

the **LITTLE ENGINE**

that could *Kill*



a murder mystery for eight

**The Violinist**

## You are the Violinist

On Wednesday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1932, you and eight other passengers boarded a three-day express train from Bombay, India to Lisbon, Portugal. Unfortunately, one did not survive the journey. It is now up to you and the seven passengers left to decide who killed the eighth.

This is your story. It details your background, your current position in life, and your actions on the fated three-day express liner. **Read carefully**, because you have many key pieces of evidence that must be used in combination with the knowledge of other passengers to unmask and convict the murderer.

You will also find a map of the train, which includes any structure that a visitor to the train would notice **upon cursory inspection**.

### Ground Rules

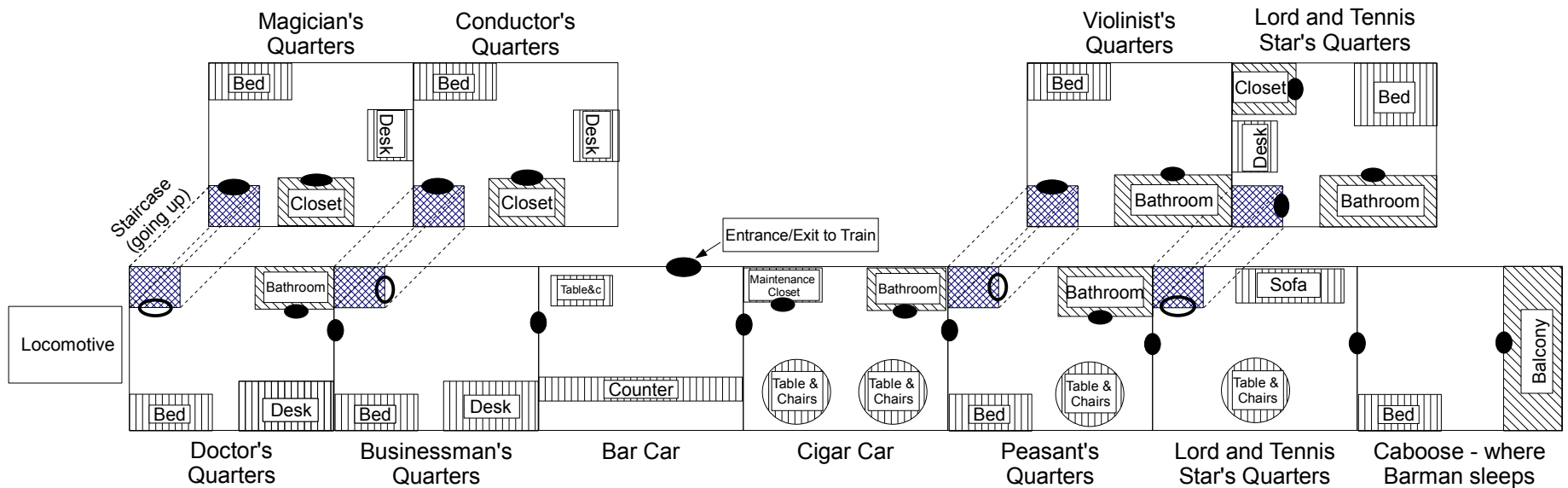
- Do not show this script to anyone else at any time.
- Please refrain from reading directly from the script when presenting evidence to others, unless you find it absolutely necessary.
- Play your character to some modest degree. You **need not** go to great efforts to mimic the character's personality - although it would be much more fun if you did - but **at least** speak as though you were your character (i.e. "I saw such-and-such an event" instead of "my character saw...", and so on).
- If someone asks you a basic question about your character that you should know (e.g. your age), but the information was not provided in your story, you may make something up - just as long as it's consistent with the rest of your story.
- This story contains historical falsities and devices of science fiction. **Take them for granted (but not anything else).**

### Lying

- **Lie with caution.** Your story interweaves with the stories of many other people who may know things about you that you might not think they know.
- You **may not lie** about the following things:
  - Something you heard someone else say.
  - An action you saw someone else doing.
  - Something that you saw someone else carrying.
  - A piece of background information about someone else, *unless you are involved in their background story*.
- You **may lie** about the following things:
  - Something that you said or did.
  - A piece of background information about yourself, *or about someone else if you were involved in their background story*.

## Map of Three-day Express Liner from Bombay to Toledo

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### Notes:

● = door (swinging or doorknob style)

○ = open doorway

Locations of chairs, mirrors, and various other items are not given. Fill in the blanks using your story.

The setup is different in each person's room. The pricetags of each room are also different, but it's up to you to guess the relative cost of each.

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The leather of his shoe feels cold and wet, likely due to too much shoeshine. You hate a man who uses too much shoeshine, but you smile anyway. He rubs his shoe a little higher on your leg and attempts to show you his pearly whites. Except they aren't pearly white and they barely make it out of the several layers of chins that line the lower half of his face. You shuffle your barstool a few inches away, leaving his shoe to drop despondently and disappear beneath the seam of his finely tailored chalk-striped slacks.

He doesn't so much as break eye contact. You hate it when men look at you like that, as if you are a prize they had purchased at one of their gala London auctions.

"Have you had enough to drink?" he asks. But his words come out as more of a bellow. Pretty much everything he says is a bellow.

"Yes, thank you."

He wheels his head around and looks down the bar. "Barman! Two more martinis. This lovely lady is still thirsty." He turns back to look at you. "No need to be modest, love. I know when no means yes." He attempts a wink but it looks more like an avalanche of skin collapsing upon his eye. You shuffle your bar stool a few more inches.

That earns you a hearty cackle and a pinch on the buttocks.

"My dear you are a coy one!" He is trying to whisper, but it comes out as yet another bellow.

The Barman comes along, hands the Businessman the martinis, and gives you a cold hard stare. You ignore it.

The Businessman snatches the drinks up from the counter, slides one over to you and gulps the other down in one go - olive and all. He smiles again and you see a piece of olive has stuck itself in his gums. You hate men who cannot swallow their olives properly.

Perhaps it would be more efficient to say that you just hate men. When they are not having sex with you, they are trying to have sex with you. And when they're not doing that they are shining their shoes with bad shoeshine.

You sip your martini and swallow. It bubbles as it goes down your throat and you channel the bubbles back upwards into a very elegant burp. It's squeaky and feminine - just naughty enough to make him think you've got a free spirit, but just cutesy enough to assure him he can take you to bed. The Businessman's enormous eyebrows shoot up with delight. And judging by the way he shifts his posture that's not all that has shot up.

You hate men, but you need money to get off this train as soon as possible, and you'll get it even if it means going through a man. You let the Businessman buy you a total of eleven martinis - the minimum number required to numb your senses enough to tolerate a night in bed with an ogre like him.

You grew up an orphan, and never knew your father. The only men you have ever known have been abusive, tyrannical chauvinists. You let them use you for a while, taking the moral high ground and giving them your obedience. But it did not take long for you to figure out that none were deserving of it. You soon shed your idealistic illusions about the world, about happiness, and about love. Now, you just do what you need to do to get by, and if that involves sex with an ogre, then so be it.

Of course, you are not prostitute and have never stooped so low as to sell your sex for money. But living an unsheltered life in this man's world has taught you that sometimes, to get what

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you want, you have to ask for it in the bedroom on the morning after.

You wake up to the sound of the Businessman sharpening his gold-tipped pen. You glance at the clock - it reads 5:00 AM. You roll under the sheets and purr a low pitched A-flat, hoping to ignite his paternal instinct of benevolence. But he doesn't bite..

"Get out," he growls, pointing with his shiny pen at the crumpled black dress and purse you left on his chair and then to the door. "I've got what I want from you."

Not every quarry will bear gold for its miner. And you know from the tone of his voice that this quarry will bear you none. You decide to cut your losses and get out as fast as you can. You could have guessed last night that this would happen. His shaft was too small even to expect a few ounces of silver.

You pick up your cocktail dress, slip your arms through its straps and pull. The silky black fabric barely covers your supple, round caboose. That may have worked in your favor last night, but you no longer see the need to give the Businessman any complementary favors, even if they are only ocular. You tug a little harder on the black fabric, grab your purse, and storm out of the room.

"Asshole," you call at him before you slam the door. It's because of conceited bastards like him that you left Paris. They'd pay you a franc a night for playing your violin at their exquisite social gatherings when they knew you deserved fifty. You got out of there as soon as you were old enough to leave the orphanage. You read in the *Le Monde* that in the Orient they offered higher pay - and more respect - for a woman with your violin skills. So you took the next train East, bound for Ceylon. Turns out Ceylon is just a Paris where the men aren't circumcised. .

Nobody is awake yet and you make it back to your room without being seen. On your way back you pass through the Peasant's room and notice him snoring in a dusty corner, cradling a stack of gold coins big enough to get you from here to Beijing, but you ignore the coins and keep walking up the steps to your room. You know better than to try to steal from the Peasant.

You put on some more comfortable clothes and crawl into bed for some real sleep. You doze off quickly, like you always do when you're angry. You dream that you are walking along Wall Street, and American businessmen are showering diamonds upon you. At the end of the street a man with a briefcase full of money beckons you. "My sweet Violinist," he whispers, "come to be with me."

Your slippers blaze across the smooth sidewalk towards the man. "Come," he says, "and live in luxury for the rest of your days." You quicken your step. The man raises his voice: "You filthy, no good daughter of a whore, get your two-pence body down here."

You awake abruptly. That insulting voice was no voice of a stock trader - it was the all-too-familiar rasp of the Peasant. You hear him call again.

"Yooohoo, Violinist, please bring your angelic self down here," he says, "A nice British man wants to take a look at you."

Had any other man called you from your bed with such a hackneyed set of superlatives you would have told him to get lost. But the Peasant is a man who possesses a sickle. In particular, a sickle that he likes to hold to people's necks. And when that particular kind of man tells you to do something, you don't exactly have an option.

You still cannot bring yourself to say the word. To call it what it is. Just days it was all so different. You had been practicing your violin on the dock near one of Ceylon's most gorgeous beaches. Life was tough - when isn't it - but you were getting by. You were working on an exquisite

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interpretation of the medieval classic, Greensleeves. The piece had you so enraptured that you did not notice the rope that was being lowered down around you by that disgusting weasel. He didn't even let you finish the piece before he pulled. He dragged you through every street in town on the end of that damn rope. You screamed and screeched the strings of your violin, but nobody paid you any mind. Nobody. From the looks of the cage he locked you in when you got back to his place, you guessed that you had not been the first of his - but you cannot say it. You cannot say the word.

You take out a new black dress from your closet and slip it on. This one more tightly cradles the breasts but hangs longer over the thighs. You have found this style better adapts you to dealing with your captor, whose primitive desires drive him to grab at every bouncing breast and short skirt in sight. You take up your violin and make your way down the steps into the Peasant's quarters. He makes you carry your damn violin everywhere you go. He claims it increases your value on the market tenfold. You wish to God you played the kazoo.

The clock strokes half-past three as you trudge down the steps. You can pinpoint the exact location of the Peasant even before you reach the bottom of the stairs by the strength of the smell of partially cooked liver. You slow your breathing and take the plunge into the dark, dusty chamber, turning immediately to the table at which you know he will be sitting.

He's playing poker with the Lord of Winchester. The Lord glances from the corner of his eye at you and puts his mahogany brier pipe to his mouth, trying to look cultured. But it might as well be a corn-cob pipe. You can tell when a man is scum, even if he tries to hide it with a brier pipe and smoking jacket. And this man is scum.

You haven't met a man yet who hasn't been scum.

From the distribution of the gold coins on the table you guess that Peasant is betting wildly and losing wildly. That poor bag of peat moss never had any tact and never will. But what can you expect from a professional kidnapper.

That's it. That's the word. Kidnapper. It sends a shudder through your spine to think it outright, even though that word that has runs through the back of your mind in a million variations since the incident. Kidnapped. Kidnapping. Kidnap. You have known the word existed for all your life. But you never even remotely fathomed its meaning eight short days ago.

"Don't just stand there, woman," the Peasant barks at you, dissipating your stream of thought. But catching himself in front of the Lord, the he makes a phony attempt to sweeten his tone before he continues. "Play this nice man Green Leaves on you fiddle." When he talks, tiny spittoons of saliva burst from his lips. And from the puddle they land into on the table you guess that the Peasant has been doing a lot of talking.

You play Greensleeves for the bastard because you have no choice. He didn't bring his scythe on the train, but from the look of his bloodshot eyes don't doubt he wouldn't resort to more barbaric and painful methods to punish you if you disobey.

The Lord seems more interested in your musicianship than the game. "Her sound is luscious," he says to the Peasant in a stilted British accent. The complement strikes you as strange. With a chill you remember what the Peasant told you about your musicianship increasing your market value, and could - could it - could it be that the Lord be making such a valuation right now? You wouldn't put it past him.

The Peasant's flashes him a wet smile and jumps to his feet, slapping his burlap clad behind: "that isn't the only thing that's luscious!" he whoops. You wonder if a view of the Peasant's charcoal

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behind is really necessary to make his point. But you suppose he will stop at nothing to turn you into a pile of his sorry gold coins. Any minute now you expect him to throw in a set of kitchen knives if the Lord buys in the next thirty minutes, but he doesn't have a chance, because just then the Tennis Star rushes into the room, distraught.

You would be too if you had a husband like the Lord.

In her hurry she bumps the Peasant's flailing buttocks and looks up in astonishment. Her eyes have a watery redness that you know all too well to preclude the onset of tears. She draws close to her husband and whispers something in his ear but you cannot make it out. Then she stalks off into her room, stoically choking back a sob.

For a moment you stop playing, debating whether to follow and comfort the poor girl, but the Peasant's angry glare indicates that you should get back to your violin. Once you strike up, the Peasant ties a rope around your ankle and clenches the other end feverishly. Why he does this you do not understand, but you do not understand most of the Peasant's obscene behaviors so it does not alarm you.

Suddenly the Peasant yanks the rope mercilessly, lifting your leg and cackling a slobbery cackle. You do not lose your balance, but you're glad you chose to wear your long skirt. That pervert always wants a cheap thrill. You slap the Peasant on the face with all your might, grab your purse, and make a break for it. You know you won't be able to get off this speeding locomotive any time soon, but you just want to get away from the Peasant's stench for a few minutes. So you run into the cigar car, and - luckily - the stench does not follow you.

In the cigar car you quickly untie the long rope. You notice immediately it's not the same rope the Peasant tied you up with in Ceylon. It's fibers are well woven, its ends neatly soldiered with black rubber. This is too nice of a rope for the likes of the Peasant.

But rope is not the problem at hand. The problem at hand is that you'd need to get as far away from the Peasant as possible, and you slip the rope into your purse and make your way to the front of the train. Unfortunately to get there you have to pass by the Businessman and his pal the Magician, who are both sitting at a table in the cigar car, puffing up a storm. The Businessman is being his usual chauvinist self, bellowing at the Conductor to order him an outlandishly fattening meal - although at his weight you would believe that such an order might actually be an attempt at a diet.

"A capitalist travels on his stomach," he says smugly as the Conductor leaves to give his order to the Barman. He pats the Mount Washington of flab that has taken residence on his belly. You cannot resist the opportunity to interject.

"Well then I expect you to travel far," you say. Your comment gives him a jolt, and a wave of fat ripples from his gaudy chin down to the edge of his gigantic abdomen and then back up again.

"Don't you have a violin to play, *woman*?" he barks.

"I do, though I think I'll be performing a solo today," you shoot back. But your comment only incites his eyes to wander down to your southern hemisphere.

"Do you have a bow, or shall I be of some assistance to you in that matter?" he asks, goggle-eyed at the view.

"I'm sure this will satisfy my needs," you say coldly and point to your violin's bow. Then you promptly slip out of his view and into the next room.

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In the bar car you see the hunched figures of the Conductor and the Barman, huddled mischievously around a silver platter that is placed on the counter. You continue walking, wanting nothing to do with their pubescent schemes.

You find yourself in the Businessman's quarters. You search under his mattress and in his suitcases for some cash but there is none to be found. You are not surprised. At his size the Businessman probably has enough pocket space for all of his money, maybe even a few elephants too. His penis certainly wouldn't be any cause for overcrowding.

You sit on his bed, flustered. The hanging clock on the opposite tells you it's 3:44, but it doesn't make you feel any better.

Suddenly you hear shouting from the direction of the bar car and a few seconds later the Barman comes sprinting past, followed by a slowly waddling (and somewhat inebriated) Businessman, curses flowing unceasingly from his mouth. Neither give you so much of a glance.

Even if you had the cash you aren't entirely sure it could get you anywhere. Before you left the Peasant told you that the Barman has eyes in every town on this railway line, from Bombay all the way to Lisbon. No one in your position has ever escaped the Barman's train alive, he said, and no one ever will.

Speaking to another passenger is not an option either. With his razor sharp scythe to your neck, the Peasant assured you that such an incident would have morbid repercussions for both the speaker and the spoken-to.

You hear noise coming from the Doctor's room. You don't feel like getting caught up in any altercations, especially ones that the Businessman is involved in, so you grab your belongings and head back to your room, passing the Conductor in the Businessman's room. He is carrying a soiled apron under his arm for no apparent reason.

Your whisper softly as they slide across the wooden floor of the empty bar car. You push through to the cigar car and move no further. Your path is blocked by the dark, turban-clad Magician, who steps out from a cloud of smoke and greets you.

"Good afternoooooon, my lady," he croons in his low-toned Arabian accent. "May I be pleased to meet you? I am the Magician." He takes your hand and places a warm, gentle kiss atop your middle knuckle.

His twinkling eyes leave you speechless.

"What is your name?" he asks softly.

"Violinst," you squeak.

"A beautiful name for a beautiful lady." Your face turns terribly hot and you know you're blushing. No - to say you are blushing would be an understatement. You are transforming into a purplish-red beet, albeit an astoundingly attractive one.

"You are red," the Magician notes, "I give you something to match." A rose the color of a fine Bordeaux suddenly appears in his hand. He slips it into yours. You feel your legs go weak and the Magician guides you into a chair just in time.

He sits down beside you, and, staring into your eyes he asks you if you would like to come away with him and be an assistant in his magic show.

"A girl with your charms - ahem, I mean charm - would be perfect for my infamous rope trick," he says.

"Yes," you want to tell him, "Yes yes yes yes." You want to tell him of your suffering, of the



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risks, and of the beautiful eyes he has. You want to tell him so many things, and you nearly do, but just then the Conductor unexpectedly bursts through the door. He has an old camera bag under his arm and seems to be in an awful rush. Likely he's one of the Barman's spies, sent to make sure you're not spilling the beans on his operation.

Well, you know how to cover your tracks. "Are you coming to take my publicity photos?" you call out to him, waving your violin. He blinks for a few seconds at the question and then sputters: "This is just my...toolkit...Got some conductorly business to attend to on the other side of the train." He does not wait for you to respond but scampers off into the Peasant's room.

You decide that the cigar car is too public a place to discuss matters with the Magician. "Let's go to the caboose," you beseech him. Nobody ever goes to the caboose except the Barman, and that's only to sleep. And if the shouting from the Doctor's room was any indication, he's not exactly sleeping right now. You grab the Magician's hand and he follows you obligingly, passing the grandfather clock in the cigar car on the way. It reads 4:10PM.

There is just one problem with your plan to run off to the caboose. You have to go through the Peasant's quarters first. But with the Magician by your side you suspect that now-scytheless Peasant's lofty threats will disintegrate like an egg in a blender. You step through the door and take a sniff. Coincidentally, the Peasant's body odor has fermented into the stench of rotten eggs. You take it as a good omen, give the Magician a wink, and lead him forward. But the Peasant stops you from behind his pool of dribble at the corner table.

"Where are you taking my Violinist?" he rasps at the Magician. The latter shoots you a very confused look.

You pipe up for him and tell the Peasant you're headed over to view countryside from the balcony in the caboose.

The Peasant ruminates on the proposition for a while and then snorts.

"The Vineyards too?" he asks.

"Yes, the Vineyards," you say.

"They seem to be seen best from there," he points towards the back of the train with a jealous thrust. Speckles of mud fly from his fingers and stain the wall. You grab the Magician's hand and tug him into the next car. From behind you can hear the Peasant cackling at his table. "Tee hee hee." He sounds like a mix between a grasshopper and a hyena. "Tee hee hee. Tee hee hee." You shut the door behind you to silence the terrible noise. It is replaced by the low sound of rushing water. Someone must be taking a shower upstairs.

But that is none of your business. You glance back at the Magician, who now has a completely stupefied expression on his face, and pull him through one more door - into the caboose. Once there you grab him by the shoulders and tell him everything.

"We don't have much time," you whisper to him. "So listen." You tell him of your kidnapping. Of the Peasant's intention to sell you off to the highest bidder on this train. It is no normal train, you tell him, and Barman is no normal bartender.

The Magician's dark Arab face goes ghastly white, but you keep going, describing the Barman's slave-trafficking operation in greater detail. The Barman finds the customers, the Peasant catches the slaves. Everybody gets on the Barman Express, the trade is made at the end of the line, and no one - not the other passengers and not the rest of the world - knows the difference.

You warn him that if you run off together the Barman will come after him and you, and that

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if he ever finds you, neither one will live to tell of it. You tell him the only way you can ever be free with him is if the Barman dies.

It's a catharsis that leaves you sweaty and breathless. The Magician remains silent and stares at you, his impenetrable eyes going in and out of focus. You are beginning to wonder whether you have confided in the wrong man.

Finally he speaks up.

"The Barman? A slave trafficker? I knew that bastard looked familiar," he says. Then he tells you a tale of how, when he was a young boy growing up in Saudi Arabia, a mysterious man invaded his house, killed his father and took him and his mother prisoner. That man loaded them into his train and shipped them up to Moscow, where they were sold into slavery too. The mother died and the boy escaped, only to live a life of poverty and destitution in freezing Russian alleyways.

Time washed away the memories of those painful years but never of the visage of the terrible man who started it all. And that visage, he says, belongs to the Barman. His now-aged face had failed to jog his memory at first, but now the connection has been made it is undoubtedly him.

It's a heart-wrenching tale, but you are not fool enough to believe it. Only one of the Barman's spies could cook up such a serendipitous story. You call him liar and kick his shin with all your might. You should have known you could never trust a man, let alone a man who produces a rose from his sleeve. You suppose the Barman will pay the Magician a hefty sum if he can chalk up some evidence of your treachery. Well you will show him. You didn't spend all your life eating frauds of his type for breakfast to lose out to one in a moment of weakness.

"I'm telling the truth!" he protests. You hiss at him. The phony bastard drops to his knees and begs for a chance to prove himself. You are about to claw those pathetic, lying eyes out, but you stop yourself at the last moment. You could kill the Magician but it won't get you off this train alive. Killing the Barman, on the other hand, might. You decide to tell the Magician a tale of your own.

"I bet you my service that I can kill the Barman before you," you tell him. "You win, I will be your assistant and we will be free. If I win I will assume you are one of the Barman's henchmen and you will rot in hell with him after the justice system is through with you."

"Deal," he says and extends his arm with a smile. But you are not that stupid. You slap his hand of trickery away and give him a hard kick in the groin. As he crumples to the ground you slide the Peasant's rope out of your purse and tie him to the bed with your tightest bowstring knot. He'll really need to be a magician if he wants to inform the Barman of anything in that sorry state.

You saunter out of the caboose and back to your room. The Peasant is still sitting hunched over his table, but now he's playing solitaire. The devilish grin he flashes you tells you that he's been cheating again.

"How were the Vineyards?" he asks in his characteristic rasp.

"They were," you say and continue up to your room before the breath the Peasant exhales while he is speaking can fully diffuse throughout the room.

It's a quarter till five when you get back to your compartment. You wash your face and apply a little bit of makeup. If you are going to kill the Barman, you figure you might as well look good while you're doing it. The train slows and then stops. You hear the Conductor run through the train, screaming "Pont de Muetre, Pont de Muetre." You wouldn't be surprised if the Barman gave the town its name to intimidate his prisoners. Well you will fulfill its prophesy in a way that he wasn't expecting.

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It's 5:20. The train starts back up again and you head down the stairs to do the job. You're not sure how yet, but you will cross that Pont de Muetre when you come to it.

You pass through the Peasant's room and notice that he's lying face down in a pool of his dribble. You never knew the Peasant to be attuned to an afternoon nap. Perhaps he suffered a heart attack, you think with excitement, but the thunderous release of flatulence that emanates from his body - and its ensuing smell - inform you otherwise. You leave him slumbering peacefully in his filthy lair.

In the cigar car there are no cigars to be seen, but there is one lonely girl who you don't recognize as a passenger - although she obviously is one now. The girl is larger than average around the waist, decked out in a lavish red mink coat, sunglasses, and a yellow fedora. A pair of studded leather boots are keeping her feet warm and a finely-groomed poodle on a hot pink leash is keeping her company. She looks straight at you from below her rose tints and then walks towards you with the grace only a woman can manage. Your breathing quickens as you become enraptured by her beauty. She comes within inches of you and then you feel the prod of a small glass cylinder on your palm.

"You know what to do with these, *ma cherie*" the woman whispers in a low baritone. Your mind is racing - you want to ask her questions but before you can think of any the lady wheels around voluptuously and walks out through the doors of the bar car, vanishing from your life as quickly as she entered it.

You look down at the item she gave you. It appears to be a medicine bottle. Its faded label reads: "ABORTION PILLS. TAKE ONLY ONE. Will cause immediate death to user if taken in high doses."

"Abortion pills," you say the words to yourself quietly. Yes, abortion pills. The candy of the feminist movement. But you do not believe the voluptuous lady intended you to use them to campaign for women's suffrage - no - these pills can be put to far better use than that. You slip them into your purse and skip your way over to the Barman's den. You have just crossed the Pont de Muetre.

The Barman is alone. Solo, without escort, unaccompanied. Nobody to hear his heavy body fall to the ground, should someone slip a toxic substance into his drink.

He sees you come in and smiles so widely his lips practically fall off the edges of his round little baby face. You smile back and pull up a stool. He smells like a burnt cigar stub.

"You know, Barman," you say, "I'd like to propose a toast."

"To what?"

"To life."

"I only toast to the Pope, who hath helped me to love Our Holy Lord and Savior."

"To the Pope, then."

But the Barman doesn't pour any drinks. He just erupts into insidious laughter. After a minute or two he manages to contain himself, and says in between chuckles: "Do you really think you can win your freedom by buying me a drink?" Then he throws his head back and succumbs to another bout of laughter. Eventually he keels over and, still laughing like a lunatic, slaps the bar with his hand. You notice a dark red burn across his neck. It still looks fresh so you poke it to shut him up. When your long sharp fingernails dig into the wound, the Barman yelps, falls to the ground, and writhes in pain. He doesn't get quieter, but you're the one who's laughing now. When he finally gets

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up he is livid with anger. But he doesn't try to punch you. Instead he puts his finger to your lips and leans over the bar to whisper something to you. The smell of burnt-out cigar stubs gets stronger as he gets closer.

"That hurt, you little bitch," he sneers, but he can't continue because the Tennis Star suddenly bursts through the back doors. She stomps militantly towards you, grabs you by the arm, and yanks so hard she nearly rips it out of its socket. You try to resist, but her fake pink nails against your cheeks make you think better of it. In thirty seconds you find yourself laying flat on the carpet of the cigar car, the door locked behind you. It takes you a minute but you soon regain use of your legs enough to crawl to the door and put your ear to it. What you hear makes you sympathize with the Tennis Star's irrational behavior, even if she did just beat you senseless.

"Oh, don't look so upset tush," you hear the Barman say, "The International Tennis Association still doesn't know about your amphetamines. At least not yet —" That's right. Who would have thought it - another case of a man manipulating a woman for his own twisted ends.

After a few seconds the Tennis Star screams at him: "When I get done with you, you'll regret ever having said that." You hear the rustle of footsteps and you back away from the door. As quickly as you can (which isn't saying much at this point) you hobble back to your room.

The Peasant is wide awake again and does not spare you his lip.

"Those vineyards can do a real number on a babe," he hisses after one look at you. A bit of spittle lands on your dead leg. Its putrid toxins burn, and you hobble more quickly, ascending the staircase and collapsing onto your bed.

But the Peasant follows you up.

"This business," he growls at you angrily, "It's between you and me, understand?"

You opt to smooth your disheveled hair instead of listening.

"Until you're sold, I'm you're boss. I make your rules. I say where you go. If I want to sell you to a nice royal family I can do that. And if I want to use you to fertilize my azaleas, I can do that as well."

You're having trouble with a pesky knot beside your left ear. You smooth it more earnestly.

He grabs you by the wrist and gives your second yank of the day.

"Listen," he rages, "I don't give a damn if you fuck every man on this train and even the woman until your hips are sore and your lips are blue. It makes no difference to me as long as it doesn't interfere with your violin playing – get it? All I want to know is what you did with my rope."

You tell him the first lie you can think of. It involves the rope tying a chest of gold in the bar car. The Peasant drools even more than usual when you mention the gold and sprints like a rabid cheetah down the stairs. You climb up to the bed and drift off into fitful state of unconsciousness. The last thing you remember is the stroke of the clock - one, two, three, four, five, six...

You wake up to the sound of a loud bursting noise and trickling water. The clock reads 6:45. Before seeing what's going on you walk to the bathroom to try to get your ravaged face cleaned up a little. You're scarcely ten minutes into this herculean task before the lights suddenly go out and the train grinds to a halt. Not a sound can be heard, save for the continuous trickling of water.

You listen to that trickle for many a minute, confused as to what is happening. Suddenly the splash of two very heavy boots break the silence. They lumber from the front of the train, pass your room, and make its way towards the caboose. The smell of a burnt cigar stub wafts up into your room. It is unmistakably the scent you smelled on the Barman just an hour ago. You grab your purse

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and run after the boots. This time you won't be so courteous as to offer the Barman a toast before you shove the pills down his throat.

You step down from the stairs into a little river that is flowing towards the caboose. You don't know where it's coming from, and you don't care. You follow the footsteps through to the Lord's quarters, making tiptoeing as quietly as possible. Up ahead you hear a loud thump, some shuffling, and then nothing. You creep your way into the caboose and fall flat on your face.

Your purse goes flying and you land on top of a wet body. You reach for the face. Round. You feel the neck - yes - that's it - you feel what you're looking for - the burn wound. This is the Barman - you feel for a pulse - dead. But how? Could the Magician be behind this? Suddenly another set of feet are trekking towards the caboose. You stay low. They get closer. Closer. When the feet walk through the door you grab at them. Your arms wrap around a pair of tuxedo pants that are so slippery they might have been dipped in motor oil. You've never encountered a slippery pair of pants before, but you hold tight and Tuxedo collapses on top of you. There is only one Tuxedo on this train, you suddenly realize, and it's the Magician.

You have never been an honest woman, just a sensible one. And when a murderer carries a body into a caboose and leaves it on the ground for a gal to slip over, and when that gal happens to have bet her life on that particular murderer - who has long since escaped - being her, you do what any reasonable gal would do. You take the credit.

"I win," you say to the Magician.

You never get a response. Suddenly lighting strikes, and you look up at his eyes staring past you into nothingness, completely petrified. The lights go out and he leaps to his feet, but he cannot so much as take a step. Out of nowhere sirens fill the air, coming from every direction. Gendarmes storm the car, shouting threats and legalese. One of them grabs you by the wrist and, giving you your third excruciatingly painful yank of the day, pulls you into the cigar car. The Magician gets thrown into a chair beside you.

In the opposite corner you spy the Conductor, crouched in a fetal position and holding a bloody, inky noose. The gendarmes grab him, subdue him, sit him at the table, and make him place the noose onto its center.

The Tennis Star is lying unconscious in the middle of the room. It takes a minute for the gendarmes to revive her but eventually she's also led to the table, although you see the Barman must have given her quite a beating over those amphetamines before he died.

You all sit in silence, staring at each other. A sharp crack is heard from outside. The gendarmes look out the window but can see nothing.

Minutes later a vile odor suffuses into your nose, and it is followed promptly by the sight Peasant, who arrives in the cigar car unaccompanied, coming from the direction of the caboose. He's wearing his usual burlap, but there is a conspicuous hole in the center of his cloak. Its perimeter is stained with blood and ink. The Gendarmes pat him down when he arrives and withdraw a bloody pen from his pocket. They throw it on the table with the rope.

The next to arrive is the Doctor who is being pulled along by two more guards. He takes a seat at the table and locks his eyes into a cold, menacing stare aimed at the Conductor.

Following the Doctor is the Lord, who is carried in holding with a heavy pipe in his right hand. He's mumbling unintelligibly about the Great War. The pipe, too, is thrown onto the table.

A mangy poodle - dead as a doornail - is carried in by the tail from the direction of the

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caboose. Thankfully it is not thrown on the table, but a dusty corner instead.

Time passes and no one says a word.

No Barman arrives.

The Businessman is dragged in shouting "I'll choke him. I swear - I'll choke that man." He is wearing the rags of a bum. It doesn't surprise you. The man never had class.

The Barman's body is never found.

One of the gendarmes speaks. He says that France has found judges to be corrupt and juries to be inept. Justice is becoming for the French an impossible ideal unable to be implemented from the crooked benches of its more crooked courts.

The country has left justice in the hands of you eight passengers. It is your duty to reach a verdict. It is your duty to make France proud again.

A vote can be taken at any time in secret or by a show of hands. In order to reach a verdict, the vote of conviction must be no more than one vote shy of unanimity.

France will only accept one guilty party. And that guilty party must be sitting at the table. Anything less will reflect shame and dishonor upon the good people of France.

Upon the arrival of an acceptable verdict, the murderer will be swiftly, and - the gendarmes assure you - brutally disposed of.

The decision before each of you is a simple interrogative. Who killed the Barman?

You don't doubt it's a man.

**NOTE TO READER: DO NOT ASK US IF YOU WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE THE  
MURDERER. ALL THE NECESSARY INFORMATION HAS BEEN PROVIDED.**