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Posted on 08 March 2019 By Ngaio Marsh

# Download Book ? Grave Mistake (Roderick Alleyn, #30) ? PDF eBook or Kindle ePUB free

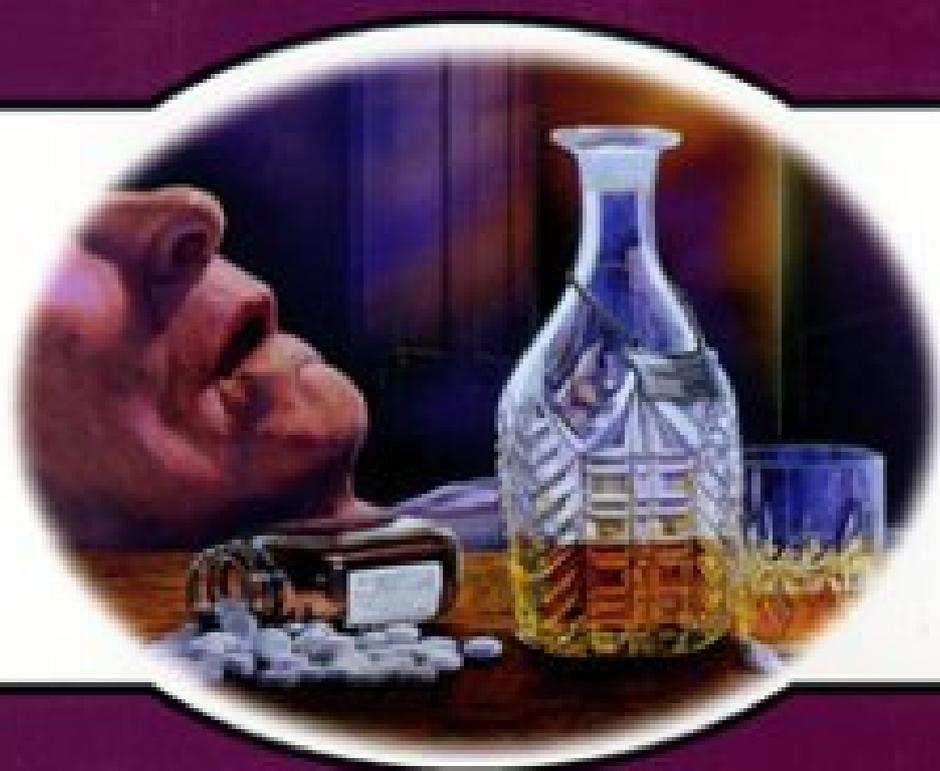
Ngaio Marsh is brilliant for when you are too tired or busy to concentrate on anything high brow, just like Agatha Christie I personally prefer the earlier ones from the 1930s and during the war, and the ones set in New Zealand rather than in the UK, but they are all good I am unashamedly in love with the hero of all Marsh's books, Inspector Alleyn, but again I do prefer him when he's younger in the earlier books Grave Mistake is fine, but it's from the 70s and frankly, all of the characters irritated me somewhat. In Grave Mistake by Ngaio Marsh, former woman of the theater Verity Preston has lived in her original hometown of Upper Quintern and now uses the chance to write plays Her childhood sometimes friend, Sybil Foster, whose daughter Prunella is Verity's goddaughter, accompanies Verity to a private party at the estate of their new neighbor, the rich collector Nicolas Markos There, Verity is alarmed to see a face from her past, now calling himself Dr Basil Schramm, and Sybil is drawn at once to the highly magnetic man Verity can't settle down to her writing before receiving news that Sybil's stepson from her late husband's first marriage, the egregious Claude, is about to arrive from Australia Thus, Sybil checks herself into Greengages, a spa rest home, to avoid having to face Claude. Read the rest of this review and other fun, geeky articles at Fangirl Nation A couple of days ago I was reading a critique of Marsh's novel Last Ditch 1977 that pulled the book apart on a whole bunch of grounds, with most of which I agreed it's indeed pretty dire But when the reviewer then said that all of Marsh's last few books were atrocious I had to demur Grave Mistake, which I'd finished reading literally hours before coincidentally stumbling across the review in question, kept me thoroughly entertained from first page to last and yet was published the year after Last Ditch In terms of pure puzzle, it doesn't rank especially highly, but in every other respect it's a very fine detective novel. Verity Preston, a respectable spinster with a past that was wilder than people might now think, is our primary viewpoint character here I've no idea if Verity is intended as a sort of Ngaio Marsh surrogate, but it certainly feels that way She's not entirely a passive character, but she's settled in her existence as an observer rather than a mover and shaker What she observes are the goings on in the village of Upper Quintern and its environs. And what has just gone on is that Verity's oldest if not closest friend Sophie Foster has died while staying at a rest cure hotel to recover from her latest bout of hypochondria All the signs are that Sophie committed suicide, but everyone who knew her doubts this not only was she not the type, she had every reason to live Moreover, she recently made a bizarre will leaving most of her fortune to the doctor who'd been treating her at the hotel whom she'd known for only a matter of weeks but who happens to be the man with whom

Verity, decades ago, committed most of her wildness. Soon Roderick Alleyn, Marsh's series detective, is called in to investigate alongside his long time sidekick Fox. Mostly because Sophie was so heavingly rich, there are lots of people with motives for offing her. Her stepson by her first marriage, Claude, wants her money. The local millionaire, Nikolas Markos, wants her architectural treasure of a house rather than his own ugly pile and, now that she's dead, will be able to live in it after his son Gideon marries Sophie's daughter Prunella. Prunella and Gideon gain from Sophie's shuffling off of the mortal coil because now there's less impediment to their marriage plans, which Sophie had seemed intent on thwarting. The doctor, as noted, is scheduled to inherit the bulk of Sophie's money, and there are lesser, but non-negligible, bequests to others. Just to add an extra motive for all concerned, Sophie's first husband, killed long ago in the war, took with him to the grave the secret of the whereabouts of the Black Alexander, a fabulously valuable one of a kind postage stamp. As I say, motives everywhere. It's through dazzling us with motives that Marsh most effectively deceives us. Although we tend to think of Marsh as one of the four Queens of Golden Age Crime the others being Sayers, Allingham and Christie it's easy to forget that she was the funniest of them. Allingham could be very funny too and Christie had her moments pretty frequently, but for sheer sustained mirth in a detective novel Marsh took some beating. As I was reading *Grave Mistake* retitled, I think unfortunately, *A Grave Mistake* in many editions it occurred to me that her comedic secret lay not so much in the jokes and bits of situational humor although there are plenty of those as in her detail writing, especially her use of unorthodox adjectives. To take just a single example, at one point we're told that an important pick me up at any police station is a cup of strong tea and a couple of recalcitrant biscuits/cookies. What a lovely term recalcitrant biscuits I can see them now, sitting all woebegone on their chipped white china plate. As I was reading *Grave Mistake* a lot of it felt a tad familiar I assumed I must have read the book decades ago, during the period when I romped through great swathes of GAD, including many of Marsh's novels. Yet I had no idea about who the killer was nor the location of the Black Alexander, both of which are quite striking aspects of the book. Further, every now and then I was remembering something visually a particular example concerns the village idiot's habit of camping inside the graveyard hedge and, from the nest he's made himself in there, scaring unwary passers by. Yet, as shown by a quick rummage in IMDB, *Grave Mistake* wasn't the basis for any of the episodes in the short lived Roderick Alleyn TV series way back when and doesn't seem to have been adapted for the screen otherwise I'm wondering if the novel might have been cannibalized at some point for some completely unrelated series *Midsomer Murder*, summat like that. But who knows I enjoyed reading this work by Marsh as I had time to savor the careful construction and development of characters that held this English village mystery together beginning to end. The role of gardener is front and center in this tale, as we are introduced to our first dead body by page 7, the gardener head over into the wheelbarrow of apparent heart attack. Two old friends with large grounds/gardens find

themselves in need of a gardener Sybil, the health challenged, extravagant, beautiful and much married finds a new man for the job and suggests she share him with Verity, the healthy 50 yr old single woman, a successful playwright He seems to know his work very well and both ladies are satisfied Verity often wondered how it had come about that she and Sybil seemed to be such close friends They had known each other all their lives, of course, and when they were small had shared the same governess Their friendship, in fact, was a sort of hardy perennial, reappearing when it was least expected to do so Along comes the Greek millionaire into their midst, having failed to buy the historic home Sybil lived in, and invites all and sundry to a dinner party to show off his remodeled home in their neighborhood Descriptions of those attending included this delightful capsule The Vicar was called Walter Cloudsley, and ministered, a little sadly, to twenty parishioners in a very beautiful old church that had once housed three hundred The scene is set for Sybil's daughter Prudence and the Greek's handsome son Gideon to become a couple, much against the plans of Sybil for her daughter to marry a peer. Even Verity is faced with a shocker at this dinner, being introduced to a lothario doctor from her past who is now going by a different name He is a particularly easy man to dislike view spoiler I was hoping he was going to be disposed of on the Concorde flight he exits on at the end of the book hide spoiler A good story but not one of her best, as I have to quarrel with a couple of points in it And since Marsh's books are usually very solid this disappointed me view spoiler A clause in a will forcing someone to marry to inherit isn't valid and I seriously doubt it would have been valid in England at that time Also, impersonating a doctor is illegal, so he should have been arrested or at least talked to much earlier and not been given the chance to escape hide spoiler Super promising author I can't conceal my excitement at the prospect of twenty well written mysteries, and I have no doubt I'll read all of Ms Marsh's works but this one left me a touch bereft in the end Without spoiling anything I'll say I figured out the who and the how but not the why And when it came eh I don't know, I suppose there are worse motives for killing but it didn't feel terribly true to character Oh well Everything else the period Britishness, the pacing, the humorous details were all top drawer and I'm very excited to devour the rest. Twists and turns. As with all her books, it rattles on at a good pace, it's easy to read and there are plenty of red herrings to delight and intrigue the reader The book is worth reading but perhaps it is not one of her best but it is still well plotted and maintains interest Sadly Troy Alleyn does not appear. 1978, Inspector Alleyn, small village and upper crust y society cosy police procedural, classic Story wonderful, narration poor When a spoiled and self indulgent middle aged woman suddenly dies at a posh rest hotel, the initial verdict appears to be suicide But her many friends swear it was most unlike her, and Alleyn and Fox aren't comfortable with the case either Nifty little time capsule of a story that although set in early 1970s seemed to fit far better in the early 1950s, with its tightly structured social strata and its attitudes towards women Yet this is a superbly crafted village cosy, complete with a long, leisured set up, complicated unraveling, and careful

denouement For this reread I listened to 1986, Chivers Audio Books, read by Jane Asher Asher's narration was extremely annoying, progressing to downright aggravating by the end Her use of European accents was abominable, and a definite problem, as one of the major characters is supposedly Swiss in origin she couldn't make up her mind whether he had a French or a German accent, and every now and then threw in what appeared to be some sort of Balkan just for contrast And we won't mention The Greek Millionaire's accent, which was sometimes Italian, sometimes almost Greek, often also Balkan And she'd slide accents around, not keeping the lines clear as to which character was speaking at any given time aggggh Never going to listen to Asher again if I can help it Think she's been fair on some other reads I've listened to, but on this one with its multitude of foreign accents Terrible.

# NGAIO MARSH



## A GRAVE MISTAKE

**'Marvellous...a really good book.'**

DAILY MAIL

Three and a half stars. A cosy village mystery first published in the late 1970s. The village is Upper Quintern and the residents are mostly wealthy with maids and gardeners shared between houses. A Greek multi-millionaire has recently bought one of the local mansions and village gossip ensues. A sudden death occurs and Chief Superintendent Alleyn is called to the village with Inspector Fox in support. They investigate a full cast of lively and likely suspects as they try to restore order to the village. Marsh writes with wit, charm and atmosphere. At times the writing felt dated and the plot was perhaps lacking in complexity, but I accepted that and it did become an engrossing read. [Download Book ? Grave Mistake \(Roderick Alleyn, #30\) ? A Spa Stay Turns Into A Homicidal Holiday A Bit Snobbish And A Trifle High Strung, Sybil Foster Prides Herself On Owning The Finest Estate In Upper Quintern And Hiring The Best Gardener In Fact, She Is Rapturous Over The New Asparagus Beds When A Visit From Her Unwelcome Stepson Sends Her Scrambling To A Chic Spa For A Rest Cure, A Liaison With The Spa S Director and An Apparent Suicide Her Autopsy Holds One Surprise, A Secret Drawer A Second And Inspector Roderick Alleyn, CID Digging About Upper Quintern, May Unearth Still A Third Deeply Buried Motive For Murder](#)

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