

## Puzzles of the Black Widowers

*By Isaac Asimov*

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Each month the Black Widowers, an urbane club of cerebral adventurers, meet at the Milano Restaurant for dinner. And each month a single guest is invited and subjected to a genial but intense grilling on the meaning of his existence. Inevitably the guest confides some puzzling question or strange occurrence in his life - the inexplicable disappearance of a good luck charm, for instance, or how a four-leaf clover can identify a traitor - tantalizing conundrums that the great Holmes himself would have enjoyed solving. When the Black Widowers are stumped (as invariably happens), they turn to their faithful waiter Henry, who serves up perfectly grilled salmon and devilishly clever answers with equal aplomb.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The fifth Black Widowers collection has stories from 1984 to 1989, 11 appearing originally in Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine. Asimov again uses a real-life New York dining club as model for the Widowers. In every story a dinner guest is asked, "How do you justify your existence?" The guests--graduate student, government spook, bookseller, plumber et al.--dispose of the question, and then pose a puzzle for the Widowers to chew over--over and over. Invariably, after the chewing, the deferential, cerebral waiter Henry, also a Widower, comes up with the solution. Said solution turns on some piece of arcana--Bermuda traffic rules, the element with the most syllables--that most readers won't know or care about. Each story is less than two dozen pages, a relief because the writing is like unbuttered, unsalted popcorn: harmless but not satisfying unless you're already addicted. Asimov assures us the Black Widowers "will continue as long as I do." Long life anyway, Dr. A.

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About the Author

Isaac Asimov was one of the world's best known and respected science fiction writers. He died in 1992.

### Users Review

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**Robert Stewart:**

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