The Mysterious Affair at Styles

Adapted by T. James Belich
From the novel by Agatha Christie

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STORY OF THE PLAY

With the Great War raging on the Continent, philanthropist Emily Inglethorp helps resettle war refugees in the English countryside. Among them is Hercule Poirot, formerly of the Belgian police. When Mrs. Inglethorp is murdered, Poirot must use his "little grey cells" to unravel the motives of the enigmatic husband, the cash-strapped stepson, the poison expert, and the rest of the household, lest his benefactor's killer escape justice. Poirot and Hastings join forces for their very first case in this new adaptation of Agatha Christie's debut novel. This play is 90 minutes long.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)
Cast: 12 (7 M, 5 W)

EVIE HOWARD: (F.) Emily's companion and Jack of all trades; about 40 years old.
MARY CAVENDISH: (F.) John's wife; about 40 years old.
JOHN CAVENDISH: (M.) Emily's stepson and Mary's husband; about 45 years old.
MR. HASTINGS: (M.) Wounded soldier on leave; about 30 years old.
DORCAS: (F.) Emily's maid; in her 50s or 60s.
CYNTHIA MURDOCH: (F.) Works at a Red Cross hospital; in her 20s.
LAWRENCE CAVENDISH: (M.) John's younger brother; about 40 years old.
EMILY INGLETHORP: (F.) John and Lawrence's stepmother; about 70 years old.
ALFRED INGLETHORP: (M.) Emily's husband; about 50 years old.
DR. BAUERSTEIN: (M.) A London specialist; about 50 years old.
HERCULE POIROT: (M.) Formerly of the Belgian police force, now a refugee in England. He has a distinctive mustache and impeccable attire; middle-aged.
DETECTIVE INSPECTOR JAMES JAPP: (M.) Of Scotland Yard; in his 40s.

SETTING

The drawing room at Styles Court, a country estate in Essex, England. It is about four thirty on a Monday afternoon in July during the First World War. The room includes a fireplace with several spill vases on the mantelpiece, a writing desk, and at least one window. One exit leads into the rooms of Emily Inglethorp.

Synopsis of Scenes

Scene 1: 4:30 on Monday afternoon
Scene 2: Tuesday evening about 8 pm
Scene 3: Wednesday morning about 5 am.
Scene 4: Later that morning
Intermission
Scene 1: An hour later

PROPS

Folded note
Letters at desk
Book of poetry
Tennis racket
Coffee try with six cups, 5 saucers, sugar, small sauce pan
1 saucer
1 cup and saucer
Dispatch case
Keys for door
Key
Test tube with sample of cocoa
Empty box
Torn strips of paper
Black beard
Vial
Note

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: The drawing room at Styles Court. It is about four thirty on a Monday afternoon in July during the First World War. EVIE enters, followed by MARY and JOHN, a married couple in their 40s.)

EVIE: At any rate, I've spoken my mind.
MARY: This can't be true, Evie.
EVIE: Afraid I said some things Emily won't forgive in a hurry. Water off a duck's back, though. We all know what that man married her for.
JOHN: Well of course he's after her money, but what can we do?
EVIE: How she can't see it, I don't know. Alfred Inglethorp must be twenty years younger.
MARY: Which is why you must stay. She'll listen to you.
EVIE: How many times must I tell her? "That man would soon as murder you in your bed as look at you." We all know how much time he spends with that pretty young wife of Farmer Raikes.
JOHN: There's no need to be spreading rumors.
EVIE: At any rate, the sooner I leave the better. Trains, what time are the trains? *(Exits.)*
MARY: So now they're saying Alfred is the one. How convenient for you.
JOHN: Mary, please, let's not get into all that.
MARY: Excuse me.

(SHE exits. DORCAS shows in MR. HASTINGS, a wounded soldier about 30 years old, and exits.)

JOHN: Hastings, old chap, welcome.
HASTINGS: Kind of you to invite me, John.
JOHN: How's that leg of yours holding up?
HASTINGS: Better now.
JOHN: Mother will be delighted to see you again.

HASTINGS: She's keeping well?
JOHN: You could say that. My stepmother has married again.
HASTINGS: But she must be at least... Sorry, John, I didn't mean...
JOHN: That's all right, you've got the idea.
HASTINGS: It must be a very difficult situation.
JOHN: I'll say. This Inglethorp fellow turned up from nowhere, on the pretext of being a second cousin or something of Evie's, though she didn't seem keen to acknowledge it.

(EVIE enters.)

EVIE: Right, I'm off. Got to catch the five o'clock.
JOHN: I wish you'd reconsider, Evie. There's the school fête tonight.
EVIE: Nothing to it.
JOHN: Hastings, Miss Evelyn Howard. Evie, Mr. Hastings. I had best help Mary. I won't be a minute. *(HE exits.)*
EVIE: So you're John's old friend. Pleasure, Mr. Hastings. Can I trust you?
HASTINGS: Well, certainly.
EVIE: Look after my poor Emily, will you? They're a lot of sharks, all of them.
HASTINGS: Now really...
EVIE: There isn't one of them that's not hard up and trying to get money out of her. Protected her as best I could, but now I'm out of the way...
HASTINGS: I'll do what I can.
EVIE: Keep your eyes open, Mr. Hastings, and above all watch that devil.
HASTINGS: Who?
EVIE: Who? Her husband, that's who.

(JOHN enters.)

EVIE: *(Cont'd.)* Goodbye, John.
JOHN: Evie...

End of Freeview

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