

LITTLE GIRL. Faster, faster! You're a train, you're a train!

THE NANNY. Daisy Armstrong!

(Tickling, laughter. They're in the room.)

Now straight into bed and no more nonsense.

LITTLE GIRL. Oh, all right.

(She gets into bed. The NANNY sits beside her.)

THE NANNY. Close your eyes. Night, night.

(The NANNY exits. We hear the door open and close. A beat of calm, and then we hear a deep, ominous sound, like the bass note of an organ. Light from the hallway spills into the room, and we see the shadow of a hulking man entering the room. Perhaps we see the LITTLE GIRL as well.)

LITTLE GIRL. Who are you? Go away. Nanny!

THE MAN. Come!

LITTLE GIRL. No! I won't! I won't come! Mama! Daddy!
AHHHHHHHHH!

(Her scream turns into the scream of a train whistle, as the train goes past us again with another roar. Vroooooom!)

(Steam from the train billows out across the stage. Out of this mist, HERCULE POIROT walks into view and addresses the audience.)

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 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.