

**INSPECTOR RAGLAN.** Still, Mr. Ackroyd was alive at nine thirty, since he was speaking into the dictaphone. And Charles Kent was off the premises by then. As to Ralph Paton, now I've always thought perhaps he could be innocent, but why doesn't he come forward?

**POIROT.** That is your advice? That he should come forward?

**GERTRUDE.** Certainly! If you know where he is -

**POIROT.** But I do know where he is. He is right...there!

(RALPH appears at the French doors. **URSULA** runs to him. The storm rumbles in the distance.)

**URSULA.** Oh, Ralph! Ralph!

**POIROT.** I told you. Put your faith in me.

**RALPH.** I'm all right Ursula. I'm here.

**POIROT.** By now, you have all given up your secrets to me. But Doctor Sheppard, he did not. He went to The Three Boars on the way home from the scene of the crime looking for Ralph.

**SHEPPARD.** Yes, I admit it. I told Ralph he would no doubt be under suspicion as soon as the murder was reported. I convinced him -

**RALPH.** To do a bunk, yes. And I was grateful for it.

**FLORA.** But where did you go?

**POIROT.** I asked myself the same. A hotel? Lodgings? No. An asylum... I tested my theory. I invent a troubled nephew and consult Caroline Sheppard. She tells me of St. Bernard's Hospital, where I find her brother admitted a patient early that morning under another name.

**RALPH.** The doctor was only trying to help. But I see now that I should have come forward and faced the music. At St. Bernard's, we never saw a newspaper. I knew nothing of what was going on.

**INSPECTOR RAGLAN.** So just what did happen that night?

**RALPH.** You know all that I do. I haven't the shadow of an alibi, but I give you my solemn word that I never went to the writing room. Inspector, I'm willing to go with you tonight but -

**POIROT.** Captain Paton, you will not be tried for this crime. You have my word.

**INSPECTOR RAGLAN.** No alibi, that's bad. I believe you, of course. But it's bad.

**POIROT.** It makes things very simple, though. You not see what must be done? No?

(A long pause.)

**GERTRUDE.** No! We don't! We don't see! For God's sake, you spiteful, egg-headed little man. If you have something to say, just spit it out and be done with it!

**FLORA.** Oh, Mother, shut up.

**INSPECTOR RAGLAN.** Go on, Poirot. Tell us. You...know, don't you? You know.

**POIROT.** Yes. I know who committed the murder of Roger Ackroyd. And the murderer is with us in this room.

(A distant rumble of thunder.)

There will be no need for an inquest if the guilty party comes forward.

**MAJOR BLUNT.** The murderer is among us, you say?

**FLORA.** And you know who it is?

**POIROT.** It is to the murderer now I speak! Listen closely to what I say. Tomorrow morning I will tell the Inspector everything - unless you do so first. Do you understand me?

(They are silent.)