

SHEPPARD. My sister. Perhaps we should part, unless you want a full interrogation.

POIROT. Eh, bien! But, you must come for a dinner.

I will prepare the vegetables to perfection. Au revoir!

SHEPPARD. Au revoir, my friend!

(**POIROT** exits. **SHEPPARD** steps into the kitchen of his home. **CAROLINE** sets down a tea tray.)

CAROLINE. Were you alone out there? I heard voices.

SHEPPARD. Just mumbling to myself.

CAROLINE. Well, eat quickly and tell me everything!

SHEPPARD. I'm afraid this Ferrars business has left me without an appetite.

CAROLINE. Did she die of heart failure?

SHEPPARD. Is that what the milkman reported?

CAROLINE. No, he agrees with my theory on suicide.

SHEPPARD. Why on earth would Mrs. Ferrars wish to commit suicide?

CAROLINE. Remorse! Last year, she poisoned that horrible husband of hers, I'm sure of it! She killed Arthur Ferrars to be free and clear to marry her true love, Roger Ackroyd.

SHEPPARD. How romantic.

CAROLINE. But she couldn't live with her guilt. Will there be an inquest?

SHEPPARD. No need. It was an accidental overdose of veronal.

CAROLINE. I'd lay odds she's left a letter confessing everything.

SHEPPARD. There is no letter! And no suicide! Let her rest in peace.

CAROLINE. James, why must you always be so naïve?

SHEPPARD. Perhaps, I wish to think the best of people.

CAROLINE. Or perhaps you can't see the truth. Nobody is what they seem, James. Everyone has their secrets.

SHEPPARD. Speaking of secrets, did you know Ralph Paton is in King's Abbot?

CAROLINE. Yes. At The Three Boars.

SHEPPARD. But why isn't he up at Fernly?

CAROLINE. Trouble in paradise. Didn't you know? Ralph is engaged to his foster father's own niece.

SHEPPARD. Ralph and Flora Ackroyd engaged? I had no idea.

CAROLINE. You're not supposed to. It's a secret.

SHEPPARD. Let me guess – the milkman told you?

CAROLINE. No, the postal clerk. Of course Ralph and Flora aren't blood relations but it's all a bit scandalous!

SHEPPARD. This must be like Christmas morning for you.

CAROLINE. What's more, I was walking through the wood yesterday, minding my own business –

SHEPPARD. Minding your own business?

CAROLINE. When I heard Ralph's voice.

(*Ackroyd's nephew RALPH appears, elsewhere.*)

He was talking to a girl, I couldn't tell who. I didn't mean to overhear –

SHEPPARD. Of course not.

CAROLINE. But I couldn't help it. He said –