

MARY. I-I think so.

POIROT. It is very simple, *mademoiselle*: who shot you?

MARY. I... I don't know. I-I only caught a glimpse of him.  
He was -

POIROT. What?

PRINCESS. Tell us.

MARY. It makes no sense. He was in a kind of uniform. But  
I may have imagined it.

POIROT. Can you tell us what happened?

*(During the following, the COUNTESS  
continues to clean and bandage the wound.)*

MARY. I'll try. I-I woke up this morning feeling disoriented,  
as though I'd been drugged or something, and I had this  
splitting headache. So I looked through my suitcase for  
some aspirin, but I didn't have any. So then I stumbled  
out of the room and I saw that Mrs. Hubbard's door  
was ajar. I called to her but she wasn't there and then -  
I know I shouldn't have - but I went into her room.  
*(To MRS. HUBBARD.)* I'm sorry.

MRS. HUBBARD. That's quite all right.

POIROT. Go on.

MARY. My head was splitting open by this time and I wasn't  
thinking straight - so I looked for some aspirin in  
Mrs. Hubbard's makeup bag. And there was this *knife*  
and it was covered with *blood*!

GRETA. A knife!

MRS. HUBBARD. In my bag?

MARY. Yes.

POIROT. Where is it?

MARY. I left it where it was. I felt *so frightened*.

MRS. HUBBARD. Holy cow. I'll go get it -!

POIROT. *STOP!* You will *not* "go get it." I will retrieve it,  
when I am ready. Now Miss Debenham, continue.

MRS. HUBBARD. Well, let me just say that this does prove  
there was a man was in my room last night, like I was -

**POIROT.** Mrs. Hubbard!

**MRS. HUBBARD.** Sorry.

**PRINCESS.** You talk too much.

**MRS. HUBBARD.** I beg your pardon.

**POIROT.** Miss Debenham.

**MARY.** Well, I was frightened when I saw the knife and I must have backed into Mr. Ratchett's room, and then I turned and saw the body on the bed with all the blood and the wounds, and I – I screamed, and then I saw the man and the gun and that's all I remember!

*(She starts to cry.)*

**COUNTESS.** *(Comforting MARY.)* It's all right.

**POIROT.** Are you sure it was a man?

**MARY.** I *think* so. I assumed it was. I suppose I'm not positive.

**PRINCESS.** He must have been hiding in this room behind the door, waiting to escape.

**MRS. HUBBARD.** So if I'd come in here first, then *whammo!* No more show tunes in the shower.

**PRINCESS.** And that would have been a terrible loss.

**POIROT.** Mrs. Hubbard, can you tell me where you keep your makeup bag?

**MRS. HUBBARD.** Gladly. Right behind the door, hanging on the handle.

*(POIROT goes to get it.)*

If these compartments were bigger, I wouldn't have to hang my makeup bag on a door handle like some drama school kid in a Rudolf Friml operetta living out of a hold-all and *holy God!*

*(POIROT has retrieved the makeup bag from which he has extracted a vicious looking dagger covered with blood and MRS. HUBBARD has just seen it.)*

**GRETA.** *(Grabbing the PRINCESS.)* I cannot look!

**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?!*"

"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 GRETA's voice from down the corridor.)*

**GRETA.** *(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 GRETA, the COUNTESS, and the PRINCESS. GRETA 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.

**GRETA.** Please stop!

**PRINCESS.** *Monsieur Poirot*, really!

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

**GRETA.** 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.

**POIROT.** 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.*

**POIROT.** You know your Shakespeare well for a Hungarian.

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

**POIROT.** 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.)*

**POIROT.** 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!!

**POIROT.** 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!*

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

*(POIROT 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.)*

**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.

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 it 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.