

Mrs. Hubbard, MacQueen, Poirot + Bouc Side 3

*young American in his thirties with a strained, rather beleaguered face.)*

**MRS. HUBBARD.** Excuse me, young man. Are you American?

**MACQUEEN.** Y-yes I am.

**MRS. HUBBARD.** I thought so. I can see from your passport.

Us Americans have to stick together, you know. Especially in a place like this. I can't even pronounce half the things on the menu. Can you believe it? And what's a falafafafafafel? I keep seeing them on the street and they look like you could play hockey with 'em.

**MACQUEEN.** I believe they're made of fried chickpeas.

**MRS. HUBBARD.** Well there ya go. Who knew? Some people will fry anything. By the way, I don't mean to snoop but I see your train ticket sitting there on the table and I wonder - do you know if they're providing a bus to the station?

**MACQUEEN.** I don't think so. I-I believe the hotel has a private car.

**MRS. HUBBARD.** Well don't you worry, I'll ask and find out. As the Bible says, "If Moses doesn't know the answer, ask the concierge." Now I better go. I think I'm annoying that odd little man with the silly moustache. *(Sotto voce.)* And I don't think it's real.

*(As MACQUEEN and MRS. HUBBARD exit, MONSIEUR BOUC enters. He sees POIROT, his face lights up and he chuckles happily. He taps POIROT on the shoulder. BOUC is another Belgian, a young middle-aged man of good humor.)*

**BOUC.** I hope that the food at this humble establishment is up to your usual standards.

**POIROT.** What? What's this?... Ah, *mon Dieu*, it is *Monsieur Bouc*!

**BOUC.** My friend! Haha!

**POIROT.** *Mon ami!* But what are you doing here?

**BOUC.** What am *I* doing here? This is my city! I live here!

**POIROT.** Of course, I'm a fool!

**BOUC.** I run Wagon-Lit, the greatest train company in the entire world, and the central office is in this hotel. *Garçon!* This meal is on me, please charge my office.

**POIROT.** *Ah non.*

**BOUC.** *Ah oui.* It will give me pleasure, you are my guest here. So tell me, what are you doing here? You are solving a crime, eh?

**POIROT.** No, no, I did that last week in Syria. It was a bad affair. An army officer, a missing check, a beautiful woman, puh. It did not end well.

*(As POIROT describes the case, a MAN appears in a blue down light, wearing an army tunic and an officer's hat. We are witnessing POIROT's memory.)*

The man was guilty, that was certain. But perhaps, because I pressed the man too hard to admit his guilt...

*(The MAN raises a pistol to his temple and fires. Bang! The noise is startling. The MAN collapses and fades away.)*

It was unfortunate in the extreme. And yet I believe I did nothing wrong.

**BOUC.** Of course you did nothing wrong. If you break the law you must pay the price. That is what *you* have told me.

**POIROT.** It is what I live by.

**BOUC.** Now tell me, you are staying here at the hotel?

**POIROT.** I was hoping, eh? I was going to play the tourist, but at the desk there was a telegram from Scotland Yard, begging me to return at once, so I have asked the concierge to get me a ticket for tonight on your famous Orient Express.

**BOUC.** There will be no problem, and the best news is, I will be joining you, for I go to Lausanne tonight on business.

**POIROT.** Haha! *C'est magnifique.*