the improbable nature of the method of deduction but that is all.

Ralph says

Probably these short stories featuring Oxford don and amateur sleuth Gervase Fen will not be every mystery

fan's cuppa, perhaps not even those who have enjoyed Fen's exploits in Crispin's many novels. Fen is clever in all the stories, but few make an actual satisfactory read in the sense of justice served or victims saved/avenged. At best, the police are pointed in the right direction; at worse, the villain gets away with it and we're left with nothing but Fen's cleverness. Pleasing to read for the author's writing style, but not up to Gen's novel-length exploits.

Melissa Dee says

With few exceptions, Gervaise Fen is an oddly unexceptional personality. He has none of the quirks of a Poirot or a Wimsey. His personality doesn't obtrude. The mysteries in "Beware of the Trains" are cerebral. We have all the facts; if we are too stupid or oblivious not to solve the mystery at the same rate as Fen, well, that only says something about us!

I'm a big fan of Golden Age mysteries, and "Beware of the Train" is not a disappointment.

Lisa Kucharski says

Enjoyed the shorts, he even comments on how fictional crime differs from real crime and then has Fen go on to solve a "real" fictional crime. :) As usual, filled with fantastic descriptions of places and persons.
