

## SIDE INDEX FOR MOTOE

Below is an index for the SIDES that have been provided. The SIDE NUMBERS are indicated by a number in a circle. Such as: **1**

You will note that at the top of the side, a character name appears. That tends to be the character that is emphasized in that unit. Because of the ensemble nature of the piece, there are not a lot of monologues—but there are a couple. Most of the units have multiple characters, but another character (besides Poirot) is spotlighted. You will find that same name CAPITALIZED in the list below. Use the list to help you locate the characters I've asked you to read for and those for which you'd like to read. Please stay within the parameters of what appears on the Audition Form page. Please put some effort into working with an accent in advance of taping.

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Scene Two

HEAD  
WAITER

*(We hear a small hotel band playing "I Want to Go Back to Michigan" by Irving Berlin. POIROT bows slightly and now we are in the dining room of the Tokatlian Hotel in Istanbul in 1934. The HEAD WAITER escorts POIROT into the room.)*

HEAD WAITER. This way, *monsieur*. I have a beautiful table that I'm sure you will enjoy. It is *monsieur's* first time in Istanbul?

POIROT. That is correct. How did you know?

HEAD WAITER. Ohh, I have my ways, *monsieur*. My little observations. In this business, one needs to be a detective, like that famous Poirot fellow who comes from France.

POIROT. I believe he is Belgian.

HEAD WAITER. No, no. From France. I know him personally.

POIROT. Ah.

HEAD WAITER. Your table, *monsieur*.

POIROT. *Merci*.

*(As POIROT sits and takes up a newspaper, COLONEL ARBUTHNOT bursts the dining room and hurries over to a table where MARY DEBENHAM is waiting. The COLONEL is a Scotsman with a Scottish accent in his mid-thirties, handsome, and very matter-of-fact. MISS DEBENHAM is an English beauty in her late twenties. There is a sadness, however, around her eyes. She is anxious.)*

ARBUTHNOT. Mary, There you are!

MARY. James! At last! Where have you been?!

ARBUTHNOT. Oh, I'm not that late, am I?

MARY. Of course you are. You're always late. And I was terrified we'd miss the train. It would ruin everything!

ARBUTHNOT. I was just exploring a bit. I've never been to Istanbul before and I quite adore all this eastern nonsense.

MARY. Well, I don't. I just want to leave right now and get it over with.

*(ARBUTHNOT puts his hand on her cheek.)*

ARBUTHNOT. I wish to hell you were out of all this. You deserve better, you know.

MARY. Shh! Not now! No one should see us like this. Not till it's all behind us. Besides, I think we're being observed by that funny little man over there.

*(She nods toward POIROT, who is hidden behind his newspaper.)*

ARBUTHNOT. What, him? He's just some damned foreigner who probably doesn't even speak English.

*(POIROT's newspaper gives an involuntary shake.)*

MARY. Shall we order? I'm starving.

ARBUTHNOT. Not here. I found a cute little place around the corner where I'm sure the food will be ten times better.

MARY. But we can't be late for the train! We can't miss it! ARBUTHNOT. We won't be late, I promise, now stop fussing and come on, let's hurry.

*(As they go, we notice MRS. HUBBARD sitting nearby. She is an outspoken American in her fifties, well-dressed with a touch of flamboyance, and she calls to the HEAD WAITER as she rummages through her handbag for her money.)*

MRS. HUBBARD. Yoo-hoo! Excuse me, waiter. You did a very nice job and I'm leaving you something extra because of it.

*(At this moment, we notice HECTOR MCQUEEN sitting at one of the tables. He is a nervous*

MRS. HUBBARD

listened. The murderer wore a uniform, and the question now is where did he go!

POIROT. No, no, my friend, the question now is whether such a man exists. He could be an invention of *Monsieur MacQueen*.

BOUC. But why would he lie? He is not the murderer.

POIROT. Why not?

BOUC. Because he is not the type! It is a crime of passion by someone Italian or Hungarian! A man with blood in his veins!

POIROT. I have now looked at all of the passports and there is one that troubles me. There is a grease spot on the signature page and it obscures the first letter of the Christian name and I believe it is telling.

BOUC. What is it?

MRS. HUBBARD. (At the door.) Knock, knock. Excuse me but I need to talk to you.

START

BOUC. If you could please wait your turn -

MRS. HUBBARD. No, I cannot wait my turn because you owe me an apology.

BOUC. I do?

MRS. HUBBARD. You thought I was crazy.

BOUC. Pardon, *madame*, I do not know to what you are referring -

MRS. HUBBARD. To what I am referring is the man in my room last night! You didn't believe me, but guess what, I have a surprise for you. There *was* a man and I can prove it! He left a button! Look!

(She pulls out a brass button and BOUC peers at it.)

BOUC. It says "Orient Express."

MRS. HUBBARD. It sure as heck does, and it's just like the ones that Michel wears on his uniform.

POIROT. (Examining it.) And you found it...?

MRS. HUBBARD. On the floor this morning, bright as you please - next to my big toe after I put these tootsies down on the floor when I woke up.

POIROT. And you waited until now to tell us?

MRS. HUBBARD. I just woke up! It's called a vacation! And I just heard about Ratchett's murder and I thought that maybe this button guy did it. Ya see it all adds up. He goes into Ratchett's room, kills him, comes out through my room, I wake up at, like, 1:15 and see him - well, not see him exactly, I sort of feel his presence - and do you realize *he could have strangled me in my bed, or shot me or something!*

POIROT. The dead man's name was not Ratchett, *madame*, it was Bruno Cassetti. Does that mean anything to you?

MRS. HUBBARD. No.

POIROT. Have you ever heard of the Armstrong case?

MRS. HUBBARD. You mean that poor kid who got murdered? It was national news. The whole world knew about it. So what?

POIROT. May I ask where you were last night between midnight and two o'clock?

MRS. HUBBARD. Oh, great, so now I'm a suspect? You know you should read some detective stories and get some tips.

POIROT. Twelve to two, *madame*.

MRS. HUBBARD. I just told you! I was alone in bed around one o'clock and then a few minutes later some man walks into my room and scares the living bejesus out of me.

POIROT. Mrs. Hubbard, would you write your signature on this paper, please?

MRS. HUBBARD. I beg your pardon?

POIROT. Your signature, so I can see your handwriting.

MRS. HUBBARD. (Writing.) I always thought the French were screwy.

BOUC. He is from Belgium.

END

MICHEL. For my daughter, you pig!

ARBUTHNOT. For Charles!

MARY. For Daisy!

GRETA. For little Daisy!

MACQUEEN. For my father!

COUNTESS. For my darling Daisy!

MRS. HUBBARD. For my grandchild!!

*(The effect is harrowing and liberating.)*

*(When the ritual is over, the lights change back to normal and a level of peace is restored.)*

POIROT. And now, my friends, what am I to do? It cannot be long until the Yugoslavian police arrive, at which time I must tell them the truth, *nicest-ce pas?*

MRS. HUBBARD. You mean the truth, of course, about the second conductor.

COUNTESS. Anything else would be a complete injustice.

POIROT. On the contrary, it is the only justice. Under the law, if you commit a murder, you must pay the price.

ARBUTHNOT. But it was Cassetti who murdered the little girl!

POIROT. And did that give you a right to kill him?

ARBUTHNOT. *Of course it did!* He killed five people for some ransom money. And he'd done it before and he'd have done it again. And now it's time for you to turn around and walk away and leave us alone!

POIROT. *(Exploding.) No, it is not! It is not that time!* I have never in my life turned my back on the law! Do you understand that, colonel?! The law must be obeyed or we become *barbarians!* It is 1934, Europe is changing and there will be chaos! There will be nothing left of us and we will have to start again! *I cannot support this!*

*(Silence.)*

MRS. HUBBARD

MARY. But the man was a monster, *Monsieur* Poirot. You know he was.

POIROT. But I cannot...

*(Beat.)*

I cannot just...

*(He is deeply moved.)*

MRS. HUBBARD. May a humble actress speak her peace?

PRINCESS. Please do, my dear.

MRS. HUBBARD. *Monsieur* Poirot, we are in your hands, and we acknowledge it. But would you really have preferred if Bruno Cassetti had gotten away scot-free? Would that be the kind of justice you are after?

*(POIROT turns away.)*

Look at it this way: you have a complete solution staring you in the face. You have the button, you have the uniform, you have three reliable witnesses who saw a man in the corridor - and surely you're not calling all of us liars. Because if you did that...

*(Her tone changes.)*

There would be months of trials, lives would be damaged even more than they have been already, and a great many people would be forced to relive the most terrible moment in all of their lives - more terrible than any human being should ever have to experience. Is that what you want? Examine your heart and tell us what you want.

POIROT. ... You put me to the test, *madame*, and I am greatly troubled.

*(He turns to BOUC.)*

*Monsieur* Bouc, my friend, you are the director of the Wagon-Lit. What do you say?

BOUC. In my opinion, the first solution you put forward is entirely correct: we had a deadly intruder disguised as a conductor, and I believe that is the solution you should offer the police.

START

END

Poirot

START

4

(Silence.)

MRS. HUBBARD. ... We're listening.

POIROT. The facts of the case could not be more simple. At five o'clock last evening this train left Istanbul on its way to Calais with stops in between. At approximately 12:30 last night, it ran into a snowdrift and was forced to stop. And at ten o'clock this morning, Mr. Cassetti was found dead with eight stab wounds in his chest. These are the facts. *C'est tout. C'est fini!*

However...these facts permit two possible solutions to the crime. Under the first solution, one of Cassetti's enemies boarded the train at Sofia and brought with him a Wagon-Lit uniform which he later put on. Then, last night, using a pass key to enter Cassetti's compartment, he stabbed the man eight times and left through the door to Mrs. Hubbard's compartment.

~~MRS. HUBBARD. That's what I've been telling you!~~  
~~Mrs. Hubbard. Here, here.~~

BOUC. Well done, my friend. You have solved the case!

PRINCESS. Oh, I would not get too excited. He has not finished yet, have you, *monsieur*?

POIROT. No, princess, I have not finished. Let me propose a second solution because two unexpected events made the first solution impossible.

The first event was the snow which forced the train to stop: it meant that the killer now had a very big problem. *WHERE COULD HE GO?* He could not get off at the next station *because there was no next station.* So unless the killer could fly, he must still be among us on this train. *He must be one of you!*

(Silence.)

~~MRS. HUBBARD. You said there were two unexpected events. We just can't wait to hear the other one.~~

POIROT. The second event was the discovery of the fragment of a letter that said, "Remember little Daisy Armstrong." And from this fragment we know that the

killer was not some random enemy of Mr. Cassetti, but someone who came to avenge the death of a five year old child. Am I being fair about this, Miss Debenham? What do you think?

MARY. I... I suppose so.

POIROT. Excellent. Now with these facts in mind, the second solution took root, and little by little it has blossomed in all its terrible ruthlessness.

The first clue leading to this solution appeared within an hour of my arrival at Istanbul, when I learned that there was not a single ticket left on the first class coach of the Orient Express.

~~(Bang! Instantly, the room goes dark with only blue spotlights on the passengers as needed. This is a flashback to a moment earlier in the play, and the technique will recur again and again over the next few minutes.)~~

BOUC. (Flashback.) It is never sold out at this time of year. That is ridiculous.

POIROT. And it was ridiculous. Why was this train so suddenly full? But thanks to *Monsieur* Bouc, I had a berth on the train, and soon, on the platform, I met an astonishing company of actors.

COUNTESS. (Flashback.) *Monsieur* Poirot, I look forward to hearing of your wonderful adventures.

MICHEL. (Flashback.) Princess Dragomiroff. How lovely to see you.

PRINCESS. (Flashback.) I have agreed to pay her way if she will assist me as I travel to Paris.

GRETA. (Flashback.) I am not married, except to God almighty who lives in heaven.

POIROT. Hungarian, French, Russian, Swedish. What were all these people doing on the same train? Something was amiss! It was like looking at a painting by Pablo Picasso. Over there is an eye, on top of an ear, behind a

END

(POIROT hesitates. Then.)

POIROT. Alors.

My friends.

May you go with God. And I hope that he gives you the strength you need to get on with your lives.

(It takes a moment to sink in - then everyone starts to breathe again. They all start chattering with immense relief. MARY and ARBUTHNOT hug each other. Then so do MICHEL and MRS. HUBBARD. A cloud has lifted and they feel alive again. "Oh, thank God." "It's a miracle!" "I thought it was over." "So did I!" "It's over!" Then.)

(Kerchunck!)

(The passengers are thrown forward as the train starts up again. They run to the windows and see the men outside.)

BOUC. The crews have arrived!

COUNTESS. They are here at last!

MACQUEEN. Well, praise the Lord!

MARY. The train is moving!

BOUC. Thank God.

(MARY bangs on the window, calling to the crew.)

MARY. Hello! Hello, there! Thank you! Thank you so much! (To ARBUTHNOT.) Oh, James, do you see them?!

ARBUTHNOT. I told you we'd be all right in the end. You know, Poirot, you turned out to be more than I...

MARY. Poirot?

MRS. HUBBARD. *Monsieur* Poirot?

COUNTESS. He's gone.

MACQUEEN. Gone where?

BOUC. *Monsieur* Poirot?

POIROT

(They look around. He's gone.)

(Tableau.)

(Then a light comes up on POIROT by himself.)

He speaks to the audience.)

STABLET

POIROT. And so the case was over at last, and the passengers went their separate ways. I have learned since that time that Greta Ohlsson did in fact get to Africa - for the first time, as it turned out - and she did work for the children and saved many lives. The colonel and Miss Debenham were married in a quiet ceremony in St. James Square, *Monsieur* MacQueen returned to his business, Michel to his trains, and the princess left us for the great beyond.

The countess, alas, went back to her husband, *Monsieur* Bouc and I have remained good friends, and Mrs. Hubbard - the great Linda Arden - has recently returned to the stage in a musical entitled *No, No, Nanette*, in which, I am told, she brings the audiences to their feet.

Meanwhile, I beg you to believe me when I tell you that I wish all of them well, and I hope that they prosper till the end of their days. But at night, in the darkness, when I am all alone, I ask myself again and again if this was justice; if I did the right thing. And on many such nights, it is not until morning that I can close my eyes.

(The lights fade.)

(And then the lights are out.)

End of Play

MRS. HUBBARD  
(At this moment, MRS. HUBBARD blows onto  
the platform.)

START

MRS. HUBBARD. Is this that Orient Express I keep hearing about? It doesn't look that impressive, at least not from here.

MICHEL. You are Mrs. Hubbard?

MRS. HUBBARD. Mrs. Helen Caroline Peabody-Wolfson-Van Pelt-Hubbard, if you please, from the beautiful garden state of Minnesota. Mr. Peabody, my first husband, was a very good soul but the poor man had no talent for longevity, and I shouldn't say poor because he did very nicely for himself, thank you very much. My second husband was a Mr. Wolfson who I loved rather dearly, but he loved a lot of women and so I traded up and got a Van Pelt, but I caught him in bed with that redhead from the Waldorf who did his nails. Then at last I found Mr. Hubbard and I call him my little white knight for saving me from a life of bridge games and watery cocktails at the Minneapolis Country Club.

BOUC. And is Mr. Hubbard joining you?

MRS. HUBBARD. No, Mr. Hubbard is not joining me. Mr. Hubbard and I traveled together once and he said it raised his blood pressure. I don't know why. So now I do it for both of us. (To MICHEL.) Do you like to travel?

MICHEL. I travel every day.

MRS. HUBBARD. Then you and I should exchange notes some time.

MICHEL. Compartment three.

MRS. HUBBARD. Is that yours or mine?

MICHEL. Yours, madame.

MRS. HUBBARD. I hope it's comfy.

MICHEL. I have never had a complaint, madame.

MRS. HUBBARD. I'm sure you haven't.

(She exits.)

POIROT. She is quite the character.

BOUC #1

END

START

7

6

BOUC. They are all characters. If I was Balzac, I would write a novel about all of them.

POIROT. And just think: for three days these strangers are brought together in the closest of quarters, eating and sleeping under a single roof.

BOUC. And then at the end they part, never to see each other again.

POIROT. Unless, unless.

BOUC. Unless what?

POIROT. Unless there is an accident. Or something fatal occurs.

BOUC. *Monsieur* Poirot! Why do you say such a thing?!

POIROT. Forgive me. It is my business. And I sense that something is wrong - that there is a tension among these passengers of yours. One of them does not fit in. It makes me frightened.

BOUC. Oh, *monsieur*! No more business, please. You must now succumb to nothing but pleasure - and prepare yourself to step aboard the pride of the company Wagon-Lit for the most memorable journey of your entire life!

(We hear the hoot of the train whistle: grad as they head for the train, we hear the second movement of Mahler's Symphony No. 1 ring out majestically and with romance.)

(The train bells clang, there is a blast of steam, and the set changes to the interior of the Orient Express. The change is dramatic and magical.)

END

## Scene Four

RATCHETT

(We are now in the Art Deco dining car of the first class coach of the Orient Express. The car gleams with elegance and romance. The fittings are gold, the cushions are made of red plush, and the bar in the dining car is fashioned of inlaid wood with an Art Deco depiction of an elegant woman lying across an ottoman. It is worthy, in its way, of the great mosaics in Ravenna. The train is breathtaking.)

(A number of PASSENGERS come through with their luggage.)

MRS. HUBBARD. Well, ain't this the bee's knees. Maybe I'll just move in for good.

MICHEL. This way, please, and watch your step.

MRS. HUBBARD. Holy cow. Is it snowing out there?

MICHEL. We get a lot of it this time of year, I'm afraid. Last year we got stuck in the snow for seven days.

MRS. HUBBARD. Seven days! Was there liquor on board?

MICHEL. There is always plenty.

MRS. HUBBARD. Well, now I can breathe again. Don't get me wrong, I also eat solid food as long as it's cooked in bouillon. As they say in the movies, lead on, MacDuff!

(They exit as the PRINCESS and GREIA enter.)

PRINCESS. Greta, you must keep up, keep up! We have to get settled in before the train starts moving!

GREIA. I have to confess to you, princess, that I am not liking trains since I am little girl. They are feeling very tight to me, like clothing that is made wrong size and is squeezing my bosom, may God forgive me.

PRINCESS. Oh, don't be silly. Trains are wonderful.

GREIA. I am also not liking the strangers and der clickety-clackety. But we will be sitting next to each other, ja? That part iss good. In Africa once I am on a train and

there is noise and crying and animals and oh! And I look up from my book and sitting there next to me, right on the seat, iss a very old goat. Haha. Is true. *Old goat!* He is like my companion. And on this trip that we are taking together right now, I think it will not be so different, ja?

(GREIA exits. The PRINCESS reacts and follows her off as POIROI enters, followed by RATCHETT, who is trying to catch up with him.)

RATCHETT. Mr. Poirot, slow up! Now I'd like to discuss that proposition I mentioned.

POIROI. *Non, non*, I'm afraid it is not a good time.

RATCHETT. Oh sure it is. Sit down. I'll be quick, I promise.

POIROI. I am afraid -

RATCHETT. Sit down.

POIROI. ... *Eh bien*. Proceed.

RATCHETT. Now I want you to take on a job for me.

POIROI. I take on few new cases.

RATCHETT. You'll take this one on, I guarantee it.

POIROI. And why is that?

RATCHETT. Because I'm talkin' big money here. Mr. Poirot, I have an enemy.

POIROI. I would guess that you have several enemies.

RATCHETT. Now what is *that* supposed to mean?

POIROI. You are successful, *n'est-ce pas?* Successful people have many enemies.

RATCHETT. Right. That's it exactly! You see I've been getting some threatening letters lately and I want an extra pair of eyes to do some snoopin' around. And that's what you do, am I right? Snoopin'? Of course, I can take care of myself.

(He flashes the gun under his coat.)

But I'll pay you five thousand dollars. How does that sound?

POIROI. *Non*.

START

RATCHETT. All right, ten. For a few days' work.

POIROI. I am not for sale, *monsieur*. I have been very fortunate in my profession and I now take only such cases as interest me - and frankly, you do not interest me.

RATCHETT. You want me to grovel, is that it?

POIROI. I want nothing, *monsieur*, except to leave.

*(POIROI exits. RATCHETT is darkly unhappy. He stomps his foot. After a beat, the COUNTESS enters, passing through. She nods as she tries to go past him.)*

COUNTESS. Pardon me. Sorry.

RATCHETT. Hey, you're that countess, aren't you?

COUNTESS. That is correct.

RATCHETT. Well, you're awful pretty. And from what I hear, you were a commoner to start with, just like the rest of us.

COUNTESS. That is also correct.

RATCHETT. So does that mean you'll have a drink with me?

COUNTESS. I am married, *monsieur*. My husband is having business elsewhere. Please excuse me.

RATCHETT. Now not so fast.

*(The COUNTESS looks up sharply, but he's blocking her way. There is something threatening about him.)*

COUNTESS. Move out of the way, please.

RATCHETT. Hey, you don't need to get all high and mighty about it.

COUNTESS. If you do not move this second I will scream.

RATCHETT. *Just wait a minute!* You've said that you're unattached at the moment, and we are on a train, so who the hell's gonna know what happens in some private room on some two-bit piece o' -

END

*(Whap! She slaps him very hard across the face. His instinct is to spring forward and attack her back.)*

COUNTESS. Stay away from me.

*(MACQUEEN bumbles into the room.)*

MACQUEEN. Oh Mr. Ratchett, I've been looking for you. I-I put your glass of wine next to your bed, and if you don't need anything else tonight, I thought I'd just -

RATCHETT. *Shut up, Hector. Just shut... up!*

*(At which moment, BOUC enters.)*

BOUC. Aha. My friends. I hope that you are settling in all right and enjoying yourselves? It won't be long now until -

*(Kerchunk! The train lurches to a start, and everyone grabs something nearby. It begins to roll and there is a sense of relief.)*

Haha! Not long at all! The journey begins, and I wish you both good luck and godspeed!

*(The lights fade quickly and we hear the train begin to roll, haltingly, then faster and faster until it's shooting along the tracks.)*

*(Zoom! Clang, clang, clang! Hoonk! Hoonk!)*

*(As the train moves, we see the snow falling, getting heavier by the second.)*

*(Simultaneously we hear the frantic, propulsive opening of Rachmaninoff's arrangement of Rimsky-Korsakov's "The Flight Of The Bumblebee.")*

Scene Six

(And now we see MICHEL at the end of the sleeping corridor. He is trying to work with the train's two-way radio, a clunky old-fashioned piece of machinery subject to problems.)

(First we hear the whining screech of the radio trying to find a signal - Oweeeee, Oweeeee! - then the crackle of the static when the signal is found.)

MICHEL. Orient Express to Belgrade Station. Orient Express to Belgrade Station. Emergency call number 867. Alert Code Blue. This is important. Do you read me? Hello? Are you there, Belgrade?

RADIO. (With much static.) We read you, Express. Pray continue.

MICHEL. We've just left Sofia and the snow is becoming heavier by the minute. I am getting concerned as we head into the mountains. Please prepare your rescue equipment in case of stoppage. Hello? Do you read me?

(Oweeeeeeeee!)

Belgrade?

(Oweeeeeeeee!)

Belgrade, can you hear me?!

9

MARY  
ARBUTHNOT

Scene Seven

(Lights up on the observation deck. MARY rushes in and looks around. A moment later, ARBUTHNOT enters.)

START

MARY. Oh thank God! I thought you weren't coming!

ARBUTHNOT. What's the matter? I got your note.

MARY. I'll tell you what the matter is! I'm frightened because we shouldn't be doing this!

ARBUTHNOT. Now calm down.

MARY. I can't calm down! We have to stop this!

ARBUTHNOT. Now that's ridiculous.

MARY. No it isn't! Oh that's the trouble with you military men, you never show any real emotion, it's always stiff upper lip no matter what's going on!

ARBUTHNOT. Mary, we're doing nothing wrong! You have to remember that.

MARY. I'm trying! I really am!

(She hugs ARBUTHNOT.)

ARBUTHNOT. Better?

MARY. Yes, I think so.

ARBUTHNOT. There was a hill near my home in Scotland, and I'd sit for hours watching the trains go by in the valley below. I knew they were heading to exotic locales and I wanted to climb aboard in the worst way.

MARY. But you didn't.

ARBUTHNOT. No. I suppose I knew somehow that I'd break my mother's heart.

MARY. You're a very good man.

ARBUTHNOT. She was a very good woman.

MARY. Do you know what the worst of it is with all this traveling we've been doing? We don't get any privacy. It's just so maddening!

ARBUTHNOT. Well, I don't see anyone around at the moment, do you?

END

POIROT. Exactly. No footprints. No marks in the snow. Which means that no one entered or left through the window.

BOUC. Then why is it open?

POIROT. I assume to mislead the police when they arrive.

BOUC. The police?!

POIROT. Of course the police. It is murder.

BOUC. The Yugoslavian police department? Oh no, no, no, no, no, no. We do not want them. You must solve the murder, then *you* tell *them* who did it.

POIROT. I have interfered too much already.

BOUC. But my company is at stake!

POIROT. But *mon ami* -

BOUC. Just think what a Yugoslavian police inquiry would do to my company. People would say, "Oh no, I cannot travel on the Orient Express, I could be murdered in my bed," and our sales would suffer and I would lose my *clients*!

POIROT. But I am due in London in three days' time.

BOUC. Then solve it in two! You are a magician. I have seen you work! You listen, you look, you pester, you make yourself a pain in the backside, then suddenly poof!, the case is solved like *that*!

POIROT. The police would be angry.

BOUC. The Yugoslavian police department? They are like the three stooges in the movie house. They poke each other in the eyes by accident. They would be thrilled not to have to do any work. If you save them the job, they will put up a statue of you in the center of Zagreb!

POIROT. I would need a plan of the coach.

BOUC. Done.

POIROT. And the passports and tickets of everyone on board.

BOUC. Done.

(The COUNTESS arrives.)

END

COUNTESS  
10  
COUNTESS  
COUNTESS. Excuse me, but you have asked to see me - *oh dear God*.

POIROT. Forgive me, countess, but I understand you were trained as a physician, so I thought perhaps you could help me with the body.

COUNTESS. I am happy to help.

(Without hesitation, she strips off her jacket and rolls up her sleeves.)

POIROT. I'm afraid it is not a very pleasant sight.

COUNTESS. I have seen worse, believe me. I volunteered in the war.

(The COUNTESS begins examining the body.)

POIROT. *Regards*. The left side of his face is slightly red, do you see?

COUNTESS. I do. It has been slapped.

BOUC. How do you know?

COUNTESS. Because I slapped it. I count eight separate wounds.

POIROT. That was my count also. Can you estimate the time of death?

COUNTESS. I would say it is between eight and ten hours ago, which puts the time between midnight and two o'clock.

POIROT. I am in accord.

COUNTESS. It appears that the killer was wild - in a frenzy of some sort.

POIROT. *Regards*. See this. Of the eight stab wounds, five appear strong and three are mere scratches. And wait, do you see, the wounds are from different directions. Do you see it? I need a pencil.

BOUC. Here.

POIROT. *Bon*. Now watch. We place the pencil inside each wound and push it gently...

BOUC. Ugh! Is this necessary?

START

COUNTNESS. Perhaps the man changed hands during the stabbing.

BOUC. Or there were two assailants. One right-handed and one left-handed.

COUNTNESS. One strong, one weak.

POIROT. It is not impossible. But now another question presents itself: why did Mr. Ratchett not fight back when all the while he had this gun under his pillow?

(POIROT pulls the revolver out from under the pillow.)

COUNTNESS. *Oh là là.*

BOUC. *Alors. May I see it?*

(BOUC takes the gun.)

COUNTNESS. How did you find it?

POIROT. He showed it to me yesterday so I knew it was here somewhere.

BOUC. It is an automatic and I believe it is loaded.

(He waves it around.)

POIROT. *Attention!*

COUNTNESS. *Ah!*

BOUC. Wait! There is a safety switch, it is not on.

POIROT. *S'il vous plait, mon ami! Have you not heard of the fatal accident?!*

(He takes the gun from BOUC, but stops suddenly and sniffs the air.)

*Un moment.*

(He sniffs again and puts his finger up.)

I have a very good nose.

(He picks up RATCHETT'S empty wine glass and sniffs.)

Aha. Smell the glass of wine.

COUNTNESS. It smells of almonds.

(She pulls RATCHETT'S eyelids up and examines his eyes.)

COUNTNESS. He was clearly drugged, which is why -

POIROT & COUNTNESS. He did not fight back.

POIROT. Pub, puh. What is this in his pocket? *Voilà.*

(He pulls a pocket watch from RATCHETT'S pajama pocket.)

BOUC. It is a watch, and the face is smashed!

COUNTNESS. It is stopped at 1:15.

BOUC. Haha! At last! We have something important, yes?!

It is the time of death, and the countess said between midnight and two! So there it is! It could not be clearer! 1:15 is the time of death, it is obvious.

POIROT. It is possible.

BOUC. What do you mean it is possible? What is wrong with it?

POIROT. I do not know yet what is wrong and what is right because *I am still investigating!* Here is a pipe cleaner, and here is a match, and here is another match of a different shape. There are dozens of clues in this room and it makes me suspicious!

BOUC. Look at this, on the floor.

COUNTNESS. (*Picking it up.*) It is a lady's handkerchief with the letter H on it.

POIROT. Yet another clue. And who is H? Eh? As in *Hamlet* -

COUNTNESS. "That is the question." There is Mrs. Hubbard, and I believe that her first name is Helen.

POIROT. And the princess?

BOUC. Her name is Natalya Dragoniroff. And there is Mary Debenham and Greta Ohlsson and James Arbutnot and Hector MacQueen and I am Constantine Bouc, and such a thing like this has never happened in the history of the Wagon-Kit and it will ruin my company and I want you to solve it immediately!

END

## Scene Ten

Princess  
Dragomiroff

(Bang! The lights come up instantly on the dining car. POIROI, BOUC, the PRINCESS, and GRETA.)

GRETA)

PRINCESS. *Monsieur Poirot*, we are here out of a sense of duty, that is all. I do not like having my day disturbed.

POIROI. Then let us begin immediately. Now it says in your passport that you are Russian.

PRINCESS. That is correct. I have been in exile since the Bolshevik dogs took over.

POIROI. And I see that your first name is -

PRINCESS. Natalya.

POIROI. And is this your handkerchief, *madame*?

PRINCESS. Of course not. It has the letter *H* on it. My initials are N. D. Natalya Dragomiroff.

POIROI. Is it yours, *mademoiselle*?

GRETA. No, no, I could not afford such a beautiful thing as this. It would be a sin.

PRINCESS. Oh!

POIROI. And may I ask each of you where you were last night between midnight and two o'clock.

PRINCESS. I could not sleep, so at midnight the Countess Andrenyi and I read a book together in my room. Out loud. It is the very best way to get to sleep when you are anxious.

POIROI. And what were you anxious about?

PRINCESS. The Bolsheviks.

POIROI. And what book did you read?

PRINCESS. *A Tale of Two Cities*, it is very comforting.

POIROI. And you, Miss Ohlsson? Where were you?

GRETA. I was in my room with Miss Debenham, who is also nice. We talked from twelve o'clock until two o'clock and then we slept. You can ask her!

POIROI. And have either of you ever been to America?

PRINCESS. Yes, many times.

GRETA. I have not been to America but I must go some day to raise money for my babies in Africa.

POIROI. You are very religious.

GRETA. *Ja*, since I was little girl and Jaysus came to visit me in my garden. He spoke with me, und told me I must verk hard to help little babies in Africa.

POIROI. And I'm sure you have done it beautifully, *mademoiselle*. Just one more question for both of you ladies. Are you aware of the identity of the man who was killed last night?

GRETA. His name was Ratchett.

(*Sob.*)

And I pray for his soul.

PRINCESS. No, my dear, his name was Bruno Cassetti, the countess told me, and what *I* pray is that his soul is damned and that he burns in hell for all eternity.

GRETA. Princess!

PRINCESS. He murdered a girl named Daisy Armstrong and her grandmother is my dearest friend. You would know her as the actress Linda Arden.

BOUC. She was very great.

PRINCESS. Not *was*, *monsieur*. She *is* very great. She is very much alive and remains the greatest actress of the American stage. And when her five year old granddaughter was murdered by this *monster* Cassetti, it took her years to recover, indeed she has not *yet* recovered!

POIROI. There were four who died?

PRINCESS. No, *five*, *monsieur*! *Five* people died! Little Daisy, and then her mother, who was pregnant, died in childbirth, and the baby died, too. And the little girl's father, Colonel Armstrong, could not live with what happened and ended his life! And a housemaid as well! Five human souls were extinguished. So please forgive me, Greta, if I take the view that there is no forgiveness

in a case such as this and that Mr. Cassetti should have been flogged to death and his remains cut up and thrown onto a rubbish heap!

GRETA. (Crying out.) Ah!

(GRETA runs from the room. The PRINCESS runs after her and bumps into MACQUEEN, who is just entering.)

PRINCESS. Greta, please! Greta!

MACQUEEN. In-I'm-I'm so sorry.

(The PRINCESS is gone.)

POIROT. *Monsieur* MacQueen, please sit down.

MACQUEEN. Of-of course. Are they all right?

POIROT. They will be fine, I assure you. Now tell me, please, what exactly were your duties as secretary to your employer?

MACQUEEN. Well I-I wrote his letters and did his errands and things.

POIROT. And you knew him only as Samuel Ratchett.

MACQUEEN. How else would I know him?

POIROT. His real name was Bruno Cassetti.

MACQUEEN. Holy God. Are you sure of that?

BOUC. Then you know about the Armstrong case?

MACQUEEN. You bet I do. My father was the district attorney for the state of New York and he brought the case against that...son of a bitch. I'm sorry, but you have no idea what he did to that family. And they were so kind to me!

POIROT. Can you tell us who was in the Armstrong household?

MACQUEEN. Mrs. Armstrong had a sister. She went to graduate school, but after the tragedy she moved to Europe and I think she got married. Her name was *Helena*. And also Mrs. Armstrong's mother would come to visit. She was an actress.

POIROT. Anyone else?

MACQUEEN. There was a governess and a baby nurse, and then poor Suzanne. She was a French housemaid - she came from Paris - and my father's office thought she might be implicated, and...and she was so distraught from the accusations that she -

BOUC. Killed herself.

MACQUEEN. (Nods.) Only it turned out that she was innocent. My father was shattered. He never recovered.

POIROT. And where were you last night between midnight and two o'clock?

MACQUEEN. Twelve to two? I-I was with Colonel Arbuthnot on the observation deck.

POIROT. And did you see anyone last night you did not recognize?

MACQUEEN. No. I saw Michel the conductor, and the other conductor, and Colonel Arbuthnot, and Miss Debenham -

BOUC. The "other conductor"?

POIROT. There is a second conductor?

MACQUEEN. I guess so. I saw him.

BOUC. He was in uniform?

MACQUEEN. Yeah. The same one that Michel wears.

BOUC. And what did he look like?

MACQUEEN. I don't know. He had his hat pulled down. He was small-boned, you know what I mean? Sort of feminine.

POIROT. Did you speak with him?

MACQUEEN. I said hello and he just kept going.

POIROT. You are very helpful, thank you. You may go. And please ask Michel to come see me.

MACQUEEN. Sure thing. I'll see you later.

(As soon as MACQUEEN exits, BOUC cries out.)

BOUC. Haha! I knew we would get a breakthrough! Mrs. Hubbard was telling the truth, I should have

END

~~POIROT. She is more than lovely. She is a complete liar.~~

~~BOUC. (*Incredulous.*) Miss Debenham?~~

~~POIROT. She claims that she is not well-acquainted with the colonel, yet they are clearly *intime*. To him she said she wanted to put something behind her and now she pretends that these words mean nothing.~~

~~BOUC. But she was shot!~~

~~POIROT. In the arm.~~

~~BOUC. It could have killed her!~~

~~POIROT. I wonder.~~

~~BOUC. About what? *Oh là là*, you do not suspect her of Cassetti's murder -?~~

~~POIROT. It is not impossible.~~

~~BOUC. But it is impossible. She is cool. She is methodical. She would not stab a man to death, she would sue him in court!~~

~~POIROT. *Non, non*, you are wrong if you think this crime is sudden and passionate. This is a long-headed crime, *mon ami*, I would stake my career on it. Look at this.~~

~~(*POIROT produces the sleeve of MARY's blouse that was cut off by the COUNTESS.*)~~

~~BOUC. The sleeve of her blouse. So what?~~

~~POIROT. There is a powder burn at the entry point.~~

~~BOUC. Which means?~~

~~POIROT. That the gun was very close to the sleeve when it went off.~~

~~BOUC. So what? The man was two feet away!~~

~~(*MICHEL hurries in.*)~~

~~MICHEL. (*At the door.*) *Pardon, messieurs*. I have finished the search.~~

~~BOUC. And, and, and?~~

~~MICHEL. Nothing. There is no sign of an intruder anywhere.~~

~~If you like, I can show you.~~

*MICHEL* POIROT. *Non, non, c'est tout*. Would you now be so kind as to remove your tunic, please?

(*MICHEL, confused, looks to BOUC for guidance, and BOUC nods. MICHEL removes his tunic and hands it to POIROT.*)

I see that none of your buttons are missing, and moreover, the thread for each button is old, so nothing was sewn on recently.

MICHEL. That is correct, but may I ask -?

POIROT. Mrs. Hubbard found this button in her room this morning.

MICHEL. (*Examining it.*) It is not mine, *monsieur*.

POIROT. So I see. But it matches yours exactly.

MICHEL. It does.

POIROT. Michel, are there other attendants on this train at the moment?

MICHEL. There is one in second class. A ticket taker I have known for years.

POIROT. Is he large or small?

MICHEL. Quite large, I'm afraid. Shall I ask him to see you?

POIROT. *Non, non*, that is quite all right. And what other passengers, besides the ones in this coach, are on the train?

MICHEL. There is hardly anyone at the moment. It is the off-season. There is a mother and child on the Belgrade carriage and that is all.

POIROT. And could there be a second conductor on this train wearing a uniform like yours?

MICHEL. Oh no, *monsieur*, there is no such thing. I had to earn this uniform with many years of service. However...

POIROT. *Oui?*

MICHEL. Well, frankly, I am not sure I trust her word, but Miss Ohlsson says that last night she saw what she calls a second conductor on the train.

POIROT. *(Suddenly alert.)* Miss Ohlsson?

MICHEL. *Oui*, she told me this morning.

BOUC. She did not tell us this morning.

MICHEL. She said he was wearing a uniform like mine and when she spoke to him he did not respond. In fact...

POIROT. What? *Tell me quickly!*

MICHEL. The princess tells me that she also saw this man last night.

POIROT. *Oh là là, oh là là, oh là là.*

BOUC. What is it?

POIROT. It is just the kind of clue that I have been waiting for.

*(He springs into action.)*

Michel, come with me. I will need your help quickly. *Monsieur* Bouc, we shall be right back. Do not move!

BOUC. But where are you going?

POIROT. You will see in a moment!

*(POIROT hurries out with MICHEL behind him - jostling MRS. HUBBARD, who is just entering.)*

MRS. HUBBARD. Ah!

POIROT. Pardon, *madame!* We will be right back!

MRS. HUBBARD. I thought you wanted to question me.

POIROT. I do! Just stay where you are!

*(POIROT and MICHEL run out of the room.)*

MRS. HUBBARD. Well that was exciting - as if we needed any more excitement around here. Now listen, I want my passport back.

*(She goes through the passports on the table, looking for her own.)*

What if there was another shooting and we had to make a run for it? Can you imagine me wandering through Yugoslavia without a passport? They'd shoot me on sight and ask questions later. "Who are you?!"

END

"Well I'm Mrs. Helen Hubbard from the Minneapolis Golf and Racquet *BLAM!*" No more mahjong!

BOUC. You have been extremely patient, *madame*, and believe me, I am grateful. If there is ever anything I can do to thank you, I am at your service.

*(He kisses her hand.)*

MRS. HUBBARD. You know you remind me of one of my husbands.

BOUC. Which one?

MRS. HUBBARD. The next one.

*(At which moment we hear GREIA's voice from down the corridor.)*

GREIA. *(Offstage, approaching.)* No, no, no, please put it back! It is my suitcase! You may not take it!

*(POIROT bursts into the room followed by MICHEL who is carrying a battered suitcase. MICHEL is followed by GREIA, the COUNTESS, and the PRINCESS. GREIA is hysterical and POIROT and the COUNTESS are trying to calm her down.)*

COUNTESS. He must have a reason.

POIROT. I have an excellent reason.

GREIA. Please stop!

PRINCESS. *Monsieur* Poirot, really!

POIROT. Miss Ohlsson, you must permit me to take a look in your suitcase.

GREIA. But they are private things! It has my undergarments!

PRINCESS. *Monsieur* Poirot!

POIROT. Miss Ohlsson, we will look at nothing that will embarrass you, you have my promise. Wait! I have an idea. Princess, would you be so kind as to assist me?

PRINCESS. I suppose.

GRETIA

POIROI. Miss Ohlsson: Michel tells me that you saw a second conductor on the train last night. Is that correct?

GRETIA. Ja.

POIROI. And what did he look like?

GRETIA. He was small like a woman.

PRINCESS. That is correct. I saw him as well.

POIROI. *Ah bon*, that is perfect. It seems that virtually everyone on this train has seen the second conductor except myself and *Monsieur* Bouc. So the question now is where did he go. Is he hiding on the train? If he were still in uniform, we could spot him quickly. Therefore, at least one conclusion is that he has *hidden* his uniform and done so in the luggage of one of the passengers.

GRETIA. But why choose me? There are other suitcases! Try the other ones first!

POIROI. (*The magician.*) Princess, would you be so kind as to raise the lid and tell us what you see inside?

(*The PRINCESS raises the lid - and pulls out a uniform identical to the one that MICHEL is wearing.*)

COUNTESS. It is the uniform.

GRETIA. Ahh! I haf never seen it! I have hurt no one, ever! I would not do such a thing!! I am not a murderer!!

POIROI. Oh now, now, now, I am not accusing you, you did nothing wrong.

GRETIA. I did nothing wrong!!

POIROI. *Monsieur* Bouc, does the jacket have all its buttons in place?

BOUC. No. There is one missing.

MRS. HUBBARD. And there ya go! Are we surprised at this? BOUC. Wait a moment. There is something more.

(*He reaches into one of the pockets of the uniform and pulls out a large, distinctive-looking key.*)

BOUC. *Oh là là. Mon Dieu.* It is a pass key for the doors on the train.

MRS. HUBBARD. And that would explain how he got in my room.

(*GRETIA weeps loudly on the PRINCESS's shoulder.*)

POIROI. Now, now, *mademoiselle*, just tell me when was the last time you looked in your suitcase.

GRETIA. It was yesterday, just after we boarded.

POIROI. So someone could have hidden it this morning after you left the room.

GRETIA. *I have no idea! I have never seen it before!*

PRINCESS. *Monsieur* Piroi! I must insist that you stop bullying poor Miss Ohlsson in this manner. She is simply not up to it like the rest of us.

POIROI. You are right, forgive me. Now would you be so kind as to help Miss Ohlsson back to her room and take Mrs. Hubbard with you. I need to speak with the countess alone for a moment if you do not mind.

MRS. HUBBARD. Of course we mind. Every time things get juicy, you throw us out again!

PRINCESS. Uch. Would you please stop gossip mongering.

MRS. HUBBARD. Me? You have your mouth open so much I can count your teeth.

PRINCESS. What a pleasure to learn you know how to count. Bird brain.

MRS. HUBBARD. Well, if I'm a bird brain, you're a communist!

PRINCESS. I am not a communist, I'm in *exile!*

MRS. HUBBARD. From your *husband*, I'll bet, who couldn't wait to get rid of you!

PRINCESS. And who's the one with all the divorces?!

MRS. HUBBARD. My husbands were unfaithful!

PRINCESS. And this surprises you?!

BOUC. Ladies, ladies, we are all a little worked up at the moment - please. This way.

EJJD

GRETA. Thank you.

*(The PRINCESS and MRS. HUBBARD exit in high dudgeon. Everyone exits except POIROI and the COUNTESS.)*

*(A moment. POIROI sighs deeply.)*

COUNTESS. You seem troubled.

POIROI. I am getting more and more concerned.

COUNTESS. That another crime will occur?

POIROI. No. That I will solve this one.

*(POIROI picks up one of the passports and reads the contents.)*

Countess. What is your maiden name?

COUNTESS. Goldenberg. As you see in the passport.

POIROI. Oui. But now you use Andrenyi.

COUNTESS. My husband's name.

POIROI. Of course. The Countess Andrenyi. And I believe your first name is Eléna.

COUNTESS. That is correct. I am a suspect?

POIROI. I merely ask questions. That is my job.

COUNTESS. I thought we were friends.

POIROI. It is my greatest wish, but please indulge me. This morning I examined your passport and I saw a grease spot at the beginning of your name, Eléna. The spot occurs before the first letter, and it could easily hide another letter, such as H. Now if you add an H at the beginning of the name, it becomes *Heléna*, which is used by Shakespeare in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

COUNTESS. That is true.

POIROI. The kind of name an actress might choose for her daughter.

COUNTESS. I suppose.

POIROI. An actress such as Linda Arden, the grandmother of Daisy Armstrong.

COUNTESS. If you say so.

COUNTESS &  
POIROI

START

POIROI. And the name Linda Arden is itself a stage name, surely. The word Arden was the maiden name of Shakespeare's mother and also the name of the forest in his play entitled -

COUNTESS. *As You Like It*.

POIROI. You know your Shakespeare well for a Hungarian.

COUNTESS. I have studied Shakespeare since I was a child.

POIROI. Yes, I know. I believe your mother Linda Arden taught it to you.

*(The COUNTESS is shaken but tries to hide it.)*

And that would make you the aunt of little Daisy Armstrong, the aunt who went to graduate school and got a degree in medicine, then moved to Europe and got married.

COUNTESS. *(A catch in her throat.)* I do not know this woman...

*(Sob.)*

But I would imagine that she still suffers from the loss of her niece and her sister.

*(She starts to weep quietly.)*

POIROI. My dear, there is no use denying it. When the train gets underway again and we reach the next city, a simple telegram will get me a photograph of Daisy's aunt and it will all be over.

COUNTESS. *(Suddenly without the Hungarian accent - purely American.)* But I didn't kill him! I should have but I didn't. I didn't even know who he was until you discovered it. But when you did, I realized that if you knew that I was Daisy's aunt, you would think that I killed him because he was... a blackmailer. And a swine! And the murderer of a darling, sweet, innocent child who deserved to live!

POIROI. *Madame*, really -

COUNTESS. *It's the truth, I swear to God!* But I'll tell you this: If I had known who he was - that he was Bruno

*Cassetti - the man who stole two of the people I loved most in this world - I would have pushed the dagger through his chest myself, and believe me, no other wounds would have been necessary!*

END

*(She stamps her foot in frustration - she is so angry she can't control herself - and she runs from the room in tears.)*

*(POIKOI is alone. He looks careworn and weary. We hear the agonized sounds of a solo cello once again, this time from the first movement of Bach's Cello Suite No. 5 In D Minor. And the lights dim.)*

*(As we transition into the next scene, we see the COUNTESS in a corner of the train weeping from the depths of her soul.)*

#### Scene Four

*(A moment later, BOUC is seen at the end of the corridor, speaking into the radio transmitter.)*

**BOUC.** 'Allo, 'allo, can you hear me? I am calling Zagreb Station, can you hear me, Zagreb? This is Constantine Bouc of the Orient Express.

**RADIO.** *(Crackling.)* We are hearing you, Monsieur Bouc, you are loud and clear.

**BOUC.** We remain in the snowdrift in the Polinski Pass. Where are you?!

**RADIO.** We have been delayed, *monsieur*, but should reach you presently. How are conditions?

**BOUC.** We are losing heat and light, provisions are low, the passengers are angry and we have a dead man rotting in compartment two. How are things with you?

*(We hear the allegro movement of Haydn's string quartet in D minor, Opus 76, No. 2. The lights cross-fade into the following scene.)*

Scene Five

*(In the transition, we hear all the suspects chattering away as they head for the dining car. When the lights come up, we are in the dining car and we see ARBUTHNOT, GRETA, the PRINCESS, and MACQUEEN all waiting impatiently.)*

16

ARBUTHNOT. Well, I'd like to know what the hell's going on!  
MACQUEEN. He wrote me a note and said to meet him here.  
GRETA. He wrote me the same thing.  
PRINCESS. I find this ridiculous!

*(MRS. HUBBARD, MARY, and the COUNTESS enter from various directions.)*

MRS. HUBBARD. So where's that little Frenchman hiding? Is he being mysterious again?  
MARY. He sent me a note to join him here.  
COUNTESS. I received one also.

ARBUTHNOT. Well, he's obviously up to something, the little weasel.

*(They all begin talking at once, "Do you think he solved it?" "Such an odd little man." "I wish this train would move already." "The man is ridiculous!")*

*(At which moment, POIROI enters, followed by BOUC and MICHEL.)*

POIROI. Pardon, pardon. I have kept you waiting and I apologize. I had to get, how you say, my ducks in a row.

GRETA. Ducks? What ducks?  
PRINCESS. It's an expression, Greta. You drive me crazy.  
GRETA. Oh.

POIROI. Please all of you be seated, I have an announcement to make.

POIROI  
ARBUTHNOT

*(They settle down and take a collective breath, then turn to POIROI. POIROI takes center stage.)*

POIROI. Ladies and gentlemen. I have called you together in order to reveal to you the killer of *Monsieur Samuel Ratchett*, also known as Bruno Cassetti.  
*(They all react.)*

MRS. HUBBARD. You're kidding!  
PRINCESS. No!  
ARBUTHNOT. I don't believe it.  
MACQUEEN. You know who did it?

POIROI. I believe that I do. But first I must interrogate the last of your fellow passengers who has not yet answered any of my questions. Colonel Arbuthnot -

ARBUTHNOT. Me?  
MARY. James?  
POIROI. Do you have a problem answering my questions, *monsieur?*

ARBUTHNOT. No, of course not.  
POIROI. Excellent. Now in the course of your service to your country, did you know an officer named Charles Armstrong?

ARBUTHNOT. No.  
POIROI. Have you heard of him?  
ARBUTHNOT. Yes, we served in the same theatre of action, but we never met.

POIROI. Have you heard of the Daisy Armstrong case?  
ARBUTHNOT. Of course I have. She was murdered by some brute who was out for money.

POIROI. Did you know that Colonel Armstrong was Daisy's father?  
ARBUTHNOT. No, I didn't.

POIROI. Or that he took his own life after the tragedy?  
ARBUTHNOT. Oh God. I'm sorry to hear it.

START

POIROT. Colonel, at the hotel in Istanbul I overheard you say to Miss Debenham that you wished that she was out of all this. What did you mean?

ARBUTHNOT. I have no idea.

POIROT. Then *she* said that no one should see you together until it was, "All behind you." Until what was behind you?

ARBUTHNOT. I can't imagine.

POIROT. Are you aware that you are obstructing justice?

ARBUTHNOT. I am aware of no such thing.

POIROT. And you, *mademoiselle*, can you explain what you meant?

MARY. I told you already. I wanted to get the trip behind me.

POIROT. I think you are lying.

ARBUTHNOT. Now listen here!

POIROT. Sit down, colonel, I am still talking. *Now tell me what you meant at the hotel! You wanted to get her out of what? She wanted to get what behind her?!*

*(They face each other squarely and the tension is high.)*

ARBUTHNOT. ... *I'm married!* All right? I'm in the process of getting a divorce - which I deserve because my wife is seeing another man - but I'll lose my case in court if it's known that I'm seeing a woman socially. When the divorce is *behind us* we can stop hiding, which is why we've been trying to keep things *private*, no thanks to you!

POIROT. You have been doing a very poor job of it, I am afraid.

ARBUTHNOT. Well, some of us have emotions, Poirot. I'm sure you'd sacrifice your own mother if it led you to one of your damn solutions, and I don't think you know what the hell you're doing.

END

POIROT. I know exactly what I am doing, colonel. I am investigating the murder of Bruno Cassetti.

ARBUTHNOT. *Well, he deserved to die!*  
POIROT. *Aha! Then you know who he is!*

ARBUTHNOT. *Well... yes.* They told me.

POIROT. But you did not know before they told you? And Colonel Armstrong was not your friend in the war? You did not save lives together as you fought with the Indian Army in the northern frontier?

*(POIROT taps the ribbon on ARBUTHNOT'S lapel.)*

You did not swear fidelity and friendship with this man at the time of your trial by fire together? And now you do not give him the respect he deserves for all the tragedy and loss that he had to endure before he took his own life?!

*(ARBUTHNOT explodes with anger, grabbing POIROT by the lapel and lifting him off his feet.)*

ARBUTHNOT. SHUT UP YOU LITTLE CARPING NINNY!  
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT TRAGEDY, HAH?!  
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT HONOR AND LOYALTY AND YOUR GODDAMN JUSTICE!!

*(Everyone springs up and tries to restrain him, overlapping.)*

BOUC. Stop!

MRS. HUBBARD. Colonel!

GRETA. Colonel Arbuthnot!

MARY. James!

PRINCESS. What are you doing?!

*(For a moment we wonder if ARBUTHNOT will throttle POIROT and do him serious injury, but then he drops POIROT and turns away.)*

POIROT. You have been telling me lies, *rieste pas?* Everyone in this room has been telling me lie after lie, but make no mistake. I know who killed Bruno Cassetti, and I know precisely how it was accomplished.

POIROT. I am sorry also because you are not.

ARBUTHNOT. Now listen to me you little *Frenchman* -

BOUC. He is Belgian.

ARBUTHNOT. I don't care if he's the man in the moon, I'm not leaving her!

MARY. It's all right, James. Honestly. I'm sure it won't take long.

POIROT. She is correct. I need a mere ten minutes.

ARBUTHNOT. Well, I don't like it! Do you understand? And you can put that in your *meerschaaum* pipe and smoke it!

BOUC. That is Sherlock Holmes.

ARBUTHNOT. Oh, go to hell!

(ARBUTHNOT *stalls out.*)

POIROT. *Bon.* Please sit down, Miss Debenham. There is much pain?

MARY. Well, it's rather sore, that's all.

POIROT. You are very brave. Let us all be grateful that it is not worse.

BOUC. (*Crossing himself.*) Thank the Lord.

POIROT. Now Miss Debenham. In the hotel yesterday I heard you speaking with the colonel and you said you were terrified you would miss the train. Can you tell me why it was so important to you?

MARY. It wasn't that at all. I didn't want to be late.

POIROT. But you said you wanted to, "Get it over with." Get it, "All behind you." Get what behind you? You seemed quite agitated.

MARY. I'm afraid you're reading into it. I'm tremendously punctual, that's all.

POIROT. Aha. *Pardon.* It is my profession. Sometimes I am too *imaginatif.* And you and the colonel are very close. I take it?

MARY. We only met a few days ago, and I suppose we rather hit it off.

POIROT. And as for the murder, I assume you know that the dead man was Bruno Cassetti.

MARY. I heard.

POIROT. And what do you know of the kidnapping?

MARY. Not much, I'm afraid. I've never been to the States.

POIROT. Aha. I see. And what is it that brought you to Istanbul?

MARY. I lived with a family for about a year. I'm a governess.

POIROT. And can you tell me your whereabouts last night between midnight and two o'clock?

MARY. I was in my room with Miss Ohlsson. We chatted until quite late. You see she...she talks quite a bit, especially when she's anxious, and I may have dozed off for a few minutes.

POIROT. I see.

MARY. May I go?

POIROT. You may. Oh wait. There is one last thing. Would you sign your name please.

MARY. All right.

(*She does.*)

It's a good thing I'm left-handed. I'd have trouble signing with my right at the moment.

POIROT. *Merci.*

BOUC. Please get some rest. And on behalf of the company I will have some champagne sent straight to your room.

MARY. Thank you so much.

(*She exits.*)

BOUC. (*Calling to her.*) And if there is anything else I can do to help, please let me know.

(*Pleasantly.*)

Goodbye! Goodbye!

(*He closes the door.*)

Oh my God, can you imagine if she had died? Thank goodness she is such a lovely young woman.

END

START

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MARY