

MYSTERY OF THE COEUR ROSE A PARVENUE DIAMONDS
 By Libby Sternberg © November 2015
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CHARACTERS:

CC, No-No, Ja-Ja, Yas-Yas, Sacre Bleu, Poirot, and silent butler

PROPS: Inflatable shark, potted plant, scarves, beauty-pageant-style sashes, red herrings,
 deck chair, gaudy fake jewels (pink or red if possible)

Although there are breaks between scenes, they can be telescoped in with no breaks.

SCENE 1:

BUTLER RINGS bell or gong to signal attention must be paid. **POIROT** goes onstage. When crowd quiets, he/she speaks. As he/she introduces each character, they step up, holding what appears to be their copies of the ship's newsletter, but it's really their script. **NOTE:** CC always has a scarf (a boa) with her until the end...

POIROT

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the SS MACADAMIA. As you see from the ship's newsletter, we are honored with several special passengers. ...Throughout the evening, you will get to "eavesdrop" on our esteemed guests. Pay close attention. Now, the introductions...First, the beautiful socialite and Midwestern Corn Queen 1929, Claire Chiffonade....

CLAIRE

(stepping forward):

Please, call me CC...

POIROT

She is traveling to France to meet her fiancé, the umbrella magnate, Ouiseau-Ouimere...

CC

Oh, all his friends call him Oui-Oui

POIROT

CC...Oui-oui...Next, we have the distinguished investment magnate Norman Noble...

NORMAN NOBLE

(stepping forward):

Feel free to call me No-No.

POIROT

Of course. No-no, meet CC. And now Mr. Noble's lovely wife, Yasmine Yasterdez

YASMINE

(stepping forward):

Oh, do call me Yas-Yas. All my *famous* friends d

POIROT

Yas-Yas, you already know No-no. This is CC. And now, the great opera impresario Herr Jakob Jarlzburg-Neindunklekammerlein-Neinmurgotterdamerung-Achschuffe

JA-JA

(stepping on stage):

You may shorten my name, if you please.

POIROT:

Thank goodness!

JA-JA:

To...Ja-Ja ...

POIROT:

(thinking he's finished)

Ja-Ja...this is...

JA-JA

(holding up hand to indicate there's more):

Ja-Ja-Nein-Nein

POIROT

(again thinking he's finished):

Okay. Ja-Ja-Nein-Nein, this is....

JA-JA

(holding up hand again):

Ahchoo! Ja-Ja-Nein-Nein-Ahchoo!

EVERYONE:

Gesundheit!

POIROT:

That leads us to the Right Reverend Moudit Bleus...

FR BLEUS

*(stepping on stage, nearly tripping,
apologizing for himself, dropping something):*
Oh, thank you, yes, yes...

YASMINE:

You called for me? Oui?

CC

Someone is asking for my fiancé, yes, yes?

YASMINE:

I am here!

CC

Not you. No, no.

NO-NO:

No-No at your service! Unless you meant Mr.
Nein-Nein

JA-JA:

It's...Ja-Ja-Nein-Nein-Ahchoo!

EVERYONE:

Gesundheit!

POIROT

Sacre Bleus!

FR BLEU:

Yes, yes?

YASMINE:

Oui, oui?

CC:

But my fiancé is not here.

YASMINE:

No! No!

NO-NO:

(clicking heels together)
At your service!

POIROT*(addressing audience):*

Mon dieu! Quelle frommage! Let me try to straighten this all out, but first...let me introduce myself. I am the great detective Poirot! No, not that Poirot. I am his much more skilled, much more nuanced, much more, how do you say...smarter...younger American cousin, Maureen Joelle Poirot. (OR MAURICE JOEL IF PLAYED BY A MAN) Or...Mau-Jo, for short. Let us hope my services are not needed this evening. But in the meantime, just to make sure we keep everyone straight, we are sporting these lovely...sashes...*n'est ce pas, bonne chance, quell dommage!* And now, I will take a much-needed nap to rest my gray matter....

POIROT reclines on deck chair with blanket over him. Starts snoring.

CC and JA-JA step up to railing, as if he's not there. JA-JA drapes his jacket over CC's shoulders.

JA-JA:

You look cold, Fraulein.

CC:

Oh, I love it when men speak French.

JA-JA:

But your fiancé, he speaks the French all the time, nein?

CC:

Is that what it is? I thought he had a cold!

JA-JA:

What lovely jewels you have. May I see them? Where did you get them?

CC:

Oui-Oui...

He leans forward and picks up necklace from her neck. She reacts as if he is being fresh, and flutters handkerchief in his face, akin to a slap.

JA-JA:

But you said *oui* – yes -- I could look...

CC:

I was telling you how I got them! Oui-Oui gave them to me. They're rare. They're worth *(to audience)* ONE MILLION SEVEN THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY TWO DOLLARS AND FIFTY SEVEN CENTS.

JA-JA:

So precise an amount....

CC:

He told me he had them appraised.

JA-JA:

They are lovely.

(To audience):

One could finance quite an opera production with that amount...or at least a half a Ring Cycle at the Met....

(back to CC):

You keep them safe?

CC:

(Nodding enthusiastically):

They never leave me!

JA-JA:

Very good to know. Would you join me for some refreshments?

CC:

I'd be delighted!

They walk off into the crowd, as YAS-YAS steps up, looking after them.

YAS-YAS:

Yes, very good to know, CC, that the jewels stay around your scrawny, conniving neck!

YAS-YAS follows them off stage.

POIROT stirs, gets up (with help from BUTLER), stares at crowd.

POIROT

Very interesting. So, Herr Ja-Ja and Madame Yas-Yas both covet Mademoiselle's jewels! What will happen next?

END SCENE

CHARACTERS mingle with guests for some minutes. Then GONG/BELL sounds, rung by BUTLER.

SCENE 2**POIROT**

Shh! If you are quiet, you might eavesdrop on another scene!

POIROT slips under blanket on deck chair as NO-NO and YAS-YAS approach, as if in conversation already. They hold papers – ostensibly a contract, but really the script. CC lurks nearby, overhearing conversation.

NO-NO:

As you can see, my terms are quite reasonable.

YAS-YAS

But Oui-Oui has refused your offer to buy his business!

NO-NO:

He claims it is his heritage.

YAS-YAS:

But a heritage doesn't pay the bills. You're offering a good price.

NO-NO

His telegram says he cannot let it go. He said he'd sell his last treasure, before putting it on the market!

CC

(Aside to audience, as she gasps and clutches necklace)

His last treasure!

NO-NO:

Let me try wiring him once more!

(He starts to walk away, muttering to himself)

I'll get that company if I have to take his last treasure to do it!

NO-NO leaves and is replaced by JA-JA. He is carrying papers, ostensibly YAS-YAS's resume.

JA-JA:

There you are! If I told you once, I've told you a thousand times, I have no part for you this year! Nothing is available! I do not need to read your list of roles! I know your repertoire!

YAS-YAS:

But, Herr...Ja-ja-nein-nein-ahchoo...

(looks at audience – all say Gesundheit)...

I know I'm right for your Cosi fan Tutte, the one set during the Pelloponisian Wars! What an intellect you have, such artistry, such creativity, such...imagination! Surely you have a spot for me...if I can only...offer you something....

(She gets close to him, runs her finger up his arm, but he pushes her away.)

JA-JA:

Please, do you think my artistry can be bought so cheaply? Ha! I have integrity! Honor! Principles!

YAS-YAS:

(Spotting CC, who is fingering the jewels nearby):

What about ONE MILLION SEVEN THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY TWO DOLLARS AND FIFTY SEVEN CENTS? Would that do?

JA-JA:

(Turns to her, intrigued):

Such a precise figure, Meine Susse Frau.

YAS-YAS:

(Laughing)

I thought you said your artistry couldn't be bought!

JA-JA:

I said it couldn't be bought so...*cheaply*. Now, let's talk...

They leave, arm in arm.

POIROT gets up, yawns, looks at the crowd.

POIROT:

Aha, more plotting! So now we know that Monsier Oui-Oui would use his last treasure to save his company, and Mister No-No would take that treasure if he could, while Madame Yas-Yas would love that treasure to secure a role with Herr Ja-Ja's opera company...The game's afoot!

END OF SCENE

CHARACTERS MINGLE FOR ANOTHER 15 MINUTES. IT IS CRUCIAL THAT ALL CHARACTERS REMAIN IN THE AUDIENCE DURING THIS INTERLUDE EXCEPT CC AND SACRE BLEUS, WHO APPEAR IN NEXT SCENE. DURING THIS INTERLUDE STAGE MANGER OR OTHER HELPER TAKES SHARK WITH JEWELRY IN A BAG AND PLACES IT UNDER A TABLE IN THE ROOM OR IN NEARBY ROOM OR KITCHEN.

SCENE 3

ALL CHARACTERS CARRY WHAT APPEARS TO BE THE NEWSLETTER BUT IS THEIR SCRIPT.

BUTLER rings gong/bell signaling new scene. When audience quiets, we see on stage CC on the deck chair, under the blanket, her hand resting on top of the blanket, clutching the SS MACADAMIA NEWSLETTER (but really the script). SACRE BLEUS approaches, sees something by the side of her chair – her handkerchief -- picks it up as if to return it to her prone body where her hand rests on top the blanket, but trips, dropping the handkerchief overboard.

SACRE BLEUS:

Oh, my. I hope that wasn't valuable.
(*Leaves stage.*)

POIROT comes from shadows, having observed the scene.

LIGHTS GO OUT! A few seconds later, CC SCREAMS! LIGHTS COME BACK ON. CC is at the railing, clasp throat. Jewels are gone.

CC:

Help! Help! I've been robbed!

POIROT:

Mademoiselle, what is the problem? How can I help you?

CC:

My necklace and earrings, the diamonds! They're gone! (starts sobbing and falls into Poirot's arms)

POIROT:

Sacre bleu!

SACRE BLEUS:

Yes, yes?

YAS-YAS

(*appearing*):

Oui, oui?

CC

Someone called my fiancé? He is here?

POIROT:

No, no!

NO-NO:

Yes, yes?

CC:

(looking around)

Where is he?

JA-JA:

What is all this commotion?

CC:

(groaning)

No one called you, Ja-Ja-Nein-Nein...Ahchoo!

ALL:

Gesundheit!

POIROT:

Mademoiselle Chiffonade's jewels have been stolen, the famous Coeur Rose a Parvenu diamonds!

SACRE BLEUS:

No! Those diamonds were lost long ago! They belonged to my great-great-great grandmother, the *Duchess Blanche Dubois d'Avenue Desire*, who lost them -- and a critical part of her anatomy -- in the French Revolution! I've been searching for them my whole life!

CC

They were insured, though.

POIROT

No, they were not! I checked.

CC gasps and collapses in his arms!

POIROT:

Get her some smelling salts! Now, on to interrogate the suspects...

(To Sacre Bleues)

Monsieur, why were you, a lowly priest who has taken the vow of poverty, searching for these diamonds?

SACRE BLEUS:

To fund my missionary trip, of course!

POIROT

(to audience):

He so readily admits this—is it because he is innocent, or he wants to appear innocent by throwing at us, what do you call it...it is on the tip of my tongue....

Just then, a small red fish jumps up from the waves...(thrown by an extra, perhaps several or SACRE BLEU)

POIROT:

Ah, the red herring! That is it. But perhaps, the culprit is one of these other fine guests! Or...anyone in this room! Now, if you please, to indulge me...Would you be so kind as to help me, Mesdames and Messieurs? Would you look around you, even under the tables, to see if anyone is hiding the jewels they have so nefariously and deviously stolen from Mademoiselle Chiffonade?

GIVE TIME FOR EVERYONE TO LOOK. SOMEONE WILL FIND AN INFLATABLE SHARK WITH THE JEWELS – CAN SET THIS UP AHEAD OF TIME WITH SOMEBODY

AUDIENCE MEMBER FINDS SHARK, POIROT ASKS THEM TO BRING FORWARD: THIS IS AN IMPROV MOMENT.

Once POIROT has the bejeweled shark in hand (IMPORTANT: SHARK HAS ONE PIECE OF JEWELRY MISSING.

POIROT:

This is, how you say, *extraordinaire!* Fortunately for us — this deadly ravenous man-eating shark has been caught before we had to get a bigger boat. *Bon chance!* So, the puzzle, *mes cher amis*, is: Who took the jewels and why did they land in the sea? Was the culprit afraid of being caught and ditched the evidence? While I put my own gray matter to work, why don't you do the same? And we shall reunite in ten minutes, at which time, we shall entertain possibilities, and I, with my superior intellect – and the script—will tell you who is the culprit...oui, oui?

CC

Yes, yes?

YAS-YAS:

Oui, oui?

POIROT:

No, no!

NO-NO:

You called?

POIROT:

No! Non! Nein, Nein!

JA-JA:

I keep telling you, it's Ja-Ja-Nein-Nein...Ahchoo!

EVERYONE

(gesturing to audience to join in):

Gesundheit!

POIROT:

Sacre...

SACRE BLEUS starts to come forward...

POIROT

(sees him, stops himself from uttering the rest of it.):

The game's afoot! Solve the mystery! Write who you think is the thief... on paper before you. We will collect your votes!

END SCENE

TEN MINUTE INTERLUDE DURING WHICH VOTES ARE COLLECTED AND TALLIED.

SCENE 5: THE DENOUEMENT

BUTLER rings GONG/BELL to indicate scene is about to begin. ALL CHARACTERS are on stage. A flip-chart or chalkboard is nearby with characters names on them and votes. CHARACTERS all carry papers, ostensibly given to them by Poirot, as he explains, but they're really scripts.

POIROT:

Let me first tell you the results of your own investigating.
(points to votes next to each character's name and recites them)
 And now...I will present the results of my sleuthing...
 Now, first, let us deal with Monsieur Oui-Oui, Mademoiselle's fiancée in France. He had ample reason to discard the jewels, no? He could have arranged for them to be purloined in order to sell them to save his company.

CC

He would never do that! He gave them to me because he loves me!

POIROT:

But he wired to Monsieur No-No that he would sacrifice any "treasure" to save his company.

POIROT:

(Turning to Ja-Ja)

Just as you would sacrifice much for your art.

JA-JA:

But of course!

POIROT:

When Mlle Chiffonade spurned your advances, did you look for other ways to perhaps have her "share" the jewels with you?

JA-JA:

I don't know what you are talking about!

POIROT:

Oh, I think you do. As does Madame Yasmine, non, non?

NO-NO:

What?

POIROT:

I will deal with you *dans une minute*, Monsieur Noble.
(to YAS-YAS):

Madame Yasterdez, you would have done anything to secure a role in the maestro's next production, would you not? Even offering him money. But where would the money come from, Madame? Perhaps by "finding" some expensive jewelry?

YAS-YAS looks horrified and offended.

POIROT:

(To No-No)

That brings us to you, Monsieur Noble. Our umbrella magnate said he would sacrifice any treasure to retain the legacy of his family's company. And yet, he had just such a treasure ready to sacrifice – the jewels! He could have asked Mademoiselle Chiffonade for them to sell or pawn. But you did not want him to have such recourse, am I correct?

YAS-YAS:

No! No!

NO-NO:

(To his wife, Yas-Yas):

I am not a thief! I make my money the old-fashioned way—by getting companies at a steal!

POIROT:

But all of you—

(pointing to NO-NO, JA-JA and YAS-YAS, who step forward)

You all have alibis, do you not? You were here, seen by these very guests ...

(sweeps arms to the audience)

...during the time of the theft.

(To audience)

Raise your hand if you saw these fine folk when the theft took place!

POIROT

So, the only people around during the theft were...Mademoiselle Chiffonade herself and, dare I say it, Sacre Bleues! As you were sleeping, Mademoiselle, Sacre saw your scarf slipping...he picked it up...but subsequently tripped and dropped it over the rail. One might have mistakenly thought he accidentally sent the jewels flying to amphibian oblivion, but that was not so. It was merely your scarf he saw lying on the ground...which you no longer have on your person –

CC:

(interrupting him):

Wait! And you, Miss Mo-Jo Poirot! You were around when they disappeared!
Not just me and the priest!

SACRE BLEUES:

That's true! I saw you!

CC:

Yes, search her!

POIROT:

Search me? What for? The jewels were found—on the shark!

CC:

All but my ring!

ALL CHARACTERS STEP FORWARD. POIROT opens trench coat, lets them search pockets, etc., pulls out string of handkerchiefs a la Harpo Marx, musical instruments, block of cheese, bottle of wine...crazy stuff. No ring.

POIROT:

You see, nothing! Your effort to distract has been for naught, Mademoiselle. If your ring is missing, Mademoiselle Chiffonade, it is because our fishy friend was not fortunate enough to fetch the flying fob with his fins...when YOU threw them overboard!

ALL GASP!

POIROT:

Yes, it was you, Mademoiselle. In a sweet and loyal attempt to help your affianced. You overheard Monsieur Noble talking about how your fiancée's company was failing. You knew he would find it difficult to ask you to part with the jewels. So you decided you would discard them...for the insurance money! But there is no money, n'est ce pas? And why would he not insure such precious stones, eh? Because...they are not so precious, are they? As our friend, the priest, has told us, they have been missing for a very long time. In point of fact, they never were found. The ones your fiancée gave to you and claimed were worth one million...and some change! Phonies! The Coeur Rose a Parvenu diamonds are just what their name implies:

ALL:
CRAP!

ALL GASP!

POIROT:

So you, Mademoiselle are guilty! Guilty of attempted insurance fraud!

CC:

Oh, no, no!

NO-NO:

Yes, yes?

YAS-YAS:

Sacre bleues!

SACRE BLEUES:

I am here! So is...

(as JA-JA steps forward)

Ja-Ja-Nein-Nein...Ah..CHOO!

ALL

(gesturing to audience):

GESUNDHEIT!

POIROT:

And GOOD NIGHT!

Riotous applause.

POIROT

Thank you for coming and indulging us. Feel free to stay and socialize. Some of you might think this little performance was not worth ten dollars. But if a few think it was worth more, there's a donation bowl on the table!

THE END