

POIROT

#1) *In the opening of the play*

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.

#2) *The End of the Play*

And so the case was over at last, and the passengers went their separate ways. I have learned since that time that Greta Ohlsson did in fact get to Africa - for the first time, as it turned out - and she did work for the children and saved many lives. The colonel and Miss Debenham were married in a quiet ceremony in St. James Square, Monsieur MacQueen returned to his business, Michel to his trains, and the princess left us for the great beyond.

The countess, alas, went back to her husband, Monsieur Bouc and I have remained good friends, and Mrs. Hubbard - the great Linda Arden - has recently returned to the stage in a musical entitled *No, No, Nannette*, in which, I am told, she brings the audiences to their feet.

Meanwhile, I beg You to believe me when I tell you that I wish all of them well, and I hope that they prosper till the end of their days. But at night, in the darkness, when I am alone, I ask myself again and again if this was justice; if I did the right thing. And on many such nights, it is not until morning that I can close my eyes.

(The lights fade.)

(And then the lights are out.)