

## 1.1 - \*Poirot - pp 12 - 13

**LITTLE GIRL.** Faster, faster! You're a train, you're a train!

**THE NANNY.** Daisy Armstrong!

*(Tickling, laughter. They're in the room.)*

Now straight into bed and no more nonsense.

**LITTLE GIRL.** Oh, all right.

*(She gets into bed. The NANNY sits beside her.)*

**THE NANNY.** Close your eyes. Night, night.

*(The NANNY exits. We hear the door open and close. A beat of calm, and then we hear a deep, ominous sound, like the bass note of an organ. Light from the hallway spills into the room, and we see the shadow of a hulking man entering the room. Perhaps we see the LITTLE GIRL as well.)*

**LITTLE GIRL.** Who are you? Go away. Nanny!

**THE MAN.** Come!

**LITTLE GIRL.** No! I won't! I won't come! Mama! Daddy!  
AHHHHHHHHH!

*(Her scream turns into the scream of a train whistle, as the train goes past us again with another roar. Vroooooom!)*

*(Steam from the train billows out across the stage. Out of this mist, HERCULE POIROT walks into view and addresses the audience.)*

**POIROT.** Good evening. The story you are about to witness is one of romance and tragedy, primal murder, and the urge for revenge. What better way to spend a pleasant evening together?

From the beginning it was an odyssey of deception and trickery. One minute I could see the light, like the beam of a train engine hurtling past. The next minute, all was darkness and the thread that I pulled came away in my fingers and led to nothing.

I believe it was the greatest case of my career, but who am I to say? Modesty forbids it. It was certainly the most difficult I have ever encountered, and it made me question the very deepest values that I have held since I was a young man.

*(Middle Eastern music is heard.)*

It began in the exotic city of Istanbul. I planned to vacation there for several days following a trying case that was on my nerves, but things began changing the moment I stepped into the dining room of the world famous Tokatlian Hotel, where the enormity of the prices was matched only by the self-esteem of the waiters. My name, incidentally, is Hercule Poirot and I am a detective.

SIDES (\* indicates the character(s) actors will read.  
An off-stage reader will read the other characters)

Act.Scene - Characters - pages

*(The HEAD WAITER approaches POIROT.)*

**HEAD WAITER.** *Pardon, monsieur.* The concierge said to tell you there are no more first class tickets for the Express tonight. It is sold out.

**POIROT.** *Ah non!*

**BOUC.** *Attends.* It is my train and it is never sold out at this time of year. That is ridiculous.

**HEAD WAITER.** It must be a party, or a convention, perhaps.

**BOUC.** Well, you tell the concierge to find a berth for *Monsieur* Poirot. He is my personal friend.

**HEAD WAITER.** But *monsieur* -

**BOUC.** The number seven is always available. It is held in reserve. Now go tell him!

**HEAD WAITER.** Right away, *monsieur*.

*(He exits.)*

**POIROT.** *Merci.*

**BOUC.** It is nothing. A gesture. Now you see this menu? Throw it away. Tonight we shall sit on the train together, just like old times, and we will dine like kings.

**POIROT.** The food on the train, it is edible?

**BOUC.** *Monsieur* Poirot! You stab me in the heart! I am writhing on the ground at your feet! It is not a mere train that will carry you tonight, it is a legend. It runs like no other vehicle on the earth. The fittings are from Paris, the paneling Venice, the plates are from Rome, and the taps from New York. The best food, the best beds, the best pillows, the best feathers inside the pillows. It is poetry on wheels, and Lord Byron himself could not write it better. *Monsieur*, prepare yourself. In one hour, I will meet you on the platform of the Orient Express.

*(Suddenly we hear the "Vorwärts Drängend" passage from Mahler's Symphony No. 1. The dining room disappears, the scene changes, and the ominous, powerful music takes us into the train station at Istanbul.)*

### 1.3 - \*Princess & \*Greta, Michel - pp 19 - 20

#### Scene Three

*(The platform is full of steam and smoke and is throbbing with activity. In the background we glimpse the sleek, shining body of the Orient Express gleaming with romance. The greatest train in the world is about to accept its passengers and sail out of the station.)*

*(At the center of the activity is MICHEL, the conductor. He is a good looking Frenchman, about forty, with a quiet, almost grave sense of humor. He has a clipboard in hand listing the names and compartments of the passengers. Meanwhile, we hear an announcement over the loudspeaker.)*

**ANNOUNCER.** *Messieurs et mesdames, l'Orient Express partira dans vingt minutes du quai numero dix. Veuillez faire attention aux marches, soyez prudent et bon voyage.* Ladies and gentlemen, the Orient Express will depart in twenty minutes from platform ten. Please watch your step and have a safe trip.

*(Bells and whistles sound as PRINCESS DRAGOMIROFF enters like a galleon in full sail with a woman named GRETA OHLSSON in her wake. The PRINCESS is in her seventies. She is Russian, expensively dressed and heavily bejeweled. GRETA, by contrast, is Swedish, with a Swedish accent. She is in her thirties and plain. There is a frightened, sheep-like quality about her. She is carrying three or four suitcases and struggles with them.)*

**PRINCESS.** Greta, will you please put those suitcases down, you are driving me mad!

**GRETA.** No, no, princess, do not have concern, they are not so heavy as they look, I am sure.

**PRINCESS.** They are extremely heavy!

**MICHEL.** Princess Dragomiroff. How lovely to see you.

(**To GRETA.**) Please, let me help you, *madame*.

(**MICHEL** *relieves GRETA of the luggage.*)

**GRETA.** It iss *mademoiselle*. I am not married, except to God almighty who lives in heaven.

(*She crosses herself.*)

**PRINCESS.** Oh Greta please, not *now*. (**To MICHEL.**) This is Greta Ohlsson.

**GRETA.** I am a missionary and I verk in Africa with little babies.

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

**MICHEL.** But your usual companion, Miss Schmidt –?

**GRETA.** She iss very sick.

**PRINCESS.** The doctors are calling it a cardiac event, but she is German so it is very unlikely to slow her down.

**GRETA.** I will pray for Miss Schmidt and God vill protect her.

**PRINCESS.** Greta, please, that is enough, just get on the train.

**MICHEL.** You are in compartment eleven, princess, as usual.  
(**To GRETA.**) And Miss Ohlsson, you are sharing with a Miss Mary Debenham in compartment four.

(**MARY** *enters, dressed stylishly.*)

**MARY.** I'm Miss Debenham.

**MICHEL.** Ah, *mademoiselle*. You will be sharing with Miss Ohlsson here.

**GRETA.** I will do my very best so I am not disturbing you.

**MARY.** Oh, I'm sure we'll get along just fine.

(*At which moment, SAMUEL RATCHETT appears. He's a middle-aged American businessman, brusque, unforgiving, with a threatening demeanor, and a whiplash of a voice.*)

**RATCHETT.** *Hector!*

**MACQUEEN.** Here, sir. I-I'm right here.

**RATCHETT.** Is the luggage on board?

**MACQUEEN.** Yes sir, it is. And I-I checked this morning for any mail that might have arrived overnight, and-and this came in apparently –

**RATCHETT.** (*Reading.*) Goddammit!

**MACQUEEN.** I know, it's *awful*. I mean just look at this! "Prepare to *die*"?

**RATCHETT.** Keep your voice down!

**MACQUEEN.** You should call the police!

**RATCHETT.** It's none of their business.

**MACQUEEN.** But these are dangerous! This is the third one you've had in a week.

It's good you have a *gun*.

**RATCHETT.** *Would you keep your voice down!*

(*By this time, POIROT has entered and approached MICHEL.*)

**POIROT.** Excuse me. Could you direct me to compartment number seven, please.

**MICHEL.** Number seven, *monsieur*? I believe there must be some mistake.

**POIROT.** Let us hope not. I must get to London by the end of the week. My name is Hercule Poirot.

**MICHEL.** Hercule Poirot, the detective?

(*Heads turn. POIROT is a celebrity.*)

**RATCHETT.** Well, what do you know! Hercule Poirot! I've heard o' you. You're famous.

**POIROT.** *Merci, monsieur.*

**RATCHETT.** The name is Ratchett. Samuel Ratchett. Import-export. And I may have some business for you.

**POIROT.** I'm afraid I am on vacation, *monsieur*.

**RATCHETT.** Oh, you'll change your mind when you hear the price. Eh? Haha!

**MICHEL.** *Monsieur* Ratchett, you are in compartment two.

## 1.3 - \*Hubbard &amp; Michel - p. 24

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

**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.** 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: and 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.)

## Scene Four

*(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 bec'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 bourbon. As they say in the movies, lead on, MacDuff!

*(They exit as the PRINCESS and GRETA enter.)*

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

**GRETA.** 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.

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

## 1.4 - \*Poirot &amp; \*Ratchet - pp 27 - 28

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*?

*(GRETA exits. The PRINCESS reacts and follows her off as POIROT 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.

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

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

**POIROT.** I am afraid –

**RATCHETT.** Sit down.

**POIROT.** ... *Eh bien*. Proceed.

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

**POIROT.** I take on few new cases.

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

**POIROT.** And why is that?

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

**POIROT.** I would guess that you have several enemies.

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

**POIROT.** 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?

**POIROT.** *Non*.

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

**POIROT.** 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?

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

*(POIROT 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' –

*(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 - Owweeee, Owweee! - 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?

*(Owweeeeeeeee!)*

Belgrade?

*(Owweeeeeeeee!)*

*Belgrade, can you hear me?!*

## 1.7 - \*Mary &amp; Arbuthnot - pp 35 - 36

## Scene Seven

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

**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?

MARY. No, I suppose I don't.

*(ARBUTHNOT takes her in his arms and kisses her with passion. They really go at it. She responds in kind.)*

Oh, James!

ARBUTHNOT. Be strong.

MARY. I will. I promise.

*(They hear someone coming and spring apart.)*

*(MACQUEEN enters.)*

MACQUEEN. Hi, I-I hope I'm not interrupting.

ARBUTHNOT. Of course you're interrupting, you moron. Are you blind?

MACQUEEN. Oh, I'm sorry! I-I-I can go get a snack or a -

*(The train stops. They all look up in surprise.)*

ARBUTHNOT. Oh my God, the train is stopping.

MARY. What is it?! What's happening!

MACQUEEN. The snow! Look!

ARBUTHNOT. Oh, not now!

MARY. We've hit a snowdrift!!

ARBUTHNOT. Oh Christ, that's all we need!

MACQUEEN. Shall I go take a look?!

ARBUTHNOT. What good will that do?

MARY. James. He's right. Let him go.

ARBUTHNOT. Mary?

MARY. Go ahead, Mr. MacQueen, we'll be here waiting for you.

MACQUEEN. I'll-I'll be back in a minute!

*(He runs off.)*

ARBUTHNOT. Why did you send him off like that?

*(MARY takes him in her arms and goes back to kissing him.)*

### Scene Eight

*(Lights up on MRS. HUBBARD in her compartment, screaming for help.)*

MRS. HUBBARD. Help! Someone come quickly! Help!

*(BOUC runs in.)*

BOUC. Mrs. Hubbard. What? What is it?!

MRS. HUBBARD. There was a man in my room! He ran off! I'm sure of it!

BOUC. Which way did he go?!

MRS. HUBBARD. That way! Just this second!

BOUC. But *madame*, that is where I am coming from and I saw no one.

MRS. HUBBARD. Well... Well maybe he ducked into one of the compartments or something! I don't know. I tell you I was lying there in my bed, dead to the world, and I open my eyes, and I see this man going out the door. And he's wearing a uniform.

BOUC. But where would he come from?

MRS. HUBBARD. I don't know. He just suddenly appeared.

BOUC. And he looked like...?

MRS. HUBBARD. *I don't know! I could barely see him!* One second he was there and then he was gone. He was like a phantom!

BOUC. But how is this possible?

MRS. HUBBARD. HOW SHOULD I KNOW!

BOUC. Perhaps you were dreaming.

MRS. HUBBARD. I wasn't dreaming. I know when I'm dreaming. My mouth gets dry. Does my mouth look dry to you?

BOUC. And your door was locked?

MRS. HUBBARD. Of course it was locked, but people have keys, don't they? I'll bet you have keys. Don't you own the company?

**GRETA.** I hope he is not being ill.

**PRINCESS.** Shh.

**BOUC.** There's a chain.

**MACQUEEN.** Hello?

**POIROT.** You must force the door.

**BOUC.** It will break and need repairing.

**POIROT.** Quickly! Do you not feel the air from the room? It is freezing. Quickly!

**GRETA.** (*Wailing.*) I do not like this at all!

*(Bang! The three men break open the door with a crash. As they enter the room, it opens out so we, the audience, are in the room with them.)*

*(Sitting up in bed is SAMUEL RATCHETT, the chest of his pajamas crimson with blood. He looks garish and hideous.)*

*(Screeeeeeeeeeech!! There is a sound of terror in the score - then GRETA screams and falls to her knees.)*

Eeeee! Dear God, dear God, it is awful!

**MACQUEEN.** Mr. Ratchett!

**GRETA.** I cannot look!

**MACQUEEN.** Do you see his chest?!

**PRINCESS.** It is horrible!

**BOUC.** (*Reaching to touch RATCHETT's chest.*) I cannot believe it!

**POIROT.** Do not touch anything! Not a speck!

**GRETA.** (*Hysterical.*) IT IS HUMAN LIFE! IT IS WRONG!

**PRINCESS.** Greta, calm down!

**POIROT.** Princess, could you escort Miss Ohlsson to her room, please.

**PRINCESS.** Come along, Greta.

*(GRETA wails with distress and the two women exit.)*

# 1.9 - Poirot & \*Bouc - pp 41 - 42

**MACQUEEN.** Holy cow.

**BOUC.** There has never been such a thing in the history of my company!

*(POIROT removes a pair of tweezers from his pocket and delicately moves the pajamas away from the wounds.)*

What are you doing?

**POIROT.** I am examining the wounds - there appear to be seven - no, eight stab wounds to the chest. *Monsieur MacQueen*, when did you see him last?

**MACQUEEN.** Me? I-I-I don't know anything! He was fine last night when I put out his wine.

**POIROT.** You are his secretary. What do you know about him?

**MACQUEEN.** Not very much. He-he-he-he never spoke about himself at all. Frankly, I think he was hiding something. That's just an impression.

**POIROT.** And why was that do you think?

**MACQUEEN.** I-I think he was fleeing from America to get away from something, and I think he managed it until a few weeks ago.

**POIROT.** And then?

**MACQUEEN.** He began to get some threatening letters. They're in my room. Do you want to see them?

**POIROT.** Yes. Go quickly. And please ask the countess to join me here.

**MACQUEEN.** I'll be right back!

*(MACQUEEN runs off.)*

**BOUC.** It is incredible for such a thing to happen on *my train*! Ooh, it's freezing in here.

**POIROT.** You have observed the window.

**BOUC.** *Oui*, it is open.

**POIROT.** And what do you see outside?

**BOUC.** Nothing.

**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, 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.*)

**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.** *Regardes.* 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.** *Regardes.* 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?

## 1.10 - \*Poirot &amp; \*MacQueen, Bouc - pp 52 - 53

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.*) Ahh!

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

**PRINCESS.** Greta, please! Greta!

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

(*The PRINCESS is gone.*)

**POIROT.** *Monsieur* MacQueen, please sit down.

**MACQUEEN.** Of-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

## 2.5 - Poirot &amp; \*Arbuthnot - pp 80 - 81

**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.

**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, *n'est-ce 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.