

Side 6

Hercule Poirot

Dialect: Belgian/French accent (consistent, not cartoonish)

Description: World-famous detective. Precise, observant, fastidious, with an eccentric sense of humor. Must carry authority while also being engaging to the audience.

Monsieur Bouc

Dialect: French accent

Description: Director of the Wagon-Lit train company and Poirot's old friend. Energetic, personable, and often lighthearted. Serves as both host and occasional comic relief.

Colonel Arbuthnot

Dialect: Scottish

Description: A proud, formal military man. Stoic and honorable, with a rigid sense of propriety.

Mary Debenham

Dialect: British (Received Pronunciation or neutral upper-class British)

Description: A calm and composed English governess. Intelligent, reserved, and seemingly in control of her emotions.

Scene Three

(We shift to the dining car where POIROT is waiting, as BOUC bursts suddenly into the room.)

BOUC. No one! There is no one, I tell you! Not a single person is on this train who should not be here!

POIROT. You are positive?

BOUC. *Entirely!* It has gone too far. *Our lives are in danger!*

POIROT. It is like a magic trick.

BOUC. It is unbelievable! I told Michel to go on searching and he may find *something*.

POIROT. I do not expect so.

BOUC. Then where did he go, this man who is dressed like a train conductor?

POIROT. I have no idea! That is the problem! Every time I find a piece of the puzzle, there is a suspect who has an alibi. Colonel Arbuthnot? He could have a grudge against Cassetti from a business dealing – but then MacQueen gives him an alibi from twelve to two, they are chatting on the observation deck! Aha, I say. What about Miss Ohlssohn? – she is strange, there is something not right about her – but she swears that she and Miss Debenham are up all night *chattering* in the room they are sharing. And so it goes with Mrs. Hubbard and the princess *and now Miss Debenham is shot and I am out of suspects!*

(ARBUTHNOT and MARY enter.)

ARBUTHNOT. Poirot! I have brought Miss Debenham as you requested, now what do you want with her?

POIROT. I merely wish to ask her some questions. Colonel, you may go.

ARBUTHNOT. I beg your pardon?

POIROT. You are not needed for this.

ARBUTHNOT. Well, I'm sorry to hear it, because I'm staying.

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 meerschaum pipe and smoke it!

BOUC. That is Sherlock Holmes.

ARBUTHNOT. Oh, go to hell!

(**ARBUTHNOT** stalks 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.