

Scene Four

*(We are now in the Art Deco dining car of the first class coach of the Orient Express. The car gleams with elegance and romance. The fittings are gold, the cushions are made of red plush, and the bar in the dining car is fashioned of inlaid wood with an Art Deco depiction of an elegant woman lying across an ottoman. It is worthy, in its way, of the great mosaics in Ravenna. The train is breathing.)*

*(A number of PASSENGERS come through with their luggage.)*

MRS. HUBBARD. Well, ain't this the bee's knees. Maybe I'll just move in for good.

MICHEL. This way, please, and watch your step.

MRS. HUBBARD. Holy cow. Is it snowing out there?

MICHEL. We get a lot of it this time of year, I'm afraid. Last year we got stuck in the snow for seven days.

MRS. HUBBARD. Seven days? Was there liquor on board?

MICHEL. There is always plenty.

MRS. HUBBARD. Well, now I can breathe again. Don't get me wrong, I also eat solid food as long as it's cooked in bourbon. As they say in the movies, lead on, MacDuff!

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

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

GRETA. I have to confess to you, princess, that I am not liking trains since I am little girl. They are feeling very tight to me, like clothing that is made wrong size and is squeezing my bosom, may God forgive me.

~~PRINCESS. Oh, don't be silly. Trains are wonderful!~~

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

Greta

there is noise and crying and animals and oh! And I look up from my book and sitting there next to me, right on the seat, iss a very old goat. Haha. Is true. *Old goat!* He is like my companion. And on this trip that we are taking together right now, I think it will not be so different, ja?

*(GRETA exits. The PRINCESS reacts and follows her off as POIROT enters, followed by RATCHETT, who is trying to catch up with them.)*

RATCHETT. Mr. Poirot, slow up! Now I'd like to discuss that proposition I mentioned.

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

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

POIROT. I am afraid -

RATCHETT. Sit down.

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

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

POIROT. I take on few new cases.

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

POIROT. And why is that?

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

POIROT. I would guess that you have several enemies.

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

POIROT. *You* are successful, *riest-ce pas?* Successful people have many enemies.

RATCHETT. Right. That's it exactly! You see I've been getting some threatening letters lately and I want an extra pair of eyes to do some snooping around. And that's what you do, am I right? Snooping? Of course, I can take care of myself.

*(He flashes the gun under his coat.)*

But I'll pay you five thousand dollars. How does that sound?

POIROT. *Non*.