



La casa dei sette cadaveri

J. Jefferson Farjeon, Dario Pratesi (Translator)

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Ted Lyte, amateur thief, has chosen an isolated house by the coast for his first robbery. But Haven House is no ordinary country home. While hunting for silverware to steal, Ted stumbles upon a locked room containing seven dead bodies. Detective Inspector Kendall takes on the case with the help of passing yachtsman Thomas Hazeldean. The search for the house's absent owners brings Hazeldean across the Channel to Boulogne, where he finds more than one motive to stay and investigate.

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From Reader Review La casa dei sette cadaveri for online ebook

Melanie (Mel's Bookland Adventures) says

I have read quite a few of Farjeon's books over the years and some of them were quite good, but there is always something that does not quite work for me and with Seven Dead I finally figured out what it is: He is trying to appeal to too many audiences at once. You know some people like the murder mystery, the puzzle figuring out how a murder was committed, others like the adventure stories chasing an "unknown" villain, hunting them down, others love the suspense type books, that keep you on the edge of the seat whilst another group does love a bit of romance in their books, some like a policeman doing the investigation, others love a bystander becoming the sleuth. In this book you have all of that and more. Whilst for the most part it is enjoyable in a way, the conclusion of the book is just silly and so random that if you lived in my neighbourhood, you would have heard a frustrated sigh. A loud one. Still, these days, I adore these books and these re-issues since the Golden Age has become almost of academic interest to me. It's like a personal research topic for me. So on that note, this one was interesting.

Sandy *The world could end while I was reading and I would never notice* says

EXCERPT: The woman was in a chair, her head resting against a blue cushion. It would have been easy at first glance to mistake her sex, for she was wearing a man's clothing -- jersey, trousers and heavy boots -- while her features, framed in short dark hair, were coarsened by exposure. She might have been attractive once. She was not attractive now. Her unseeing eyes were open. . .

THE BLURB: Ted Lyte, amateur thief, has chosen an isolated house by the coast for his first robbery. But Haven House is no ordinary country home. While hunting for silverware to steal, Ted stumbles upon a locked room containing seven dead bodies. Detective Inspector Kendall takes on the case with the help of passing yachtsman Thomas Hazeldean. The search for the house's absent owners brings Hazeldean across the Channel to Boulogne, where he finds more than one motive to stay and investigate.

MY THOUGHTS: J. Jefferson-Farjeon is one of my favorite golden age detective story writers. His writing is both atmospheric and compelling, yet at the same time he manages to inject it with an underlying wry sense of humour.

Seven Dead is a locked room mystery. Seven bodies are discovered in a room where the shutters have been nailed closed and the key is in the lock on the outside of the room. Add a note with a cryptic clue and the portrait of a pretty young girl with a bullet hole through her heart, and the mystery deepens.

I first encountered Detective Inspector Kendall in Jefferson-Farjeon's The Z Murders, and then Thirteen Guests, both titles that have been republished by Poisoned Pen Press as part of the British Library Crime Classics series. He is a decisive man, very thorough in his investigative techniques, and a deep thinker. He is, rather unusually for this period, a relatively realistic police detective without any of the affectations so commonly given to characters in this era.

He is aided and abetted in his investigation by a young journalist and yachtsman, Hazeldean, who had inadvertently stumbled upon burglar Ted Lyte fleeing the crime scene, his pockets full of silverware. He becomes obsessed with the painting of the girl and is determined to find her.

There are plenty of twists and unexpected turns in this story, and I became a little obsessed myself with the relevance of the silk trader.

Early on in the book, one of the characters, I think it was Kendall, says 'There's some mighty queer story behind all this.', and he's right. Not only queer, but compelling. Seven Dead was almost a five star read, but the ending fell a little short for me.

Thank you to Poisoned Pen Press via Netgalley for providing a digital copy of Seven Dead by J. Jefferson-Farjeon for review. All opinions expressed in this review are entirely my own personal opinions.

Please refer to my Goodreads.com profile page or the 'about' page on sandysbookaday.wordpress.com for an explanation of my rating system.

This review and others are also published on my blog sandysbookaday.wordpress.com
[https://sandysbookaday.wordpress.com/...](https://sandysbookaday.wordpress.com/)

Jeanette says

This is not what I anticipated for some reason. I was expecting more humor, more wit, more emotive complexity a la Agatha?

It's very simplistic in plot and I found the conversations colloquial and strange. Often I don't think I gathered most of the context because I just couldn't embed in an inspector and his associate speaking about theoretical possibles in such a way.

It's a cozy from era before the mystery genre got its slick, IMHO. It's just ok. The changes of locale were interesting, but all else I found jumpy. Tension of what had happened did exist, but I can't say, for me anyway, that the continuity of the progress to filling out the answers, ever did.

The tricky quirky non-connecting writing style (full of void type tricks) annoys me enough to loss an entire star for that alone.

Emma says

The premise of the book piqued my interest immediately. A thief stumbling across a room with seven dead bodies, what an absolutely delicious mystery who could resist? I certainly couldn't. I devoured this read in a day, I really enjoyed it.

What I particularly enjoyed was the atmosphere created by Farjeon throughout the book. Our tale opens at a quiet, secluded country home containing a dreadful secret. Farjeon paints a vivid picture of what lies behind the shuttered windows and you could almost be in the room taking in the horrifying sight with your own eyes. The story takes its readers to Boulogne, where once again you feel you're walking through the ramparts and sitting in Madame Paula's dark, tiny guest house.

The mystery is investigated by Detective Inspector Kendall, not the local sergeant because he 'isn't a man

burdened with brains' and Thomas Hazeldean, a passing journalist come yachtsman who becomes embroiled in the mystery purely by accident. These two make a great duo, Kendall full of gumption and enthusiasm and Hazeldean, full of adventure and a thirst for the truth. I'd love to see them join forces again.

The truth behind 'Seven Dead' is unpredictable and even the most experienced classic crime reader will be stumped! This is a fantastic addition to the crime classics series and as always, my favourite crime ingredients appear to make an entertaining and enjoyable read full of red herrings, baffling clues, shifty characters and a conclusion you won't see coming.

Elaine Tomasso says

I would like to thank Netgalley and Poisoned Pen Press for an advance copy of Seven Dead, a police procedural cum adventure originally published in 1939 and set mostly in Essex and Boulogne. This latest edition has a very informative introduction written by Martin Edwards.

Inspector Kendall is finishing off a week of training the local police when a constable staggers in carrying burglar Ted Lyte and closely followed by journalist Tom Hazeldean. It turns out that Lyte has found 7 dead bodies in a locked room in an empty house. While Kendall continues his investigation in England he manipulates Hazeldean into going to Boulogne to find the missing home owners.

Seven Dead is an interesting read with both good and bad points. The plot is well thought out and fairly addictive so I found myself feverishly turning the pages to find out what was coming next. I am full of praise for the ending which, while rather unreal and definitely unbelievable, is moving, fitting and apt.

Unreal and unbelievable probably sums up much of the novel. Hazeldean falls in love with a portrait of the home owner's niece, Dora Fenner and, moved to help her, he takes off immediately for Boulogne to try and find her, which of course he does. It is all a bit naïve, innocent and chivalrous for modern sensibilities and hardly realistic but not unexpected in a novel of this vintage. His adventures in France, however, are risible from the slapstick fights to the dodgy French and had me laughing out loud.

The plot is, however, compulsive and while many of its devices are coincidental and the investigation hardly scientific or rigorous I thoroughly enjoyed it. It is easy to pick faults with a novel written in a different age for a less informed readership but readability is always one of my main priorities and this novel has it in spades as it held my attention throughout. The solution is ingenious although the motive is age old and the ending is exotic and extremely unusual so, despite its faults, I have no hesitation in recommending Seven Dead as a good read.

Eric says

Really 3.5 stars.

Those readers who like a high body-count will get full value from this. The title could have been "Ten Dead".

I certainly enjoyed this more than "The Z Murders" but still found some of Farjeon's writing tricks annoying. The hero and heroine not telling each other vital bits of information for instance appears again in this. The romance element was fine.

The ending was pretty awful- so contrived, melodramatic, and rather obvious even for 1939.

It is rather surprising to me that D.L.Sayers considered Farjeon one of her favourite writers.

Very readable.

Renee says

This reprint from 1939 is the first book I have read by this author. Martin Edwards provided an extremely illuminating introduction with background information on J Jefferson Farjeon (1883-1955). While his books had gone out of print, Mr. Edwards in his role as Series Consultant to the British Library has the enviable position of learning more about writers such as Mr. Farjeon from family and friends and helping to ensure that quality books and their writers won't be forgotten. I truly enjoyed reading this mystery and appreciate those whose work allowed me the opportunity to discover *Seven Dead*.

Inspector Kendall is summoned to Haven House where a gruesome discovery has been made. Seven bodies are found in a locked room, none showing any obvious cause of death. Thomas Hazeldean, a journalist, becomes involved after seeing a man fleeing Haven House. When Inspector Kendall allows him entry to the crime scene, Hazeldean becomes enamored with a girl whose picture he sees on the wall. Dora, the girl in the picture has gone to Boulogne and Hazeldean follows her hoping that when he locates her, she will provide information about the seven deaths. While Inspector Kendall works to solve the case in England, Thomas locates Dora and her uncle and attempts to understand what happened in their house. When the Inspector and Thomas meet again, they share what they each have learned and all the pieces of this mystery come together, as well as the killer's identity. No spoilers here! The plot and characters reflect the time that the book was written, so while the dialogue is dated, a good mystery is a good mystery and this is a good mystery! The author had my attention on page one, the ending was quite unique and everything in-between was well written. A thoroughly good book and one I recommend.

Thank you, Poisoned Pen Press and NetGalley for the ARC in exchange for an honest review. My favorite books are those where the reveal takes me totally by surprise and this book certainly accomplished that.

Nikki says

This is a really entertaining entry into the British Library Crime Classics line-up: the premise had me from the word go, for sure. It's a locked room mystery with a rather creepy beginning: a would-be burglar stumbles on a room full of corpses in a seemingly empty house. There's a serious romantic plot that I think might put some readers off, especially as it involves a guy getting rather creepily fixated on a painting of a young girl and deciding he has to know her (though at least he knows she's an adult now); sometimes it doesn't feel like the primary point is the mystery, but instead the relationship between two people who are mostly on the edge of it.

There's also some rather odd banter between the inspector and the policeman who works with him. Sometimes I seemed to be missing context — which makes no sense, considering they weren't supposed to

know each other long before the case, so it should all be perfectly comprehensible — and sometimes it just seemed like the dialogue was trying to be too clever.

Nonetheless, it's entertaining and the weirdness of that opening kept me interested in how the mystery itself worked out. Unlike with some of the other books reissued by the British Library for the Classic Crime series, I do actually find myself rather eager to pick up another book by Farjeon, instead of just pleasantly entertained but not ready to leap on it. The *Z Murders* and *Thirteen Guests* are now on my TBR pile.

Reviewed for The Bibliophilian.

Ivonne Rovira says

I first met the intrepid Inspector Kendall — and his creator J. Jefferson Farjeon — in *Thirteen Guests* (1936). In that incredibly suspenseful twist on the country-house murder mystery, a journalist/amateur sleuth gets the best of poor Kendall; however, in *Seven Dead*, published three years after *Thirteen Guests*, Kendall (once again working with a journalist) cracks a very creepy murder mystery with seven corpses killed at once. The great Dorothy L. Sayers herself called Farjeon “unparalleled for creepy skill in mysterious adventures,” and he proves it here!

Farjeon, very popular in his day, is nearly forgotten these days — too bad too, as I’ve loved all four of his novels that I’ve read. Those were re-released by British Library and Poisoned Pen Press, which has been steadily bringing back Golden Age crime classics. And they cannot reprint Farjeon novels fast enough for me! Yes, they’re that intriguing!

In the interest of full disclosure, I received this book from NetGalley, British Library and Poisoned Pen Press in exchange for an honest review.

Carol says

Seven Dead, originally published in 1939, is the latest release in Poisoned Pen’s British Library Crime Classics series. For those not familiar with the series, it is a republication of English authors’ Golden Age – between the World Wars – detective fiction. Agatha Christie is the poster child for Golden Age authors, but there are many others, in addition to Farjeon, with whom the average crime reader may not be familiar: John Bude, Mavis Doriel Hay, Charles Williams, Freeman Wills Crofts. Some are sterling; others less so. I was delighted by *Seven Dead* and Farjeon is in the sterling category.

Seven Dead takes place in a countryside town in England and also in Boulogne-sur-mer, France. At the outset, the police have discovered seven bodies in a room locked from the outside, in an otherwise empty English manor house. None of the seven lived in the house or were related to its owners, who happened to leave impulsively for an out of town trip. The lead police detective, Detective Inspector Kendall, and a conveniently placed yachtsman, Hazeldean, are equally prominent in the book, and readers learn many if not most of the key facts as a result of Hazeldean’s unofficial, concurrent investigation. The sum far exceeds its parts, in large part because Farjeon’s writing is crisp, clear and interesting, the period details bountiful and intriguing, and his two lead characters make sensible choices.

Often, when reading novels from the early 20th century – especially those labeled “genre” fiction - - I steel myself against the sexism, racism, colloquialisms and wordiness I frequently encounter. With crime novels, an over-emphasis on motive frequently adds another layer of irritation. I determine not to roll my eyes, no matter how conveniently a key clue or witness falls into the laps of the subject detective. *Seven Dead* included none of those negatives, and it also wasn’t a search for motive but was focused on the evidence revealed over time. I found it to be blessedly un-dated in its language and style. The motive is disclosed at the end, and it’s not one the reader had the clues to figure out prior to the big reveal, but that didn’t detract from my enjoyment. The funny thing is, if I were sharing a beer with another mystery/detective reader who had finished *Seven Dead* recently, we could probably identify a dozen things that didn’t make sense or otherwise would be flagged as flaws or problems. (view spoiler) But none of them bothered me one wit, because the novel as a whole was so enjoyable.

If you like Golden Age mysteries, *Seven Dead* is a sure thing. If, like me, you read them from time to time but only the very best, *Seven Dead* should still be on your short list. I’ll be looking for and reading more Farjeon novels this year.

For a list of British Library Crime Classics novels, topped by another Farjeon novel: *Mystery in White*, click here: <https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/9...>

About the author. J. Jefferson Farjeon is a long-forgotten English crime and mystery novelist, playwright and screenwriter, and Eleanor Farjeon's brother. He wrote more than 90 novels and plays between 1924 and 1955. One of Farjeon's best known works was a play, No. 17, which was made into a number of films, including *Number Seventeen* directed by Hitchcock.

Thanks to Poisoned Press and NetGalley for making an ecopy available for review.

Aoife says

This review is also available on my blog

There are plenty of Kendalls in the world, but I remember one who did pretty good work recently at Bragley Court, in the case of the Thirteen Guests. What I liked about him was that he didn't play the violin, or have a wooden leg, or anything of that sort. He just got on with it.

This book stars with seven dead people. Then it gets more absurd. Then a plane crashes and then things get really weird. And as reader, you have no way of guessing how the weirdness will manifest because there are no clues beforehand.

So no, this isn't a typical golden age mystery. No country house party where coincidentally everyone has a grudge against one party-member. I actually was reminded more of Edgar Wallace (especially the German movie adaptations). There's a Russian nesting doll of dark secrets, mysterious characters (including an ominous –gasp– foreign silk merchant), a beautiful damsel in distress (she gets to have slightly more agency than those in the Wallace-movies but not much), lots of fog and – most importantly – nobody takes things too serious. They all joke around a lot. Especially the conversation between the inspector and his sergeant are glorious:

Your trouble isn't that you fail to mention things, Wade, but that you mention them too late, and then incomplete. I have no doubt that, three years after your death, you will send somebody the information.

You will have to suspend your disbelief a lot, though. Even more than "Of course ten people would just accept an invitation from a complete stranger to spend a weekend at a remote island." More than once ~~per chapter~~ I found myself going *Oh come on* but – much like in *Mystery in White* (whose plot looks plain and normal compared to *Seven Guests*) – I didn't care. The writing is so fast-paced that that I didn't have the time to worry about pesky things like logic and realism. But at the same time the absurdity is well-contained. There are surprising coincidences, of course, but they all relate to the crime and the reasons for it; no inspector coincidentally stumbles over an important clue because he happens to be at the right place at right time. There is no bad timing that leads to a side-character betraying important information because they just missed the announcement about who the villain is. The main characters are fairly normal characters who sometimes have bad luck and sometimes good luck.

Still, traditionalists might not enjoy this too much. It really is more Edwardian pulp fiction than golden age mystery.

ARC provided by NetGalley

Erin Britton says

Who'd be a burglar, eh? You find a nice looking and conveniently empty house, you manage to gain entry in a suitably quiet fashion, you help yourself to some bread and cheese, you go looking for the silver spoon collection, and then you find a locked room containing seven dead bodies. Mass murder might not have been the prize that Ted Lyte hoped to find when he broke into Haven House, but that's certainly what he ended up with. Traumatic as the discovery might have been for him though, for the forces of law and order, it's just as well that Ted decided to engage in a spot of housebreaking, since it resulted in a heinous crime being uncovered far more quickly than the perpetrator had hoped – so quickly in fact that the killer ultimately cannot effect an escape from justice.

The task of identifying the seven victims and tracking down their killer falls to Detective Inspector Kendall, although he is ably assisted by Thomas Hazeldean, a freelance reporter and yachtsman, who happened to have been the one to apprehend Ted Lyte when he ran screaming from Haven House. Their respective investigations take them across the channel to Boulogne, where they attempt to locate the owners of the house and determine how the seven unfortunate souls met their fate.

Seven Dead is an atmospheric and unpredictable murder mystery by J. Jefferson Farjeon (author of *Mystery in White*, which proved to be a mega Christmas bestseller when it was republished as part of the British Library Crime Classics series in 2014). Detective Inspector Kendall is an experienced and keen-eyed investigator. He proves to be a methodical and diligent sleuth, although he is not particularly patient with his subordinates. Kendall is perhaps oddly keen to allow Thomas Hazeldean to muscle in on the investigation, but he is certainly not one of the bumbling police officers so often seen in classic crime fiction – he recognises that the assistance of an amateur investigator could be useful, but he doesn't actually have to rely on someone else to crack the case.

As for Hazeldean, his work as a reporter would seem to justify his interest in the murders, although Farjeon adds a slight romantic slant to his character so that he dashes off to Boulogne in search of a pretty face as much as anything else. Still though, he's very much a brave man of action and, while he does uncover some vital clues, his approach to the investigation contrasts nicely with Kendall's more cerebral efforts. The pair of them make a very efficient detective duo, with their differences really complementing each other and their dedication ensuring that justice is eventually served. There are certainly a good number of suspicious characters for them to deal with during their hunt for the killer. In fact, everyone staying or working at Madame Paula's guesthouse in Boulogne seems to be at least a little bit sinister.

Farjeon lays down a good trail of clues throughout *Seven Dead*, which means that it is perfectly possible for the reader to work out the identity of the killer alongside Kendall and Hazeldean. However, the great twist contained within the story doesn't concern the identification of the murderer, but rather the reason behind the killings. The explanation ends up sounding utterly plausible when relayed by Detective Inspector Kendall, but the killer's motivation was very much out of left field. Looking back, there were a couple of clues in that regard, although piecing all the detail together would certainly have been a difficult task. The finale of the story might perhaps seem a little over the top at first, but on reflection it fits in nicely with the sense of dread and finality that permeates the story. *Seven Dead* is a suspenseful and highly original mystery novel and it is another fine addition to the British Library Crime Classics series.

Lori says

A petty thief gets a scare when he chooses Haven House for his first household robbery. He discovers the bodies of seven persons in the house. He runs, slowly losing the silverware he picked up. He's pursued by a free-lance journalist, Thomas Hazeldean, as well as a member of the local law enforcement. Haven House was entrusted to the uncle of a young girl to manage until she is able to inherit. Both are missing from the house but were seen at the home during the day. Inspector Kendall is put on the case which leads him and Hazeldean to France and ultimately to the South Atlantic in pursuit of the criminals. This is an early work from the golden age of detective fiction as the genre developed. It's plot, while still engaging, is more simplistic than some. Hazeldean's character needed further development. Most cozies and police procedurals stick with one jurisdiction, but this one takes the reader to different locales, similar to what a thriller might do. It's an enjoyable read. These remarks are based on an electronic advance review copy provided by the author through NetGalley with the expectation an honest review would be written.

Magistra says

3 1/2 stars. Seven people are found dead in an empty house. Who they are and how they died is the central puzzle of the book. I was riveted by the plot for most the whole book although I thought the ending was slightly bizarre. There are great historical details, the plot is tight, and the central characters are well drawn. Overall a fun vintage mystery.

Judy Lesley says

Thank you to NetGalley and Poisoned Pen Press for a digital copy of this novel.

This began as an interesting read for me until it began to show signs early on of the hot buttons that cause me to argue with a story. I kept on reading and finally ended up at a rather farfetched ending that just didn't satisfy me. Obviously the policeman in this story didn't have even one superior officer he had to report to because he could take off for days and even weeks at a time in pursuit of this criminal. Never mind that he was a regional policeman and not a part of Scotland Yard. Add to that an amateur who happens on the scene and is instantly allowed access to all the police findings and it would be bad enough. In this story it gets even worse because the amateur falls into **adoration** instantly with the sweet young girl of the piece. They have conversations where neither of them finishes a sentence because they just "know" what the other is thinking. Hmm.

This is the story of a crime which had it's beginnings in the past - although the time line is rather confusing and blurred. There are seven suicides to begin with (maybe), some murders, a mutiny aboard ship, a group of castaways, cricket balls and bats, a self-employed journalist, a fainting heroine, a not-so-nice uncle, and a policeman who seems to pull solutions out of the air. It started out well and then it just wasn't. Not a favorite from the British Library Crime Classics series but I did read it all because some bits were interesting.
