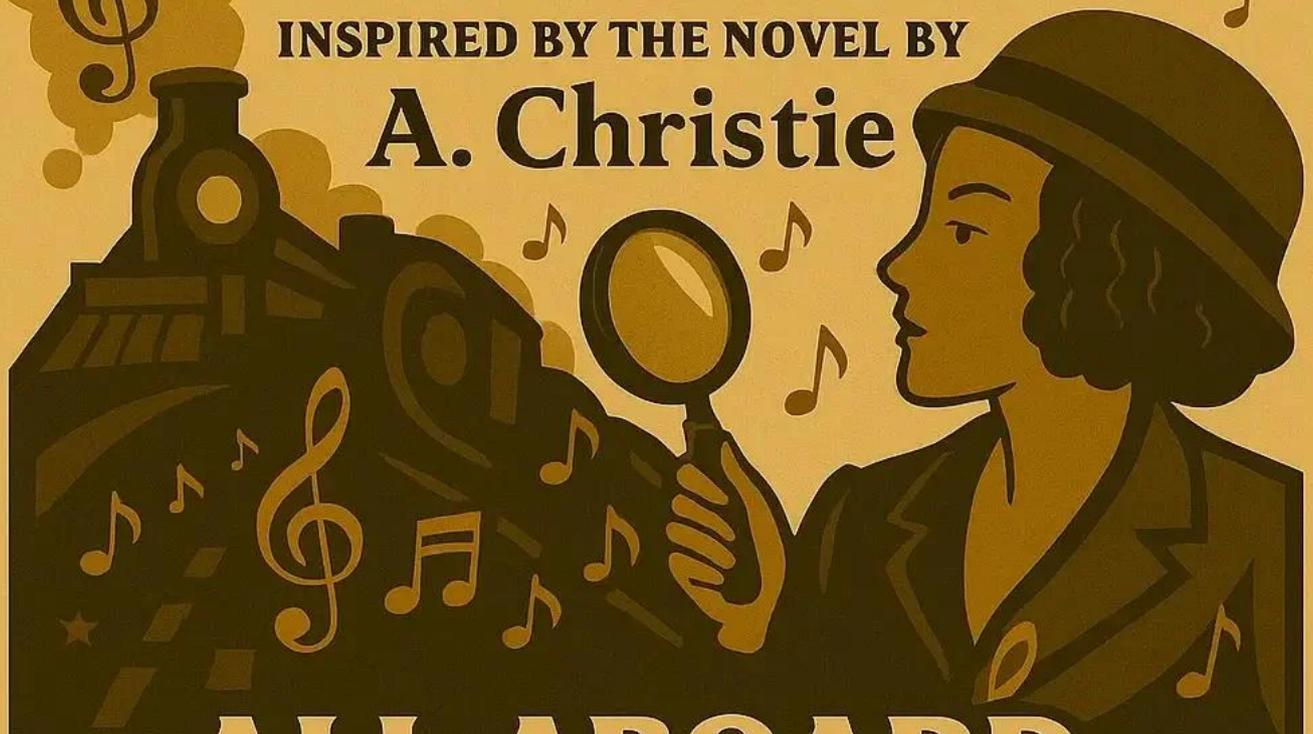


MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS

INSPIRED BY THE NOVEL BY

A. Christie



**ALL ABOARD
THE ORIENT EXPRESS**
AND LET THE ADVENTURE BEGIN!

**IN TOUR DA
GENNAIO 2026**

CHARACTERS

HERCULES POIROT - Belgian Detective, 40s

MARY DEBENHAM - British Governess, mid-20s

COLONEL ARBUTHNOT- British Army officer, 40s

MRS. HUBBARD (LINDA ARDEN) - American matron, 50s, secretly Daisy Armstrong's grandmother; family to the victim of Cassetti in a previous crime.

HECTOR MACQUEEN- American Secretary, late 20s

PIERRE MICHEL - French Conductor, early 30s

MR RATCHETT (CASSETTI)- American Business man selling art, secretly Cassetti a notorious gangster.

COUNTESS ANDREYNI - Hungarian noblewoman, early 30s.

ACTOR MULTI-ROLLING:

A1 – POIROT AND MARY DEBENHAM

A2 – POIROT AND COLONEL

A3 – POIROT AND MRS. HUBBARD

A4 – POIROT AND HECTOR

A5 – POIROT, MICHEL, MR. RATCHETT AND CASSETTI

A6 – POIROT AND COUNTESS

ACT 1 SCENE 1

(A dim cold wash of light silhouettes six figures. Slowly, spotlights warms the stage, becoming brighter and brighter to the audience. A hiss and clatter of a steam engine builds to a crescendo.)

POIROT (A1): Signora e signori, buon pomeriggio. Welcome. Welcome, one and all, to the infamous Orient Express. Here, amidst the golden carriages and velvet curtains.

POIROT (A5): The fine food and vintage cigars.

POIROT (A6): The charming music and picturesque landscapes.

POIROT (A4): A crime most baffling has occurred!

POIROT (A2): For now, all you need to know is that a man, Samuel Ratchett, an evil figure amongst high society, has been found dead in his apartment.

POIROT (A 1 3 4 5 6): (*Gasp Dramatically*)

POIROT (A3): The corpse was found with wounds across his chest!

POIROT (A 1 2 4 5 6): (*Gasps dramatically but beginning to rise in volume*)

POIROT (A4): Suggesting the murderer is still aboard this very train!

POIROT (A 1 2 3 4 6): (*Gasp at their highest point of tension*)

POIROT (A4): They do not seem to be scared...I said the murderer is still aboard this train! (*Poirot's help the audience to react*). Much better.

POIROT (A5): But my friends take comfort, here is our little secret (*Poirot giggles to themselves*). Would you like to know? (*Await audience reaction*). Hmm, that seems hardly convincing...

POIROT (A1 2 3 4 5 6): We said, would you like to know?

POIROT (A5): Good, because if we fail, the killer may even strike again!

POIROT (A6): But do not worry my friends, we are here to help because I am not one Poirot, but six!

POIROT (A1 2 3 4 5 6): Six?!

POIROT (A5): Yes! Six! How wonderful!

POIROT (A6): Six brains.

POIROT (A1): Six moustaches.

POIROT (A6): All helping to examine the clues from differing angles.

POIROT (A3): But what does this mean?

POIROT (A5): Throughout our little performance you will see the Poirots trading canes and hats.

POIROT (A4): Sharing their sharp wits.

POIROT (A3): Embodying the very spirit of Hercule Poirot!

POIROT (A1 2 3 4 5 6): As the mystery begins to unfold!

POIROT (A5): How exciting!

POIROT (A1): Now here is where we need your help.

POIROT (A2): We will interrogate each, help gather all the clues and finally, present them to you, our audience.

POIROT (A4): You must watch closely.

POIROT (A5): Listen carefully.

POIROT (A6) : And choose wisely! A killer is amongst us.

POIROT (A3): Now...all aboard!

SONG - Seven Nation Army by The White Stripes

*Sung by **POIROT (A3)**.*

(As the song plays the previous Poirots all evolve into the new passengers, gathering their belongings for the journey).

I'm gonna fight 'em off

A seven nation army couldn't hold me back

They're gonna rip it off

Takin' their time right behind my back

And I'm talkin' to myself at night

Because I can't forget

Back and forth through my mind

Behind a cigarette

And the message comin' from my eyes

Says, "Leave it alone"

Don't wanna hear about it

Every single one's got a story to tell

Everyone knows about it

From the Queen of England to the Hounds of Hell

And if I catch it comin' back my way

I'm gonna serve it to you

And that ain't what you want to hear

But that's what I'll do

And the feelin' comin' from my bones

Says, "Find a home".

(At the end of the song all characters sit in various seats on the stage. A3 has left the stage at the end of the song, returning as MRS HUBBARD).

Musical Interlude.

ACT 1 SCENE 2

Musical Interlude

(All characters are sitting near each other, waiting patiently in silence. All characters are now present except POIROT. MRS HUBBARD grows impatient with the silence).

MRS HUBBARD: Three days. Not one. Not even two. But threeeeeeeee. *(She pulls MICHEL by her and loops his arm so he cannot escape, he is clearly uncomfortable)* Trois. Tre. A big old three *(she slowly lifts individual fingers and whispers three).*

MICHEL: Perhaps I can get miss a drink?

MRS HUBBARD: Miss? It's Mrs! You should know better! But yes...yes, you can. Double gin and tonic.

MICHEL: But of course.

(Exit MICHEL)

MRS HUBBARD: God, I'm bored. Bored. Bored. Bored. BOREEEEEEEEEED.

(Enter MICHEL with the required drink and places it meticulously before MRS HUBBARD).

MRS HUBBARD: Thank you kindly...before you go sugar...care to play a little game?

MICHEL: I'm sorry miss...

MRS HUBBARD: Mrs!

MICHEL: Mrs! Excuse eh moi, but I have other duties to atten-

MRS HUBBARD: Tut tut for such a slanderous statement! Your duties are to attend to me and make my journey fun! Now, my game.

MICHEL: I really do not have ti-

MRS HUBBARD: It's very simple. If I win, that drink is free. If you win, I'll let you buy it for me.

MICHEL: That does not make any sens-

MRS HUBBARD: *(She pulls MICHEL next to him and loops his arm so he cannot escape).* Alright, alright, alright, so, here's how it goes. I am gonna' guess little details about these passengers and you, my little cute as a button, will tell me if it's correct, yes?

MICHEL: Madame, I have been told I should not divulge details about the other passe-

MRS HUBBARD: Shush!

(MICHEL regains his composure)

MRS HUBBARD: Now, let's see...this one, this one is fun. Mary Debenham. She seems like sharp one. English as they come probably. All prim and proper, with that neat little bun and those steely eyes. Quiet as a darn mouse I reckon, hasn't really said anything in the past hour. Erm next to her, that cat in the army get up. Colonel Arbuthnot. British Army. Very stiff upper lip. Bit of a quiet one too actually, I keep fightin' the urge to scream "Ten-hut!" to see whether he moves. Don't know whether that's just an American thing or not. But you ask me, he's got secrets bigger than them medals. Ever since he got on this train, he keeps eyeing up poor Mary like a hog on a stick. He should really stop! Or buy her a drink at least!

MICHEL: I should really return to my station.

MRS HUBBARD: Now hold on, I ain't finished. That big old pile of sparkly diamonds. Countess Andreyne. European royalty I guess from the size of her jewellery and the fact we don't really have royals where I come from. Now she is the type of woman who makes you want to fix your dress and trim your nails. Don't get me wrong, elegant, but man oh man, I bet when she screams, it cuts through ice ten inches thicker than Lake Michigan. Strange though, I see a sadness in her eyes. Now him...

MICHEL: Monsieur MacQueen, yes, I know of him already. But he has repeatedly asked me to call him 'ector-

MRS HUBBARD: Hec-tor, sweetie, Hec-tor. You gotta really put some "horse" in that "H" there.

MICHEL: *(He composes himself to really spell out the "H" within the name)*
My apologies, Hector is his name. Hector is secretary to a Mr Ratchett. He seems mild mannered and polite enough. But...

MRS HUBBARD: But what honey?

MICHEL: I believe he is always moving. Anxious, no? He repeatedly looks at his clock like he is going to miss an important appointment. Un lièvre avant la chasse.

MRS HUBBARD: What now?

MICHEL: A hare before the hunt. As though he has had too much coffee.

MRS HUBBARD: *(laughs)* Well, maybe he isn't the one that's being hunted...

MICHEL: I must return to my station.

(MICHEL leaves the stage)

MRS HUBBARD: *(shouting after him)* But I haven't finished! You were about to guess the best one! Moi!

COLONEL: Mrs Hubbard. Sharp. Perceptive. An honest woman who gives the impression that she is deeply loyal and cares for her family.

MRS HUBBARD: Why thank yo-

COLONEL: I haven't finished. But loud and obnoxious, one who constantly overshadows to an entire carriage; a carriage far too small for the price I paid I might add!

MARY: John!

MRS HUBBARD: I never! Forgive me for not being the perfect woman of restraint and trying to enjoy myself! A girl makes a little noise to entertain the hours, a holla here and there, and suddenly she's the clown of the hour! Colonel, some of us like a little sparkle to our journey...

(A fierce stare is held between the two, enter MR RATCHETT. A silence whilst he finds his seat)

MR RATCHETT: Quieter than a funeral home in here.

(He sits uncomfortably close to MRS HUBBARD)

MR RATCHETT: Nice little parlour trick you got going on, deciding who's who and what's what. I could hear you halfway down the carriage.

MRS HUBBARD: Nothin' wrong with that! Whose it bothering!

MR RATCHETT: The colonel by the looks of things. But it's a dangerous world we live in Mrs Hubbard. Dangerous world. Now some folk know it ain't wise spouting other people's business aloud to strangers.

MRS HUBBARD: I ain't like other folk...

MR RATCHETT: That you ain't...that you ain't...*(he looks her up and down)*. You know, most people like to tip toe around me, knowing not to truly look me in the eye unless I say so. But you-

MRS HUBBARD: Like to stare right back; knowin' precisely when a snake is going to bite.

MR RATCHETT: You comfortable here. On this train. All alone with nowhere to go for, what was it? Three days? As you keep reminding everyone. Maybe I can help to warm yo-

(He leans uncomfortably towards MRS HUBBARD until HECTOR interrupts quickly)

HECTOR: Mr Ratchett! My employer...a very successful businessman. Deals in antiquities and rare collectibles from across the globe. Passionate and driven about his craft. Therefore, I must remind Mr Ratchett, that an awful lot of paperwork is yet to be signed...if he would like to follow me to his quarters.

(A moment is shared between MR RATCHETT and MRS HUBBARD; he holds a threatening gaze for too long, a warning)

MR RATCHETT: Until we meet again 'Miss' Hubbard.

(HECTOR and MR RATCHETT leave)

MRS HUBBARD: Isn't he just a ray of sunshine! I could practically feel his hot breath on my skin.

COUNTESS: Some men believe cruelty is a form of charm. Here. *(She hands MRS HUBBARD a silk handkerchief)*

MRS HUBBARD: *(She takes it and dabs her brow)* Why thank you darlin', nice embroidery too. Men like him? All bark and no bite, but that one, somethin' ain't right. A chill follows that one.

COUNTESS: The coldest usually have the most to hide.

MRS HUBBARD: Huh, I didn't expect such wisdom wrapped in satin, Countess.

COUNTESS: Nor thunder wrapped in pearls.

(A shared moment between the two)

COUNTESS: Come. I have more drinks in my own compartment.

MRS HUBBARD: Drinkin' with royalty. Well I never.

(Exit MRS HUBBARD and COUNTESS; MRS HUBBARD tries to copy the COUNTESS' body language as she leaves, personifying a rich and regal personality).

COLONEL: I wish you were not a part of this Mary.

(A silence)

COLONEL: You should have stayed at home.

MARY: John...

COLONEL: You should have waited-

MARY: John! I am not someone in your command!

(A silence)

MARY: Do you think this is easy for me?

COLONEL: I never sai-

MARY: I'm here for the very reason you are. The last time I trust-

(She holds herself back from crying)

COLONEL: I forget sometimes that...

MARY: I carry what I must. As do you.

(A silence)

MARY: I thought time would make this easier but...it still hurts...

COLONEL: I think about it too. Every day.

(MARY stays silent)

COLONEL: If this is too much?

MARY: No, no... I'll be alright...

COLONEL: Good. We hold the line?

MARY: *(softly saluting)* Yes, sir.

(The characters embrace, not in passion, but in shared grief).

POIROT (A4): *(Offstage before entering the scene)* This makes no sense. *(Seeing the characters come out of their embrace)* Ah. Pardon. I appear to

have...misjudged the number of passengers or rooms on this carriage. Or intruded. Possibly both.

MARY: Monsieur Poirot...I was told you would be coming onboard. We were just...

POIROT (A4): Yes, yes. Of course, "just". A very flexible word. Forgive me, I shall go back the way I came...and pretend I only saw the corridor. A very romantic corridor it seems.

COLONEL: Perhaps a knock next time? Before entering?

POIROT (A4): A knock? But of course. On the air? Or the floor? Next time, I shall bring a bell, no? *(laughs)* There is no door, it is a public carriage...Monsieur, I assure you, the greatest secrets are often found where everyone can see. Alas, I must journey on. If either of you do discover carriage one, kindly let it know I am looking for it.

(Exit POIROT)

COLONEL: That man sees too much.

MARY: *(she smiles)* Good night, Colonel.

(MARY kisses him on the cheek before leaving the stage).

COLONEL: Good night, Mary.

Musical interlude.

ACT 1 SCENE 3

Musical interlude.

(POIROT is delicately preparing his coffee. A comedic moment is built that at the precise moment of lifting the cup to his lips he is disturbed by the entrance of MR RATCHETT)

MR RATCHETT: So, you're the famous detective, huh?

POIROT (A4): Usually, people start with names before occupation, non?

MR RATCHETT: Where are my manners? I am-

POIROT (A4) Ratchett. Yes, I know of you. Hercules Poirot. But you knew that already before pretending to "introduce" yourself.

MR RATCHETT: Fine. No games. Heard plenty about you. Sharp. Damn sharp from what I've been told. Clever. Don't miss much.

POIROT (A4): I miss drinking my coff-

MR RATCHETT: I like a man who knows when to listen.

POIROT (A4): Apologies. It seems a clever man must also know when he should and should not speak.

MR RATCHETT: Right...listen, as I said you got a reputation for seeing the hole in the tire before the ride busts.

(MR RATCHETT laughs at his own word play)

POIROT (A4): A charming image, sir.

MR RATCHETT: A man of your smarts is hard to come by, and I need someone like you. Someone who is always watching. Sees the “whole” picture, for me, you get me?

POIROT (A4): I do, but it is a vague request, Mr Ratchett. I have found these to be the most dangerous in my previous experiences.

MR RATCHETT: I ain’t paying you to be vague.

POIROT (A4): *(POIROT raises an eyebrow and imitates his American accent)* You “ain’t” paying me at all. I have not accepted any job offer nor received any formal request from yourself.

MR RATCHETT: Don't play games with me!

(He calms himself)

MR RATCHETT: Look, let's cut to the chase. I'm in a lot of trouble. I've made a lot of enemies. A lot.

POIROT (A4): And you wish to employ me to keep these shadows at bay.

MR RATCHETT: See, now you’re getting it.

POIROT (A4): But why should I “get it” in the first place, monsieur? Why should I become so loyal to your personal enterprises?

MR RATCHETT: Because loyalty can be bought with coin an-

POIROT (A4): And you have a lot of coin to spare.

MR RATCHETT: Precisely. Oh you are good.

POIROT (A4): But why myself? There are various "guards" aboard this metal vessel.

MR RATCHETT: Because I think that you're the best.

(POIROT looks away)

MR RATCHETT: *(leaning in too close)* Eh, you listenin', I don't like repeatin' myself. I hate that. *(MR RATCHETT wags his finger as if telling of a school child).*

POIROT (A4): I do not work for money, monsieur, or flattery.

MR RATCHETT: I don't think you understand, *(takes gun out of his pocket)*, I'm only offering money out of courtesy Mr Poirot.

POIROT (A4): Nor do I work under fear; this is not the first threat whispered over hot beverages, and I am sure it will not be the last.

MR RATCHETT: Oh really?

POIROT (A4): Oui.

MR RATCHETT: Then what works for our dear Hercules?

POIROT (A4): Hercule, Hercule Poirot, and to answer your question, Mr Ratchett, honesty.

MR RATCHETT: Honesty?

POIROT (A4): Oui. Honesty. A simple price, no? For my consideration.

MR RATCHETT: Alright, I'll bite. I'll be honest. I'm tired Hercules. I'm tired of looking over my shoulder in case someone is there with a knife.

POIROT (A4): A reasonable fear.

MR RATCHETT: Then name your price.

POIROT (A4): I am not for sale.

MR RATCHETT: Then why did you ask little man? *(He brings his gun closer to his face to remind POIROT of his power)*

POIROT (A4): I asked to learn. A man who hires protection has made enemies. A man who, when enquiring about their services, then threatens his potential protector? Some would say he deserves them. Good night, Mr Ratchett.

(POIROT finishes his coffee and tries to exits the scene, MR RATCHETT grabs him arm, after releasing him, POIROT doesn't flinch. He nods, calm as ever, and exits. MR RATCHETT sits alone in silence).

Musical interlude.

ACT 1 SCENE 4

Musical Interlude

*(We see the **COLONEL** sitting alone drinking to himself, enter **MARY**, visibly distressed)*

MARY: You can't sleep either...

COLONEL: Sleeps a luxury before a battle. And some of us don't deserve it...

*(**Mary** scoffs in disbelief)*

COLONEL: We have our orders...

MARY: You think it's that simple.

COLONEL: No, but it helps...

MARY: John...please, I don't think...

SONG - Demons by Imagine Dragons and Jar of Hearts by Christina Perri

*Sung by **COLONEL** and **MARY***

COLONEL:

When the days are cold.

And the cards all fold.

And the saints we see are all made of gold.

When your dreams all fail.

And the ones we hail

Are the worst of all.

And the blood's run stale.

I want to hide the truth.

I want to shelter you.

But with the beast inside.

There's nowhere we can hide.

No matter what we breed.

We are still made of greed.

This is my kingdom come.

This is my kingdom come.

MARY:

*Who do you think you are?
Runnin' round leaving scars
Collecting your jar of hearts
Tearing love apart
You're gonna catch a cold
From the ice inside your soul
So don't come back for me
Who do you think you are?
I hear you're asking all around
If I am anywhere to be found
But have I grown too strong?
To ever fall back in your arms
I've learned to live half alive
Now you want me one more time*

COLONEL:

*When you feel my heat.
Look into my eyes.
It's where my demons hide.
It's where my demons hide.
Come get real close.
It's dark inside.
It's where my demons hide.
It's where my demons hide.
They say it's what you make.
I say it's up to fate It's woven in my soul I can't let it go
Your eyes, they shine so bright
I want to save their light*

You can't escape this now

Unless I show you how

MARY:

Who do you think you are?

Runnin' round leaving scars

Collecting your jar of hearts

Tearing love apart

You're gonna catch a cold

From the ice inside your soul

So don't come back for me

Who do you think you are?

It took so long just to feel alright

Remember how to put back the light in my eyes

I wish I had missed the first time that we kissed

'Cause you broke all your promises

And now you're back

You don't get to get me back.

You don't get to get me back

(Sang in unison together)

Mary:

Who do you think you are?

Runnin' 'round leaving scars

Collecting your jar of hearts.

Tearing love apart

You're gonna catch a cold.

From the ice inside your soul

So don't come back for me

Don't come back at all

COLONEL:

When you feel my heat

Look into my eyes.

It's where my demons hide

It's where my demons hide Come get real close

It's dark inside.

It's where my demons hide

It's where my demons hide

*(Then **MARY** on her own)*

MARY:

Who do you think you are?

Runnin' round leaving scars

Collecting your jar of hearts

Tearing love apart

You're gonna catch a cold

From the ice inside your soul

So don't come back for me

Don't come back at all.

Don't come back at all.

*(The **COLONEL** exits, leaving **MARY** on her own to reflect on stage)*

Musical interlude.

ACT 1 SCENE 5

Musical interlude

(HECTOR is writing on various records, he is visibly upset)

HECTOR: Page after page! Wrong after wrong! Children's names just crossed out with red ink! Like there were nothing but entries! How is this even possible!

(HECTOR slams the files, enter MRS HUBBARD, carrying a small purse)

MRS HUBBARD: Now what has that book ever done to you?

HECTOR: Mrs Hubbard! I-

MRS HUBBARD: I hate taxes too, don't worry darlin'...Boy, if this train slows anymore, never mind three days, it will be three years before we get there!

HECTOR: Wouldn't be much need for these files then I guess.

MRS HUBBARD: You could burn them?

HECTOR: What? I mean I could, but I don't thi-

MRS HUBBARD: Relax sweetheart, just being your friendly neighbourhood nightmare...

HECTOR: Right...erm, can I ask you a personal question?

MRS HUBBARD: Shoot.

HECTOR: These records...they're poison. Poison and wrongdoings. Sometimes I wonder that by helping with these...that I'm...

(Enter COUNTESS)

COUNTESS: Part of the evil? Depends on what your next actions are.

MRS HUBBARD: Your highness.

(The COUNTESS sits separately from the others)

MRS HUBBARD: Somethin' heavy on your mind sugar?

(The COUNTESS begins to speak but catches herself and looks away).

MRS HUBBARD: Okay then...Listen Hector, sweetie. You gotta do, whatever it is... you gotta do to shake that evil from your system.

HECTOR: That doesn't sound great!

MRS HUBBARD: I never said it was, but when you got gangrene, the cutting is by far the hardest part. If you don't, that infection will just slowly fester and BANG! *(MRS HUBBARD hits the papers on the floor)* It will kill you soon enough; whether that's in the mind or in the body!

HECTOR: What are you doing!

MRS HUBBARD: Helping kickstart the ointment. Speaking of poison, I'm sure I have a night cap in here somewhere.

(She rummages around in her bag and pulls out a small children's sock. A beat. She clenches it tightly, holding herself together as if she is going to cry).

COUNTESS: Mrs Hubbard?

MRS HUBBARD: I'm quite alright dear. Just an old ghost I wasn't expecting to see in new company.

COUNTESS: Old memories can be as sharp as knives; especially when unexpected.

(MRS HUBBARD tries to calm herself but continues to grieve)

HECTOR: Okay then... so, this was fun and all, but I best return to my quarters and re-organise the files.

(HECTOR tries to exit)

COUNTESS: Take her with you.

HECTOR: I really must be gett-

(The COUNTESS turns suddenly and stares coldly at HECTOR)

COUNTESS: Take. Her. With. You. She must not be alone.

HECTOR: *(defeated)* I-but-Mrs Hubbard...can I escort you?

MRS HUBBARD: *(recollecting herself)* And here I didn't even have to buy him a drink.

(As she leaves she clutches the shoulder of the COUNTESS, a moment is shared).

(The COUNTESS waits until they have left the scene, she pulls a small candle from her glove which she has been hiding, places it on a small table, lights it, and does the sign of the cross on her chest. She looks to the sky as if she is praying)

COUNTESS: For the light that was lost, and the shadows we cannot escape. Forgive me for what must be done.

Musical interlude

ACT 1 SCENE 6

Musical interlude. A soundscape of a storm is heard.

(The characters MARY, COLONEL, MRS HUBBARD and COUNTESS are on stage. They enact the rocking and throwing of the carriage)

MARY: I fear this storm is getting worse! Do you think it will subside?

COLONEL: Nature at nature's finest. I am sure we need not fret. A tempest could arise, and we would be safe in the Orient's chambers.

MARY: But Colonel I really feel-

COLONEL: Trust me. Please...

MRS HUBBARD: I don't care what you say chief. This. Is. Bad! We've all heard the stories! People trapped for days an' days on end. Slowly freezing to death! *(The rumbling of the storms is getting louder)* I need warmth! Comfort! The arms of ma' lover next to a fire! Not this crazy snow pepperin' us from either side!

COUNTESS: My dear, must you always lead with the hyperbolic.

MRS HUBBARD: When the time calls, YES!

COUNTESS: *(chuckles)* You wouldn't have lasted five minutes in my home country.

(Enter HECTOR)

HECTOR: WHAT IS GOING ON HERE!

COUNTESS: Who would have thought Mrs Hubbard is the calm one.

HECTOR: It's been like this for almost two hours! The train surely can't take any more of this? Do we even have enough supplies!

COUNTESS: The way I have seen you engulf your food, I would not be so sure.

HECTOR: Oh, screw you, Queenie!

COUNTESS: HOW DARE YOU SPEAK TO ME LIKE THA-

COLONEL: Everyone calm down! I am sure we will all be fine!

(Enter POIROT)

POIROT (A5): What seems to be the inconvenience?

HECTOR: Inconvenience?! Just the fact that we are practically driving into an avalanche! Surely you can see how badly the snow is coming down!

POIROT (A5): Oui.

HECTOR: Oui?!

POIROT (A5): Yes, oui.

HECTOR: Are you not concerned!?

POIROT (A5): No, monsieur Hector.

HECTOR: AND WHY NOT!

POIROT (A5): You have so many fears. But fear is a luxury.

MRS HUBBARD: A luxury?!

MARY: I don't feel now is the time Mr Poirot.

POIROT (A5): Oh, but it is young Mary! The snow cannot be controlled or contained. You cannot predict or harness its raw power so, accept simply, that whatever happens, happens.

COUNTESS: (*chuckles*) I am beginning to like this man.

MARY: But what if it derails the carriage?

COUNTESS: If you must indulge in such ridiculous statements, then I suggest you return to your personal chambers at once! A storm like this is a simple triviality.

COLONEL: How dare you!

MRS HUBBARD: I didn't realise her majesty was such a royal pain too!

(A sudden crescendo as the train comes to a halt, all actors throw themselves around on stage as the train crashes. The lights go out. A quiet moment is shared).

COLONEL: Mary!

MARY: I'm fine John.

*(As the lights return, we see **HECTOR** clutching to the **COUNTESS**)*

COUNTESS: Remove your paws from my dress!

HECTOR: I'm sorry.

POIROT (A5): Is anyone harmed?

*(We see all characters checking amongst themselves, the **COLONEL** checks the window)*

COLONEL: It looks like we have hit a drift.

HECTOR: Oh god! Oh God, oh god! (*he begins to hyperventilate*)

POIROT (A5): Now listen here monsieur, the tracks are blocked but we are perfectly safe.

HECTOR: We're all dead! You hear me! Dead!

POIROT (A5): Oui, we are stuck. But the fires are lit, and I am sure help will be with us very shortly.

HECTOR: I'm gonna die! We're gonna die (**HECTOR** is now frantically running around the cabin)

COLONEL: Oh for christ's sake, calm yourself man! (*The COLONEL is now c hasing him around the room*)

MARY: I am not feeling very luxurious now.

HECTOR: I FEEL NAUSOUS!

COLONEL: Someone grab him!

MRS HUBBARD: What happens now!

POIROT (A5): The authorities will be notified when we do not arrive at our destination. From there, they will send a rescue team to help. Simple.

HECTOR: I'M GOING TO THROW UP, AND THEN I'M GONNA DIE!

COUNTESS: Oh, for heaven's sake! (*She throws her drink over him, HECTOR calms for one beat*)

HECTOR: I'm soaked! I'm drowning! I'm gonna throw up, drown and then I'm gonna die.

(MARY sings a few lines from 'Dream Angus'; clutching her hands over his ears and breathing slowly together at the end of the song)

Song - Dream Angus by George Churchill

Sung a Cappella by MARY

Can you no hush, your weeping.

All the wee lambs are sleeping.

Birdies are nestling.

Nestling together.

Daisies are growin' over the heather.

HECTOR: *(after having a calm moment with MARY, thanking her, and realising everyone is staring) I think I will go and check on Mr*

Ratchett. He usually awakes this hour, and I must inform him of our current situation.

(Exit Hector)

POIROT (A5): C'était magnifique. A woman of many talents.

MARY: It's nothing really. It worked well with my previous employer's child-

MRS HUBBARD: Enough! How are we gonna get outta here!

COLONEL: I am sure they will send a repair team shortly.

COUNTESS: I shall expect a formal apology from their staff when they do arrive. Though, with all this lunacy, I think I am better suited waiting in my own cabin.

(Exit COUNTESS)

MRS HUBBARD: This is just ridiculous!

(Exit MRS HUBBARD)

MARY: I envy your courage Mr Poirot.

POIROT (A5): Fear is the most poisonous thing to humanity mon cheri. It is the one thing that we choose to carry with us. But remember, it is also the one thing we can choose to leave at any moment (*POIROT looks at the COLONEL and back to MARY*). Good night, madame.

(Exit POIROT)

(The COLONEL and MARY share a moment before the COLONEL turns and exits. Leaving MARY briefly, before exiting himself)

POIROT (A1): Ahh, the storm rages outside. But the real storm is within these carriages, no? Each one of passengers, wears a mask so well, don't they? But I can see the cracks, the subtle signs. Can you? The glances? The anger? Do you have your suspicions? They think they can hide it from me, from us? But we know better, don't we? I said we know better, don't we? Magnifique. It is only a matter of time... The truth always reveals itself my friends, but when it does, will you know the answer already?

Musical interlude.

ACT 2 SCENE 1

(MR RATCHETT is seen walking on stage holding a gun; looking nervous. As the song plays out, all the other characters begin to narrowly miss being seen or caught by the antagonist).

Song - Somebody's Watching Me by Rockwell

Sung by MR RATCHETT

I'm just an average man with an average life

I work from 9 to 5, hey, hell I pay the price

All I want is to be left alone in my average home

But why do I always feel like I'm in the Twilight Zone and

I always feel like somebody's watchin' me

And I have no privacy

Oh, oh, oh, I always feel like somebody's watchin' me

Tell me is it just a dream

When I come home at night

I bolt the door real tight

People call me on the phone I'm trying to avoid

Well, can the people on TV see me or am I just paranoid

When I'm in the shower, I'm afraid to wash my hair

'Cause I might open my eyes and find someone standing there

People say I'm crazy, just a little touched

But maybe showers remind me of Psycho too much, that's why

I always feel like somebody's watchin' me

And I have no privacy

Oh, oh, oh, I always feel like somebody's watchin' me

Who's playin' tricks on me...

(A scream is heard off stage)

Musical interlude.

ACT 2 SCENE 2

Musical interlude

(Blackout. The audience hears a voice offstage).

HECTOR: Mr Ratchett. It's morning. I have your coffee prepared.

(A sound effect of knocking is heard)

HECTOR: Mr Ratchett?

(The knocking becomes louder)

HECTOR: Sir! It's Hector. Are you alright in there?

POIROT (A5): A problem, monsieur?

HECTOR: Oh everything is fine, the usual morning routine, I guess. Although, he doesn't usually take this long to answer...Mr Ratchett? *(knocks louder)*

MARY: What is all this commotion about?

HECTOR: Nothing, nothing, no cause for alarm...

COUNTESS: It doesn't sound like nothing.

HECTOR: Isn't there *something* else for you to do on this train!

POIROT (A5): *(aside)* I feel like *something* is not quite in order here...

COLONEL: MaQueen? What's all this fuss about?

HECTOR: Hasn't anyone got anything else better do on this train! It's nothing!

COUNTESS: Mr Ratchett isn't responding...apparently it's nothing.

HECTOR: Oh shut up!

COLONEL: *(Knocks enthusiastically)* Open up man! Otherwise this infernal racket will continue all day

HECTOR: Is that really necessary?

COLONEL: Stand back. *(The COLONEL insinuates he is going to break down the door).*

HECTOR: Aren't we jumping the gun here!

COUNTESS: Rather apt statement...considering the circumstances for Ratchett, wouldn't you say?

HECTOR: Hilarious!

COLONEL: I've paid good money to ride this train, and I will not have my breakfast further disturbed by a man's inability to be awoken by his blathering assistant!

HECTOR: *(HECTOR protects the door)* Well I never! In all my life, I, well-

COLONEL: *(The COLONEL pushes him away)* Move out the way man!

POIROT (A5): Not yet, we should be careful, there may be-

(Three loud bangs are heard on the door, until all characters fall through, the room illuminates slightly, HECTOR, COLONEL, MARY, POIROT and the COUNTESS are all in the space. HECTOR continues moving around freely in the dark).

HECTOR: *(whispers)* I can't see a damn thing. Mr Ratchett, erm, we have guests...I am just going to turn on the lights...

(As he reaches for the light beside MR RATCHETT'S bed and illuminates the room, a bloodied bed sheet is revealed in front of his face, covering the shape of a man; a crescendo of sound is heard from the ensemble)

HECTOR: OH GOD! HELP! HELP! Someone please help!

COUNTESS: Is that?

POIROT (A5): I think you already know the answer madame.

HECTOR: OH GOD! *(HECTOR faints, reluctantly the COUNTESS comforts him)*

COLONEL: Dear god man!

MARY: What happened?

POIROT (A5): It is simple.

MARY: Simple?

POIROT (A5): Yes, simple. Monsieur Ratchett has, alas, met his untimely end. Murdered. Ceased to exist.

COLONEL: A rather invasive statement to make when we've just seen the body!

MARY: It could have been an accident Hercule.

POIROT (A5): No. It is simple. All the blood. You do not have to be a detective to accomplish this theory. The vast amount would suggest it was done through lethal force.

COUNTESS: *(still trying to wake HECTOR)* The authorities will deal with this accordingly, I suggest we leave...

MARY: What else can you see, Poirot?

COLONEL: Mary, please! This is no place for a woman!

(POIROT ignoring the others as he continuously inspects the body)

POIROT (A5): A broken watch? 1:15, perhaps the time of death? A burnt piece of paper? A shame. A silk handkerchief, embroidered? Expensive I am sure. A pipe cleaner? Perhaps this pipe burnt the paper...A red kimono, how strange. To the average eye. Nothing. But to Hercule Poirot, breadcrumbs. They speak, they whisper. *(laughs)* Can you not hear their sweet melody, no?

COLONEL: He's mad!

POIROT (A5): Mad? No. I do not wear the "hat" as your English say? I am precise. Some would presume madness and precision are the same. Alas.

MARY: Let me see the paper.

POIROT (A5): No, no, madame, I shall read it aloud. No one touch anything please.

MARY: As you wish...

POIROT (A5): It states a name. Miss Daisy Armstrong.

MARY: Perhaps money owed...he struck me as the man would look for trouble around such a thing.

POIROT (A5): Perhaps. But it is too early to tell.

COUNTESS: Grief is the key ingredient here to this wretch's demise.

POIROT (A5): How strange...

COUNTESS: What?

POIROT (A5): That your mind leaps to revenge as the incentive of the murder? It suggests a familiarity with the sentiment, no?

(HECTOR awakes suddenly)

HECTOR: MR RATCHETT!

POIROT (A5): Ah welcome back, Mr Maqueen! How was your slumber?

HECTOR: I- I don't understand...what the hell is going on here!

POIROT (A5): Your employer is dead.

HECTOR: What? *(He nearly faints again)*

POIROT (A5): Yes, yes, you know this otherwise your head would not have hit the ground so suddenly. Tell me, do you know this person? *(POIROT shows him the paper from a distance)*

HECTOR: Mrs Armstrong?

POIROT (A5): Miss. Not Mrs. Miss. Daisy Armstrong. It was a famous case some years ago. A child was taken and killed.

MARY: How awful!

COLONEL: But what has this got to do with anything!

POIROT (A5): Which is why I am asking our Mr Maqueen, Colonel.

COLONEL: Surely there are more pressing matters at hand!

HECTOR: Right!

POIROT (A5): *(ignoring him)* As Ratchett said to me himself, "*I have enemies.*" Not the words of an innocent man, but of one who fears justice catching up with him. Perhaps, in some form, Daisy has returned to enact her revenge...

(Enter MRS HUBBARD)

MRS HUBBARD: Mr Poirot! I need to speak to you urge-
(She screams after seeing the body) I knew it! I knew it! I knew I wasn't safe! I felt it!

COLONEL: Mrs Hubbard, please!

MRS HUBBARD: First the intruder and now this!

POIROT (A5): Intruder?

COUNTESS: What are you blathering about?

MRS HUBBARD: Last night? Didn't anyone hear me?

HECTOR: No.

MRS HUBBARD: Are you sure?

HECTOR: *(a beat)* Wait, yes, yes I did!

MRS HUBBARD: It was awful Hecule! I was lyin' there, mindin' my own business and I SWEAR on my late husband's grave the wall moved! And that person was holding a knife! That's right! A knife! I'm not some scenile old hag you know? I know what I saw!

COUNTESS: The furniture was trying to kill her, really?

MRS HUBBARD: Whatever Queenie! Anyhow! I woke up this mornin' and found this at the foot of my bed!

(MRS HUBBARD shows a scarf, which when unveiled to the audience, reveals a small, bloodied knife)

MARY: Is that...

HECTOR: Blood? *(he sways then faints again)*

COLONEL: For Christ's sake man!

MRS HUBBARD: Under my mattress! I could've been murdered in my sleep!

POIROT (A5): *(POIROT studies knife. He holds it delicately, playing with it's balance between his fingers, the tone shifts)* No, instead, they appear to have found their true target.

MARY: I don't think I have ever seen anything like this before...

MRS HUBBARD: Oh god! That could have been me! ME!

POIROT (A5): Ah, may I see the blade, please?

MRS HUBBARD: What?

POIROT (A5): The blade. Merci. The smallest detail can give us our next clue.

(MRS HUBBARD reluctantly gives the weapon to POIROT)

POIROT (A5): No discernible fingerprints. Lightweight. Rather theatrical, no? Interesting...

MARY: How so?

POIROT (A5): This is no ordinary crime...Colonel, please leave our dear Hector and help me with the body.

COLONEL: Why me?

POIROT (A5): If you truly believe this is no place for a woman, then I trust you will have no trouble in lifting the corpse?

COLONEL: But you said not to touch anything?

POIROT (A5): True, but at this time, I feel it is more beneficial to examine the cause of death than the corpse placement. Proceed.

(The COLONEL, underneath the bedsheet, reluctantly lifts the corpse on its side after gagging audibly, the other characters gather around)

HECTOR: *(After slowly awaking once more)* What happened? *(Rising slowly to see the body he turns suddenly and imitates nearly throwing up)*

POIROT (A5): *(A short pause to measure the body)* Quatre, cinq, six. Six stab wounds to the body. Fascinating.

MARY: Six?

POIROT (A5): Oui. But they are uneven. Deep. But also, shallow. Some, not even real attempts.

MRS HUBBARD: Does it matter? He's dead ain't he?

POIROT (A5): Yes, he is dead, but not by one hand. I think...this hatred...it feels shared. Passed between hearts like a disease.

COUNTESS: Are you implying I had something to do with this?

POIROT (A5): That you are all, indeed, suspects Countess. We are trapped in the snow and now trapped in deceit. I must ask that you all return to your private carriages.

(A cacophony of sound is heard as all other passengers are complaining about what has happened)

POIROT (A5): *(speaking over them all)* There, I will call upon you in pairs...

(The passengers try to continue their individual speeches once more)

POIROT (A5): No matter how deep you think the truth is buried, I will bring it to the surface. That, I promise. Madams. Monsieur's. Good day.

(Exit POIROT, the other passengers remain frozen. Silent. Suspicion now lingers within their eyes)

Musical interlude.

ACT 2 SCENE 3

Musical interlude

(POIROT appears on stage speaking to the audience)

POIROT (A6): Six wounds. Some deep. Some hesitant. A strange collection of clues, no?...A pipe cleaner, misplaced perhaps? A silk handkerchief, with strange lettering embroidered. A watch, ceasing now to function. A letter, half destroyed, a red silk kimono. How odd. Everyone asleep, supposedly, both in mind and body. This is no crime of passion. It is too precise. Yet, the truth-

(A gunshot is heard and a female scream)

Has a way of revealing itself.

(Another musical interlude where the COLONEL, MARY and POIROT are now sitting together on stage; Mary now has her arm in a sling, a silence ensues)

POIROT (A6): You will forgive me, I am a great admirer of silence, but not when it follows a gunshot. Mademoiselle, I see you have acquired a new souvenir onboard?

MARY: It is nothing.

COLONEL: No, it bloody well isn't! The woman was attacked!

POIROT (A6): I am sorry to hear mad-

COLONEL: And whilst we sit here answering your silly questions, this mad man is still on the loose.

POIROT (A6): A mad man, you say? So, it was a male?

COLONEL: *(recollects himself)* Erm yes, a man sprinted past her in the corridor, I tried to catch the assailant, but he escaped...

POIROT (A6): Funny, is it not, how the murderer evaded your capture, when, even by your own admission, the train is too small for the price they charge.

COLONEL: I meant for the luxuri-

POIROT (A6): Yet, in this tiny world of wheels, someone vanished into smoke, poof, a fine magic trick. Ah, which reminds me...*(POIROT pulls a pipe cleaner from his pocket)* Do you smoke a pipe?

COLONEL: Yes, but that is not mine.

POIROT (A6): But of course, may I see your pipe, monsieur?

(The COLONEL reluctantly pulls his pipe from his pocket)

POIROT (A6): *(Inspecting the pipe)* Of course, a simple coincidence that the murderer, and yourself, both use such a smoking apparatus.

COLONEL: Exactly, so this triv-

POIROT (A6): Ah, I am not finished, monsieur. (*POIROT sniffs the pipe cleaner*). A strong aroma no? A very particular taste I am sure, not one for my palate. Is this the correct phrase? Palate? Oui. I am surprised you continued smoking such a pipe when you were an officer in America. Usually those 'yankees', as they say, turn to cigarettes. "Lucky Strikes" I am told our a fine delicacy. I only say this because I notice this is an American pipe cleaner, found at the scene of the crime and this, attached to the pipe, the pipe that you have just given me from your own pocket, is the same American pipe cleaner found next to the body. (*A stunned silence from the COLONEL*). Curious. But where is the connection? Hmm? Why does this matter? If the details of the Daisy Armstrong case are still fresh in my brain, was not her father a captain in the American military?

COLONEL: A colonel.

POIROT (A6): Yes! A fine cause. But alas, when serving with comrades, someone like Colonel Armstrong, perhaps, you must have wanted to keep that British smoking tradition alive? Have a small remembrance of home. Smoking a pipe with a fellow British man. I assume he was a friend?

COLONEL: A brother.

POIROT (A6): And yet, mon ami, when the name of little Daisy was revealed on a torn letter, and yet you said nothing. Curious, non? Some would suggest this a motive to kill, monsieur...

MARY: The man who attacked me was wearing something red...flowing like a robe...

POIROT (A6): Ah, pardon Mary, you have found your voice again, excuse eh moi, Colonel. We shall return to you shortly.

(The COLONEL remains silent)

POIROT (A6): So, Mary, the killer now has a taste for fashion; they must have brought multiple kimonos, no? An appetite for murder and silk it seems.

COLONEL: This is no laughing matter, Poirot! Pipe cleaners and kimonos? They mean nothing!

POIROT (A6): Pieces of a jigsaw do not reveal the true picture until they are assembled monsieur. Now, tell me, Mary, how is your arm? This must be quite an eventful day for you so far. Is it painful?

MARY: *(her voice falters)*. No, it's just a scratch.

POIROT (A6): A scratch. Bon. I am glad to hear you are safe.

COLONEL: For now!

POIROT (A6): I must ask, mon cheri, that a "scratch", as you say, can cause so much turmoil?

COLONEL: She's been shot for christ's sake!

POIROT (A6): I am aware of what has happened Colonel. But clearly, there is more that Mary chooses not to admit. I am not accusing, I am simply asking.

COLONEL: And she doesn't have to answer!

POIROT (A6): Mary, are you well enough to answer my line of enquiry?

(MARY does not answer).

POIROT (A6): I will not press with questions, if you are not emotionally or physically capable. But I must warn you, if choose not to answer, then the outcome will be more severe towards you. Now, are you ready?

MARY: *(Nods quietly)*

POIROT (A6): Bon. Where were you at the time of Mr Ratchett's murder?

MARY: I...I don't remember exact-

COLONEL: She was asleep. Dead to the world.

POIROT (A6): Allors...asleep. Everyone always asleep. Convient, non? And of course, I am to assume you were the same?

COLONEL: A gentleman always retires at a sensible hour.

POIROT (A6): And yet such a gentleman keeps interrupting.

COLONEL: This is propost-

POIROT (A6): Mary, earlier today, when our poor Hector was panicking, it was you who calmed him, was it not? What were those words? Ah yes, "Daisies are growin' over the heather"? *(MARY has a stunned moment)*. A lullaby. Sweet and soft. The one they sing to a child

they love. Tell me, mademoiselle, how long were you little Daisy's governess?

(MARY looks to the COLONEL, after seeing his fierce gaze, she looks away once more trying to hide her tears).

POIROT (A6): Very well, I shall leave you two "strangers" to become more acquainted in the wake of this tragedy.

(POIROT does a "false" exit, turning to leave the stage, MARY and the COLONEL look to each other to hold hands, but then dismiss the gesture after Poirot returns).

POIROT (A6): One more thing...why are the English so careful when they love?

COLONEL: How dare you! You have no rig-

POIROT (A6): *(Ignoring the COLONEL'S interruption)* So polite. So quiet. As if love were rude. Or dangerous. But secrets, they are far more dangerous, non?

(Exit COLONEL)

POIROT (A6): It is not a crime to love, Mademoiselle, but lying to Hercule Poirot because of it?...tut-tut, that is something else entirely.

(Exit POIROT)

Song - Bring me to life by Evanescence

Sung by **MARY**

How can you see into my eyes like open doors?

Leading you down into my core where I've become so numb

Without a soul my spirit's sleeping somewhere cold

Until you find it there and lead it back home

(Wake me up)

Wake me up inside

(I can't wake up)

Wake me up inside

(Save me)

Call my name and save me from the dark

(Wake me up)

Bid my blood to run

(I can't wake up)
Before I come undone
(Save me)
Save me from the nothing I've become.

Now that I know what I'm without
You can't just leave me
Breathe into me and make me real
Bring me to life
(Wake me up)
Wake me up inside
(I can't wake up)
Wake me up inside
(Save me)
Call my name and save me from the dark
(Wake me up)
Bid my blood to run
(I can't wake up)
Before I come undone
(Save me)
Save me from the nothing I've become
(Exit MARY)
Musical interlude.

ACT 2 SCENE 5

Musical interlude

(Enter POIROT, MRS HUBBARD and COUNTESS)

POIROT (A2): Thank you for joining me. I understand that this is a delicate and distressing time.

COUNTESS: It is somewhat entertaining actually...

POIROT (A2): Yes...now, where should we beg-ATCHOO (*POIROT sneezes*). Oh mon dieu. (*They pat their person trying to find a handkerchief*).

MRS HUBBARD: I swear it's the damn snow! People think I'm crazy, but I tell ya, it gets right up my sinuses. Let me see if I've got a fresh one. (*MRS HUBBARD rummages around her purse*).

COUNTESS: Here. It is clean. (*She passes the handkerchief*).

POIROT (A2): You are most generous, madame. What exquisite embroidery...silk, yes? The sheen, finesse, it's magnifique.

COUNTESS: You may keep it.

POIROT (A2): For moi? Marvellous! I shall add it my little collection! (*producing a bloodied handkerchief*) Alas, this one is quite ruined...but look! Both silk...both embroidered with the letter "H"...the same shade, the same delicate thread, what a curious coincidence, that yours and this one are nearly twins.

(*The COUNTESS does not speak*).

POIROT (A2): But, I wonder madame...why would there be a H? It is not the initial of Elena Adrenyi, is it? Perhaps a name once yours? Or one you keep hidden? Like a secret hand in a deck?

COUNTESS: You seem quite fond of coincidence, Mr Poirot.

POIROT (A2): Ah but in a web of lies, coincidence is always the first thread you must pull.

COUNTESS: (*whispers*) Helena.

POIROT (A2): Et voilà! Our own Helen of Troy resides with us tonight. Not a trojan horse, but a handkerchief. What storms you must have ventured.

MRS HUBBARD: So what if her name is Helena, big whoop?

POIROT (A2): A "big whoop" indeed. For Helena Goldenberg was the aunt of little Daisy Armstrong; the very child whose tragedy seems to connect us all here tonight.

MRS HUBBARD: Goldenberg? That don't sound like Queenie here.

POIROT (A2): No, madame, but tangled family trees, they often bear the strangest fruit.

COUNTESS: I lose handkerchiefs all the time. It is no crime. Perhaps it was stolen...taken by the man who attacked him. Plus, Ratchett was no gentleman either. He took what he wished, without asking. Perhaps he stole it himself...and the "H". It stands for Hungary. My home country.

POIROT (A2): A valid point. Or a red herring. Who can decide?

COUNTESS: I will not be challenged to the killing of a man due to a second-hand piece of cloth. Good day, monsieur Poirot.

(Exit COUNTESS)

POIROT (A2): There is a quiet dignity in retreat, no? *(POIROT turns to MRS HUBBARD)* But often, it is the most vibrant who conceal the darkest secrets...

MRS HUBBARD: Oh great, it's my turn now, huh? You just throwin' darts at any target, aren't ya?

POIROT (A2): Not darts madam, observations. I recall Mr Ratchett, was rather forward with you at the beginning of the journey?

MRS HUBBARD: Sure, he tried to butter my biscuit, but his boy Hector interrupted. Saved him a slap probably.

POIROT (A2): Ah and for someone so bold, you seemed unusually flustered on the night of the murder?

MRS HUBBARD: I might holler like a banshee, but there is still a lady under this dress! You think I'd stay calm finding a man stabbed stiff and soaked with blood? I ain't no monster! But...sometimes even monsters can get scared.

POIROT (A2): Of course, madame. But, you appeared the instant that little Daisy's name was called...almost as if you were expecting a cue.

MRS HUBBARD: I wasn't there at first! I came running when I heard all the commotion! And if I'm readin' from a script, it's a damn good improvised one!

POIROT (A2): And yet the bloodied knife appears suddenly, carefully placed in your compartment. Another coincidence?

MRS HUBBARD: I didn't plant it! I found it, like cruel gift tucked neatly under my mattress.

POIROT (A2): Indeed, the performance continues, a true artist, a true entertainer.

MRS HUBBARD: Are you accusing me, Mr Poirot?

POIROT (A2): I accuse no one madam. I only observe. Every entrance, every exit, every prop, every line... it is very well rehearsed.

MRS HUBBARD: You think I staged this whole thing? A murder mystery matinee?

POIROT (A2): No madame...I think the truth terrifies even the best performers.

MRS HUBBARD: You know what, I was just starting to enjoy your company! (*As she is about to leave, she turns to POIROT and bows dramatically*). Bravo, monsieur! Bravo. I hope you're proud of this little show of ours.

Musical interlude.

ACT 3 SCENE 1

(*Enter all POIROTS*)

POIROT (A5): Mon dieu! This is most difficult, non? Each thread I pull only tightens the web of lies!

POIROT (A2): The Countess, so elegant, so composed. But what if she is not merely grieving? What if that silk handkerchief was not lost...but *left*? A token perhaps from Daisy Armstrong's aunt?

POIROT (A3): And the Colonel, a man of discipline, of loyalty. But I see the storm behind his eyes. He loved the Armstrongs. He loved Mary. Would he not kill to protect her honour? And his pipe cleaner...found at the scene. A careless mistake, or a deliberate plant?

POIROT (A4): Mary, ma petite Mary. Calm. Clever. Controlled. But say the name Daisy... and her soul trembles. She was the governess, no? Dismissed after the tragedy. Is it guilt that haunts her? Or vengeance that guides her?

POIROT (A1): And Mrs Hubbard, the star of the show! Loud. Brash. Theatrical. But her timing... *too* perfect. She finds the knife, screams on cue,

spins an alibi like an aria. No madame, I think you play your role far too well.

POIROT (A6): They are all connected. Not by coincidence but by something deeper. A shared grief? A shared purpose? A shared guilt?

POIROT (A5): But which one wielded the blade?

POIROT (A2): Who struck the final blow?

POIROT (A4): And Hector! We still await his tale! His truth might unlock the mystery.

POIROT (A3): Or deliver the final lie.

POIROT (A1): Will the truth reveal itself?

POIROT (A6): Or will Hercule Poirot be driven mad before this play reaches its final curtain.

(Exit all POIROTs apart from A6)

Song - Crazy Train by Ozzy Osbourne

*Sung by **POIROT (A6)***

All aboard ha ha ha ha ha ha ha

Ay, ay, ay, ay, ay, ay, ay.

Crazy, but that's how it goes

Millions of people living as foes

Maybe it's not too late

To learn how to love

And forget how to hate

Mental wounds not healing

Life's a bitter shame

I'm going off the rails on a crazy train

I'm going off the rails on a crazy train

Let's go

I've listened to preachers

I've listened to fools

I've watched all the dropouts

Who make their own rules

One person conditioned to rule and control

The media sells it and you live the role

Mental wounds still screaming

Driving me insane

I'm going off the rails on a crazy train

I'm going off the rails on a crazy train

(Exit POIROT)

Musical interlude.

ACT 3 SCENE 2

(HECTOR walks along on stage. He is pacing, or walking in thought. One by one POIROTS begin to appear, circling and observing him. In this scene all POIROTS interview HECTOR).

HECTOR: It was just a scrap of paper...just ink on pulp...

POIROT (A1): But the name, monsieur?

HECTOR: Armstrong.

POIROT (A2): A name that frightens you more than blood...

HECTOR: I fainted at the blood! Not the name!

POIROT (A3): But the note, it frightened you.

HECTOR: It's nothing.

POIROT (A5): It was something, mon ami. Something sharp enough to cut you open.

HECTOR: A memory.

POIROT (A6): A memory you have tried so hard to forget.

HECTOR: Yes.

POIROT (A1): What do you know of the Armstrong case?

HECTOR: I know nothing!

POIROT (A2): Hector...

HECTOR: A little girl was taken. The man got away. That's all.

POIROT (A3): Ah perhaps an error of the judge? They are more practical than perceptive, no? He should have seen the truth-

HECTOR: You don't know what you are talking about.

POIROT (A5): Ah so you do know more!

HECTOR: No...look, that case destroyed lives...not just Daisy's...it left damage in places you wouldn't expect.

POIROT (A6): Even for those who were merely watching.

HECTOR: Especially them.

POIROT (A1): So you carry a memory?

HECTOR: A burden.

POIROT (A2): And what burden is this?

HECTOR: My father...he was a judge. On the Armstrong case.

POIROT (A3): Mon dieu...

HECTOR: He believed in justice. In the law. But when that man Cassetti walked free...it broke him...he died thinking he had failed. I lived trying not too.

POIROT (A5): So when you saw Mr Ratchett... did you recognise him?

HECTOR: I didn't!

POIROT (A6): You did.

HECTOR: Stop it.

POIROT (A1): What was it?

HECTOR: Nothing!

POIROT (A2): His clothes?

HECTOR: No.

POIROT (A3): Maybe his documents?

HECTOR: Please stop!

POIROT (A5): It must have been something monsieur!

HECTOR: HIS EYES!...it was...his eyes... I felt like I had seen them before. Somewhere. Long ago.

POIROT (A6): And in that moment, you believed your employer was the same man. The man who escaped your father. The man who killed little Daisy Armstrong.

HECTOR: I never said that!

POIROT (A1): But you knew him before you worked for him?

HECTOR: I never said that either!

POIROT (A2): No, but you believe in in your heart.

HECTOR: No, we are not doing this! You are not tricking me or blaming me! Is it, it is getting hot in here? Or is it just me?

(HECTOR begins to unbutton his collar and tie, fidgeting)

POIROT (A3): Did you kill Mr Ratchett?

HECTOR: I can't breathe!

POIROT (A5): Did you plunge a knife into his body?

HECTOR: I'm dying!

POIROT (A6): Did you take his life?

HECTOR: The lights are fading! I'm dying!

POIROTS (A 1 2 3 5 6):BREATHE!

HECTOR: I'M TRYING!

(POIROTS enact a physical comedy sequence where they all slap HECTOR in a rhythmic fashion. Very slapstick comedy).

POIROT (A5): Are you alright mon ami?

HECTOR: I'm not sure...

(POIROTS re-enact the same physical comedy sequence where they all slap HECTOR in a rhythmic fashion).

POIROT (A5): Are you alright mon ami?

HECTOR: Thank you, I feel much bett-

(POIROTS re-enact the final same physical comedy sequence where they all slap HECTOR in a rhythmic fashion).

HECTOR: STOP HITTING ME!

POIROTS (A1 2 3 5 6): Apologies.

POIROTS (A6): Back to the case?

HECTOR: *(sarcastically)* Oui.

POIROT (A1): This memory, the Armstrong one, it still haunts you?

HECTOR: I've lived with the weight of that case for years. I know how to carry it. As did my father before me.

POIROT (A2): And still you claim no connection to Mr Ratchett?

HECTOR: None.

(HECTOR looks away from the other POIROTS. He is clearly broken).

POIROT (A3): Very well. But remember dear Hector.

POIROT (A6): It is usually the quietest door mouse who often leaves the loudest footprints.

(Exit all POIROTS from stage, HECTOR sings a small verse of the MARY'S nursery rhyme to himself)

HECTOR: I'm sorry, Pop...I tried.

(Exit HECTOR)

Musical Interlude.

ACT 3 SCENE 4

Musical Interlude

(Enter POIROT. All other remaining characters are in a line on stage)

POIROT (A5): *(Speaking to the audience)* I have gathered the evidence. But I need your help. I will call each suspect's name. Then, I want you to scream! To shout! Tell me which is the true killer! Are you ready? Mon dieu, I said, are you ready? Voila. Do you believe it to be Mary? The Colonel? Mrs Hubbard? Hector? The Countess? It seems there is noise for every single passenger...but what does this mean?

MRS HUBBARD: *(MRS HUBBARD'S voice changes, the act has now been dropped).*
It means you are late to the party, monsieur Poirot. Allow me to
introduce myself. My name is Linda Arden. Actress.
Director. But most of all, grandmother. Grandmother to the once
beautiful-

POIROT (A5): Daisy Armstrong.

MRS HUBBARD: Bingo. You want to know who killed Ratchett? Or should I say, real
name Cassetti; the man who got away free with killing her! I did.
We did.

POIROT (A5): My god.

MRS HUBBARD: Of course, mistakes were made.

HECTOR: I thought I burnt all the documents, I'm sorry Linda. I didn't mean
to leave the note! My mind was consumed about avenging my
father tha-

MRS HUBBARD: Enough. Don't fall apart now.

POIROT (A5): I don't understand.

MRS HUBBARD: Let me assist you. Mary was indeed Daisy's governess. You caught
on when she sang the nursery rhyme...the song she would sing to
my little spring flower...

MARY: She was family...I couldn't forget her. Not with him still alive...

MRS HUBBARD: She couldn't shake that poor ache. Not while Ratchett still
breathed. That's why our dear Colonel kept pushing her to the act
itself...

COLONEL: I only wanted peace. For her. For us. For all of us.

MRS HUBBARD: Oh yes! The Colonel is still devoted to Mary, something I disproved
of showing publicly. He was hiding his own torment too... the loss
of his friend; Daisy's father.

COLONEL: When Daisy died, the family shattered. Her mother, Sonia, grief-
stricken, died in childbirth. Her father, my brother in arms, took his
own life.

MRS HUBBARD: *(disapprovingly)* You left your pipe cleaner in the room. Our boy
Poirot was quick to pick up on that.

COLONEL: It was not intentional.

MRS HUBBARD: *(Turning to the **COUNTESS**)* And you Helena, with your handkerchief, your initials, your silk.

POIROT (A5): I was talking to Helena after all?

COUNTESS: Yes. Sonia Armstrong, little Daisy Armstrong's mother...I was Sonia's sister, Helena...He took my niece from this world. So I helped take him from this one...

MRS HUBBARD: And little Hector, our sweet little Hector Maqueen, his father was indeed the judge who tried to convict Cassetti. But the system failed. It broke him.

HECTOR: And my family. I...I helped with the letters, the false threats, the documents.

MRS HUBBARD: Only way to get "Ratchett" on the train...and after it was done, he deleted every trace. Or so I thought...

POIROT (A5): So many threads... the friend, the granddaughter, the niece, the carer, the judge, all tied to little Daisy...but how?

MRS HUBBARD: What the killing? Simple really. He would take sedatives before sleeping. Why our little Hector would always wake him with coffee. We needed to continue that little routine going to show you nothing was out of the ordinary.

POIROT (A5): But surely someone must have heard?

COLONEL: On the night I patrolled the corridors. Kept watch. Just like the old days. No one saw a thing.

MRS HUBBARD: Once inside, I initiated the first blow. Mary stood at the door. One by one, we took our turn. Each leaving their mark. A ritual. A reckoning.

POIROT (A5): That explains the varying stab wounds...

MRS HUBBARD: The countess then insisted on moving the body...

COUNTESS: I wanted to feel the weight of his corpse in my hands. I wanted to know the deed was done. But that pig...he covered me in his blood.

POIROT (A5): Thus the handkerchief was left.

MRS HUBBARD: Reckless, but understandable.

POIROT (A5): And the knife? "Planted" within your room?

MRS HUBBARD: A little theatre. You never believed the act, but I did not lie. Yes, that was the weapon. One by one, we pierced our little shrine.

POIROT (A5): And Mary? She was shot?

MRS HUBBARD: You're right! It's almost as though we needed a trained marksman, a soldier who could wound but never kill! (*The COLONEL gives a quiet salute to POIROT*).

POIROT (A5): "A little scratch"...

MRS HUBBARD: Exactly! A diversion. Everything possible to keep you from seeing the full picture.

POIROT (A5): This is monstrous., all of it.

MRS HUBBARD: What do you expect! We were broken. Every one of us. Completely shattering our lives and then just walking free. So we stopped him. Together.

POIROT (A5): You should have gone to the poli-

MRS HUBBARD: We did! Remember! The first time! Hector's father tried and tried! The system failed him! It failed us! So we became the system. The judge. The jury. The executioner.

POIROT (A5): And now? What happens to me? Do I become another victim of this...justice?

MRS HUBBARD: No Hercule. This is your choice. Not ours. The train will move soon. When it does their are two options.

MARY: You tell the authorities.

COLONEL: Name us.

HECTOR: Expose everything.

COUNTESS: Expose us.

MRS HUBBARD: Or?

POIROT (A5): Bury the truth. Make up a nameless phantom that vanished into the night?

MRS HUBBARD: I knew you would catch on eventually.

POIROT (A5): What do I say? No name, no trace, a mystery...a great escape.

MRS HUBBARD: As monsters sometimes make.

POIROT (A5): Pah, you expect me to lie?

MRS HUBBARD: I expect you to listen. To truly listen.

POIROT (A5): I am listening! This is rid-

MRS HUBBARD: To your heart, Poirot...your heart. You knew this man was evil. You refused his job opportunity at the start of this journey. A voice inside that beautiful mind and soul already told you how much of a low life scum he already was...Now, I ask you to listen once more...

(POIROT stares intently at all of them, MRS HUBBARD, believing that she has been defeated, lifts her hands as a gesture to be handcuffed. A beat. POIROT turns his back to all of them as if leaving the stage, suggesting they are letting the other passengers go).

POIROT (A5): What happened to little Daisy...by accepting this newfound silence...I take a piece of that weight with me also. Your guilt, your black justice...now mine too...there is no verdict that can ever free us from these bonds. *(POIROT stares around the carriage)*. You know, I was quite excited for my little holiday, they say this train creates happy memories. No. I think not. It creates scars...and now, it adds more to its collection. Good night, mon ami. May you find the peace...or the oblivion you so desperately seek.

(Exit POIROT)

MARY: It is finished...it's done. *(She begins to cry in the COLONEL'S arms)*.

COUNTESS: That...that was not what I was expecting at all.

COLONEL: Thank you, Linda.

MRS HUBBARD: My pleasure...

HECTOR: So, erm, now that's erm, done...what now?

COUNTESS: We drink. We mourn. We celebrate Daisy's little life.

COLONEL: And we never speak of this again...

Song - Don't stop me now by Queen

Sung by cast

(Sang by A3) : Tonight, I'm gonna have myself a real good time

I feel alive

And the world, I'll turn it inside out, yeah

And floating around in ecstasy, so

(Don't stop me now)

(Don't stop me)

'Cause I'm having a good time, having a good time

I'm a shooting star, leaping through the sky

Like a tiger defying the laws of gravity

I'm a racing car, passing by like Lady Godiva

I'm gonna go, go, go

There's no stopping me

(Sang by A4) :I'm burnin' through the sky, yeah

Two hundred degrees

That's why they call me Mister Fahrenheit

I'm traveling at the speed of light

I wanna make a supersonic man out of you

(Sang by A1 and A2): (Don't stop me now) I'm having such a good time, I'm having a ball

(Don't stop me now)

If you wanna have a good time, just give me a call

(Don't stop me now) 'Cause I'm having a good time

(Don't stop me now) Yes, I'm havin' a good time

I don't want to stop at all, yeah

(Sang by A6): I'm a rocket ship on my way to Mars

On a collision course

I am a satellite, I'm out of control

I am a sex machine, ready to reload

Like an atom bomb

About to oh, oh, oh, oh, oh explode

(Sang by A3): I'm burnin' through the sky, yeah

Two hundred degrees

That's why they call me Mister Fahrenheit

I'm traveling at the speed of light

I wanna make a supersonic woman of you

*(Enter **POIROT: A5**)*

(Sang by A5) (Don't stop me, don't stop me, ooh, ooh, ooh)

Hey, hey, hey, I like it

(Don't stop me, don't stop me)

Have a good time, good time

(Don't stop me, don't stop me) Ah

Oh yeah

Alright

Oh, I'm burnin' through the sky, yeah

Two hundred degrees

That's why they call me Mister Fahrenheit

I'm traveling at the speed of light

I wanna make a supersonic man out of you

(Sang by all actors): I'm having such a good time, I'm having a ball

(Don't stop me now)

If you wanna have a good time, just give me a call

(Don't stop me now) 'Cause I'm having a good time

(Don't stop me now) Yes, I'm havin' a good time

I don't want to stop at all

(Sang by Actor 3) La da da da da

Da da da ha

Ha da da ha ha ha

Ha da da, ha da da ah

Ooh ooh ooh

THE END.