

Side 5

MICHEL. Princess Dragomiroff. How lovely to see you.

(*To GRETA.*) Please, let me help you, *madame*.

(*MICHEL relieves GRETA of the luggage.*)

GRETA. It iss *mademoiselle*. I am not married, except to God almighty who lives in heaven.

(*She crosses herself.*)

PRINCESS. Oh Greta please, not *now*. (*To MICHEL.*) This is Greta Ohlsson.

GRETA. I am a missionary and I verk in Africa with little babies.

PRINCESS. I have agreed to pay her way if she will assist me as I travel to Paris.

MICHEL. But your usual companion, Miss Schmidt –?

GRETA. She iss very sick.

PRINCESS. The doctors are calling it a cardiac event, but she is German so it is very unlikely to slow her down.

GRETA. I vill pray for Miss Schmidt and God vill protect her.

PRINCESS. Greta, please, that is enough, just get on the train.

MICHEL. You are in compartment eleven, princess, as usual.
(*To GRETA.*) And Miss Ohlsson, you are sharing with a Miss Mary Debenham in compartment four.

(*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 ve vill be sitting next to each other, *ja*? That part iss good. In Africa once I am on a train and

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 him.*)

Scene Ten

(Bang! The lights come up instantly on the dining car. POIROT, BOUC, the PRINCESS, and GRETA.)

PRINCESS. *Monsieur* Poirot, we are here out of a sense of duty, that is all. I do not like having my day disturbed.

POIROT. Then let us begin immediately. Now it says in your passport that you are Russian.

PRINCESS. That is correct. I have been in exile since the Bolshevik dogs took over.

POIROT. And I see that your first name is –

PRINCESS. Natalya.

POIROT. And is this your handkerchief, *madame*?

PRINCESS. Of course not. It has the letter *H* on it. My initials are N. D. Natalya Dragomiroff.

POIROT. Is it yours, *mademoiselle*?

GRETA. No, no, I could not afford such a beautiful thing as this. It would be a sin.

PRINCESS. Oh!

POIROT. And may I ask each of you where you were last night between midnight and two o'clock.

PRINCESS. I could not sleep, so at midnight the Countess Andrenyi and I read a book together in my room. Out loud. It is the very best way to get to sleep when you are anxious.

POIROT. And what were you anxious about?

PRINCESS. The Bolsheviks.

POIROT. And what book did you read?

PRINCESS. *A Tale of Two Cities*, it is very comforting.

POIROT. And you, Miss Ohlsson? Where were you?

GRETA. I was in my room with Miss Debenham, who is also nice. We talked from twelve o'clock until two o'clock and then we slept. You can ask her!

POIROT. And have either of you ever been to America?

PRINCESS. Yes, many times.

GRETA. I have not been to America but I must go some day to raise money for my babies in Africa.

POIROT. You are very religious.

GRETA. *Ja*, since I was little girl and Jaysus came to visit me in my garden. He spoke vith me, und told me I must verk hard to help little babies in Africa.

POIROT. And I'm sure you have done it beautifully, *mademoiselle*. Just one more question for both of you ladies. Are you aware of the identity of the man who was killed last night?

GRETA. His name was Ratchett.

(Sob.)

And I pray for his soul.