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Samuel French Acting Edition

A Poirot Double Bill

by Agatha Christie

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>The Wasp's Nest</i>	9
<i>Yellow Iris</i>	29

The Wasp's Nest

CHARACTERS

CHARLES HARBOROUGH

CLAUD LANGDON

NINA BELLAMY

HERCULE POIROT

SETTING

The garden of Charles Harborough's house about half an hour before sunset on a summer's evening.

THE WASP'S NEST was originally a television play broadcast on the BBC on 18 June 1937. It was broadcast live from Alexandra Palace as part of the programme Theatre Parade. It was directed by George More O'Ferrall and the cast was as follows:

CHARLES HARBOROUGH	D.A. Clarke-Smith
CLAUD LANGDON	Wallace Douglas
NINA BELLAMY	Antoinette Cellier
HERCULE POIROT	Francis L. Sullivan

*(The garden of **CHARLES HARBOROUGH**'s house. There is a wall with a door leading to the road. Near the door is a tall shrub. There is a table with drinks and garden chairs and an old tree root can be seen which contains a wasp's nest. **NINA BELLAMY** and **CLAUD LANGDON** are together. She is a pretty girl of twenty. At the moment she looks worried and upset. He is a good looking fellow of twenty-seven. He has a sullen expression on his face and is refusing to look at her.)*

NINA. *(Pleadingly.)* You do see how it was, don't you, Claud?

CLAUD. *(Reluctantly.)* Yes, I see.

NINA. And you forgive me?

(He does not answer.)

You do forgive me?

CLAUD. *(Impatiently.)* Oh, of course, of course! We've been over all that.

(He speaks to himself.)

But it's a bad show.

NINA. What?

CLAUD. Nothing, my dear.

NINA. You're so queer and unlike yourself.

CLAUD. Well, I feel rather badly about the business that's all.

NINA. It was my fault – all my fault. I blame myself bitterly.

CLAUD. You mustn't do that. It was my fault as much as yours. I was a bad tempered overbearing brute. No wonder you couldn't put up with me.

(**HERCULE POIROT** enters. He stands in the doorway unnoticed, observing the two young people.)

NINA. Yes, but I needn't have –

CLAUD. (*Impatiently.*) Oh, don't let's go over it all again.

NINA. I want you to understand.

CLAUD. I do understand.

NINA. And you do forgive me?

(**CLAUD** takes **NINA** in his arms and kisses her gently.)

And now you really have forgiven me?

CLAUD. For the thousandth time, yes!

NINA. (*Recoiling.*) But you are still angry, though.

CLAUD. Let's wash the subject out once and for all. Are you coming?

NINA. Not now. I'm waiting to see Charles.

CLAUD. (*Rudely.*) And more talk – talk – talk! Sorry, Nina, I'm in a bad mood today.

(*He turns sharply to exit and collides with POIROT.*)

POIROT. Pardon!

CLAUD. Sorry. My fault.

POIROT. Not at all, Mr. Langdon.

CLAUD. (*Surprised.*) You know me?

POIROT. I saw your name, (*Pause.*) at the chemist's shop.

(**CLAUD** looks a little disconcerted.)

CLAUD. Oh! The chemist's shop...

POIROT. Precisely. The chemist's shop.

CLAUD. (*Uncertainly.*) Oh!

(*He exits brusquely. POIROT bows politely to NINA.*)

POIROT. Mademoiselle!

(He looks slowly round as though in search of something.)

NINA. *(Coldly.)* Do you – er – want anything?

POIROT. It is true that I search for something.

NINA. What?

POIROT. A wasp's nest.

(NINA looks at him as if he is mad.)

NINA. These are private grounds, you know.

POIROT. *(Searching.)* Mais oui, mais oui.

NINA. So unless you wish to see Mr. Harborough –

POIROT. *(Absently.)* Monsieur Harborough, yes.

NINA. *(Sharply.)* This is Mr. Harborough's estate.

POIROT. I know. It is to see my friend Monsieur Harborough that I come.

NINA. *(Relieved.)* Oh, I see!

POIROT. *(Cheekily.)* So you see, Mademoiselle, I am not quite so mad as you think.

NINA. Oh, I didn't –

POIROT. But you did. You showed it most plainly. Now however, you are reassured. I am the friend of the family. My character is cleared.

NINA. I did think that perhaps –

(She breaks off and laughs.)

I suppose I showed it rather plainly.

POIROT. I am very quick to see things.

(He looks at her attentively.)

I can see something else. That you are worried, Mademoiselle.

NINA. Oh!

(She turns abruptly away. CHARLES HARBOROUGH, a man of about forty, enters.)

CHARLES. *(Surprised.)* Nina!

NINA. *(Nervously.)* Yes, I – I wanted to see you.

(**CHARLES** catches sight of **POIROT**.)

CHARLES. By all that's wonderful, Hercule Poirot!

(*He shakes him warmly by the hand.*)

NINA. (*Startled.*) Hercule Poirot!

CHARLES. Monsieur Poirot – Miss Bellamy. The prince of detectives, Nina. The terror of evil-doers.

(*He turns back to POIROT.*)

And what brings you to this quiet part of the world?

POIROT. You remember saying to me if ever I am in this part of the country to look you up. That is right, is it not? Look you up!

CHARLES. Quite right.

POIROT. Eh bien, I take you at your word.

CHARLES. Splendid. Have a drink.

NINA. I – I think I'll be going Charles. I'll see you tomorrow.

(*She slips out quickly.*)

POIROT. No whisky – a little plain soda only. That was your fiancée, was it not? All the congratulations.

CHARLES. Oh – er – you saw?

POIROT. But yes, I read the announcement three days ago. A marriage arranged between Charles Harborough and Nina, the daughter of Colonel Bellamy.

(*He raises his glass.*)

À votre santé.

(**CHARLES** turns away sharply with a gesture that might be embarrassment or dislike.)

You are a fortunate man.

CHARLES. (*Gruffly.*) Yes.

(*They sit.*)

POIROT. The young lady is charming – quite charming.

(*There is a pause.*)

Pardon me if I commit an indiscretion – the lady was engaged before she met you?

CHARLES. Yes.

POIROT. To a Mr. Langdon?

CHARLES. Yes.

POIROT. So she has done the jilt, as you say. She has turned him downwards for you?

CHARLES. Yes, but –

POIROT. Which is all very well for you, but not so agreeable for him, eh?

CHARLES. (*Stiffly.*) It's a lady's privilege to change her mind, and if you'll excuse my saying so, Monsieur Poirot, jilting is rather an offensive expression.

POIROT. (*Quickly.*) Ah! Pardon.

CHARLES. (*Sententiously.*) It's better to find out a mistake in time.

POIROT. Much better. And Mr. Langdon, what does he think?

CHARLES. Langdon's taken it very well, taken it like a man, in fact.

POIROT. Like a man. How does a man take a thing of that kind?

CHARLES. Like a sportsman.

POIROT. (*Thoughtfully.*) Ah!

CHARLES. You've not told me what you are doing down in this part of the world. On holiday, I suppose?

POIROT. (*Slowly.*) No, I am not on holiday. I am here on business.

CHARLES. Business?

(*He stares curiously at POIROT.*)

You mean you are here professionally – as a detective?

POIROT. Yes.

CHARLES. (*Curiously.*) I suppose I mustn't ask you anything about your investigations?

POIROT. On the contrary, I should prefer that you asked.

CHARLES. You are investigating a – burglary?

Yellow Iris

CHARACTERS

HERCULE POIROT
PAULINE WEATHERBY
SEÑORA LOLA VALDEZ
BARTON RUSSELL
ANTHONY CHAPPELL
STEPHEN CARTER
WAITER
CLOAKROOM ATTENDANT
COMPÈRE

YELLOW IRIS was first performed on the BBC National Programme on 2 November 1937. The original broadcast was featured with music composed by Michael Sayer and lyrics by Christopher Hassall. The cast was as follows:

HERCULE POIROT	Anthony Holles
PAULINE WEATHERBY	Evelyn Neilson
SEÑORA LOLA VALDEZ	Martita Hunt
BARTON RUSSELL	Sydney Keith
ANTHONY CHAPPELL	Frank Drew
STEPHEN CARTER	Peter Scott
WAITER	Dino Galvani
CLOAKROOM ATTENDANT	Audrey Cameron
COMPÈRE	Bernard Jukes

Scene One

(The restaurant of the hotel Jardin des Cygnes. Mixed restaurant chatter is heard.)

PAULINE. *(Urgently.)* Waiter! Waiter!

WAITER. Mademoiselle?

PAULINE. Where can I telephone? It's desperately urgent.

WAITER. The telephone, mam'selle, is in there.

PAULINE. Thank you.

(The restaurant chatter fades.)

Scene Two

(The hotel lobby. The porter's bell from the front desk is heard. The CLOAKROOM ATTENDANT speaks efficiently as SEÑORA LOLA VALDEZ arrives.)

ATTENDANT. Good evening, madam. Can I take your cloak?

LOLA. Yes, please.

ATTENDANT. Thank you, madam.

LOLA. Tell me, the telephone – where is it?

ATTENDANT. The telephone, madam? Just outside this cloakroom, on your right, madam.

LOLA. Ah yes. Thank you. *(Quietly.)* Is it private? I have a very important personal message to give. I would not like anyone to –

ATTENDANT. Quite private, madam. On your right as you go out.

LOLA. Oh, thank you.

(Fade.)

Scene Three

(The study of HERCULE POIROT. The telephone rings.)

POIROT. Hélas! Never is there peace.

(He calls.)

Jules! Jules! Le téléphone!

(There is no reply. The telephone continues to ring.)

Zut alors!

(He lifts the receiver.)

Hallo!

(PAULINE speaks, disguising her voice.)

PAULINE. *(Urgently.)* Is that Monsieur Hercule Poirot? Is that Hercule Poirot?

POIROT. Hercule Poirot speaks!

PAULINE. Monsieur Poirot, can you come at once – at once? I'm in great danger, I know it!

POIROT. Who are you? From where are you speaking?

(PAULINE sounds more distant.)

PAULINE. At once... It may be life or death! The Jardin des Cygnes...at once...table with yellow irises –

(The line goes dead.)

POIROT. Hallo! Hallo!

(He rattles the receiver.)

Hallo! *(Quietly.)* The Jardin des Cygnes, hein? There is something here very curious.

(Fade.)

Scene Four

(Restaurant at Jardin des Cygnes. Mixed restaurant chatter and music.)

["YOU'RE GOOD FOR MY BAD HABITS"]**CHORUS**

YOU'RE GOOD FOR MY BAD HABITS,
I CAN'T REMEMBER NOW
THE WAY TO SAY, "OH! BLIMEY!"
TRY ME - NO KIDDIN' -
YOU'RE GOOD FOR MY BAD HABITS,
YOU'VE DONE THE TRICK SOMEHOW,
AND ALL WITHOUT A SINGLE ROW.
FOR YEARS I'VE WAITED
FOR SOMEONE THAT LOVED ME YET HATED
ME BITING MY NAILS.
YOU GAVE ME SOMETHING TO CARE FOR,
AND THEREFORE
I WENT BACK ON THE RAILS.
YOU'RE GOOD FOR MY BAD HABITS,
IF I COULD MARRY YOU,
YOU'D FIND THAT I COULD DO GOOD TOO.

VERSE

SOME PEOPLE LIVE IN A CHRONIC HURRY,
NOTHING BUT WORRY
ALL THE DAY THROUGH
BUT LIFE WILL MOVE IN A NEW DIRECTION
WHEN THERE'S AFFECTION
TO GUIDE YOU.

*(The **CHORUS** reprises over the following dialogue.)*

WAITER. Buona sera, Monsieur Poirot. Welcome to the Jardin des Cygnes. You desire a table, yes?

POIROT. No, no, my good Luigi. I seek here for some friends
- perhaps they are not here yet.

WAITER. It is a big party?

POIROT. Non – non. Ah, let me see, that table in the corner with the yellow irises!

WAITER. Yes?

POIROT. A little question, if it is not indiscreet. On all the other tables there are tulips – pink tulips. Why on that one table have you yellow irises?

WAITER. A command, monsieur – a special order. No doubt to please one of the ladies.

POIROT. But of course. And the table is...?

WAITER. Mr. Barton Russell's table – an American. Rich, oh là là, so rich!

POIROT. Aha, and one must study the whims of the ladies, must one not, my good Luigi?

WAITER. Monsieur has said it.

(Light applause is heard at the end of the number.)

POIROT. But tiens, I see at the table an acquaintance of mine. I must go and speak to him!

(There is a pause.)

Bon soir! Bon soir! Is it not my friend Anthony Chappell?

CHAPPELL. By all that's wonderful, Poirot, the police hound. Come and sit down. Let us discourse of crime. Let us go further and drink to crime!

POIROT. Thank you, mon cher Anthony.

*(An instrumental version of **YOU LIVE IN MY HEART** underscores the restaurant chatter.)*

CHAPPELL. There's a glass there!

POIROT. A little only...

CHAPPELL. Now tell me what you're doing here. There isn't a dead body in the place – positively not a single one!

POIROT. You seem very gay, mon cher?

CHAPPELL. Gay? I'm steeped in misery, wallowing in gloom.
(Confidentially.) You hear this tune they're playing?

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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