

AGATHA CHRISTIE

# THE JEWEL ROBBERY AT THE GRAND METROPOLITAN



  
COOLTURA

“Poirot,” I said, “a change of air would do you good.”

“You think so, mon ami?”

“I am sure of it.”

“Eh - eh?” said my friend, smiling. “It is all arranged, then?”

“You will come?”

“Where do you propose to take me?”

“Brighton. As a matter of fact, a friend of mine in the City put me on to a very good thing, and - well, I have money to burn, as the saying goes. I think a weekend at the Grand Metropolitan would do us all the good in the world.”

“Thank you, I accept most gratefully. You have the good heart to think of an old man. And the good heart, it is in the end worth all the little gray cells. Yes, yes, I who speak to you am in danger of forgetting that sometimes.”

I did not quite relish the implication. I fancy that Poirot is sometimes a little inclined to underestimate my mental capacities. But his pleasure was so evident that I put my slight annoyance aside.

“Then, that’s all right,” I said hastily.

Saturday evening saw us dining at the Grand Metropolitan in the midst of a gay throng. All the world and his wife seemed to be at Brighton. The dresses were marvellous, and the jewels - worn sometimes with more love of display than good taste - were something magnificent.

“Hein, it is a sight this!” murmured Poirot. “This is the home of the Profiteer, is it not so, Hastings?”

“Supposed to be,” I replied. “But we’ll hope they aren’t all tarred with the profiteering brush.” Poirot gazed round him placidly.

“The sight of so many jewels makes me wish I had turned my brains to crime, instead of to its detection. What a magnificent opportunity for some thief of distinction! Regard, Hastings, that stout woman by the pillar. She is, as you would say, plastered with gems.” I followed his eyes.

“Why,” I exclaimed, “it’s Mrs Opalsen.”

“You know her?”

“Slightly. Her husband is a rich stockbroker who made a fortune in the recent Oil boom.” After dinner we ran across the Opalsens in the lounge, and I introduced Poirot to them. We chatted for a few minutes, and ended by having our coffee together.

Poirot said a few words in praise of some of the costlier gems displayed on the lady’s ample bosom, and she brightened up at once.

“It’s a perfect hobby of mine, Mr Poirot. I just love jewelry. Ed knows my weakness, and every time things go well he brings me something new. Are you interested in precious stones?”

“I have had a good deal to do with them one time and another, madame. My profession has brought me into contact with some of the most famous jewels in the world.”