Background Story – Whodunnit

'A8 to J6, knight takes rook. GAme, I believe,' Poirot proclaimed.

Bouc slumped, this was not his cup of tea. He preferred DIce. Irritably, he checked his watch. 05 47. Another 20 minuTS and they would have had spent almost haLF of their 63-mile journey engQGed in this mind-numbing game.

'Not a betting man he says, pfft,' Bouc scoffed as he reluctantly slid 7P across the table.

'If you should endeavor to win it back, I will be patiently awaiting you. In ZO NE three, room 5Q, bed 1B.' Poirot deF1antly caught the coin with the tip of his ornate WV pipe, letting loose a smug grin. It was almost *too eaSY*.

'All that time in the army and all I ever learned was how to work with the K9 unit.' Bouc despaired, gently rubbing the O2 BN cufflinks he proudly wore as a memento of his service.

'Fret not, you were doing admirably. Up till the mistake with the bishop at C4,' Poirot stated.

Without missing a beat, he proceeded to straighten the crooked 8K 9Z 3X license PLate that decorated the wall of the dining car. He stopped to admire a picture of VW Kasparov and XJ Zugzwang, 2 Grandmasters locked in the now famous stalemate, **The Knight's Substitution.**

The RH YT HM IC serenity was broken as a piercing scream tore through the carriage.

'Another MU UD ER?' Bouc wondered aloud, recalling their last adventure together.

'Quick, time to gather the pieces, Bouc,' Poirot muttered, putting them in the box neat little pairs.

'What do we do!' Bouc leapt to his feet and ran to the door.

"Quick Bouc! Time is off the essence!'

'Blasted electronic locks!' Bouc yelled, repeatedly entering the sequence **'Y35YM1'** into the keypad.

'Shift to the right!,' Poirot yelled as he picked up the emergency hammer and swung it into the glass.

As Bouc brushed the glass off him, the keypad turned green and the door calmly slid open, seemingly unaware of the damage Poirot had just wrought. Both men exchanged a shrug, this is a problem for later, They made their way past the crowds into the room of another dead tycoon.

'None of this makes sense!' Bouc exclaimed.

Poirot paid no attention to Bouc, drama was of no use to him now. Something about the way the body was laid out was peculiar. 'He did not die here, he was moved' Hercule Poirot concluded as he began scanning the room for peculiarities.

'This room, Bouc, is something off about the furniture?'

'Why yes... it's all been moved! Usually the bed is laid against the further wall rather than along the sides and this,' Bouc said as he eyed an unusually large cabinet, 'this shouldn't be here, help me reorder the blasted thing,'

Bouc and Poirot heaved the ornate cabinet out of the way to reveal an envelope with the following words burned into the cover '**How many stations does** Downtown line Stage 2 serve?'. Visibly unnerved by the absolute lack of context, Bouc began examining the contents of the envelope instead.

'This man is a con artist, Poirot. Look here! He doesn't even look the part, how could anyone have sold him student tickets! Why, he should be charged the adult fare!'

'Quite right, quite right. Nevertheless, what interests me is this peculiar contraption' Poirot pulled out a strange looking object no bigger than a fist.

'Looks like a complicated stamp,' Bouc pointed out, 'you can see the ink bleeding through!'

Poirot carefully examined the contraption and asked for some paper. He pressed it once into the print. Then fiddled with a series of dials on the side and did it again. This went on for quite some time until he seemed pleased with himself.

'What a curious instrument, by adjusting the dials on the side, we are able to configure the machine such that only some of the 3 numbers indicated are imprinted, in spite of what it might display when seen from the bottom! I'd imagine this is rather useful for highlighting certain numbers!'

'But what does this mean?' Bouc gestured to the remaining contents of the envelope.

'IE4E4E4I44IIIEI44IEESY4Y4Y4S44SSSYS44SYYX055505X55BXB0B55B5075BBB5B7BB575 55BB5B5IIIEIIIIEININI NEINEISSSRSSSSRSLSLSLRSLRS0BB5BBB05B505B55B55B3Q0X0Q 03Q0333Q3Q03XQ8YYYYY8YY8Y8Y88YY8YY5555555B55555B55555555BB55B5BBBB55B B5BB5BB55BB555555B555B55B'

And a redacted image. 'This must be the culprit! But it's so charred, how will we ever see it?'

'**PRESENTly**, I shall need time to think,' Poirot concluded.

Goal: The end goal is to decrypt the image and obtain the flag that is embedded in the decoded image.