

# AGATHA CHRISTIE'S



*The Million Dollar Bond Robbery*

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Adapted from the story by Agatha Christie

**BIG DOG PUBLISHING**

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**BIG DOG PUBLISHING**

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## *The Million Dollar Bond Robbery*

**MYSTERY.** Philip Ridgway was entrusted by the London and Scottish Bank to transport one million dollars of bonds from London to a bank in New York. The bonds were counted in Mr. Ridgway's presence in London, sealed in a packet, and then put in a trunk that had a custom lock with only one key, which was solely in his possession. However, just a few hours before the ship is due to dock in New York, the trunk is found open and the bonds missing. Despite a thorough search of the ship and passengers, it's as if the bonds have disappeared into thin air, prompting Poirot to declare, "We will dismiss the 'thin air theory,' which is not practical at the present stage of science." But the question remains: Who took the bonds, if not Philip Ridgway?

**Performance Time:** Approximately 20-30 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 eccentric Belgian detective Hercule Poirot. "The Million Dollar Bond Robbery" was first published in *The Sketch* in 1923 in the United Kingdom and in *The Blue Book Magazine* in the United States in 1924 as "The Great Bond Robbery." 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, 2 F, 2 flexible)

(With doubling: 5 M, 2 F)

**HERCULE POIROT:** Famed Belgian detective; has a mustache; speaks with a French accent (opt.); male.

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

**PHILIP RIDGEWAY:** Assistant general manager of the London and Scottish Bank who is engaged to Esmée Farquhar; described as "a nice-looking young fellow, tall and spruce, with a touch of graying hair at the temples"; male.

**MISS ESMÉE FARQUHAR:** Asks Poirot to help clear Mr. Ridgeway's name when a million dollars in bonds disappear onboard a ship; described as "well-dressed and perfectly composed in manner"; female.

**MR. VAVASOUR:** Philip Ridgeway's uncle and a joint general manager at the London and Scottish Bank; has a short white beard; male.

**MR. SHAW/MR. VENTNOR:** Joint general manager at the London and Scottish Bank who became ill with bronchitis while the bonds were in transit; clean-shaven; male.

**CLERK:** Bank clerk at the London and Scottish bank; flexible.

**STEWARD:** Ship steward who was onboard the "Olympia" when the bonds went missing; flexible.

**MRS. MURCHISON:** Poirot's landlady; female.

**NOTE:** Mrs. Murchison may double as the Clerk and Steward, if desired.

## *Setting*

London and Liverpool, 1925.

## *Sets*

**Poirot's study.** There are three armchairs, a coffee table, a fireplace, a wastepaper basket, and a window.

**Cheshire Cheese Restaurant.** There is a small table with four chairs. A backdrop of a restaurant and/or other set pieces may be added, if desired.

**London and Scottish Bank.** There is a bank counter. A backdrop of a bank and/or other set pieces may be added, if desired.

**Quay alongside the transatlantic liner, the "Olympia."** There is a backdrop of the docked ship "Olympia."

**Interior of a train compartment.** There are 2-4 seats. A backdrop of the interior of a train may be used, if desired.

## *Synopsis of Scenes*

**Scene 1:** Poirot's study, morning.

**Scene 2:** Cheshire Cheese restaurant, a short time later.

**Scene 3:** London and Scottish Bank, Threadneedle Street.

**Scene 4:** Quay alongside the "Olympia," Liverpool.

**Scene 5:** Aboard a train.

*Props*

Teacup  
Coffee cup  
Stack of mail  
Newspaper  
2 Business cards  
Wastepaper basket  
Money  
Letter  
Envelope

*Sound Effect*

Sound of a train coming to a halt

*"We will dismiss the 'thin air theory,'  
which is not practical  
at the present stage of science..."*

*—Hercule Poirot*

*SCENE 1*

(AT RISE: *Hercule Poirot's study, morning. Hercule Poirot is drinking coffee and going through his mail. Arthur Hastings is drinking tea and reading the newspaper. Hastings lays the newspaper aside.*)

HASTINGS: What a number of bond robberies there have been lately! Poirot, let us forsake the science of detection and take to crime instead!

POIROT: You are on the... *(Slight pause.)* How do you say it? Get-rich-quick tack, eh, [mon ami]? *[or "my friend"]*

HASTINGS: Well, look at this last coup...a million dollars' worth of Liberty Bonds that the London and Scottish Bank were sending to New York disappeared in a remarkable manner onboard the transatlantic liner the "Olympia."

POIROT: *(Dreamily.)* If it were not for [the mal de mer], I should delight to take a voyage myself on one of these big ships. *[or "seasickness"]*

HASTINGS: *(Enthusiastically.)* Yes, indeed. Some of them are perfect palaces...the swimming pools, the lounges, the restaurant, the palm courts. Really, it must be hard to believe that one is on the sea.

POIROT: *(Sadly.)* Me, I always know when I am on the sea. And all those trifles that you enumerate, they say nothing to me. But, my friend, consider for a moment the geniuses that travel as it were incognito! On board these floating palaces, as you so justly call them, one would meet the élite, the [haute noblesse] of the criminal world! *[or "nobility"]*

HASTINGS: *(Laughs.)* So that's the way your enthusiasm runs! You would have liked to cross swords with the man who stole the Liberty Bonds?

*(Mrs. Murchison, Poirot's landlady, enters.)*

MRS. MURCHISON: (*Announcing.*) A young lady is here to see you, Mr. Poirot. Here's her card.

(*Mrs. Murchison hands Poirot a business card.*)

POIROT: (*Looking at the card.*) The card bears the inscription, "Miss Esmée Farquhar." (*Stares at something under the coffee table.*) Ah, a stray crumb. (*Reaches under the table to retrieve the stray crumb and puts it carefully into the wastepaper basket. To Mrs. Murchison, nods.*) Please show Miss Farquhar in. (*Mrs. Murchison exits. Pause. Miss Farquhar enters.*) Sit down, I beg of you, mademoiselle. This is my friend, Captain Hastings, who aids me with my cases.

(*Miss Farquhar pleasantly bows and takes a seat.*)

ESMÉE FARQUHAR: I am afraid it is a big problem I have brought you today, Monsieur Poirot. I daresay you have read about it in the papers. I am referring to the theft of Liberty Bonds on the "Olympia." (*Poirot looks surprised.*) You are doubtless asking yourself what I have to do with a grave institution like the London and Scottish Bank. In one sense, nothing. In another sense, everything. You see, Monsieur Poirot, I am engaged to Mr. Philip Ridgeway.

POIROT: Aha! And Mr. Philip Ridgeway —

ESMÉE FARQUHAR: Was in charge of the bonds when they were stolen. Of course, no actual blame can attach to him. It was not his fault in any way. Nevertheless, he is distraught over the matter, and his uncle insists that he must have carelessly mentioned having them in his possession. It is a terrible setback in his career.

POIROT: Who is his uncle?

ESMÉE FARQUHAR: Mr. Vavasour, joint general manager of the London and Scottish Bank.

POIROT: Suppose, Miss Farquhar, that you recount to me the whole story?

ESMÉE FARQUHAR: Very well. As you know, the bank wished to extend their credit in America, and for this purpose, decided to send over a million dollars in Liberty Bonds. Mr. Vavasour selected his nephew, Philip, to make the trip, as he had occupied a position of trust in the bank for many years and was conversant with all the details of the bank's dealings in New York. The "Olympia" sailed from Liverpool on the 23rd, and the bonds were handed over to Philip on the morning of that day by Mr. Vavasour and Mr. Shaw, the two joint general managers of the London and Scottish Bank. The bonds were counted, enclosed in a package, and sealed in Philip's presence. He then locked the package at once in his trunk.

POIROT: A trunk with an ordinary lock?

ESMÉE FARQUHAR: No, Mr. Shaw insisted on a special lock fitted to the trunk by Hubbs's. Philip, as I say, placed the package at the bottom of the trunk. It was stolen just a few hours before reaching New York. A rigorous search of the whole ship was made, but without result. The bonds seemed literally to have vanished into thin air.

POIROT: (*Grimaces.*) But they did not vanish absolutely since I gather that they were sold in small parcels within half an hour of the docking of the "Olympia." Well, undoubtedly, the next thing is for me to see Mr. Ridgeway.

ESMÉE FARQUHAR: I was about to suggest that you should lunch with me at the restaurant, the Cheshire Cheese. Philip will be there. He is meeting me but does not yet know that I have been consulting with you on his behalf.

POIROT: Let us be on our way, then.

**[END OF FREEVIEW]**