Boekverslag Engels Murder on the Orient Express door Agatha Christie

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Auteur: Agatha Christie
Title: Murder on the Orient Express
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Summary.

When Hercule Poirot, a Belgian private detective returns from Syria, he takes the Simplon Orient Express. It's unusually full for that time of the year. But one passenger didn't show up, so he could have his seat. Mr Poirot is amusing himself watching the twelve other passengers.

At dinner, a man named Ratchett comes to Poirot to speak to him. He wants Mr Poirot to take on a job for him. He says he's a very rich man, who has an enemy. His life has been threatened, and, even being able to take pretty good care of himself, he wants to be a hundred percent safe. So he offers Poirot twenty thousand dollars for his security. But Poirot refuses. Not because the money, but he only takes cases that interest him.

That night, at exactly twenty-three minutes to one, a loud groan, wakes Poirot up. It's from Ratchess's compartment, next to Poirot's. He also notices that the train has stopped. At the same time a ting of a bell sounds sharply, also from Ratchess's compartment. Poirot opens his door and watches the conductor coming to Ratchess's compartment. He knocks on the door. Since nothing happens, he knocks again. At the same time another bell rings, from a door farther down. Then the conductor hears a voice saying: "Ce n'est rien. Je me suis trompé." So the conductor leaves. The woman who rings the bell, said that there was a man in her compartment, but he left before anyone could confirm that.

The next morning, Poirot awakes and noticed that the train has been snowed up and has been stopped. And also that Mr. Ratchett has been found, murdered in his bed. The detective starts his investigation. Mr Poirot investigates Ratchett's compartment, he finds a pipe cleaner, obviously belonging to a man, and a
lady’s handkerchief. And a strang thing is that Ratchett has been stabbed twelve times, each time in a
different way. One or two wounds are practically scratches. And at least three of the wounds would be
deathly. And two wounds are deep, each must have cut several bloodvessels, but the edges don’t gape.
The theory is that the man was already dead when he was stabbed the last two times. And that’s very odd. Poirot thinks that there were two people involved, one left- and the other righthanded. A man and a
woman. He also founded a watch and the hands were pointing out to a quarter past one. Then Poirot
finds,one of the most important clues, a piece of burnt paper, where somebody had written something.
And Poirot manages to recover the message: 
"-member little Daisy Armstrong...".
Colonel Armstrong was an Englishman, living in the United States. He was married to the daughter of
Linda Arden, who was a famous actrice. They had one daughter whom they loved. One day this three
year old girl was kidnapped, and 200.000 dollars were demanded as the price of her return. After paying
the money, the child’s dead body was found. The girl’s mother was expecting another child. Because of
the shock of her daughter’s death, she gave birth to a dead child, and she died herself, too. And her
broken-harted husband shot himself. There was also this French nursemaid, whom was accused of the
crime. They refused to believe her hysterical denials. Finally, in a fit of despair, she threw herself out of a
window and was killed. Afterwards, it was proved that she was completely innocent. About six months
later a man named Cassetti was arrested as the head of the gang by whom the child had been
kidnapped. Strange enough, he got away and left America. Knowing this all, it’s easy for Poirot to figure
out that Ratchett’s real name is Cassetti. After leaving the States he changed his name. The burnt letter
that was found in his compartment was a threat to Ratchett. But who sent him that letter, and why, and
especially, by whom was it burnt?
He talks to all the passengers, each separately. None of the passengers, (except two,who are married),
seems to know each other. They all have an alibi! So, Poirot thinks, if they’re all telling the truth, then
nobody could have committed the crime! But two people did say that they saw a strange man, who was
not a passenger. He starts wondering, how it can be that there are so many clues, and that each clue is
not possible, considering the other ones.
Just by thinking and remembering the things he heard and saw, he gets two solutions.
A few days later Poirot asks everybody to come to the restaurant wagon. He haves two solutions, and
then says that Mr Bouc and Mr Constantine have to decide which solution is the right one.
So he starts with his first theory. Mr. Ratchett had a certain enemy whom he feared. That enemy boarded
the train at one of the stations it passed. That night, he entered Ratchett’s compartment, stabbed him
twelve times, left some fake clues and, because of the train being brought to a standstill, he could get
away.But Mr. Bouc, who knows Poirot very well, knows that this can’t be possible.The crime was not
committed so.
But Poirot thought hard and came with an other solution. The first and most important clue of all, was a
remark made by Mr Bouc in the restaurant car at lunch on the first day. Mr Bouc said, that the passengers
in the train were so varied, all classes and nationalities. And when Poirot remembered this later, after the
crime, his answer is: In America there might be a household composed of just such varied nationalities. An
Italian chauffeur, an English governess, a Swedish nurse, a French lady’s-maid, etcetera. That led Poirot
to his scheme of “guessing”, that is, casting each person for a certain part in the Armstrong family
drama.That gave him some good results. Finally, he found out that they were all in it! Then it was easy for
him to fill in the rest of the details.
And so Poirot tells about each of the twelve persons how that person was involved in the Armstrong household. And how they were so disappointed when Cassetti could get away with his terrible crime. Poirot says that he created a self-appointed jury of twelve people. And immediately the whole case "fell into beautiful shining order." Poirot saw it as a perfect crime, each person playing his or her part. It was so difficult to recover that if suspicion should fall on any person, the evidence of one (or more) of the others would clear the person, and confuse the whole case. Every minute detail of their evidence was worked out beforehand. The whole thing was a very cleverly-planned puzzle, so arranged that every new piece of knowledge that came to light made the solution even more confusing. But Poirot saw the solution and said it to the passengers, it's quiet for a little while. Then Mrs Hubbard says that it's all true. They decided to do it because everybody was so crazy with vengeance, and they all wanted Cassetti death, from which he first had escaped. Everything was perfectly planned, and they almost succeeded. And then Poirot came...

But Poirot said that he would say the first solution to the police, although that one was not true. So he could clear all the passengers, because of compassion.

Personal opinion

It is a book which I couldn't put away. It's written a little bit old-fashioned, there are many difficult words and I had my dictionary alongside me. But the way Agatha Christie wrote this book, the story carries me along. I wanted to know so badly who the murderer was, that I couldn't stop reading. I read the book in one day. The story was very tense and you didn't know who the murderer was till the end of the book. She wrote it so that you suspect till the last moment all the passengers on the train. But the strange thing is that all the passengers are involved with the crime, but you don't know that until the last few pages. It's pretty extraordinary how Poirot figured it all out. You don't think anything sooner about that theory. So the story keeps carrying you along.

My favourite scene

That's the scene when Poirot is searching for clues in Ratchess's compartment. Every little detail he sees. A pipe-cleaner and a handkerchief made the impression that there were two people involved, a woman and a man. A little peace of burnt paper with a half sentence, that he managed to recover on a odd way. He examined the open window, but there were no fingerprints and no footsteps in the snow. So the murderer didn't leave the compartment through the window. But the door to the corridor was locked with a chain from the inside, so the murderer left the room on another way, which Poirot didn't know yet. He also examined the dead body, the knife-stabs were been made by a powerful man, because they were right through mussels and bloodvessels. All the stabs were made on a different way and right- and lefthanded. In a few pages he discovered very much clues and the theory's he made for explaining the clues were remarkable.

15 new words

reluctance – tegenzin
inadequate – ontoereikend
deferential – eerbiedig
apologetic – verontschuldigend
vexedly – geërgerd
vexatious – lastig
prematurely – vroegtijdig
vengeance – wraak
acquaintance – kennismaking
handkerchief – zakdoek
monotonous – eentonig
voluble – woordenrijk
woe – ellende
reminiscence – herinnering
dandified - fatterig