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Posted on 01 September 2018 By Ngaio Marsh

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Shades of Agatha Christie's 4 50 from Paddington and Hitchcock's 1956 film *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Perhaps Agatha Troy could have broken out singing *Que Sera, Sera* while they hunted for little Ricky Hank. Nothing like a mystery involving the rescue of several traveling spinsters involving from the fat evil guy who starts a cult which is a cover for an international drug ring. I don't know that the 17th book in any series can really be expected to be one of the best ones, so I'm not really sure what I was thinking here. Other than this: When I was a kid, probably about 10 years old, Agatha Christie was my favorite writer. Marsh is often compared to Christie, and I thought *Spinsters in Jeopardy* was the most delicious title imaginable. I also really liked *Old Ladies*, I don't know what that was about. I was a weird kid. Anyway, I tried to read it several times, but I thought *Spinsters* was impenetrable. I was pretty confident in my ability to get through it as an adult, but I will certainly admit that I see what was so confusing to *Little Me*. Here's the set up: Inspector Alleyn has been invited to investigate shady dealings at a remote French chateau. Coincidentally, his wife has started to receive letters from a long lost relation who lives in the same village. Coincidentally, on the train to this village, Alleyn and his wife happen to separately look out their windows in the middle of the night and witness a murder in a window the train is passing. Coincidentally, this is the same chateau Alleyn has been sent to investigate. Coincidentally, an elderly woman on the train suffers a burst appendix and there are no doctors in the village because of a convention but a guest at the shady chateau is a doctor, so viola Alleyn and his wife bring their kid and accompany the ill woman to this den of satanism and reefer madness. Seriously, WTF. I should also mention that Alleyn, his wife, Troy, and their son all speak with a veddy British, sometimes tongue in cheek. I think formality that makes them seem even artificial than their extremely unlikely circumstances. So this book stunk, right? Not entirely. Some of the dialogue is pretty good, sidekick Raoul is quite dashing, and surprisingly some of the jokes land. I might read another.

@Download Pdf ? *Spinsters in Jeopardy* ã For Inspector Roderick Alleyn, The Trip Was To Be Official For His Family, A Mediterranean Romp But A Plot Torn From The Pages Of A Gothic Novel Soon Engulfed Them All. Alleyn's Son Was Kidnapped A Very Wealthy Spinster Was Murdered And In An Eerie Chateau, Carved Out Of The Riviera Mountainside, Alleyn Faced The Ultimate Jet Set Cult. 3.5 stars for me. I liked the interplay of Alleyn and Troy with their 6 year old Ricky and then their train journey meant to be part work for Alleyn at request of S ret and British Intelligence as well as a wee vacation for wife and child. Troy had received strange letters from a distant cousin she had never heard of, and since the town Alleyn had to visit on work matched with this cousin's location, it was thought to be serendipity. First clue that things were not going to be peaceful came from what both Troy and Alleyn

observed from their separate sleeping compartments on the journey Alleyn meant to pull off his investigation of what was going on at this imposing house on the cliffs of C te d Azur without sharing his intent, but needs must It was a murder they both observed from the train. Additional speed bump complicating their holiday was coming to the aid of a woman passenger who very obviously needed urgent medical care All these circumstances converge, giving Alleyn entry to the massive house since the only doctor available is on one of his visitations to this place of contemplation, indoctrination of exotic cult teachings and easy access to weed whilst managing drug trafficking. Can we say Whaaaaat But it gets worse, believe me I couldn't enjoy the plot device of having their young son kidnapped Had it been taken seriously I may have even discarded the book without finishing, but it was so casually treated by Alleyn had it been presented on stage than one tomato would have been thrown Kidnapping children is a topic I avoid whenever forewarned. Anyway as far as pentagram meetings in flowing robes go, naked men who exalt themselves in archaic rituals for the adoration of spinsters who really only want the smokes, there were some moments of comic relief I have not read the books in order, wasn't there for wedding birth, etc Eventually I will catch up as long as I can get these nice clean paperbacks at my library It was good entertainment, just not my favorite of what I have read so far I did enjoy meeting Ricky. Very much default three stars This one is a mixed bag. I hate kidnapping in general, but I especially hate child kidnappings Very much not on board for the kidnapping of Troy and Alleyn's young son. I always like the Troy Alleyn dynamic, but on the other hand I'm not sure I entirely buy their reactions to the kidnapping of their son Troy's is realistic Also, Ricky Alleyn is far too much of an overly precocious child, who often does not sound like any child I have ever heard But then, perhaps that's hereditary, because I had issues with Alleyn's dialogue in the early books Also, this one was really quite sinister, with the creepy cult, and the drug connections The whole thing felt very over the top Not at all what I was in the mood for. But then, it almost redeems itself in the ridiculousness that is the last half of the last chapter Troy's second cousin refers to them as Cousin Roddy and Cousin Aggie in her head Snicker So yeah, on the plus side we had Alleyn family dynamics, and the completely hilarious ending, on the minus side, the kidnapping, the sense of menace and the creep factor. I really can't make up my mind about it. I've enjoyed reading the Inspector Alleyn mysteries by Ngaio Marsh very much I've read the first few in order but I've also jumped around a bit in the series A case in point being my latest, Spinsters in Jeopardy which is the 17th book in the series I guess it's probably somewhat important to read the series in order as you do get to see how Alleyn's relationship with artist, Agatha Troy develops I was a bit surprised to find that the duo now have a son But having said that, the stories also stand very well on their own. In Spinsters, we see our intrepid family on a vacation in southern France, ostensibly visiting a long lost relative of Troy's On the train journey to Roqueville, as the train approaches the city, both Alleyn and Troy see what appears to be an act of violence from their train compartment On arrival in Roqueville, they are also thrown into a

dire situation, as one of the passengers, an elderly woman, Miss Truebody, has a problem with her appendix and must see a doctor immediately. Fortunately, while all of the local doctors are away at a conference, there is an Egyptian doctor at the villa, which the train just passed and the family brings Miss Truebody there. Now Alleyn isn't exactly on vacation, he is instead working with la Surete to find a drug smuggling ring working in the area. So, there is lots going on here. Alleyn must try to remain somewhat incognito as he visits la Chevre de l'Argent the silver goat, as there appear to be people there who know both he and Troy. He must keep his family safe from the strange goings on at the chateau, while still investigating. There is going on than just drug smuggling, maybe. For an Alleyn mystery, there is considerable action. There are great characters, Alleyn, Troy nice to see her playing a bigger role and Ricky, their young son. As well, you have the inestimable Raoul, Alleyn's driver who is so much assistance. And of course, suitable villain abound. It's an interesting, quick moving story and one of the entertaining Alleyn mysteries. 4 stars. While I prefer her English manor home murders, I love anything Ngaio Marsh writes, including when she just goes for the crazy and fully embraces it like she does in this book. Here, her intrepid detective and his family come into close and dangerous contact with a cult. Mistaken identities, kidnappings, and goat statues all come into play, and it is a fun wild ride. Oh for heavens sake I agree with the reefer madness references in other reviews and I have, indeed, seen that very silly movie. Now that marijuana is legal, I can state without fear of arrest that reefers absolutely have no such effect or addiction potential. So there I really like this one. One of my favorites. It's just fun. Love Ricky. For once not a mystery from Marsh but a ripping yarn. A ripping yarn about cults, drug trafficking, muddled identities and general derring do. There's a mystery element in the tale, to be sure, but it very much takes the back seat in what's otherwise a romp. The Yard's Roderick Alleyn is being lent to the Surete to help nail an international drug trafficking gang operating out of the Alpes Maritimes. Since he's going to be based not far from where a cousin of Troy's lives a cousin she's never met but with whom she's corresponded it seems like a good idea to take Troy and six year old Ricky along so as to mix business with something of a vacation. The first sign that this plan might not work out too well comes when their train is approaching its destination. Peering out into the early morning gloom, Alleyn sees, through the lighted window of a chateau next to the tracks, what looks like a murder being committed. Turns out that's the very chateau his bosses are hoping he'll be able to infiltrate, because it's the HQ of a seedy cult linked to the drugs gang. That's coincidence number one. Coincidence number two the sudden taking ill of a fellow passenger on the train is enough to gain Alleyn the kind of entree to the chateau, and the cult, that he could have only dreamed of. I'm normally not too much of a fan of coincidence driven plotting, but the ones here seem just on the right side of the plausible risible boundary. If these two coincidences happened in real life we'd remark on them with interest, but we wouldn't be completely flabbergasted. Another part of the plotting that might trouble some minds arises because, quite clearly, Marsh knew nothing about the effects of

marijuana she seems to have thought they were much the same as those of, say, cocaine and heroin. The glue that keeps the cult together is that its leaders take pains to get the acolytes addicted to reefers, and one of those acolytes talks about how her habit has come completely to control her actions: she'll do anything for the next fix of marijuana, in other words. To which all one can say is: Yeah, right. As with the coincidences, this doesn't really matter. If we assume the cult leader has spiked the reefers with something harder, then the rest fits in well enough. Besides, this is an adventure romp we're reading, not John le Carr. There's a lot of Marsh's trademark humor here. I laughed aloud several times. Aside from the occasional urge to smack the precocious young Ricky upside the head, I rollicked through *Spinsters in Jeopardy* with a grin on my face, even during the occasional moments of high tension.

NGAIO MARSH



**SPINSTERS
IN JEOPARDY**

'As inventive as usual.'

THE TIMES

I'm currently reading through the Ngaio Marsh Roderick Alleyn mysteries in order for a challenge with the Reading the Detectives group on Goodreads. Although I'm enjoying them, some have become a bit samey but that could never be said about this one, which is a completely bonkers thriller. It's one of the capers involving gangs, chases and glamorous locations which many Golden Age detective authors also wrote. Alleyn, wife Troy and their unbelievably perfect and precocious six year old son Ricky, making his first appearance in the series, decide to go on a holiday to France. Well, actually it isn't completely a holiday, since Alleyn is being sent there on the trail of a fiendish drug gang. But he thinks it will be easy enough to combine sightseeing with exposing desperate criminals. What could possibly go wrong? Well, for starters, there is a desperately ill British passenger on the train, and the Alleyns have to help find her medical care. There is also an early plot similarity with a famous element in *4 50 from Paddington* apparently seeing a crime through a train window but Marsh got there first, as Christie's *Miss Marple* book was published four years later. The plot soon thickens, involving a bizarre religious cult not a million miles from previous Alleyn novel *Death in Ecstasy*, a long lost cousin of Troy's, and various French characters whose conversation is translated word for word so for instance they constantly refer to Ricky as the small one for *le petit*. While I found this an enjoyable romp, the plot is ludicrous and completely unbelievable, there is very little element of mystery, and I really don't think Marsh does capers as well as some other writers, such as Allingham. The adorable Ricky is also pretty insufferable, despite being amusing. And there's some stereotyping of both spinsters and Egyptian characters, which is disquieting although of its time. **view spoiler** And, as pointed out in other GR reviews, Marsh doesn't seem to have much knowledge of marijuana reeferers, as she thinks it turns people into desperate addicts and makes them so high they will be ready to take part in bizarre sexual ceremonies. **hide spoiler**

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