

The Missing Will Murder

by

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Act 1

Scene 1 - The Marsh Estate

Lights up as Mrs. Baker enters the Marsh Study through the doorway. Hercule Poirot is sitting in a large chair in front of the fireplace covered with a blanket. {language note: in southern England, supper is a late evening snack, dinner is a more formal larger meal. Poirot is using French when excited and sometimes just to annoy Mrs. Baker. Scene note: should convey rising and falling waves of intensity, reaching a climax when the constable arrives. Checked all idioms for usage in time period. Switched to ones that were in usage in England at the time. Incorporated information from the biographies of the two period female private investigators}

Poirot C'est intolérable.

Mrs. Baker In English.

Poirot This is intolérable.

Mrs. Baker You could just leave.

Poirot Fille impertinente! I have as much right to be here as you do. Look at that fireplace, the drawer. Remember? This estate is here because of me.

Mrs. Baker As I remember it, you only found a burnt corner of the will in the drawer.

Poirot With your dirty signature on it! The old man paid you for your silence! What else did he pay you for?

(Marty Black and Jacob Marsh look into the room from the main entrance to the study. They are wearing masks, and are visible to the audience but not to Mrs. Baker or Poirot)

Mrs. Baker I should wash your mouth out with soap, I should!

Poirot I'd love to see you try! I knew it! You were sleeping with the old man!

Mrs. Baker I did no such thing, I did. If it wasn't for that darling young lady, Miss Lemon, you would never have found the will. Not you!

Poirot I was the one who figured it out. We were on the train back to London. They had given up. Defeated. I solved the case and we returned. It was, as usual, my superior intellect and ability that made the difference.

Mrs. Baker Nonsense! Yes, you came back, but you were all standing around looking lost, you were. I showed you how to read the will by starting the fire. So, now that I think of it, it was me, it was.

Poirot Espèce de sorcière!

Mrs. Baker What did you call me?

Poirot A rose by any other name...

Mrs. Baker You knockers old man. Get out of this house.

Poirot Make me!

Mrs. Baker I'm going to get my rolling pin, I am.

(as Mrs. Baker turns to head out of the study Jacob and Marty exit)

Poirot You just try that, you witch.

Mrs. Baker Ah, that now is the pot calling the kettle black, it is. You're the devil you are. ***(she crosses herself)***

Poirot Oh, I should have known, un catholique.

Mrs. Baker Watch your tongue! What did you call me?

(Jacob and Marty, still wearing masks, start watching Poirot and Mrs. Baker through an exterior window. They react to what is being said by Poirot and Mrs. Baker. They should duck out of sight when either Poirot or Mrs. Baker turn toward window.)

Poirot So what was he paying you?

Mrs. Baker A fair wage, was all. He would die if he knew Violet was wasting his money supporting a freeloader like you!

Poirot My dear lady, he is already dead.

Mrs. Baker He would die again, he would.

Poirot A freeloader! What are you doing still here, my dear lady. Violet hardly ever comes.

Mrs. Baker Cooking and cleaning for you, you worthless....

Poirot My, my, my dear lady. Watch your language!

Mrs. Baker I'll watch my language, I will. On your head.

Poirot You're making no sense....

Mrs. Baker Violet would be here much more if you weren't here to annoy her.

Poirot *(holding up one finger, in a dismissive gesture)* Oh, yes. The important things first. What are you making for dinner?

Mrs. Baker Cook for yourself. You don't eat what I make.

Poirot I would if you would make something edible. What happened to you, getting too old?

Mrs. Baker You, you...

Poirot Again, you make no sense. My dear woman, you have strict instructions. And you haven't made anything good in weeks. I'm wasting away.

Mrs. Baker The master was a hard man, he was, but not worthless like you. All he wanted was a plain meal, and he would eat it, he would. You, you pampered...

Poirot Now you are just repeating yourself. I grow tired of this conversation. You have your instructions. You can go now.

Mrs. Baker I'll go when I please, I will. And I'll make you a supper when I please. That's about all you'll eat.

Poirot Mrs. Baker!

Mrs. Baker That is my name, it is.

Poirot It is my pleasure that you go. Go and make dinner. Something better than the disgusting fair you've been making. Make that Coq Au Vin, I remember you making that tolerably.

Mrs. Baker I made that last week, I did. You threw it in my face!

Poirot Yes, you're right. C'était un repas terrible! I wouldn't feed it to swine. And I didn't throw it in your face! I placed it on the floor, for the animals to eat. That was all it was good for.

Mrs. Baker The constable had to come, he did.

Poirot That was not my fault. You were the one who became hysterical.

Mrs. Baker Hysterical? I was the one on my knees scrubbing up the mess on the floor.

Poirot Overwhelmed by a little hard work? Life isn't easy. We must all learn to do a little hard work.

Mrs. Baker Oh, yes, you have had such a hard life, you have. Sitting here and feeling sorry for yourself. Sad, sad man, you are.

Poirot You know nothing of me. Nothing of the betrayal I've had.

Mrs. Baker Oh, since that Mr. Hastings left for Argentina?

Poirot He left me high and dry. I made him into the man he is today.

Mrs. Baker A rancher? What do you know about ranching? Didn't you throw that floozy into his arms.

Poirot She wasn't a floozy. She was a singer and an acrobat. And his wife! I never thought Hastings would marry her!

Mrs. Baker So you say. And why shouldn't he marry her? A proper man is married. Not an ornery bachelor like you.

Poirot And now you are giving me advice on the proper way to live. I don't work scrubbing floors.

Mrs. Baker You don't work at all. And sponging from a woman, you are. Don't you have any shame.

Poirot I worked for everything I have. I've worked hard and applied my intellect. What was the last book you read? Come on, tell me.

Mrs. Baker I don't have time to read no books. I don't live a life of leisure like you, reading books.

Poirot You can't even read!

Mrs. Baker A fine detective you are! How do you think I remember all the recipes. How do you think I can make anything you want.

Poirot Je le savais! So no, you cannot read.

Mrs. Baker I even helped teach Violet to read, I did.

Poirot I work harder than you do just by breathing!

Mrs. Baker You and hard work have never made each other's acquaintance.

Poirot I have done magnificent work and solved the difficult cases no one else could. And do you know how I did it? Because it must be done! You see, I've had a hard life and everyone I know has betrayed me.

Mrs. Baker You haven't had it hard. Now the master, he was the one with a difficult life, he was.

Poirot Oh yes, a wealthy man. So difficult a life.

Mrs. Baker He did.

Poirot What was so bad?

Mrs. Baker He was the one who faced betrayal, he was.

Poirot Oh mon dieu!

Mrs. Baker We are in England, we are. Honest people speak English.

Poirot Go on..

Mrs. Baker I will.

Poirot And....

Mrs. Baker The master, he never married.

Poirot I am not surprised.

Mrs. Baker There was a woman...

Poirot ...there always is.

Mrs. Baker ...can you listen...

Poirot ...I am, could you finish your story. I'm hungry.

Mrs. Baker I could poison your food.

Poirot That famous Devonshire calm.

Mrs. Baker There was a woman. She saw the master on the street. She threw herself at him, she did. He was not interested in that way.

Poirot He wasn't interested in women?

Mrs. Baker No, not in that woman.

Poirot Even when she invited his attention.

Mrs. Baker He was an honorable man.

Poirot A rich honorable man.

Mrs. Baker She had a boy, an little boy. She tried to say he was the master's child she did.

Poirot And why would she say such a thing?

Mrs. Baker The master said there was a slight resemblance.

Poirot Oh, a slight resemblance.

Mrs. Baker No, now don't you go thinking that.

Poirot So, just a coincidence?

Mrs. Baker No, not a coincidence. She saw him on the street, she did, and thought she could use the resemblance to rob him.

Poirot And this rich man, this very rich unmarried man, of course he rejected his obligations. As you say, it was no coincidence.

Mrs. Baker You aren't listening to me. He never...

Poirot Of course not. The boy just happened to look like him.

Mrs. Baker You are stuffing words in my mouth, you are. I should poison you, I should.

Poirot Go ahead. Try it. Remember, I am the master detective.

Mrs. Baker You were the master detective. Now you are a moocher, you are.

Poirot Watch your tongue! So old man Marsh shirked his duty.

Mrs. Baker No! He had proof, he did.

Poirot Proof, you say.

Mrs. Baker Yes. The boy was born before the master even moved to Australia.

Poirot Of course. How convenient an excuse. He just happened to move to the other side of the world and then just happened to move to a town that just happened to have a boy who looked like him.

Mrs. Baker They were Australians! He was a good Englishman, he was. Not a thief or murderer.

Poirot And all Australians are thieves and murderers?

Mrs. Baker You understand, you do.

Poirot Make my dinner!

Mrs. Baker You don't believe the master?

Poirot I believe people lie when it is convenient.

Mrs. Baker Even the English?

Poirot Especially the English.

Mrs. Baker Get out!

Poirot I have every right to be here.

Mrs. Baker You came for two weeks. That was a fortnight ago!

Poirot I have an open invitation.

Mrs. Baker **(shouting)** Get out!

Poirot **(shouting)** Make my dinner!

Mrs. Baker I should poison you with that dinner!

Poirot And I should use that rolling pin of yours on you!

(there is a pounding on the door)

Constable **(Offstage)** This is the constable! Let me in!

(Marty and Jacob exit)

Mrs. Baker Not again! See what you did! Oh my. For shame!

Poirot Let him in, my dear woman.

Mrs. Baker My dear woman, indeed.

(More pounding at the door)

Constable **(Offstage)** Let me in, now!

(Mrs. Baker leaves, reenters with the Constable)

Constable This is the second time in a week that I have had to come in here because you are disturbing the peace.

Poirot This is all her fault! The woman does not know how to act.

Constable That is very interesting, Mr Poirot. I've known Mrs. Baker for years. What is she doing, exactly?

Poirot She is driving me to distraction.

Constable And how is she doing that?

Mrs. Baker I'm the one doing my job, I am. He is the one....

Constable ***(Holding up a finger in a dismissive gesture)*** One moment, Mrs. Baker. I want to get your stories one at a time. I'm not a master detective like Mr. Poirot here.

Mrs. Baker Master detective, indeed!

Constable Mrs. Poirot! Please! Now what, in particular, is she doing?

Poirot Mon Dieu! Being heard. Incessantly!

Mrs. Baker See, again with the devil's language!

Constable Mrs. Baker!

Poirot She makes my case for me.

Constable Walk me through this, Mr. Poirot.

Poirot She is talking all the time. She is fluffing pillows. Straightening pictures, moving furniture. Making terrible meals. A man can't think around her.

Constable She is the housekeeper, so it's doing her job that is the problem?

Mrs. Baker He is....

Constable Please! I will get your side of this in a moment. Let me understand Mr. Poirot. She is cooking badly?

Poirot Not fit for a person.

Constable Is she cooking differently for you.

Poirot I don't know how she ever got her job. Completely foul.

Constable Interesting. Thank you. Now, Mrs. Baker, two nights ago you brought over some food for the wife and me. Was that the same as you made for Mr. Poirot.

Mrs. Baker He threw his plate on the floor, he did.

Poirot As I said....

Constable Please, Mr. Poirot. You had your chance, now let me hear from Mrs. Baker. Was that the same meal you brought over two nights ago.

Mrs. Baker No, not the same.

Poirot See...

Constable You made his separately?

Mrs. Baker No, of course not. I took yours out of the pot after, I did. I wouldn't bring you a plate from the floor.

Constable So from the same pot.

Mrs. Baker Yes.

Constable I see. Mr. Poirot, getting back to what you said earlier, what did you mean by, "being heard?"

Poirot **(triumphantly)** Enfin! Servants should be seen and not heard. All I do is hear her.

Constable But you are otherwise alone in the house, am I right?

Poirot Exactly.

Constable But you are here visiting, are you not?

Poirot Yes

Constable So who are you visiting?

Mrs. Baker No one, he is. He should leave.

Constable Mrs. Baker!

Poirot You understand!

Constable Oh, yes, I understand. Mrs. Baker, you have always proven yourself to be an excellent housekeeper and cook. Just continue to do that, and nothing else. And Mr. Poirot, I know you are a famous London detective. But this isn't London. I have had enough of this! If the two of you continue, I am going to have to put you both in chains until Miss Violet returns! **(there is silence)** Do I have your word that I will not have to come back? **(they nod)** Good day. I will show myself out. **(he exits)**

Poirot Mrs. Baker, you need to control yourself.

Mrs. Baker Why don't you just go home.

Poirot Don't get hysterical again. Keep calm, and keep your voice down. Just go and make me my dinner. One that is fit to be eaten.

Mrs. Baker Maybe I should scream. A way to get you out of this house, it is. Would be worth it to see you carted off in chains, it would.

Poirot What would Miss Violet think? Have you thought of that? You, too, would be in chains.

Mrs. Baker **(quietly)** You are the devil, you are. I'll make you a supper later, I will. **(she exits)**

Poirot Enfin! **(Poirot looks around the room triumphantly, but seeing he is alone, moves to follow Mrs. Baker)** What are you going to make me!

(Marty Black and Jakob Marsh, both still masked, enter the room when it is empty)

Marty What are we looking for?

Jakob I'm looking for a likeness of the old man. You seem to be collecting the silverware.

Marty It's just lying around. They will never miss it.

Jakob Don't be stupid. Of course they will. Rich people always miss it. The more they have the harder they try to hold onto it. **(Marty looks bleak, and starts to take some things out of the sack he is carrying)**

Marty So that's why you never have anything?

Jakob I got you here, didn't I?

Marty But I was the one who had to work for our passage.

Jakob I explained that to you. I had the higher price on my head. They were looking for me more than you. What are you doing?

Marty Putting the stuff back. You said...

Jakob You heard them. They will accuse each other of taking whatever you take. Might make our work here easier. Anyway, I need to get some supplies. We could barter the silver.

Marty It was lucky you saw that article in the paper. About the old man leaving all that money to his niece.

Jakob He didn't leave it to her. He left her a puzzle. That "Poirot" was the one who found it.

Marty The man who is here? We should leave.

Jakob **(waving away his concern)** Not so lucky for the old man. Up and died. But he deserved it. He had so much he could have given my mum some of it to keep me safe.

Marty She wouldn't have used the money to keep you safe. She would prob...

Jakob ***(Silencing Marty off with a punch to his gut)*** Don't you talk about my mum that way.

Marty What way? You're the one who got caught cheating at two up. So, where do you think they keep the money?

Jakob Not here you drongo. People like this keep their money in banks.

Marty Then why are we here? That walloper almost caught us.

Jakob I have a plan to get us some of that money. ***(he reaches behind a piece of furniture)*** I just need... I found it!

Marty Found what?

Jakob ***(he holds up a portrait of Mr. Andrew Marsh)*** The means to get my part of the fortune.

(blackout)

Scene 2 - A café in London

Felicity Lemon is seated at an outdoor table. Felicity has a deck of Tarot cards in her hands. Violet Marsh approaches. {{This could be played in front of the curtain, stage left}}

Felicity: **(looking up)** Violet! What a wonderful surprise! It's been too long.

Violet: I hope I'm not interrupting?

Felicity: Nonsense! I always look forward to a visit from you!

Violet: I hope you still feel that way after I tell you why I've come.

Felicity: **(Felicity places a card, face up on the table, and then looks up smiling)** Hercule?

Violet: As always, you prove to me why your detective agency was such a wise investment!

Felicity: **(Felicity smile disappears)** I am trying....

Violet: Oh no, not that. But there is a problem at the estate.

Felicity: **(gestures for Violet to join her, Violet sits)** What is he up to now?

Violet: Don't you want to use "the cards?" **(the tension is broken and they both laugh)**

Felicity: You are prophetic, as always. I was just considering anything I could use to bring in business. You know how hard it is. You need something to set yourself apart. Something you can use to be taken seriously.

Violet: Then I'll get right to the point. Felicity, I need your help. Hercule has taken up residence at my home. He is driving Mrs. Baker mad.

Felicity: But he hates the country! How long has he been there?

Violet: Two months. He said two weeks when he arrived, but he never left.

Felicity: Two months! Why, that's not long after Hastings left for Argentina.

Violet: He was never the same since.

Felicity: Didn't he hire that new sidekick? Oh, what was his name?

Violet: Stevens. That lasted one day.

Felicity: One day! But then I'm not surprised. He can be quite demanding. I thought he might treat another man better. What happened?

Violet: He made life intolerable. He never forgave Hastings for leaving and now treats anyone he meets as if they are going to abandon him the moment they get the chance.

Felicity: Hastings knew him from before he became the “Great Detective” and always stroked his, according to that strange German alienist, his ego.

Violet: But I think, especially, the way a woman must treat him. He seemed to share my uncle’s thoughts on the role of women in society. It always seems to point back to our gender.

Felicity: I suppose so, but perhaps particularly in some men’s opinions. But I didn’t help with that either. I wasn’t so kind to “the great detective” when I left. But what is going on with Mrs. Baker? She seemed to be able to handle him in the past.

Violet: Oh yes, for two weeks all was, not exactly smooth sailing, but smooth enough. After a month I started hearing from the Constable.

Felicity: Oh dear! What happened?

Violet: Let me get some tea. *(She motions off stage)* This might take a moment.

Felicity: Oh, I can not stay here very long. I was about to....

Violet: A job possibility?

Felicity: Not exactly. There is some business I...But you were saying...

Violet: Yes, to the point, Poirot arguing that servants should be seen and not heard, and threats about rolling pins and poison.

Felicity: That first part sounds like him, but he was never violent! I don’t think it is in him to be.

Violet: I never thought Mrs. Baker as being a violent woman either. But the constable is sending me telegrams! Writing this is what he can hear from the street.

Felicity: You did tell him he could visit anytime and stay as long as he liked.

Violet: Funny you should say that. I remember it was you telling him that, not me.

Felicity: Only because you told him he could have whatever he wanted if he found the missing will.

Violet: I think you should get at least as much credit as he did. When Hastings wrote about it he left you out completely. Almost as if he were there instead of you.

Felicity: It's a men's club. But I got this office from you and a fabulous recommendation from Hastings. He was sending me any case Poirot didn't have time for or...

Violet: ...or thought was beneath him.

Felicity: It paid the bills.

Violet: Does it?

Felicity: It did.

Violet: Well, I have a case for you!

Felicity: Really. **(not a question)**

Violet: Yes, a real case. I need you to get Poirot out of my house.

Felicity: And how am I going to do that? You did give him that invitation.

Violet: As I said, you told him that.

Felicity: **(suddenly serious)** You are my partner, and I'm not making any payments back to you. Are you demanding I do this?

Violet: No, never! I'm asking you as a friend. Of me, and for Mrs. Baker. And, I think, of Hercule too. Mrs. Baker told me that it is either him or her!

Felicity: The unflappable Mrs. Baker said that? That's difficult to believe.

Violet: All he does is bark. I think he feels abandoned.

Felicity: His pride is a little tarnished, that's all.

Violet: I don't know, I think he might be having a crisis of confidence.

Felicity: Hercule? You don't know him as I do.

Violet: Oh where is that tea? **(She starts to get up but Felicity puts a hand over hers to stop her)**

Felicity: The service here is not great. That's not why I come here. So what's going on with Hercule?

Violet: He's not eating. He demands she make him dinner and then turns it away.

Felicity: What?

Violet: Now do you see?

Felicity: Oh, this is bad.

Violet: And now the town Constable had wired me. He told me he has been to the house several times. He's had to threaten them with incarceration!

Felicity: Hercule in chains! Now, that would be a site.

Violet: But not Mrs. Baker.

Felicity: I would like to help. Truly, I would. But I'm not sure what I can do. Since Hastings left I haven't been able to...

Violet: I know, and I understand. My balance sheet doesn't look all that good either. If it wasn't for Uncle Andrew, I'd have to close the gallery.

Felicity: I'm sorry, I wanted to send you some dividends...

Violet: It's fine. Really. My solicitors say I'm more than a year away from having to make any hard decisions.

Felicity: We had been so hopeful things would change.

Violet: Oh, they have. I hear about that "Maud West."

Felicity: Have you met her? I have. You know who she reminds me of?

Violet: Someone we know?

Felicity: Oh yes, someone I know very well. Dulcie Duveen!

Violet: You mean Dulcie Hastings?

Felicity: The very one.

Violet: She has Auburn hair?

Felicity: She has any color hair she wants. She is an actress. Do you know what she did to become famous? *(a beat)* She recovered her own stolen clothes!

Violet: That's it?

Felicity: She wore a costume! Called it a disguise. Her clothes were stolen, and she had to wear one of her costumes. And now she is a famous woman detective!

Violet: I suppose she knows how to play a part.

Felicity: Exactly, the country thinks that playing the role of a woman detective makes her one. Then they feel they are being so progressive when they can just continue to repress and exploit half of the population.

Violet: It's not that bad.

Felicity: When was the last time you were invited to anything.

Violet: I was...

Felicity: When you were a novelty. Suddenly, a woman of means in a men's world. That wore off quick, didn't it?

Violet: What about "The Thrilling Adventures of a Woman Detective?" That was quite popular. Didn't that help?

Felicity: It helped Antonia Moser, yes. It helped her get more jobs sneaking about after unfaithful husbands. "Prompt, secret and reliable." That's what she offers. But not, "effective, insightful or capable."

Violet: But there are jobs.

Felicity: Yes, for women who are prompt, and are willing to remain "secret." Otherwise, they might have to give us some rights not granted us by our husbands. Might have to allow us to vote!

Violet: We cannot change our society in a day. But things are changing. There are rumors that Scotland Yard is going to accept women.

Felicity: You haven't talked to those men! I'll believe that when I see it. And even then, I'll be skeptical.

Violet: Didn't any of my Girton Girls need your help?

Felicity: They can only get divorced once.

Violet: Can we get back to the most pressing issue?

Felicity: Of course, Hercule Poirot!

Violet: Mrs. Baker?

Felicity: Alright, alright. What can I do?

Violet: Could you go to the estate. Talk to him? Ask him for help with a case?

Felicity: You are asking much. When I left, it was over him taking credit for everything I did. Now you want me to crawl back and tell him he was right?

Violet: **(grimacing)** Oh yes, I understand that. What was I thinking? I'm just so worried about Mrs. Baker. **(a pause)** Remember how we tricked him into taking my case? Could we do something like that again.

Felicity: Make him think it was his idea all along.

Violet: Yes! That's it!

Felicity: But we need a case first!

Violet: Perhaps we could make something up?

Felicity: I don't know about that. Hercule is arrogant, but he is also very clever.

Violet: Perhaps we can go there and figure something out? You could talk about your cases and he might get inspired?

Felicity: Frankly, Violet, I'm embarrassed to talk about my current cases. In front of anyone, but especially Hercule. I've become no more than a peeping-tom.

Violet: Felicity, please, if not for me, for Mrs. Baker.

Felicity: Violet, I would do anything for you. But I just don't see how that could work.

Violet: Please, just come with me. Perhaps we can work our little magic together just one more time.

Felicity: Well then, pick a card.

(blackout)

Scene 3 - A Small Room

Jacob Marsh is sitting at a small table with his back to the audience. On the table are several bottles and brushes a small mirror and the portrait taken from the Marsh estate. Marty Black is standing next to the table facing the audience. {{this could be played in front of the curtain, stage right}}

Marty Are you finished?

Jacob No. We need to fool that old lady.

Marty What about the detective. We should get rid of him. He's supposed to be real good.

Jacob He's a stuffed shirt. He might have been someone once, but now he is a ship with shredded sails.

Marty So, then, he would be easy to get rid of?

Jacob It's the old lady. She's the one to worry about.

Marty I don't like killin old ladies. It's bad luck.

Jacob That's the only kind of luck we get. I don't want to kill the old lady, I want to get her on my side.

Marty But I'm on your side.

Jacob I don't need you! I need her to say I am the long-lost son of... what did she call him, the master? Makes me sick.

Marty Let me see. You have been at that for hours. I want to see what you are doing.

Jacob Finished.

(Jacob turns to face the audience)

Marty Finally. (a beat) Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Jacob So I look like him?

Marty You don't look like you.

Jacob Well...

Marty Yes, you look like him.

Jacob Do you think I can I fool the old lady?

Marty I think you could fool his own mother. You look exactly like the painting we took.

Jacob Do you think I could fool the niece.

Marty Why do you want to fool the niece?

Jacob You're daft. What do you think she would do if she thought I was her Uncle's son?

Marty Like the story your mum told?

Jacob But this time make it stick. I'd be the rightful heir. I'll get all the money!

Marty You mean we will get all the money.

Jacob Yes, of course. We.

Marty But she would just kill you and keep it all.

Jacob This isn't Australia. This is England. They don't just go around killing people.

Marty So, what is the plan? Do we just go over there?

Jacob No, that would be stupid. I need to be clever if I am going to get all the money.

Marty All the money. Yes, we get all the money. I like that.

Jacob Yes, of course, we *(he emphasizes the word)* get all the money. I like it too. But I can't just announce I am here. I need to get this exactly right. First convince the old lady she thinks she is seeing the old man, the master. They, when I really have her attention, I say I'm that long-lost son he denied at first, but then sent for on his deathbed.

Marty What if she thinks you're a ghost. You might scare her to death.

Jacob That old windbag. I don't think she scares that easy. But, you have a point, if she thinks I'm a ghost...no, wait, this is even better! If she thinks I am a ghost at first then when she sees I'm real she will have to admit I must be the old man's son.

Marty Good idea! How do we do that?

Jacob I do it. I stand far away where only she can see me. And just barely see me.

Marty Why far away? Why not have her get a good look at you.

Jacob You are a drongo. I get her to see me in the distance. Then she will think, he looks like "the master." Then when she gets a better view, she will think, he really looks like "the master." Get her accustomed to the idea. Then when she sees I'm real

and someone just passing through it will be her idea that I must be the old man's son. She will do all the work for us.

Marty Why would she care about someone just passing through?

Jacob She wouldn't. But I know these old English ladies. They love to gossip. You heard the way she talks. I approach her with a sob story about how I am an orphan, lost in the big, scary world. How my mum died and left me all alone in the world with only a story about a father who had to leave us behind because his brother died. How he promised to come back, but he never did. How I went on a walkabout to find my long-lost father so I could give him my mum's last message, that she still loved him and that she knew if he could he would have returned.

Marty But your mum didn't say that.

Jacob The old lady doesn't know that she didn't. Let her think, oh, I can help this poor boy get some peace. I can tell him what happened to his father.

Marty Why would it work now? It didn't work back home.

Jacob That was far away from here. And these English, they are a stupid people. Wealthy and pampered. They will believe anything you tell them. They have the luxury to believe anything you tell them. When you live in the gutter like us, then you believe only the truth. Only the truth that serves you best.

Marty I like that.

Jacob I know you do. Now let's go get my fortune.

Marty Let's go get our fortune.

Jacob No, this isn't our fortune, it is my fortune. He wasn't your father!

Marty He wasn't your father either! ***(Jacob punches Marty in the stomach)*** Oof!

Jacob So you think my mum was a liar?

Marty I don't have to think that. I know...Oof! Again, with the punching! Stop it.

Jacob Talk about my mum again like that...

Marty I didn't mention your mum. Stop punching me.

(Blackout)

Scene 4 - The Marsh Estate

Lights up with Mrs. Baker is stage left in the Marsh Study. Hercule Poirot is sitting in a large chair in front of the fireplace covered with a blanket. The constable is standing stage right.

Poirot Sacre bleu! There are no such things as ghosts.

Mrs. Baker But there are thieves!

Poirot What are you talking about?

Mrs. Baker You are stealing the silverware.

Poirot Not that again. This woman needs to be committed to a mental hospital.

Constable What is this about stealing the silverware.

Mrs. Baker He's stealing the silverware, he is.

Constable That is quite an accusation, Mrs. Baker. Mr. Poirot, what do you have to say for yourself.

Poirot The woman is clearly mad. She needs to be confined to an institution.

Constable About the silverware?

Poirot No, of course not. About the ghosts.

Constable Mr. Poirot, what do you have to say about the silverware?

Poirot Dédaigneux je m'en fiche!

Mrs. Baker See what I mean, he speaks the devil's language, he does.

Constable In English, please.

Poirot I don't care about the silverware.

Constable Are you sealing the silverware?

Mrs. Baker We should search his room, we should. We will find it, we will.

Poirot You step one foot into my room and I will kill you!

Constable Mr. Poirot!

Mrs. Baker I'm scared of him, I am. A stiff wind would blow him away, it would.

Poirot She's seeing ghosts again!

Constable I asked you a question, Mr. Poirot. It is a simple one. Why are you avoiding it? Did you take the silverware?

Poirot I am not avoiding it. It is a stupid question. I don't need to answer stupid questions.

Constable Humor me, Mr. Poirot. Please.

Poirot I did not take the silverware.

Mrs. Baker Search his room, we should.

Constable Mrs. Baker, I will do the investigating.

Poirot This woman claims she is seeing ghosts. You need to deal with that!

Mrs. Baker We should search his room. Prove him the liar and thief he is, we will.

Poirot I am no thief. And you even put one foot in my room, it will be the last thing you do.

Constable Mr. Poirot! Stop the threats of violence. This is a peaceful community!

Mrs. Baker With a no-good lying thief in it!

Constable You too, Mrs. Baker. You both need to calm down and listen to me. I came here for a reason, this time. I just heard from Miss Marsh. She is coming for a visit tomorrow. She is very concerned with the fighting going on in her house.

Mrs. Baker She should be concerned that she is allowing a thief to live under her roof.

Poirot She should be concerned that someone claiming to see ghosts is living here.

Mrs. Baker I said I might have...

Constable Stop! I have had enough! Can you get yourselves organized in a decent manor for Miss Marsh to come back? Or do I have to pull you both out of the house until tomorrow?

Mrs. Baker She would want her silverware back, she would.

Poirot Maybe the ghost took it.

Constable Enough! (*a beat*) What is this about a ghost?

Mrs. Baker I said, I saw a person at the tree line through the kitchen window. The person looked like Mr. Marsh, he did. But like a younger Mr. Marsh.

Poirot The very dead Mr. Marsh.

Mrs. Baker I didn't say it was Mr. Marsh. I only said he looked like him, I did. I never said it was his ghost.

Constable That is a very long way, from the house to the tree line. And through the window?

Mrs. Baker He wasn't there when I went outside.

Poirot Vanished into thin air is what she said. Like a ghost.

Mrs. Baker It was an expression, it was. I didn't say it was a ghost.

Constable Mr. Poirot, please. Now Mrs. Baker, you tried to get closer, but the person wasn't there when you did. Could you have been seeing a shadow that looked like a person.

Mrs. Baker But I could see his face, I could. I would know that face anywhere.

Poirot There, you have it all. She's telling you a ghost story!

Constable Mr. Poirot!

Mrs. Baker Can you see how he is? Could you live with him in your house?

Poirot This isn't your house.

Constable Both of you, stop! Now! Mr. Poirot, silence! Mrs. Baker, just answer my questions and ignore him.

Mrs. Baker Easier said than done, it is. He's a sly one, he is. Stealing the silver...

Constable Mrs. Baker! Now, you said at the tree line. Was he hidden by the trees or standing in front of them?

Mrs. Baker In front of them, he was.

Constable And you could see his whole body?

Mrs. Baker Clear as day, it was.

Poirot You should check her eyes. She is seeing things again.

Mrs. Baker Oh, you would like to say that, you would! Like you aren't taking the silverware!

Poirot You are right, I'm not taking the silverware!

Constable I think I've heard enough. Mrs. Baker, I will take a look around the property to see if anyone is hiding in the woods.

Poirot You are wasting your time.

Constable Luckily, it is my time to wait. What I don't want to wait on is getting the two of you to act with civility to each other.

Poirot You just need to get her to shut her mouth.

Constable You could both use a lesson in keeping your mouth shut.

Poirot You can't speak to me....

Constable I just did. And, I can do much more than that. Miss Marsh is going to arrive home tomorrow. Can you stand to be in the house together for only one more night?

Mrs. Baker I have a lot to do to get the house ready for her, I do.

Constable You do that, and perhaps stay away from Mr. Poirot.

Mrs. Baker I will if he returns the silverware.

Constable Enough of that. Let Miss Marsh deal with the silverware when she gets home. In the meantime, could you keep the peace for one more evening?

Poirot I can if she stays out of my way...

Constable Mrs. Baker?

Mrs. Baker Yes. ***(she is distracted by something outside the room)*** Can I show you where I saw the...person.

Constable Yes, show me.

Poirot Waste of time... You know, she is going to pester you about the missing silverware. I didn't take it.

Mrs. Baker Search his room we should.

Constable Stop!

Poirot It will be the last thing you do!

Constable Mr. Poirot.

Mrs. Baker Ignore him. He is a thief.

(Constable and Mrs. Baker exit, Blackout)

Scene 5 – Outside The Marsh Estate

Lights up with Mrs. Baker and the Constable stage left. Marty and Jacob are stage right hiding behind some shrubbery. This can be played in front of the curtain.

Constable There is nothing out here.

Mrs. Baker But I did see someone, I did. He looked like the master, he did.

Constable What do you mean? *(the constable is slowly moving towards center stage and acts as if he is searching for footprints or other evidence of someone trespassing)*

Mrs. Baker The person I saw, he looked like the master, he did. Only younger.

Constable So what Mr. Poirot is saying is true. You think you saw the ghost of Andrew Marsh?

Mrs. Baker No, I know he is dead, I do. I was there when we put him in the ground, I was. But he looked so much like the master.

Constable Have you been thinking about Mr. Marsh lately? Do you miss him?

Mrs. Baker I'm not crazy. And I'm not seeing ghosts. There was someone out here, there was. And he looked like the master, he did. Only younger.

Constable You said that before. What do you mean, younger?

Mrs. Baker He looked like the master just after he returned. He looks like that picture that was painted just after he returned from Australia.

Constable Were you looking at that picture recently? Perhaps thinking about the old days?

Mrs. Baker That old picture, no! I always thought it looked too much like him. Like it captured his soul. Creepy, it was.

Constable So the picture captured his soul? When did you look at it last? Where is it hung? Perhaps you walk by it every day.

Mrs. Baker Oh no, never, I did. After the master died we draped it in black, we did. Then, after a while I took it down and hid it, I did.

Constable So you hid the picture? Are you bothered by that?

Mrs. Baker Violet never noticed it was gone. I thought she would have noticed it when I took it down.

Constable And that bothered you?

Mrs. Baker He was always good to her, he was. I know he was hard on her, but he had her best interest's in mind, he did.

Constable How was he hard on her?

Mrs. Baker He was a man, he was. Needed to tell her what to do. But he did it out of love, he did. What was best for her.

Constable So you don't agree with what Violet is doing?

Mrs. Baker Now don't you start putting words into my mouth to. I could get my rolling pin, I could.

Constable Mrs. Baker!

Mrs. Baker Don't you go shouting at me, young man. I knew you since you were a baby!

Constable You need to have some respect for the representative of the law.

Mrs. Baker A representative of the law, oh my. Oh my. One that doesn't catch the thieving, the thieving silverware thief.

(They are getting too close to Marty and Jacob. Jacob picks up a small stone and throws it over their heads off stage left. The constable hurries that way to investigate)

Mrs. Baker Someone is there! See, I was right, I was!

Constable No, there is nothing here. No footprints. Only tracks I see are from a rabbit. It must have been a rabbit.

Mrs. Baker If you catch it I can make it for dinner.

Constable That's not why I'm here. We have looked, and there is no sign of anyone out here. How about we go back to the house and you show me the picture?

Mrs. Baker You want to see that horrid thing. Ok. I know exactly where I put it. ***(Mrs. Baker and the Constable exit stage left.)***

Marty Now what are we going to do? They are going to know we stole the painting! Our fortune is lost!

Jacob Maybe your fortune is lost, but mine is not. This is just one more piece of my plan. They are really going to think that old witch is out of her mind. She can't even remember where she put her favorite picture of "her master."

Marty I have a plan too. You aren't the only one who can think of a plan! I think we should tear up the painting and put it in that old detective's room. Stash some silverware in there too.

Jacob It is a bad idea to push our luck. I don't think we should go into the house again right now. Let's let the pot simmer for a while.

Marty You never like my ideas.

Jacob I would if you ever had a good one.

Marty I am tired of waiting around in the shadows.

{{ Mrs. Baker returns and confronts Marty and Jacob. Mrs Baker does not accept the story Jacob tells and there is an interaction that ends in Mrs. Baker getting insulted and indignant and slaps (or otherwise touches Jacob. It is important that she do so. She storms off back to the house and Jacob and Marty are very upset}}

Scene 6 - The Marsh Estate

The constable is standing stage center in front of the fireplace. Violet and Felicity enter.

{{Mrs. Baker has been found dead after the constable hears of another huge and loud argument between Mrs. Baker and Poirot. Poirot has been arrested and removed from the house. The constable explains what he thinks happened and instructs them not to go into the kitchen until the remains have been removed. Felicity ignores the constable and leaves to examine the body of Mrs. Baker while Violet and the constable continue to talk. Felicity returns and comments that for some strange reason Mrs. Baker's hand is covered in thick makeup.}}

Blackout – end of act I