

AGATHA CHRISTIE'S



*The Jewel Robbery
at the Grand Metropolitan Hotel*

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Adapted from the short story by Agatha Christie

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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*The Jewel Robbery
at the Grand Metropolitan Hotel*

MYSTERY. Adapted from the short story by Agatha Christie. While vacationing at the Grand Metropolitan Hotel in Brighton, famed Belgian detective Hercule Poirot is called upon by a rich American couple to hunt down the thief who stole a priceless pearl necklace from their hotel suite. The case seems simple enough since only two people had been in the couple's suite: a curmudgeonly hotel chambermaid and the couple's dramatic French maid. Both suspects are questioned by police and each blames the other. Just when the police inspector thinks he has solved the case, Poirot races to uncover the identity of the clever jewel thief by conducting an experiment with his pocket watch.

Performance Time: Approximately 30 minutes.



Agatha Christie, circa 1925

About the Story

Agatha Christie was born in southwest England to a wealthy family. Growing up, Christie enjoyed reading mystery novels by Wilkie Collins and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Many of Christie's short stories were first published in periodicals and feature the famed Belgian detective Hercule Poirot. Poirot later became one of Christie's most famous characters. "The Jewel Robbery at the Grand Metropolitan" was first published in *The Sketch* in March 1923 in the United Kingdom as "The Curious Disappearance of the Opalsen Pearls." The author of 66 detective novels and 15 short story collections, Christie is best known for her bestselling novel *And Then There Were None* and her play *The Mousetrap*.

Characters

(5 M, 4 F, 1 flexible, extras)

HERCULE POIROT: Famed Belgian detective; speaks with a French accent; male.

CAPTAIN ARTHUR HASTINGS: Poirot's friend who assists him on cases; male.

MR. ED OPALSEN: A rich stockbroker who spends large sums of money buying jewels for his wife; male.

MRS. OPALSEN: Ed's wife whose priceless pearl necklace has been stolen at the Grand Metropolitan Hotel; wears an evening gown with many pieces of expensive jewelry including an emerald necklace; female.

CÉLESTINE: The Opalsens' dramatic French maid; one of two suspects being investigated for the theft of Mrs. Opalsen's pearl necklace; female.

CHAMBERMAID: Curmudgeonly hotel chambermaid; one of two suspects being investigated for the theft of Mrs. Opalsen's pearl necklace; female.

POLICE INSPECTOR: Local police inspector; wears a suit; male.

POLICE SEARCHER: Local police officer; wears a uniform; female.

VALET: Hotel valet; male.

PAGE: Hotel page; flexible.

EXTRAS: As Hotel Manager, Lift Boy/Girl, Hotel Guests, and Waiters.

Setting

Poirot's study, London, and The Grand Metropolitan Hotel, Brighton, UK.

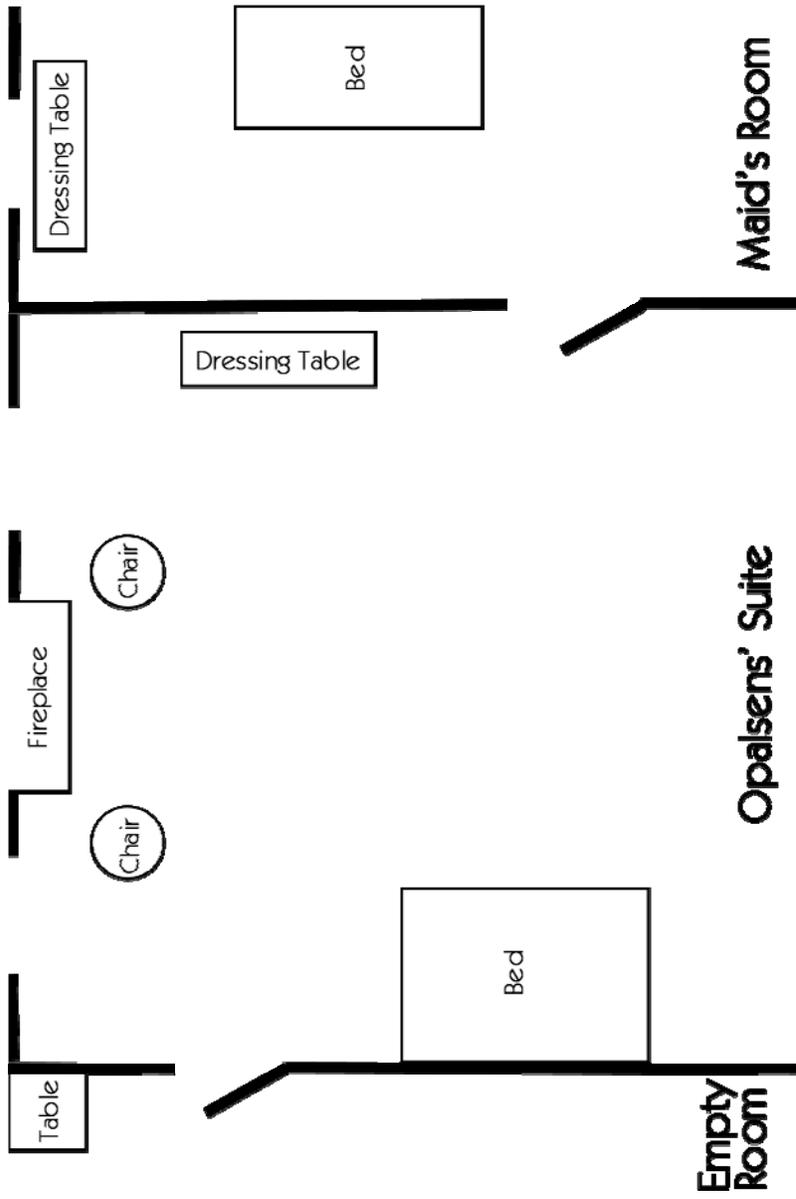
Sets

Note: The sets may be as simple or elaborate as your budget allows.

Poirot's study. There are two armchairs and an end table or coffee table.

Grand Metropolitan dining room: A backdrop of a grand hotel dining room. There is a pillar on each side of the room. Three small dining tables with chairs are onstage.

Opalsens' hotel suite. The suite consists of a main room for Mr. and Mrs. Opalsen and a small adjoining room for their maid, Célestine. The **Opalsen's room** has two armchairs, a fireplace, a dressing table with drawers, and a bed (opt.). There is a door SL that leads to the adjoining maid's room. At SR is a door that leads to an empty room. Upstage there are two windows. The **maid's room** contains a small bed and a dressing table. There is a window upstage. The **empty adjoining room** is only partially seen. There is a small table near the door. (See set diagram, pg. 7)



Synopsis of Scenes

Scene 1: Poirot's study, London.

Scene 2: The Grand Metropolitan Hotel dining room,
Saturday evening.

Scene 3: Opalsens' hotel suite, later that evening.

Scene 4: Opalsens' hotel suite, later.

Scene 5: The Grand Metropolitan Hotel dining room.

Scene 6: The Grand Metropolitan Hotel dining room, the next
morning.

Props

2 Teacups
Coffee cups
Notebook and pencil, for Police Inspector
Woman's handkerchief
Jewel case with lock
Emerald necklace
Jewelry case key on a chain
Notebook, for Poirot
Pocket watch, for Poirot
Pearl necklace
2 Plain white cards
Wastepaper basket filled with litter
Traveling jacket, for Poirot

Sound Effects

Knock at the door
Elevator bell
Bell, to summon Valet

*“...it was the kind of case
that even a stiff-backed idiot
like that inspector could solve.”*

— Arthur Hastings

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Poirot's study, London. Hercule Poirot and Arthur Hastings are relaxing, drinking tea.)

HASTINGS: Poirot, a change of air would do you good.

POIROT: You think so, [mon ami]? [or "my friend"]

HASTINGS: I am sure of it.

POIROT: (Smiles.) Eh? It is all arranged, then?

HASTINGS: You will come?

POIROT: Where do you propose to take me?

HASTINGS: Brighton. As a matter of fact, a friend of mine in the City put me on to a very good thing, and, well, I have money to burn, as the saying goes. I think a weekend at the Grand Metropolitan Hotel would do us all the good in the world.

POIROT: Thank you, I accept most gratefully. You have the good heart to think of an old man. And a good heart, in the end, is worth all... (Points to his head.) ...the little grey cells. Yes, yes, I am in danger of forgetting that sometimes.

HASTINGS: I do not quite relish the implication. I fancy that you are sometimes a little inclined to underestimate my mental capacities, but your pleasure is so evident that I shall put my slight annoyance aside.

(Blackout.)

Scene 2

(AT RISE: *The Grand Metropolitan Hotel, Brighton. Dining room, Saturday evening. Hotel Guests, wearing formal attire, are seated at several tables, dining. Poirot and Hastings are seated at a table CS, drinking coffee Mr. and Mrs. Opalsen are standing near a pillar, mingling with other Hotel Guests. Mrs. Opalsen is wearing an evening gown and expensive jewelry.*)

POIROT: *(To Hastings, gazing around the room.)* What a sight, is it not so, Hastings? The dresses are marvelous.

HASTINGS: And the jewels...

POIROT: ...are worn sometimes with more love of display than good taste. Ah, the sight of so many jewels makes me wish I had turned my brain to crime instead of to its detection. What a magnificent opportunity for some thief of distinction! Regard, Hastings, that woman by the pillar. *(Indicates Mrs. Opalsen.)* She is, as you would say, plastered with gems.

HASTINGS: *(Recognizes her.)* Why, it's Mrs. Opalsen.

POIROT: You know her?

HASTINGS: Slightly. Her husband is a rich stockbroker who made a fortune in the recent oil boom.

(Hastings approaches the Opalsens and invites them to join him for coffee. Hastings introduces the Opalsens to Poirot.)

POIROT: *(To Mrs. Opalsen.)* What lovely gems, madame.

MRS. OPALSEN: It's a hobby of mine, Mr. Poirot. I just love jewelry. Ed knows my weakness, and every time things go well, he buys me something new. You are interested in precious stones?

POIROT: I have had a good deal to do with them, madame. My profession has brought me into contact with some of the most famous jewels in the world.

MRS. OPALSEN: You know, I've got some pearls of my own that have a history attached to them. I believe it's supposed to be one of the finest necklaces in the world. The pearls are so beautifully matched and so perfect in color. I declare, I really must run up to my suite and get it!

POIROT: Oh, madame, you are too amiable. Pray, do not trouble yourself!

MRS. OPALSEN: Oh, but I'd like to show it to you.

(Mrs. Opalsen scurries off to her suite to retrieve her pearl necklace. Mr. Opalsen looks at Poirot inquiringly.)

POIROT: *(To Mr. Opalsen.)* Your wife is so amiable as to insist on showing me her pearl necklace.

MR. OPALSEN: *(Smiles.)* Oh, the pearls! Well, they are worth seeing. Cost a pretty penny, too! Still, the money's there all right. I could get what I paid for them any day...perhaps more. May have to, too, if things go on as they are now. Money's confoundedly tight in the City. *(Page approaches and whispers something in Mr. Opalsen's ear. To Page, alarmed.)* Eh? What? I'll come at once! Not taken ill, has she? Excuse me, gentlemen.

(Mr. Opalsen abruptly exits. Poirot leans back in his chair. Then, carefully and meticulously, Poirot arranges the empty coffee cups in a neat row and beams happily at the result. Note: While Poirot arranges the coffee cups, the following actions are viewed onstage. A Manager, appearing agitated, rushes on and exits. The Lift Boy is deep in conversation with a Page. The lift bell rings three times, but the Lift Boy/Girl ignores it. Waiters are rushing about distracted.)

HASTINGS: Curious. I wonder when they will come back.

POIROT: *(Thoughtfully.)* They will not come back.

HASTINGS: Why?

POIROT: Because, my friend, something has happened.

HASTINGS: What sort of thing? How do you know?

POIROT: *(Smiles.)* A few moments ago, the manager came out of his office and ran upstairs. He was much agitated. The lift boy is deep in talk with one of the pages. The lift bell has rung three times, but he heeds it not. Even the waiters are distracted. *(Shakes his head with an air of finality.)* The affair must indeed be of the first magnitude. *(Looks off.)* Ah, it is as I thought! Here come the police.

(A Police Inspector enters. He speaks to the Page and is ushered off. Page re-enters and approaches Poirot and Hastings.)

PAGE: *(To Poirot.)* Mr. and Mrs. Opalsen would like to see you upstairs in their suite.

(Poirot springs nimbly to his feet. Hastings and Poirot exit with the Page. Blackout.)

Scene 3

(AT RISE: *The Opalsens' suite. At CS, Mrs. Opalsen is sitting in an armchair, weeping violently. Mr. Opalsen is pacing, angrily. The Police Inspector is standing in the middle of the room with a notebook and pencil in his hand. A hotel Chambermaid, looking frightened to death, is standing near the fireplace. On the other side of the room, Mrs. Opalsen's French maid, Célestine, is weeping and wringing her hands. Knock on the door.*)

MR. OPALSEN: *(Calls.)* Come in!

(Poirot and Hastings enter. Mrs. Opalsen springs from her chair and rushes to Poirot.)

MRS. OPALSEN: *(To Poirot.)* It was fated I should meet you the way I did this evening, and I've a feeling that if you can't get my pearls back for me nobody can!

POIROT: Calm yourself, I pray of you, madame. *(Pats her hand, soothingly.)* I reassure you...all will be well. Hercule Poirot will aid you!

MR. OPALSEN: *(To Police Inspector.)* I suppose there will be no objection to my, er, calling in this gentleman? *(Indicates Poirot.)*

POLICE INSPECTOR: *(With indifference.)* None at all, sir. Perhaps now that your lady's feeling better, she'll just let us have the facts?

(Mrs. Opalsen looks helplessly at Poirot. Poirot leads her back to her armchair.)

POIROT: Seat yourself, madame, and recount to us the whole history without agitating yourself.

(Mrs. Opalsen dries her eyes gingerly with a handkerchief.)

MRS. OPALSEN: *(To Police Inspector.)* I came upstairs after dinner to fetch my pearls for Mr. Poirot, here, to see. The chambermaid and Célestine were both in the room as usual—

POIROT: Excuse me, madame, but what do you mean “as usual”?

MR. OPALSEN: I make it a rule that no one is to come into this room unless Célestine, the maid, is there also. The chambermaid does the room in the morning while Célestine is present and comes in after dinner to turn down the beds under the same conditions. Otherwise, she never enters the room.

MRS. OPALSEN: *(To Police Inspector and Poirot, continuing.)* Well, as I was saying, I came up. I went to the drawer here... *(Indicates the bottom right-hand drawer of the dressing table.)* ...took out my jewel case, and unlocked it. My jewel case looked the same as usual but the pearls were not there!

POLICE INSPECTOR: When had you last seen them?

MRS. OPALSEN: They were there when I went down to dinner.

POLICE INSPECTOR: You are sure?

MRS. OPALSEN: Quite sure. I was uncertain whether to wear them or not, but in the end, I decided on wearing my emerald necklace and put the pearls back in the jewel case.

POLICE INSPECTOR: Who locked up the jewel case?

MRS. OPALSEN: I did. *(Holding up key.)* I wear the key on a chain round my neck.

(Police Inspector examines the key and jewel case.)

POLICE INSPECTOR: *(Shrugs.)* The thief must have had a duplicate key. No matter. The lock is quite a simple one. What did you do after you'd locked the jewel case?

MRS. OPALSEN: I put it back in the bottom drawer where I always keep it.

POLICE INSPECTOR: You didn't lock the drawer?

MRS. OPALSEN: No, I never do. My maid remains in the room till I come up, so there's no need.

POLICE INSPECTOR: Am I to understand that the jewels were there when you went down to dinner and that since then the maid has not left the room?

(Realizing the implication, Célestine lets out a piercing shriek and grabs Poirot's arm.)

CÉLESTINE: *(To Poirot.)* The suggestion is outrageous...that I should be suspected of robbing Madame! The police are well known to be of incredible stupidity! *(Pleading.)* But, Monsieur, who is a Frenchman—

POIROT: *(Correcting.)* A Belgian.

CÉLESTINE: *(Ignores the correction and continues.)* Monsieur will not stand by and see me falsely accused while that chambermaid is allowed to go scot-free. I have never liked her...a bold, red-faced thing. A born thief. She said from the first that she was not honest...and keeps a sharp watch over me when she is doing Madame's room! Let those idiots of policemen search her, and if they do not find Madame's pearls on her, it will be very surprising!

CHAMBERMAID: *(To Poirot, angrily.)* If that foreign woman's saying I took the pearls, it's a lie! I never so much as saw them!

CÉLESTINE: *(To Police Inspector, shouts.)* Search her! You will find it is as I say!

CHAMBERMAID: *(Advancing toward Célestine.)* You're a liar, do you hear?! Stole 'em yourself and want to put it on me! Why, I was only in the room about three minutes before the lady come up, and you were sitting here the whole time, as you always do, like a cat watching a mouse.

POLICE INSPECTOR: *(To Célestine.)* Is that true? You didn't leave the room at all?

[END OF FREEVIEW]