

'The most fiendishly clever thriller ever written for the stage'
THE TIMES



SLEUTH

A PLAY

ANTHONY SHAFFER

Sleuth

Anthony Shaffer

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Sleuth has all the ingredients of a top-class thriller, which it undoubtedly is - a plot whose twists and turns are breathtakingly audacious and fiendishly cunning; suspense and excitement galore; and a brilliant parody of the Agatha Christie country-house thriller, mercilessly satirizing the genre at the same as using its technical devices to the full. It is a dramatic study of sexual conflict and jealousy between an older and a younger man; as well as a subtle psychological portrait of an inadequate and sexually-obsessed middle-aged man.

Sleuth was filmed by Joseph Mankiewicz, with Laurence Olivier and Michael Caine in the leading roles, and this edition is fully illustrated with stills from the film, for which Anthony Shaffer wrote the screenplay.

Anthony Shaffer has written several television and stage plays, including the West End success *Murderer* (also available from arion Boyars Publishers). He has also written many screenplays, including *Play with a Gypsy*, Hitchcock's *Frenzy*, *The Wicker Man*, and the Agatha Christie films *Death on the Nile* and *Evil Under the Sun*.

Sleuth Details

Date : Published July 1st 2000 by Marion Boyars (first published January 1st 1970)

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Author : Anthony Shaffer

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From Reader Review Sleuth for online ebook

Jessie says

What a clever play! I was hoping for a bit more action but I loved the witty way the characters toyed with each other.

Mel says

My ideal Doctor Who episode with the Master is just an adaption of Sleuth.

Brian McCann says

I'll be honest: I wasn't looking forward to reading this. I thought it would be a "slog" at best.

But I loved every page. Well-crafted and quick. Thank you Anthony Shaffer.

Reminded me that I saw his WHODUNNIT in Boston in the early 80s in its pre-Broadway run. And I liked that too!

Cindy says

So clever. I want to see the movie now.

April Mccaffrey says

4/5

Sleuth is a play written by Anthony Shaffer. The most famous adaptation is the 1972 film with Laurence Olivier and Michael Caine.

I very much enjoyed reading Sleuth. Fast-paced, intriguing and engaging.

I have always found a fascination with stories that held just two people. There is so much you can do with two people and a setting when writers put their minds to it. You don't always need a full on action packed story and Sleuth proved just that.

A story about humiliation, power and games. It is interesting to see Andrew having control of Milo in part 1, where you can clearly see he has all the power and the one pulling the strings. You can clearly see his Hatred for Milo-a gentlemen with good morals-for stealing away his wife.

Then in the second half, the tables quickly turn when Milo uses his quick initiatives and quick thinking and this time, he is the one to humiliate Andrew and Andrew hates it. It's quite nice to see the victims getting what they deserve after being bullied by people with power and money.

I also enjoyed the themes in this book and have been very noticeable with the jolly sailor and bad puns where some scenes did make me snort with laughter. (Especially the penis jokes!)

Over all, I enjoyed this. I am very much looking forward to seeing this on stage this month at Nottingham playhouse theatre!

Maleen says

Another great twisty turny plot. There were a few unnecessary allusions to inappropriate things. (I must be the only left who would just like to read a clean murder mystery...ironic, I know.) I want to watch the movie. I, of course, pictured Michael Caine playing his part perfectly. (I'm a little young to picture Laurence Olivier.) I wish we could have met Marguerite.

JZ says

It's odd that some people have an idea that if you see the play, you haven't read it. lol
The whole idea behind the play is action! The playwright wants her/his play performed. Does it not occur to people that novels are just really long plays that can't be performed, but needs the imagination of such action? Odd, that.

This one is so good, I've seen 3 different productions of it, and have read the 'book' in addition.

Tristan Wolf says

This most wonderful play, which I have read several times and seen performed live twice by two different acting companies, was faithfully and joyously translated to the screen in 1972, starring Sir Laurence Olivier and Michael Caine. It was notoriously gutted by Harold "Must Have Homoerotica" Pinter, directed (as much as possible) by Kenneth Branagh, and uncomfortably suffered through by Michael Caine and Jude Law. Stick with the original.

The genius of the play is that, in one extravagant set, the playwright has created a stage on which the perfect crime is both committed and detected. To say more would contain terrible spoilers. The dialog is both witty and telling, as the rich mystery writer Andrew Wyke confronts, in a civilized manner, his wife's lover, Milo Tindle, a commoner and hair-dresser who may turn out to be more clever than Andrew anticipated. The verbal sparring is wonderful, and the mystery is multi-layered. A wonderful read and, if you stick with the original film, a delightful viewing as well.

As a final tease, I offer the tag line from the poster for the original movie: "Think of the perfect crime... then go one step further..."

Katy Noyes says

4.5 stars

I've seen the film and wanted to read the play. And a good smirk I had too.

I pictured Olivier and Caine throughout in this riot of bluff and double cross. Andrew Wyke has invited Milo Tindle to a private meeting at his manor house. We soon learn that Milo's affair with his wife is the subject under discussion, Andrew claiming he is happy to be rid of her, and suggesting Milo and he stage a jewellery robbery so the lovers can live comfortably while he, Andrew, benefits from the insurance money. But is everything as it seems?

When you read/see this for the first time, there is bluff after deceit after hilarious double-cross. The men are a verbally well-matched pair, sparring joyously with words, humiliating each other as they battle. It is farcical and hilarious, with some wonderful rude insults ("you mendacious b0llo@k of Satan!") and an ending you'll be hard pushed to guess.

Hugely enjoyable, and only a short read of a play. Reminds me that I must read more plays!

A.J. Bauers says

The back cover of this play promised many twists and turns in a satire style reminiscent of Agatha Christie, and boy did it deliver. It kept me on my toes and it forced me to finish reading it in one sitting. The reason why I gave it four stars instead of five has to do with the ending, which I'd rather not detail on this review as it would be a major spoiler; but to generalize, I'll just say I had a hard time conceptualizing Milo's motivations. This is another one that I think would be fabulous performed lived and I plan on checking out the 2007 movie from my library tomorrow.

Kiersten says

This was so intense... ALL OF THE PLOT TWISTS. Probably one of my favorite plays I've ever read. Hopefully I'll get to see it in the future!

Beverly says

Loved the movie, so wanted to read the play. Now I will have to watch the movie again to see what changes were made from the play. But as I was reading the play, I remembered many of the scenes from the movie. An excellent, twisty, turny plot.

Susan says

I don't know. I love the stories that pit an older man (or woman) against a younger one in this kind of head-to-head battle of wits with all the games being played and the hidden agendas on either side. However, something was missing for me. It was too short or there weren't enough layers or something; I'm not sure what, it just felt incomplete to me and I was disappointed.

I'm in the middle of watching the original movie (with Olivier and Caine) which was adapted to screen by Shaffer himself. It's interesting to see the little things he changed. And I haven't been able to get my hands on the remake (with Caine and Law) so far but I'm going to find it because the screenplay was written by none other than Pinter, and we all know how much I love him.

Grade: B

Anna says

I had forgotten the movie was based on a play. So the last time I watched it, I decided I wanted to read it. I read it in less than two days. Absolutely brilliant! I imagine the movie in my mind while I read. I loved the characters and I loved the thrilling mystery. Games of murder make the most interesting plots.

Gabriel says

Twisty, turny, clever, intriguing ... if only there were more plays like this. How I would love to see them all. How I would love to get under the skins of each character and see them played out. To take something as old as murder mysteries and curve it into itself (much the way Joss Whedon took the Horror genre and mutated it in "Cabin In The Woods") is a sheer act of genius if it can be done right.

Anthony Shaffer did it right!

Oh boy, did he do it right!

Wonderful "whodunnit" with amazing word play, fun characters and an even better ending. Unlike Murder at the Howard Johnson's, Sleuth knows how many twists and turns to include and when it is best to just end it. Shaffer does an amazing job of taking the audience along a great ride that plays with our perceptions in amazing ways. I need to see this, either the movie version (I hear there are TWO adaptations of this for the screen, one done by Harold Pinter, of all folks!) or a stage version. In either case, this Shaffer is definitely equal to his relative (Peter Shaffer).
