

Le Christmas Pudding d'Hercule Poirot

English Version

Written by

Agatha Christie
(A France Inter Radio Play)

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Created for Brisbane French Meetup

Brisbane French Meetup

1 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
Good evening, Laurence Garcia!

2 LAURENCE GARCIA
Good evening, Stéphanie!

3 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
Good evening, Soro Solo!

4 SORO SOLO
Good evening, Stéphanu!

5 STEPHANIE DUNCAN
Good evening everyone! For this
Christmas Eve, France Inter is
bringing you a special glittery
programme that will smell of roast
turkey, Christmas trees and even
pudding. Laurence, that's really
something, isn't it? I think
you'll love it too, Soro Solo!

6 SORO SOLO
Yes !

7 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
So this evening, your evening will
begin in "Autant en emporte
l'histoire" with an adaptation of
an Agatha Christie short story,
"Christmas Pudding", quite
appropriate, an episode in the
adventures of Hercule Poirot. And
you, Soro Solo, at 10pm, what will
you be cooking up for us?

8 SORO SOLO
I've heard the word pudding, I
think what I'm proposing to France
Inter listeners is going to look
like a kind of pudding, a melon...

9 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
...African pudding.

10 SORO SOLO
...yes, tropical-style pudding,
because we're going to have as a
musical thread the Afro-American
singer Liz McComb, who with her
new album recounts the different
Christmas songs.

(MORE)

SORO SOLO (cont'd)

I've also been joined by actor and musician Simon Winsé from Burkina Faso, who will be telling us a little about the traditional Samo festival in his country, which coincides with Christmas, and of course all of this will come from my own pet peeves of not agreeing with excessive Christmas presents.

LAURENCE GARCIA

11 The pet peeves, there's a few more of those...

SORO SOLO

12 Yes, yes, yes, we're falling into mimicry, etc.

STÉPHANIE DUNCAN

13 And you, Laurence Garcia, at 11pm?

LAURENCE GARCIA

14 At 11.15pm, with the actor Patrick Timsit and our friend Laurent Delmas, we're going to play off the wrong foot, in fact...

STÉPHANIE DUNCAN

15 I'm not surprised.

LAURENCE GARCIA

16 ...not in your dreams, but in your nightmares of family dinners, those occasions, the subjects that cause a stir at the table, the dog-collar gifts, the famous buttered log... sheesh!

STÉPHANIE DUNCAN

17 A feast, after all!

LAURENCE GARCIA

18 Yes...well, no, no, it'll be funny and with lots of extracts from cult films, particularly from the cinema which pokes fun at these families who sometimes go berserk too...

STÉPHANIE DUNCAN

19 Chouette, chouette, chouette.

LAURENCE GARCIA

20 ... Voilà, voilà.

21 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
 So we'll hear from Laurence Garcia
 at 11.15pm, and you, Soro Solo, in
 an hour at 10pm.

22 SORO SOLO
 Exactly.

23 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
 Merry Christmas.

Music

24 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN (CONT'D)
 As promised in "Autant en emport
 l'histoire", a Christmas Eve in
 the company of Agatha Christie,
 "Hercule Poirot's Christmas
 Pudding". The famous Belgian
 detective, priceless with his egg-
 head, his shiny moustache and his
 little idiosyncrasies. But beware
 him who mocks - Hercule Poirot, as
 you know, has a fearsome acumen.
 In London, in December 1960, a few
 days before Christmas, our
 detective receives a visit from a
 strange character, Monsieur
 Jesmond, who has been assigned to
 a highly sensitive case. The
 investigation, which Hercule
 Poirot eventually accepts, takes
 him to an English manor house
 where Mr and Mrs Lacey, two
 delightful septuagenarians, are
 preparing to celebrate Christmas
 with their grandchildren. A family
 gathered around the Christmas
 tree, roast turkey, christmas
 pudding and even snow - what could
 be more idyllic and innocent? But
 as you can imagine, with Agatha
 Christie, the snow soon turns red.

25 VOICE - RADIO
 France Inter, Stéphanie Duncan,
 "Autant on emporte l'histoire".

26 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
 Later on, to talk about Agatha Christie, I'll be talking to Anne Martinetti, a great connoisseur of the English writer, but first, "Hercule Poirot's Christmas Pudding" by Agatha Christie with Michel Vuillermoz, from the French comedy, as Hercule Poirot and Édith Scob as Mrs Lacey. The film is directed by Cédric Aussir.

Music

LE CHRISTMAS PUDDING D'HERCULE POIROT

2 MR JESMOND PROPOSES A MISSION

2

27 HERCULE POIROT
 Mr Jesmond, I have an important appointment, I'm terribly sorry...

28 MR JESMOND
 Please, Mr Poirot. This is a real affair of state. I want you to know that your cooperation will be appreciated in very high places.

29 HERCULE POIROT
 You are too kind, but I really cannot undertake what you are asking of me. And at this time of year, on top of that... uh...

30 MR JESMOND
 Imagine. An old-fashioned Christmas in the English countryside.

31 HERCULE POIROT
 Brrr. I'm not English, I'll remind you. In my country, Christmas is a celebration for children. We celebrate New Year's Eve.

32 MR JESMOND
 Ah, but in England, Christmas is a real institution. And I assure you, at Kings Lacey, you will see it in all its splendour. It's a wonderful old house, you know. One of the wings dates back to the 14th century.

33 HERCULE POIROT
In winter, mind you, I never leave
London.

34 MR JESMOND
Monsieur Poirot, I'm afraid you
don't appreciate the seriousness
of the problem.

35 HERCULE POIROT
Yes, I do, and I sympathise
wholeheartedly with the Prince.
But the police know how to be very
discreet, you know.

36 MR JESMOND
No, there's no question of calling
in the police. We would have to go
to court. Yet we know so little.
We 'suspect', we don't know.

37 HERCULE POIROT
I am deeply sorry for you.

38 MR JESMOND
Traditions are being lost, you
know. People prefer to spend the
holidays in hotels these days.
Whereas an English Christmas, with
all the family, the children
waiting for their presents, the
tree, the turkey, the pudding, the
snowman....

39 HERCULE POIROT
To make a snowman, you need snow.
And it doesn't come on order, even
for an English Christmas.

40 M. JESMOND
Ah, but according to a friend in
the weather service, there's a
good chance of snow this year.

41 HERCULE POIROT
Snow in the countryside. That
would be the bouquet. In a big
stone mansion. Brrr.

42 MR JESMOND
Not at all. Things have changed a
lot. There's oil-fired central
heating.

43 HERCULE POIROT
What's that? They have oil-fired
central heating in Kings Lacey?

44 MR JESMOND
Yes, they do. And radiators in the bedrooms. I assure you, Monsieur Poirot, Kings Lacey represents the height of comfort. You might even find it too warm.

45 HERCULE POIROT
Too warm? That's highly unlikely.

46 MR JESMOND
The situation is serious.

47 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
A young prince, the only son of the king of a rich and powerful Eastern state, had arrived in London a few weeks earlier. Public opinion in his country was fairly suspicious of this offspring. Recently, however, his engagement had been announced. The wedding day had been fixed and the young prince had travelled to England, taking with him some of his family's famous precious stones to have them remounted in a more modern way by a famous jeweller. Among them was a ruby of great value. So far, so good. And then the groom-to-be had indulged in a few youthful indulgences in London.

48 HERCULE POIROT
A classic story.

49 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
The Prince had taken his mistress to a great jeweller to choose a piece of jewellery. But, flattered by the lady's interest, he showed her the famous ruby and rashly even allowed her to wear it one evening.

50 HERCULE POIROT
Fatal mistake!

51 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
The rest, you can guess. The beautiful woman left the table to powder her nose. Time passed and she didn't come back. She had left the establishment and vanished into thin air. The ruby with her.

- 52 MR JESMOND
As you can see, this ruby is no ordinary stone. And the circumstances of its disappearance, if they were to be revealed, could have serious political repercussions.
- 53 HERCULE POIROT
I understand, Mr Jesmond. We need to find the ruby.
- 54 MR JESMOND
And it's just you.
- 55 HERCULE POIROT
Oh, perhaps. You have so little to give me. Impressions, suspicions, it's all very meagre.
- 56 MR JESMOND
His Highness is very young. It would be a pity if his life were ruined by a simple youthful error. We must avoid scandal. But this ruby has an extremely long history. A lot of blood has been shed and a lot of people have died for it.
- 57 HERCULE POIROT
Deaths? I certainly hope it doesn't go that far.
- 58 MR JESMOND
Well, of course not. I'm sure of it.
- 59 HERCULE POIROT
You can't be sure. Whoever has the ruby, others may want to get their hands on it. And they won't beat about the bush, my dear sir.
- 60 MR JESMOND
Then can I take it as understood, Monsieur Poirot, are you going to Kings Lacey?
- 61 HERCULE POIROT
And how would I explain my presence there?
- 62 M. JESMOND
We can arrange that very easily, thanks to someone I know, Edwina Morecambe, who is very friendly with the Laceys.
- (MORE)

M. JESMOND (cont'd)
I can assure you of that, it will all seem perfectly natural. And you'll see, Mr & Mrs Lacey are delightful people.

HERCULE POIROT
63 You're not just telling me a story about oil-fired central heating?

MR JESMOND
64 Of course not. I assure you, you'll have every comfort.

3 IN THE RECEPTION ROOM AT KINGS LACEY

3

STEPHANIE DUNCAN
65 Arriving at Kings Lacey, Hercules Poirot chatted with Mrs Lacey in the reception room. About 70 years old, but straight as a candle, Mrs Lacey had snow-white hair, an outsized nose and a determined chin.

MRS LACEY
66 I hope you enjoy our Christmas party, Monsieur Poirot. We shall be with family, you know. But Edwina Morecambe told me that this is what you wanted to see. An old-fashioned Christmas, well, you're in for a treat. The tree, socks full of sweets hanging on the bed, turkey, oyster soup, plum pudding and all the rest.

HERCULE POIROT
67 You're making my taste buds go crazy, Madame.

MRS LACEY
68 I think that what we can all expect tomorrow night is some serious indigestion. What are they doing outside? Another one of their games. You know, I was always afraid that Christmas here would bore the children. Well, not at all, just the opposite. They seem to be having the time of their lives. And they're always hungry. I don't think they get enough to eat at boarding school.

- 69 HERCULE POIROT
You're quite right. In any case,
it's infinitely kind of you and
your husband to welcome me into
your family circle like this,
Madame.
- 70 MRS LACEY
Edwina has assured me that you
might be able to help us. I don't
quite know how, but she told me
that you once saved some friends
of yours a lot of trouble in a
case, shall we say, rather like
ours. In fact, perhaps you don't
even know what I'm talking about?
- 71 HERCULE POIROT
If I've understood correctly, I'm
talking about your granddaughter's
love affair with these unwelcome
people.
- 72 MRS LACEY
Yes. Edwina seemed to be implying
that you might have some useful
information about this young
Desmond Lee-Wortley.
- 73 HERCULE POIROT
If I'm not mistaken, he doesn't
have a very good reputation.
- 74 MRS LACEY
Oh no, indeed. It's even awful.
Only with Sarah, my little girl,
the argument won't work. It only
makes young girls even more
excited.
- 75 HERCULE POIROT
You're a thousand times right.
- 76 MRS LACEY
When I was young...my goodness, it
was a long time ago...we were
warned about them, you know,
certain young people. But in fact,
we always managed to dance with
them, or find them alone in the
half-light of a greenhouse. No,
that's why I didn't want to let my
future husband do what he had in
mind.
- 77 HERCULE POIROT
No, you'd better tell me what's
worrying you.

- 78 MRS LACEY
Sarah's parents are deceased, so we, her grandparents, brought her up. Perhaps she was careless, but we thought it best to give her as much freedom as possible.
- 79 HERCULE POIROT
You can't go against the spirit of the times.
- 80 MRS LACEY
But Sarah, how can I put it, is part of what we call the coffee-bar set. She lives in a grubby little one-bedroom in Chelsea, wears those funny clothes that appeal to all young people, thick stockings, black or apple green. She must scratch like crazy. And to top it all off, she goes out unwashed and uncombed.
- 81 HERCULE POIROT
That's the fashion. They grow out of it.
- 82 MRS LACEY
All I know is, she's infatuated with this Desmond Lee-Wortley who really has a bad reputation. He's more or less living off rich girls. They all seem crazy about him. I don't want Sarah falling into his clutches. Ever since they came here, she's only had eyes for him.
- 83 HERCULE POIROT
I don't quite understand, madam. This Desmond Lee-Wortley, is he here, in your house at the moment?
- 84 MRS LACEY
That was my idea. I thought, this way, Sarah will see him at home. In our family atmosphere, we'll be very nice to him. He'll seem a lot less interesting at the same time.
- 85 HERCULE POIROT
Your attitude is very intelligent, madam.
- 86 MRS LACEY
Let's hope so. But in the 48 hours since he arrived, my tactics don't seem to be working.

(MORE)

MRS LACEY (cont'd)

I must confess something to you, Monsieur Poirot. I can't help feeling a certain attraction for him. Not a real attraction, of course. But I can feel the charm working. He had the good side of him, you know, to ask if he could bring his sister here. She's just had an operation and been discharged from hospital. He thought it was sad that she was spending Christmas in a convalescent home. He promised he'd bring up her meals and take care of everything. That's pretty nice of him, isn't it?

HERCULE POIROT

87 This altruism seems out of character.

MRS LACEY

88 Well, it's... it's true that you can love your sister and also want to get hold of a rich girl. Do you see? Sarah will be very rich. Next year, when she's 21, she'll inherit a very large fortune from her mother. Do you think you can help us in any way?

HERCULE POIROT

89 I can't promise you a miracle, but I'll do what I can. If only to thank you. It's not so easy, I imagine, to organise a party like this these days.

MRS LACEY

90 Oh, no, the service isn't as good as it used to be. But this Christmas we're very lucky. We can always count on Mrs Ross, a wonderful cook. And our faithful Peverell.

HERCULE POIROT

91 Your butler?

MRS LACEY

92 Yes. We've retired him, but he still insists on serving at Christmas. In fact, he's so old and wobbly that every time he carries something a bit heavy, I expect him to drop everything. But we're very attached to him.

(MORE)

MRS LACEY (cont'd)

So you see, we're all set for a merry Christmas. A white Christmas, look, it's snowing. Here are the children. Come and meet them, Mr Poirot. Wipe your feet before you come in. This is Mr Poirot.

STEPHANIE DUNCAN

93 Mrs Lacey introduces Hercule Poirot to her grandchildren.

MRS LACEY

94 Michael, Bridget.

STEPHANIE DUNCAN

95 Two teenagers of 15, smiling and full of vitality.

MRS LACEY

96 And this is Sarah.

SARAH

97 Hello.

HERCULE POIROT

98 Hello, Miss.

MRS LACEY

99 And Desmond Lee-Wortley.

HERCULE POIROT

100 Here she is now. A pretty redhead, nervous-looking, a little rebellious, but she shows real affection for her grandmother. As for Desmond, a fisherman's jumper, tight black jeans, long hair, the real bad boy. And unshaven too.

STÉPHANIE DUNCAN

101 After tea, served with scones, muffins and cucumber sandwiches, everyone dispersed. The more younger ones took refuge in the study to listen to the music.

SARAH

102 Let's take a walk in the garden, Desmond. It's very stuffy in here.

DESMOND LEE-WORTLEY

103 What, go for a walk? You've got to be kidding. I'll take the car out and we'll go for a drink at the pub. The Spotted Pig.

- 104 SARAH
No. Let's go to the White Stag
instead. In the other village.
It's more fun.
- 105 STEPHANIE DUNCAN
Sarah wouldn't have admitted it to
anyone, but it was against Kings
Lacey tradition for a woman to set
foot in the Spotted Pig.
- 106 SARAH
Didn't you think Desmond was
charming, Grandma dear?
- 107 MRS LACEY
Yes, yes, yes. You know, I
especially, especially want you to
be happy. Here's your knight in
shining armour returning with the
carriage. He likes his trousers so
tight, but it does accentuate
knock knees.
- 108 SARAH
Oh, you think so? See you later,
Grandma.
- 109 MRS LACEY
See you later, have fun.
- 110 STEPHANIE DUNCAN
Mrs Lacey returned to the library
and found Hercules Poirot asleep
by the window.
- 111 DESMOND LEE-WORTLEY
Come on, my beauty, have you been
chided for going to the pub? Your
family is a century behind.
- 112 SARAH
That's just what I need, someone
making comments.
- 113 DESMOND LEE-WORTLEY
And he's foreign? Is he French?
- 114 SARAH
Belgian, I think.
- 115 DESMOND LEE-WORTLEY
What's he doing at your place?
He's a cop, a detective? Is there
anything to detect at Kings Lacey?

116 SARAH
Oh, he didn't come in a professional capacity. And as for police, he's not been looking after parked cars for ages.

117 DESMOND LEE-WORTLEY
Did you see his moustache and his black hair? He has to dye it, doesn't he?

118 SARAH
From what I understand, he wanted to see an old-fashioned English Christmas.

119 DESMOND LEE-WORTLEY
Pfff! There's nothing more tart than that sort of thing. I wonder how you put up with it.

120 SARAH
Because I like it.

121 DESMOND LEE-WORTLEY
Come on, stop it. Where to, sweetheart, let's cut our losses. Tomorrow we're off, to Scarborough or wherever.

122 SARAH
No, that sounds like too much trouble.

123 DESMOND LEE-WORTLEY
Huh? You've not had enough of the sentimental bosh?

124 SARAH
No, of course, but...

4 PLANNING A PRANK

4

125 STEPHANIE DUNCAN
Bridget and Michael went for a walk in the garden.

126 MICHAEL
It's going to rain all night.

127 BRIDGET
Let's make a snowman.

128 MICHAEL
Wow, I haven't made one since... since I was four.

129 BRIDGET
It's not that complicated.

130 MICHAEL
We could make him look like
Monsieur Poirot. By sticking a big
black moustache on him. There's
one, I think, in the disguise box.

131 BRIDGET
I wonder how he could have been a
private detective. I can't imagine
him looking for clues with a big
magnifying glass or measuring
footprints.

132 MICHAEL
I've got an idea. How about we put
on a show for him...?

133 BRIDGET
How's that?

134 MICHAEL
Well, set up a fake crime for him.

135 BRIDGET
You mean with a fake dead body in
the snow, that sort of thing?
Brilliant!

136 MICHAEL
To make him feel in his element.

137 BRIDGET
Maybe that's teasing him a bit too
much...

138 MICHAEL
The snow will make a perfect
backdrop. Can you see it? The
corpse... footprints. We'll study
it closely. Pierce one of
Granddad's daggers, make blood.

139 BRIDGET
There's an old paint can in the
garage, we could use it for blood.

140 MICHAEL
Oh, yes! With crimson!

141 BRIDGET
No, crimson's too bright. You need
something browner.

142 MICHAEL
And who's going to play dead?

143 BRIDGET
I will!

144 MICHAEL
Just a minute. It was my idea.

145 BRIDGET
No, it has to be a girl. It's more poignant, a pretty girl, lying in the snow.

146 MICHAEL
Pretty, yeah right...

147 BRIDGET
And I've got black hair!

148 MICHAEL
What's wrong with that?

149 BRIDGET
It makes a better contrast in the snow. Besides, I'll wear my red pyjamas.

150 MICHAEL
No, you won't! You won't see the bloodstains.

151 BRIDGET
Yeah, but it'll look good on the snow. Plus, there are white borders, we only have to put the bloodstains on them. Wouldn't that be nice? Do you think he's really going to fall for it?

152 MICHAEL
If we do it right, yes. He'll only have to find footprints in the snow. And then the footprints of someone else moving towards and away from the corpse. Human footprints, of course. As he won't want to confuse them with his own, he won't realise that you're not really dead. Er... say, he's not going to pack his bags and go, is he?

153 BRIDGET
No, I don't think he will. He'll realise we've played a joke on him. A sort of Christmas game, if you like.

154 MICHAEL
We shouldn't do it on Christmas
Day. Grandpa might not like it.

155 BRIDGET
The day after, then?

156 MICHAEL
OK. The next day it is.

157 BRIDGET
And that'll give us more time to
prepare. Come on, then. Let's go
back.

5 CHRISTMAS EVE

5

158 STEPHANIE DUNCAN
It was the evening of 24 December.
The evening of all the
preparations. The Christmas tree
took pride of place in the living
room, and everyone helped to
decorate it, fixing boughs of
holly to the walls and hanging a
bouquet of mistletoe in the
entrance hall.

159 MICHAEL
Do you think Grandma has planned
to put the sweets in the socks,
like she does every year?

160 BRIDGET
Starting to get a bit large, no?

161 SARAH
Mmm... I love the smell of candles
mixed with the tree.

162 MICHAEL
It really is the scent of
Christmas.

163 DESMOND LEE-WORTLEY
I didn't think such archaic
customs were still practised.

164 SARAH
We've always done it this way at
home.

165 DESMOND LEE-WORTLEY
Is there a reason for that?

- 166 SARAH
Come on, don't be such a killjoy,
Desmond. I think it's quite nice.
- 167 DESMOND LEE-WORTLEY
You're not going to tell me that
you like this?
- 168 SARAH
No, not really, but... A little
bit anyway.
- 169 MRS LACEY
Who's up for braving the snow to
go to midnight mass? It's twenty
to midnight, coming up.
- 170 DESMOND LEE-WORTLEY
Come over here, Sarah. There are
limits, namely, the midnight mass.
- 171 SARAH
Yes, that one, truly.
- 172 DESMOND LEE-WORTLEY
We'll put on a record. I'm sick of
Christmas carols. What's in there?
- 173 STEPHANIE DUNCAN
With loudness, laughter and
trampling, most of the others put
on their coats and left. Hercules
Poirot rose from his seat.
- 174 MRS LACEY
Are you going to bed, Monsieur
Poirot?
- 175 HERCULE POIROT
Oui, il est tard.
- 176 MRS LACEY
Well, good night. I hope you sleep
well.

6 AN UNEXPECTED WARNING

6

- 177 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
Hercule Poirot climbed the stairs
and entered his bedroom, a vast
room, amply supplied with
radiators. He was on his way to
the four-poster bed when
suddenly...

HERCULE POIROT

178 An envelope... on the pillow...
Here. What's all this dirty paper?
"Don't eat a crumb of the
Christmas pudding. Someone who
means you well." Well, that's
terrible handwriting. And the
spelling mistakes. Quite a cryptic
message. And quite unexpected.

7 CHRISTMAS LUNCH

7

STEPHANIE DUNCAN

179 Christmas lunch started at 2
o'clock in the afternoon. Real
tree trunks were burning in the
big fireplace. Oyster soup had
been followed by two huge turkeys,
of which only the carcasses were
left. Now it was the supreme
moment of pudding, brought in with
great pomp by old Peverell.

MRS LACEY

180 My God, is he going to make it?
One Christmas or another, it's
time for the bedroom. One
Christmas or another, sure enough,
he'll drop the pudding in his
hands. But what's better, taking
the risk of seeing him fall to his
death or the risk of vexing him to
death?

STEPHANIE DUNCAN

181 The pudding sat on a silver plate
as big as a football. A sprig of
holly stood triumphantly at the
top, surrounded by beautiful blue
and red flames.

MRS LACEY

182 It's OK, he's put it down.
Operation Pudding is a success.

STEPHANIE DUNCAN

183 In no time, Mrs Lacey had carved
up the pudding, the plates went
around the guests, still bearing
portions being licked by the
flames.

BRIDGET

184 You have to make a wish, Monsieur
Poirot. It's tradition, a wish
before it goes out. Hurry up,
Granny dear!

- 197 MICHAEL
It means you're going to stay
single.
- 198 HERCULE POIROT
There's a good chance of that.
I've been single for many years
and it's unlikely to change.
- 199 SARAH
Ah, ah, but what's that? Um,
glass. Grandma, is it possible Mrs
Rose left glass in the pudding?
- 200 MRS LACEY
...glass?
- 201 SARAH
Luckily I didn't swallow it. Look,
a toque stone like the kind you
find in papillotes.
- 202 HERCULE POIROT
Do you mind? Here's a huge stone,
red and glittering.
- 203 MRS LACEY
What I can't figure out is, how
did it end up in the pudding?
- 204 MICHAEL
I've got the pig.
- 205 BRIDGET
I've got the ring.
- 206 DESMOND LEE-WORTLEY
I think I've got the tenner.
- 207 STEPHANIE DUNCAN
Amidst the laughter, no one
noticed that Poirot had carelessly
dropped the red stone into his
pocket. After lunch, when the
older members had retired for a
refreshing siesta, Hercule Poirot
went to the kitchen.
- 208 HERCULE POIROT
May I congratulate the cook on a
wonderful meal?
- 209 STEPHANIE DUNCAN
Mrs Ross was a tall, strong person
with a noble bearing, as dignified
as a theatrical duchess.

- 210 MRS ROSS
I'm glad you enjoyed it, sir.
- 211 HERCULE POIROT
Liked it? But you are a genius,
Mrs Ross, a true genius. The
oyster soup, the stuffed turkey,
everything was a revelation to me.
- 212 MRS ROSS
You're very kind.
- 213 HERCULE POIROT
And the Christmas Pudding. Not
bought in the shops. Homemade, of
course.
- 214 MRS ROSS
Oh, yes, sir. It's my own recipe
and it's been the same for years.
The puddings you buy are no good.
Mind you, this one was a bit
young. A good pudding should be
made several weeks in advance.
This one was only made three days
ago, the day before you arrived. I
still respected tradition.
Everyone in the house had to go
into the kitchen, take a turn with
the spoon and make a wish. It's an
old custom, you see.
- 215 HERCULE POIROT
That's very interesting. So
everyone went into the kitchen.
- 216 MRS ROSS
Yes, the young people, Bridget,
Michael, Mr. London and his
sister, Mrs. and Mr. Lacey, yes,
they all had their turn with the
spoon.
- 217 HERCULE POIROT
And how many puddings did you
make? Was this the only one?
- 218 MRS ROSS
No, I made four. Two large ones
and two small ones. The second of
the large ones was for New Year's
Day. The two small ones for the
Colonel and Mrs Lacey, when
they're alone in the house.
- 219 HERCULE POIROT
I see, I see.

220 MRS ROSS
Actually, sir, that's not the good
pudding you had for lunch today.

221 HERCULE POIROT
Not the right pudding? What do you
mean, not the right pudding?

222 MRS ROSS
Well, we have a big special tin in
which we put the pudding in a
bain-marie. But this morning,
Annie, the cook's assistant,
grabbed it off the shelf, knocked
it over and it broke. Obviously, I
couldn't serve the pudding any
more. There could have been glass
splinters in it. So I had to take
the other one, the one for New
Year's Day. You understand, I
don't get the help these days that
I used to get from the servants.

223 HERCULE POIROT
Times do change.

224 MRS ROSS
And this house, empty all the
time. It's only Christmas that the
family comes.

225 HERCULE POIROT
This is the first time, I believe,
that Mr Lee-Wortley and his sister
have been here?

226 MRS ROSS
Yes, sir. But we, here, think he's
not really one for Miss Sarah.
Well... and his poor sister, such
poor health. She looked fine the
day she arrived. And then the
other day, after turning the
puddings, she felt ill again and
hasn't moved from her bed since.
Ah, that's doctors nowadays.

227 HERCULE POIROT
Thank you very much, Mrs Ross.

8 THE MYSTERIOUS INTRUDER

8

228 STEPHANIE DUNCAN
After this long and beautiful
Christmas day, Hercules Poirot
went to bed early.

HERCULE POIROT
 229 Well, well, what a mystery this
 pudding is, I can't make any sense
 of it. Anyway, we shall see.

STEPHANIE DUNCAN
 230 He went to bed, but not to sleep.
 And after two hours of patience...

HERCULE POIROT
 231 Ah, that's it. I knew it! Let's
 pretend we're asleep.

STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
 232 Someone had just entered the room.
 And by the light of a torch, had
 begun to examine Poirot's
 belongings. His wallet, his
 clothes, the drawers. The person
 slipped their hand under the
 pillow, went round the room, and
 finally, after a small exclamation
 of annoyance, left the room.

HERCULE POIROT
 233 Well there you go. Did you perhaps
 think that Hercule Poirot was
 going to hide something where you
 could find it?

STEPHANIE DUNCAN
 234 He turned on his other side and
 fell peacefully asleep. But the
 next morning...

9 A CORPSE IN THE SNOW!

9

MICHAEL
 235 Monsieur Poirot! Monsieur Poirot!

HERCULE POIROT
 236 Er... Yes, but what is it? It's
 Michael. Has something happened?

MICHAEL
 237 Je... Monsieur Poirot. You must
 help me. Something terrible has
 happened!

HERCULE POIROT
 238 Something awful? What is it?

MICHAEL
 239 It's Bridget. She's out there in
 the snow. I think she is... she's
 not moving, she's not talking
 and...

(MORE)

MICHAEL (cont'd)

Oh, you'd better come and see. I'm very much afraid that... I'm sure she's dead.

HERCULE POIROT

240 Eh? Miss Bridget? Dead.

MICHAEL

241 Looks like she's been murdered. There's blood...

HERCULE POIROT

242 Did you wake everyone in the house?

MICHAEL

243 No, I didn't. I've only told you for now. Grandad and Grandma are still asleep. She, Bridget, is lying on the other side of the house, near the terrace. Please come.

HERCULE POIROT

244 Lead the way. I'll follow.

STÉPHANIE DUNCAN

245 Outside, the sky was clear. The snow had stopped, but it had fallen heavily during the night and covered everything in a thick, immaculate blanket. The world seemed pure, white and beautiful.

MICHAEL

246 This is it. This is it.

STEPHANIE DUNCAN

247 A few yards from them, Bridget lay in the snow, dressed in red pyjamas and a white woollen shawl encrusted with a scarlet stain. Her head covered by her black hair. In the middle of the stain stood the curved hilt of a large knife.

HERCULE POIROT

248 My God, it's like being at the theatre.

MICHAEL

249 I know, it's weird. It almost doesn't seem real. See these footprints? I suppose we shouldn't blur them.

- 250 HERCULE POIROT
Oh yes, the tracks. Yes, you
mustn't cover them up. Still, the
first thing is to see if she's
still alive. Don't you think so?
- 251 MICHAEL
Yes, er... obviously. But you
know, I thought that... well...
- 252 HERCULE POIROT
Careful, that's it. You must have
read some detective novels. Above
all, don't touch anything and
leave the body as it is. Only
we're not sure it's a corpse yet.
You have to think doctor before
you think police. Don't you agree?
- 253 MICHAEL
Yes. I thought I was doing the
right thing.
- 254 HERCULE POIROT
All right, stay here. I'm going to
approach from the other side, so
as not to erase the tracks.
Beautiful tracks, aren't they? So
clean!
- 255 MICHAEL
They must be the killer's
footprints.
- 256 HERCULE POIROT
Yes, they are. A long, narrow
foot, with shoes of a very
particular kind. Easy to
recognise, I think. Yes. These
footprints are going to be very
important.
- 257 STEPHANIE DUNCAN
At that moment, Desmond Lee-
Wortley came out of the house with
Sarah.
- 258 DUNCAN LEE-WORTLEY
What are you doing out there?
- 259 SARAH
Is something the matter? My
goodness! It looks like...
- 260 HERCULE POIROT
Yes, it does. Looks like murder,
doesn't it?

- 288 STEPHANIE DUNCAN
With a quick movement, Desmond
bent down and grabbed the stone
from Bridget's hand.
- 289 HERCULE POIROT
You shouldn't have done that.
- 290 DESMOND LEE-WORTLEY
I didn't disturb the corpse, did
I? Whereas that stuff could get
lost. What we need to do is get
the police here as soon as
possible. I'll phone straight
away.
- 291 SARAH
Monsieur Poirot, I don't
understand. Those footprints, what
did you mean?
- 292 HERCULE POIROT
Can you not see for yourself,
Mademoiselle. They're identical.
- 293 SARAH
Ah, but seriously, you...?
Desmond...? No, but that's
ridiculous. I mean, it's him.
That's his car. No, he's... He
must have gone for the police
instead of phoning.
- 294 HERCULE POIROT
Let's go home. We've come here to
catch our death. And we can't do
anything until Desmond comes back
with the police.
- 295 MICHAEL
But we... We can't leave Bridget
like this, on her own!
- 296 HERCULE POIROT
Our staying here won't help her
either, Michael. So come on. It's
sad, it's a tragedy, but there's
nothing more we can do for Miss
Bridget. Let's get in the warmth
and perhaps have a cup of tea or
coffee.

- 297 STEPHANIE DUNCAN
They sat down in the dining room.
And when everyone had a cup of
coffee in front of them...
- 298 HERCULE POIROT
I have a little story to tell you.
It's about a young prince who came
to England.
- 299 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
Hercules Poirot tells them how he
was asked to recover the jewel
that had been stolen by the
prince's mistress.
- 300 HERCULE POIROT
Now this young woman has a friend
who has set up a number of dubious
blackmail operations involving
precious stones. And now I learn
that this young gentleman is
coming to spend Christmas in this
house. As it's important for the
young thief to disappear from view
for a while, the young man has
arranged to hide her here in Kings
Lacey, passing her off as his
sister.
- 301 SARAH
Oh no, no...
- 302 HERCULE POIROT
But that's how it is. The young
lady, who is supposed to be
discharged from hospital, feels
much better when she arrives here,
but then comes the news that a
detective has arrived. She gets
cold feet and doesn't come out of
her room.
- 303 MICHAEL
And the ruby?
- 304 HERCULE POIROT
When she heard I was coming, the
young woman was in the kitchen
with you, all gathered to turn the
pudding dough. That's where she
hid the ruby, in one of the
puddings, the one to be eaten on
New Year's Day of course. By then,
she would have had time to
retrieve it.

(MORE)

HERCULE POIROT (cont'd)

But then, on Christmas morning,
the pudding for lunch fell on the
floor. The good Mrs Ross doesn't
hesitate for a second, she serves
the other pudding.

MICHAEL

305 Bloody hell! You mean to tell me
that at Christmas, Sarah found a
real ruby in her pudding?

HERCULE POIROT

306 And you can imagine Mr Desmond
Lee-Wortley's excitement at the
sight. Then I slipped the ruby
into my pocket. But that evening,
someone came into my room to try
and get it back, without success.
Why did this happen?

MICHAEL

307 Because, in the meantime, you had
given it to Bridget. Didn't you?
But I don't quite understand.
Quickly, the rest!

HERCULE POIROT

308 Come to the window. Take another
look at the crime scene.

MICHAEL

309 Oh, it wasn't all a dream?

SARAH

310 Someone removed the body?

HERCULE POIROT

311 The mystery of the missing corpse.

MICHAEL

312 For heaven's sake, Mr Poirot. You
haven't... He's taken us all for a
ride.

HERCULE POIROT

313 It's true, my children, I've had a
turn playing you. I knew about
your little conspiracy, you see,
so I mounted a counter-attack. Ah!
Here's Miss Bridget.

ALL

314 Bridget?

HERCULE POIROT

315 Well recovered from your prolonged
stay in the snow, I hope.

- 316 BRIDGET
so a big jumper, a good cup of
herbal tea, and I'm in great
shape. My arm's just a bit sore
from the tourniquet you had me put
on. Did I play my part well, Mr
Poirot?
- 317 HERCULE POIROT
You were magnificent, my child.
But you see, everyone else is
still in a fog. Last night, I
approached Miss Bridget. I
explained to her that I knew about
your little plot. Yes, I heard you
plotting outside. And I asked her
if she would play a part for me.
She made the prints in a pair of
Mr Lee-Wortley's shoes.
- 318 SARAH
But what's the point of all this,
Monsieur Poirot? What's the point
of sending Desmond for the police?
They'll be beside themselves when
they realise it was all a set-up.
- 319 HERCULE POIROT
Sarah, Sarah, I don't believe for
a moment that Mr Lee-Wortley went
to the police. All he wanted was
the ruby. I don't think you'll be
seeing him any time soon.
- 320 SARAH
No, it can't be true. I can't
believe a word of this.
- 321 HERCULE POIROT
Alas!
- 322 MICHAEL
And the ruby, Mr Poirot, did you
let that guy get away with it?
- 323 HERCULE POIROT
My goodness...
- 324 BRIDGET
He's pulling our leg again. Eh, M.
Poirot?
- 325 HERCULE POIROT
I'll give you one last trick. Look
in my left pocket.
- 326 BRIDGET
Oh! That's it! There it is.

327 HERCULE POIROT
Don't you see? The one Bridget was holding in her hand was just a fake made of coloured glass. I'd brought it from London just in case. So that's that. The scandal is averted. Mr Desmond, trying to sell the stone, will soon realise that it is a fake, the perfect ending. The prince gets his ruby back. All's well that ends well.

328 SARAH
Well, except for me.

329 HERCULE POIROT
You are mistaken, Mrs. Sarah. You've gained experience. And all experience is good experience.

330 SARAH
So you say.

331 MICHAEL
Well, now we know everything.

332 HERCULE POIROT
We know everything... I don't know everything. It's my job to know. Don't eat a crumb of the Christmas pudding. Someone who wishes you well. Who could have written this message? And why?

333 ANNIE BATES
Sir? Sir?

334 HERCULE POIROT
Who are you, my child?

335 ANNIE BATES
Annie Bates, sir, at your service. I'm here to help Mrs. Ross. I didn't mean to do anything forbidden, you know. I meant well.

336 HERCULE POIROT
Did you write this?

337 ANNIE BATES
I didn't mean any harm, sir. I can assure you of that.

338 HERCULE POIROT
Oh, I'm convinced of that, but explain to me, why did you write it?

339 ANNIE BATES
Because of those people, Mr. Wortley and his sister. His sister! That made me sick. Nobody believed it in the kitchens. Besides, she wasn't any sicker than I was. Everyone! We all thought something strange was going on. Let me explain. One moment, when I was in the downstairs room changing towels, I listened at the door. Mr. Wortley was in his room with her, talking. This detective," he said, "this Hercule Poirot who's coming here, we're going to have to do everything we can to get rid of him as quickly as possible. And then a little later, he asked her, in a sinister tone, "What did you put it in? In the pudding," she replied.

340 HERCULE POIROT
Ah...

341 ANNIE BATES
Oh, sir, it was such a shock. I thought he was trying to poison you. I didn't know what to do. Mrs. Ross won't listen to a scullery maid like me. So I came up with the idea of writing you a warning note. And I put it on your pillow.

342 HERCULE POIROT
You watch too many sensational films, Annie. But I remember you have a good heart and a good dose of ingenuity. Thank you, Annie.

343 ANNIE BATES
You're very welcome.

344 HERCULE POIROT
Well now, let's go. I have nothing more to do here.

345 MICHAEL
Monsieur Poirot!

346 BRIDGET
Monsieur Poirot!

347 MICHAEL
We've had a lot of fun thanks to you.

- 348 BRIDGET
Come on, a kiss under the
mistletoe.
- 349 HERCULE POIROT
Ha ha ha... And your grandparents?
- 350 BRIDGET
They've just got up.
- 351 HERCULE POIROT
In the end, I'm not sorry I came.
I've had a good Christmas, a very
good Christmas.

Music: Santa Baby by Eartha Kitt

11 ANALYSIS WITH ANNE MARTINETTI

11

- 352 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
Adapted from the novel Christmas
Pudding by Agatha Christie with
Michel Vuillermoz, from the
Comédie Française as Hercule
Poirot, Edith Scob as Mrs Lacey,
Mélanie Bernier as Sarah, Camille
Claris as Bridget, Hélène
Alexandridis as Mrs Ross, Jean-
Baptiste Lafarge as Desmond Lee-
Wortley, Yann Tassin as Michael,
Daniel Berlioux as Monsieur
Jesmond, and Marion Malenfant as
Annie. Sound recording, editing
and mixing: Pierric Charles and
Maiwenn Le Jehan, Sound effects:
Élodie Fiat, Assistant director:
Laure Chastant, Director: Cédric
Aussir.

Music: Santa Baby by Eartha Kitt

- 353 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN (CONT'D)
You're listening to France Inter,
"Autant en emporte l'histoire".
Anne Martinetti, good evening.
- 354 ANNE MARTINETTI
Good evening.
- 355 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
Since you were a little girl, I
think, you've been a great fan of
the work and character of Agatha
Christie, to whom you've written
several books.

(MORE)

STÉPHANIE DUNCAN (cont'd)

So the story I've just told is an adaptation of a short story by Agatha Christie, "Christmas Pudding", first published in 1960. A work, I believe, that has often been adapted for English television and radio.

ANNE MARTINETTI

356 Yes, because it obviously evokes the traditional English Christmas, with all its culinary specialities. It's a memory, even for Agatha Christie, who had a truly wonderful memory. She had a 12-course meal at her grandmothers' house, with mince pies, the famous Christmas pudding, turkey, two turkeys, one roasted, the other boiled. Yes, that's funny, a boiled turkey, a roast turkey, Yorkshire Pudding, in short all sorts of English specialities that now no longer make the French jump, but on the contrary they delight in.

STÉPHANIE DUNCAN

357 So Agatha Christie was very fond of Christmas. But at the same time, there's an atmosphere like that, cosy, quiet, very traditional, full of good feelings. And then, at the same time, there's the mystery, the lurking crime. She loves contrasts like that.

ANNE MARTINETTI

358 That's the English world. We like tradition, but we also like modernity. And our English friends, although outside Europe, are extremely European from that point of view. In other words, everything to do with legends, Celtic legends, even Viking legends - they were more or less populated by Vikings too, the Anglo-Saxon territories. All these worlds blend together, and Agatha Christie's work is no exception. We have both Gothic literature, the literature around Sherlock Holmes, which she adored, and then the traditional English side that she experienced as a child.

- 359 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
And then the clash of differences,
well, also, putting a crime in a
seemingly very calm, very nice,
very peaceful world, that's her
speciality.
- 360 ANNE MARTINETTI
That's the point of humour of many
English authors. You have
tradition, appearances, and then
you have reality. Reality means a
violent death, a jealous husband,
an unfaithful wife or vice versa.
And then there are the jewels,
which are also a recurring theme
in Agatha Christie.
- 361 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
And Agatha Christie herself, I
think, loved to eat and she also
loved to cook.
- 362 ANNE MARTINETTI
So she really liked to eat. She
had a family tradition of good
food and gastronomy, because there
was a cook in her parents' house,
Mrs Jane Waugh, who was a very,
very important figure in Agatha
Christie's childhood.
- 363 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
Yes, because she spent a lot of
time, I think, in the kitchen. She
wasn't rejected by her parents,
but in any case she was a bit of a
loner as a little girl.
- 364 ANNE MARTINETTI
In any case, she had the life of a
child at the time, i.e. she had a
nanny who looked after her, but
she could drop into the kitchen at
any hour to look for a cupcake, a
bun, a muffin, and so on.
- 365 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
366 We're in the 1900s.
- 367 ANNE MARTINETTI (cont'd)
Exactly, it's the beginning of the
20th century.
- 368 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
...she was born in 1890.

369 ANNE MARTINETTI
You can see her recounting her gourmet memories in her autobiography, and there are many pages devoted to recipes, and in any case to the excellent dishes she was able to enjoy at the time.

370 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
There you have it, excellent food, good memories, but at the same time, as you said, Anne Martinetti, there's also poison involved, because when you say good food and you say crime novel, you inevitably say poisoning or potential poisoning.

371 ANNE MARTINETTI
Of course, so she uses these moments, either as moments, she uses them in her narrative structure, quite simply to kill. And that actually happens in two thirds of the novels, so we die eating very, very good things.

372 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
Yes, because often in crime novels you die with a revolver or a dagger, but in theirs it's more likely to be poison.

373 ANNE MARTINETTI
It happens too, it happens too. But still, the height of refinement is to die eating a chocolate cake, which is the case in the title "Un meurtre sera commis le..." where the chocolate cake is called "La Mort exquisite", and where it is poisoned, you die drinking cocktails, you die drinking champagne, there's a title called "Meurtre au champagne". And generally speaking, people often die from eating sweets.

374 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
You die where you sinned, a little bit.

375 ANNE MARTINETTI
I've heard, I've heard. The hand diet is on the 25th, so that's a good date to start.

376 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
And it has to be said that Agatha
Christie had a pretty precise
knowledge of poisons.

377 ANNE MARTINETTI
That's right, so she was a
volunteer nurse during the First
World War, and she happened to be
in charge of supplies and the
poisons cupboard in Torquay,
Devon, where she grew up. So she
developed a science of poisons,
which is a real science, and she
used that science, so she never
uses the same poison twice in the
series of novels. She made certain
pharmacists very interesting
characters in her work. And today,
at Torre Abbey, there's a poison
garden, which is Agatha Christie's
garden.

378 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
A must-see.

379 ANNE MARTINETTI
Yes.

380 STÉPHANIE DUNCAN
So in this story too, it seems to
me, what strikes me is Agatha
Christie's mixture of conformity
and humour, so the character of
Hercule Poirot, who is a bit
prudish, who has his little
quirks, he can't do without his
central heating, and Mrs Lacey
too, this charming old lady, even
very attached to Christmas
traditions, who watches over her
granddaughter's morality and at
the same time can't help admitting
that she has a soft spot for
Desmond, this bad boy. She admits
that she had little affairs when
she was young, with forbidden
boys. There's this mix between the
two.

381 ANNE MARTINETTI
And this mixture really does
exist.

(MORE)

ANNE MARTINETTI (cont'd)

It can be found, and I'm particularly fond of it, in all Agatha Christi's works, and this Mrs Lacey is obviously Agatha herself, who is the same age as her grandmother when she writes the novel, and she has this side, yes, she wants to protect her little girl, but she doesn't want to stop her having fun. And this is a recurring theme in her life. When she talks about her life in her autobiography, she says that what interests her is having fun, and that she flirted quite a lot with boys during her trips to Egypt. Of course, as she explains, flirting isn't all she can do, it's not...

STEPHANIE DUNCAN

382 ... Sleep with them.

ANNE MARTINETTI

383 Yes, there's that. But on the other hand, make the young man believe that he's... that you're seduced, dance with him. So this Mrs Lacey, she's particularly charming, funny and an ideal grandmother.

STÉPHANIE DUNCAN

384 And at the same time, it's 1960, no doubt, Agatha Christie is not insensitive to what's going on, to the times, well, we're not in the 1930s any more, she sees a youth emerging, boys wearing tight jeans, long hair. There's a look at youth too, it's a bit like the Beatles' youth already.

ANNE MARTINETTI

385 Yes, it's true, we're very much in that era, and there's another novel called The Third Girl, which accentuates Agatha Christie's somewhat entomologist-like study of young people. And as she says, I love the trousers in the novel, I love the tight trousers that young people wear, but they make their knees look knackered.

(MORE)

ANNE MARTINETTI (cont'd)

And so there's always this side, I'm indulgent, I'm understanding, but that doesn't mean I'm narrow-minded, and I can also see what's wrong with these young people. So there's always a bit of a carrot and stick approach to young people.

STÉPHANIE DUNCAN

386

Thank you very much, Anne Martinetti, for coming to share with us Agatha Christie's Christmas Pudding on this Christmas Eve. You've written a number of books about her, including "Crèmes et Châtiments, recettes délicieuses et criminels d'Agatha Christie", co-written with François Rivière and published by Lattès, and more recently, "Mortel Cocktail", published by Le Masque, and of course, the new "Christmas Pudding" by Agatha Christie, which is available from Livre de Poche.

Music

STÉPHANIE DUNCAN (CONT'D)

387

"Autant en importe l'histoire" is finished for this evening. Director Juliette Goux was assisted by Emmanuel Fournier, with Kevin Pellot on technical duties. You can listen to or podcast this programme again on our FranceInter.fr website, where I look forward to your comments, as well as on the programme's Facebook page. Next Sunday, there will be no 'Gone with the Wind', but a two-hour 'Masque et la plume', devoted to Christmas films and shows, to mark New Year's Eve. As for me, I look forward to seeing you again on Sunday 7 January, with a 'Gone with the Wind' devoted to Mary Shelley, the English writer who, in 1816, during a strange summer spent in the Swiss mountains, in the company of her poet friends, invented a hero of fantasy literature with a bright future, 'Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus'. Guaranteed to thrill you on Sunday 7 January.

(MORE)

STÉPHANIE DUNCAN (CONT'D)

But in a few minutes, just after the flash, we'll be continuing our special Christmas evening with Soro Solo, who's offering us...

SORO SOLO

388

A Christmas with Liz McComb for the carol and Simon Winsé from Burkina Faso for a tropical Christmas overture.