

## Synopsis – Murder On the Orient Express

Famous detective Hercule Poirot is called back from Istanbul to London on urgent business. He intends to book a first-class compartment on the Orient Express, run by his former friend and colleague, Monsieur Bouc. The train is surprisingly full, but Bouc manages to secure Poirot a spot in the first-class cabin. While aboard the Orient Express, Poirot meets a host of peculiar characters: an aging Russian princess, her Swedish companion, a Hungarian countess, a Minnesota housewife, a Scottish colonel, an English governess, a French conductor, a disagreeable American businessman, and his anxious secretary. While aboard the train, the angry businessman, Samuel Ratchett, corners Poirot and demands Poirot to investigate a series of ominous letters that have been sent to Ratchett, threatening his life.

As a snowdrift halts the Orient Express in its tracks, Ratchett is found stabbed multiple times in his locked train compartment. Poirot is tasked by Monsieur Bouc to solve the murder, as the killer could still be in their midst. As Poirot investigates, conflicting clues and convoluted alibis lead him to dead ends. Over the course of 48 hours, will Poirot be able to solve the case of the Murder on the Orient Express?

## Character Plot Analysis

*Regarding ages: some age flexibility is possible, with the following exceptions:*

- *Michel must be believably old enough to have an adult child.*
- *Helen Hubbard must be believably old enough to have an adult child in their mid-late 20's.*
- **HERCULE POIROT** [Male, mid-40s-60s, Belgian/French accent, any ethnicity.]

Iconic character. Agatha Christie's most famous detective. Poirot is fastidious, thorough, a touch ridiculous, and incredibly observant and intelligent. He is both arrogant and humble to fault. He is an observer of people, astute at analyzing why people behave as they do, and firmly believes that most crimes can be solved primarily by observation, psychology, and thinking them through. He values intelligence and the rule of law above all else.

- **MONSIEUR BOUC** [Male, mid-40s-60s, Belgian/French accent, any ethnicity]

The owner of Wagon Lit, Orient Express. Bouc is a middle-aged gentleman with a youthful vigor and attitude. Gregarious, witty, good humor, honest and forthright, he puts his friends and customers above profit, although he is concerned about his company's image. He is not a match for Poirot in intelligence, however.

- **MARY DEBENHAM** [Female, mid 20s-30s, English (standard) accent, any ethnicity]

An English governess. Anxious, but also cool and determined, Mary has a certain sadness about her, as well as many secrets. She is a beautiful young woman carrying on a secret affair with Colonel Arbuthnot. Must be comfortable kissing on stage.

- **COLONEL ARBUTHNOT** *\*\* possible doubling role with Samuel Ratchett*

[Male, 30s – 40s, Scottish accent, any ethnicity]

A military man of the old-fashioned type, possibly old-money, and used to being obeyed without question. He is strong, charismatic, matter of fact, occasionally tender, but also problematic in some of his personal views. Has a temper. Must be comfortable kissing on stage.

**HECTOR MCQUEEN** [Male, mid-20's – 50s, American accent (any), any ethnicity]

Personal assistant and secretary to Samuel Ratchett, McQueen is a nervous character with a stutter that appears more prominently when he is especially anxious. Seems rather new to his profession. Talks a bit too much.

- **MICHEL, the Train Conductor** *\*\* possible doubling role with Head Waiter, Marcel*

[Male, 30s-60s, French accent, any ethnicity]

Competent and organized, Michel is the conductor for the first-class carriages of the Orient Express. Handles himself well in a crisis and is very good at his job. He is unfailing polite and quiet with an almost grave sense of humor.

- **PRINCESS DRAGOMIROFF** [Female, 50s-70s, Russian accent, any ethnicity]

Displaced Russian nobility. The Dowager Princess is a battleship: determined, arrogant, formal, and accustomed to getting her way. She travels a great deal and holds very decided opinions. Everyone knows when she enters the room.

- **GRETA OHLSSON** [Female, 20s – 60s, Swedish accent, any ethnicity.]

A Catholic missionary and baby nurse, currently serving as a companion to Princess Dragomiroff. She would like to help small children in Africa. Deeply devout. This character may be funny but should not be played as a caricature for laughs.

- **COUNTESS ANDRENYI** [Female, 30s-50s, Hungarian accent, any ethnicity]

In addition to being married to a count (and thus, nobility), she also is a doctor. Beautiful, educated, charming, and intelligent enough to match wits with Poirot. Impeccably put together, with a warmth that wins over everyone she meets. She has a steely edge and is no wilting flower.

- **HELEN HUBBARD** [Female, 40s-70s, harsh American accent, any ethnicity]

Not exactly what she seems, Hubbard comes across as a gregarious, loud, obnoxious, flamboyant American busybody who has been married multiple times. She is jovial, domineering, and deliciously nosy and brash. Must be able to sing and do a little dancing. Should also be able to pull off a cooler, more calculated version of this character with a very standard or even cultured American accent.

- **SAMUEL RATCHETT** *\*\*possible doubling role with Col. Arbuthnot*

[Male presenting, 30s-40s, American accent (mobster - possibly Brooklyn or Chicago style)]

A dangerous and unlikable man, full of entitlement, with a hair trigger temper. Must have a forceful personality, and come across as someone not to be trusted or crossed. As the murder victim, this actor may be required to remain on stage and still for an extended period of time.

- **MARCEL, THE HEAD WAITER** *\*\*possible doubling role with Michel, Conductor*

[Male, 20s – 50s, Turkish accent. Any ethnicity]

A Turkish waiter, snooty, smooth, has a great comic timing. Accent is a plus, but can be substituted with another accent.