

(**GERTRUDE ACKROYD** bursts in, followed by **MISS RUSSELL**. **GERTRUDE** has a drink in her hand.)

GERTRUDE. This is an outrage, Miss Russell!

MISS RUSSELL. Now, please, Mrs. Ackroyd. I only asked a simple question!

GERTRUDE. I know exactly what you meant!

FLORA. Mother, what is it now?

GERTRUDE. I'm being accused, Flora! Like a common criminal!

MISS RUSSELL. I assure you, I mean no disrespect.

GERTRUDE. It appears that some money is missing from Roger's bedroom bureau and Miss Russell thinks -

MISS RUSSELL. I merely asked -

GERTRUDE. I know what you were implying!

POIROT. Excuse me. There is money missing?

GERTRUDE. Who are you? Oh! Let me guess. You're that little foreign detective acting on Flora's behalf.

POIROT. I act on behalf of justice.

GERTRUDE. Justice? And how much are you charging for justice?

POIROT. I am not interested in money.

GERTRUDE. You'd be the only one. All the troubles in the world can be put down to money.

FLORA. Mother, come into the other room.

(**PARKER** enters, furtively.)

GERTRUDE. I will not! This is your fault, Flora. Did you tell Miss Russell we were in need?

FLORA. No, Mother -

MISS RUSSELL. I mentioned privately to Flora that since I keep the books at Fernly, I could arrange for your current expenses, ma'am. I believe that's what Mr. Ackroyd have surely would have wanted.

POIROT. With apologies, I fear we lose the thread. The money...?

MISS RUSSELL. Mr. Ackroyd cashed a cheque for a hundred pounds yesterday which he told me he put in his bureau. Only sixty pounds remain.

POIROT. The bureau was unlocked?

MISS RUSSELL. Yes. Which is why I asked Mrs. Ackroyd if she had seen anyone go into the room.

POIROT. Parker, would you be so kind as to fetch Miss Bourne?

GERTRUDE. Yes, question the parlourmaid! She probably stole it! For that matter, how do we know you didn't take the money, Miss Russell?

FLORA. Mother! Have you no shame?

GERTRUDE. Shame? Yes. Let's discuss our shame, Flora. Do you know the provisions of your dear uncle's will? Because I do!

FLORA. Mother, this is a family matter -

GERTRUDE. Roger never treated me like family! His will proves it. He left sums to everyone except me! And, most of it goes to Ralph!

POIROT. I regret to inform you Ralph Paton has disappeared. At a very inopportune moment.

SHEPPARD. He's wanted for the murder of your brother-in-law.