

HERCULE POIROT (Belgian / French accent)

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.

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.

MONSIEUR BOUC (Belgian / French accent)

1) (Fun/Talking to a friend/Bragging about the Orient Express)

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 are 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.

2) (Serious/Working Poirot to take on the case)

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! Only you can solve this. 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! The Yugoslavian Police Department? They are like the Three Stooges in the movie house. They poke each other in the eyes by accident! Please old friend, say you'll take the case and find the murderer before the police arrive.

MRS. HELEN HUBBARD (American accent)

1) (fun/flirty)

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 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.

2) (Serious/scared)

There was a man in my room! He ran off! I'm sure of it! 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. One second he was there and then he was gone. He was like a phantom! And I wasn't dreaming. I know when I'm dreaming! My door was locked, but people have keys, don't they? He could have strangled me in my bed, or shot me or something!

3) Sing: Alexander's Ragtime Band

Come on and hear, come on and hear Alexander's Ragtime Band
Come on and hear, come on and hear 'bout the best band in the land
They can play a bugle call like your never heard before
So natural that you want to go to war
That's just the bestest band what am, oh honey lamb
Come on along -

GRETA OHLSSON (Swedish)

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

And I look up from my book and sitting there next to me, right on the seat, is a very old goat! 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?

PRINCESS DRAGOMIROFF (Russian)

No, my dear, his name is Bruno Casseti, and what I pray is that his soul is damned and that he burns in hell for all eternity. He murdered a little girl named Daisy Armstrong and her grandmother is my dearest friend. You know her as the actress Linda Arden. And when her five-year-old granddaughter was murdered by this monster Casseti, it took her years to recover, indeed she has not yet recovered! And it wasn't just that sweet little girl that was taken from us. First 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, who could not live with what happened and ended his own life. There is no forgiveness in a case like this. That Mr. Casseti should have been flogged to death and his remains cut up and thrown onto a rubbish heap!

HECTOR MACQUEEN (American)

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. And 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 -she killed herself. Only it turned out that she was innocent. My father was shattered. He never recovered.

MARY DEBENHAM (British)

I only caught a glimpse of him. He was in a kind of uniform. But I may have imagined it. 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. 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! 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!

COUNTESS ANDRENYI (Hungarian)

I am delighting to see you. The famous detective. That is being wonderful. I have read about you in the papers, *monsieur*, and I admire you greatly. *Ez as igazsa'g.*

You speak Hungarian beautifully.

No, no, it "iss" nothing at all.

He'las, he cannot join me this trip. But since I am visiting my mother it works out nicely. He does not like her. *Monsieur Poirot*, I look forward to hearing of your wonderful adventures.

COUNTESS ANDRENYI (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 then I realized that if you knew who I was, 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! 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 words would have been necessary!

COLONEL ARBUTHNOT (Scottish)

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! 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.

SAMUEL RATCHETT (American)

Mr. Poirot, I'd like to discuss that proposition I mentioned. I want you to take on a job for me because I'm talkin' big money here. I have an enemy. 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 but I'll pay you five thousand dollars. How does that sound?

** Colonel Arbuthnot and Samuel Ratchett will be doubled and played by the same actor. **