

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.)

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, *n'est-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 snoopin' around. And that's what you do, am I right? Snoopin'? 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.*

RATCHETT. All right, ten. For a few days' work.

POIROT. I am not for sale, *monsieur*. I have been very fortunate in my profession and I now take only such cases as interest me – and frankly, you do not interest me.

RATCHETT. You want me to grovel, is that it?

POIROT. I want nothing, *monsieur*, except to leave.

(POIROT exits. RATCHETT is darkly unhappy. He stomps his foot. After a beat, the COUNTESS enters, passing through. She nods as she tries to go past him.)

COUNTESS. Pardon me. Sorry.

RATCHETT. Hey, you're that countess, aren't you?

COUNTESS. That is correct.

RATCHETT. Well, you're awful pretty. And from what I hear, you were a commoner to start with, just like the rest of us.

COUNTESS. That is also correct.

RATCHETT. So does that mean you'll have a drink with me?

COUNTESS. I am married, *monsieur*. My husband is having business elsewhere. Please excuse me.

RATCHETT. Now not so fast.

(The COUNTESS looks up sharply, but he's blocking her way. There is something threatening about him.)

COUNTESS. Move out of the way, please.

RATCHETT. Hey, you don't need to get all high and mighty about it.

COUNTESS. If you do not move this second I will scream.

RATCHETT. *Just wait a minute!* You've said that you're unattached at the moment, and we are on a train, so who the hell's gonna know what happens in some private room on some two-bit piece o' –

(Whap! She slaps him very hard across the face. His instinct is to spring forward and attack her back.)

COUNTESS. Stay away from me.

(MACQUEEN bumbles into the room.)

MACQUEEN. Oh Mr. Ratchett, I've been looking for you. I-I put your glass of wine next to your bed, and if you don't need anything else tonight, I thought I'd just -

RATCHETT. *Shut up, Hector. Just shut...up!*

(At which moment, BOUC enters.)

BOUC. Aha. My friends. I hope that you are settling in all right and enjoying yourselves? It won't be long now until -

(Kerchunk! The train lurches to a start, and everyone grabs something nearby. It begins to roll and there is a sense of relief.)

Haha! Not long at all! The journey begins, and I wish you both good luck and godspeed!

(The lights fade quickly and we hear the train begin to roll, haltingly, then faster and faster until it's shooting along the tracks.)

(Zoom! Clang, clang, clang! Hoonk! Hoonk!)

(As the train moves, we see the snow falling, getting heavier by the second.)

(Simultaneously we hear the frantic, propulsive opening of Rachmaninoff's arrangement of Rimsky-Korsakov's "The Flight Of The Bumblebee.")