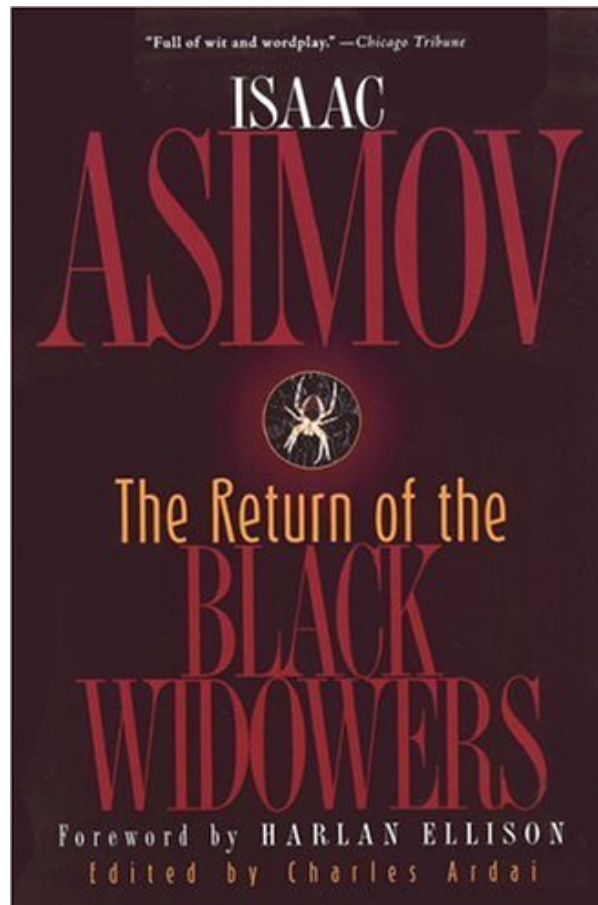


# THE RETURN OF THE BLACK WIDOWERS BY ISAAC ASIMOV



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"Full of wit and wordplay." —*Chicago Tribune*

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The Return of the  
BLACK  
WIDOWERS

Foreword by HARLAN ELLISON  
Edited by Charles Ardai

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From Publishers Weekly

Fans of Asimov's Black Widower brain-teasers, which typically turn on wordplay and subtle observation, will welcome this sixth (and first posthumous) collection in this diverting series. The book includes Shamus nominee Ardai's choices of the 10 best Black Widower stories, six previously uncollected tales and more. In each tale, the six members of the Black Widowers club gather to dine, socialize and take a crack at solving a puzzle posed by an invited guest. Invariably, the highly literate and intelligent group—an artist, a patent lawyer, a cryptographer, a math teacher, a chemist and a mystery writer (whose real-life counterparts from Asimov's circle of science-fiction colleagues Harlan Ellison identifies in his foreword)—falls short of success, and their Jeeves-like waiter, Henry, effortlessly points out the often obvious clues they overlooked. The mysteries the club tackles range from murder to theft to the seemingly inexplicable disappearance of an umbrella into a space warp. Most are locked-room or impossible crimes, and since the author bends over backwards to play fair, many readers will easily be able to anticipate the solutions. These old-fashioned puzzle stories may not have much substance, but they never fail to entertain.

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About the Author

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Until his death in 1992, author Isaac Asimov would write more than 120 ingenious tales of detection and deduction, and in 66 of them he would present his armchair detectives, the Black Widowers, with the mind-teasing puzzles that they would strive to solve in often-quarrelsome conversation. The Black Widowers club is meeting again. In a private dining room at New York's luxurious Milano restaurant, the six brilliant men once more gather for fine fare served impeccably by their peerless waiter, Henry. At table, too, will of course be that requisite dinner guest to challenge their combined deductive wit: a man whose marriage hinges on finding a lost umbrella; a woman shadowed by an adversary who knows her darkest secrets; a debunker of psychics unable to explain his unnerving experience in a haunted house; or a symphony cellist accused of attacking his wife with a kitchen knife. In addition to six stories that have never before appeared in any collection, this volume includes the ten best-ever Black Widowers cases, among them the very first to be published, in Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine, as well as the first brand new Black Widowers story to appear in more than ten years.

- Sales Rank: #1263260 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Carroll n Graf
- Published on: 2005-11-10
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: .91" h x 5.68" w x 8.74" l, .70 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 304 pages

## Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

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Charles Ardai is a Shamus-nominated mystery writer, editor of numerous anthologies, and creator of the internet service Juno. He lives in New York City.

### Most helpful customer reviews

24 of 25 people found the following review helpful.

Four stars for Asimov fans, two stars for non-fans

By Vincent Poirier

Of course I had to buy it! I love Asimov, I love his style and wit. He passed away in 1992, but that only slowed his output without stopping it.

There are 11 stories repeated from previous collections, six stories gathered for the first time, one Black Widower story by someone else, and an homage to the Black Widowers also by someone else. There's an essay by Asimov and Harlan Ellison's forward.

Ellison's forward is the first thing wrong with the book. Asimov was famous for refusing to have anyone else write introductions to his books. In his story collections he also appended miniature essays to each story, often about how he came to think of a particular plot; obviously these essays are missing here. Further, the two stories by other writers just didn't belong in an Asimov collection, they're intruding. Finally, a few of the last stories were written when Asimov was dying and they are simply no good. I read and enjoyed them for sentimental reasons only; they would disappoint readers new to Asimov or the Black Widowers.

So if you are already a fan of the Good Doctor's fiction, indulge yourself and enjoy. Otherwise, do yourself a favour and pick up another of his 400+ books.

Vincent Poirier, Tokyo

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Pure Asimov, to the end

By john

I have been reading Asimov since the 1960s. I loved his science writings. That led me into his fiction. Much later, I discovered the Black Widowers. Although every story in 'The Return' is not new, it is like coming home again to re-read them. He never distracts the reader with burdensome philosophy and theory. He is always right to the point. And, of course, by now, his characters are well established and well known to the

reader. It amazed me that he could originate so many unique 'puzzles', only a couple of which I was able to solve before Henry stepped in. Even the couple of stories not penned by Asimov seemed to carry on his tradition. Bravo, Isaac Asimov!

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awesome

By dennis j hopkins

awesome

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