

# Murder on the Orient Express

## Side #1

### 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 Tokatlion 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.

**Side #2**

COUNTESS

You seem troubled.

POIROT

I am getting more and more concerned.

COUNTESS

That another crime will occur?

POIROT

No. That I will solve this one.

*(POIROT picks up one of the passports and reads the contents.)*

Countess. What is your maiden name?

COUNTESS

Goldenberg. As you see in the passport.

POIROT

Oui. But now you use Andrenyi.

COUNTESS

My husband's name.

POIROT

Of course. The Countess Andrenyi. And I believe your first name is Elena.

COUNTESS

That is correct. I am a suspect?

POIROT

I merely ask questions. That is my job.

COUNTESS

I thought we were friends.

POIROT. It is my greatest wish, but please indulge me. This morning I examined your passport and I saw a grease spot at the beginning of your name, Elena. The spot occurs before the first letter, and it could easily hide another letter, such as H. Now if you add an H at the beginning of the name, it becomes *Helena*, which is used by Shakespeare in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

COUNTESS

That is true.

POIROT

The kind of name an actress might choose for her daughter.

COUNTESS

I suppose.

POIROT

An actress such as Linda Arden, the grandmother of Daisy Armstrong.

COUNTESS

If you say so.

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.*

**Side #3**

POIROT

Do you have a problem answering my questions, monsieur?

ARBUTHNOT

No, of course not.

POIROT

Excellent. Now in the course of your service to your country, did you know an officer named Charles Armstrong?

ARBUTHNOT

No.

POIROT.

Have you heard of him?

ARBUTHNOT

Yes, we served in the same theatre of action, but we never met.

POIROT

Have you heard of the Daisy Armstrong case?

ARBUTHNOT

Of course I have. She was murdered by some brute who was out for money.

POIROT

Did you know that Colonel Armstrong was Daisy's father?

ARBUTHNOT

No, I didn't.

POIROT

Or that he took his own life after the tragedy?

ARBUTHNOT

Oh God. I'm sorry to hear it.

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. 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!!