

*Act II*

*Scene IV*

The Buffet at the Railway Station of Caen

The stage represents the Buffet at the Railway Station of Caen in Normandy. At the back, there are three large, open doors through which one can see the station with its trains and passengers coming and going. A station manager gives orders; a conductor answers the questions of an officer; porters push luggage carts; a police officer is on duty. In the Buffet room itself, travelers are eating or being served. Some are seated at a long table in the middle, others at small tables, drinking boiling coffee which they have just served themselves. One sees piles of luggage and other articles of travel.

AT RISE, a train is in the station. At one small table, there is a traveler, a little boy and a dog. All three are seated on chairs.

ALL THE TRAVELERS

(calling at the same time)

Waiter! Look, waiter, this coffee is too hot!  
Undrinkable.

A Conductor enters at the back.

CONDUCTOR

Travelers to Meyden, Falaise, Argenton and  
Le Mans—boarding now!

VARIOUS TRAVELERS

What? Already! Oh!

Some put their cups to their lips, burn themselves and utter screams.

WAITER

(sadistic)

Don't rush, ladies and gentlemen, don't rush. You still have 15 seconds.

TRAVELER No. 1

(furious)

And no way to drink this coffee! It's insane!

The travelers leave money on the tables. They rush, jostling each other onto the platform.

Traveler No. 1 hands a large banknote to the Waiter.

TRAVELER No. 1

Waiter, quick, pay yourself.

WAITER

(slowly, on purpose)

Let's see. You had a café-crème with bread...

TRAVELER No. 1

(stamping his foot)  
Yes—my change—my change.

WAITER  
With bread... and butter, I think...

CONDUCTOR  
Travelers to Meyden, Falaise, Argenton and  
Le Mans—boarding now!

TRAVELER No. 1  
Yes, yes. Fine! Fine! Keep the change then!

WAITER  
(pocketing the money)  
It always ends the same way.

Very calmly, he replaces the uneaten food in the buffet.

As he is about to pay the Cashier, a Second Traveler is looking for his overcoat in his suitcase.

TRAVELER No. 2  
Now, that's it. My coat has vanished!

CASHIER  
Don't worry, Monsieur. We'll look for it.

TRAVELER No. 2  
Look for it, yes. My train is about to leave.  
(he offers his card)  
Here's my address! You will send it to me. It's a yellow overcoat. And if you don't find it, I will demand 1,000 francs in damages from your rotten company.

He runs out.

CASHIER  
(aside)  
And they will give you 100 *sous*. You should have read the tariff.

Another Traveler (TRAVELER No. 3) rises to leave. At that moment, the traveler with the little boy—who is none other than Sherlock Holmes—rises and goes to him.

HOLMES  
Excuse me, sir! Will you allow me to ask you a question?

TRAVELER No. 3  
By all means, Monsieur.

HOLMES  
Why are you so hot?

TRAVELER No. 3  
(surprised)

What do you say?

HOLMES

I say that you have on nothing but a light Macfarlane and therefore you shouldn't perspire because it's very cool this morning.

TRAVELER No. 3

Why, Monsieur—

HOLMES

So, if you are perspiring, it's because under the Macfarlane, you have another coat—and that this coat is probably the one you've just “borrowed” from this gentleman.

TRAVELER No. 3

Monsieur?

HOLMES

Come on, no scenes! Take it off, I beg you, and go give it back to its rightful owner. And now, I won't keep you any longer. Sir, I have, indeed, the honor—

Traveler No. 3 leaves speechless, obeying Holmes' orders as if he was hypnotized. The Detective sits down tranquilly.

FREDERICK

(with admiration)

Ah! Bravo, Papa. You are truly the greatest detective in the world.

HOLMES

Oh, a simple consulting detective, Frederick.

FREDERICK

Yes, but smarter than all the other detectives combined. Oh, Papa, one day I'd like to be as good a detective as you.

HOLMES

It doesn't suffice to want to! Detectives are born—not made. You can perfect the necessary qualities, but you must first have them within. Do you possess these qualities, Frederick?

FREDERICK

Oh, yes, Papa. Heavens, at school, every time crayons vanish from the desks of one of my friends, I'm always the one who discovers who's stolen them.

HOLMES

Really? And how do you find the culprit?

FREDERICK

Ah! This way. First off, I make a detailed investigation, then I consider the clues, and by deduction, I always find the culprit. I must have a knack for it! Why, I've got almost as much *flair* as Toby here.

He caresses the dog.

HOLMES

In that case, you have a lot.

FREDERICK

Plenty! Oh, Papa, it would be so nice if you were to take me as your student.

HOLMES

I'm not saying I won't, Frederick. Once I've determined that you truly have the necessary qualities.

Holmes pulls out his pipe and fills it. The newspaper salesman enters the Buffet with his basket.

NEWSPAPER SALESMAN

Ask for the Paris papers. New theft by Arsène Lupin.

FREDERICK

Arsène Lupin! Oh, Papa, will you buy the paper? I would like to know what he's done this time, this  
Lupin. I find this Gentleman Burglar exciting.

HOLMES

You're right, Frederick. That fellow Lupin is an interesting character.

(calling)

Hey! Merchant.

NEWSPAPER SALESMAN

The Caen paper, Monsieur?

HOLMES

No—the Paris paper—*Le Figaro*.

NEWSPAPER SALESMAN

Here!

HOLMES

Thanks!

Holmes pays the newsman who goes off.

FREDERICK

Oh, read, Papa, read.

Holmes unfolds the paper and starts reading.

HOLMES

*We have just learned that, last night, Arsène Lupin stole a priceless diamond from M. Gottlieb, a respected jeweler. The famous Chief Inspector Ganimard of the Sûreté, having discovered, with his usual perspicacity, that Lupin was planning to leave for America, went immediately to Le Havre where he is certain of arresting him very soon.*

(to Frederick)

Well, Frederick, here's an opportunity to prove your abilities as a detective. Let's see—tell me what you think of this business.

FREDERICK

What do I think of it?

(concentrating)

First of all, I am certain of one thing.

HOLMES

Which is?

FREDERICK

That this Ganimard is an imbecile.

HOLMES

Ah, and why?

FREDERICK

Because it's almost as if he had written to Lupin,  
"I am going to Le Havre, so don't go there."

HOLMES

Not bad, Frederick. And in your opinion, what's  
Lupin going to do?

FREDERICK

Since he must rid himself of the diamond, and it's only in America where anyone is rich enough to  
buy it from him, he'll take either an English or German liner to get there.

HOLMES

And, as the German line is the most rapid, it is most probably that he is embarking from  
Cherbourg!

FREDERICK

That's elementary. Oh, Papa, since we are passing through Cherbourg to return to England, do you  
think that it would be amusing to meet Lupin and make his acquaintance?

HOLMES

Evidently, Fred! But, it remains to be seen if he will be disposed to make ours.

At this moment, an automobilist enters with his chauffeur. It's Arsène Lupin, with his real face, the one we  
saw when he was in Gottlieb's dressing room. The chauffeur is Fouinard.

Holmes follows him with his eyes during the following scene.

LUPIN

(furious)

I tell you, it's your fault. An automobile never breaks down if its chauffeur knows his business.

FOUINARD

Boss, I'm truly sorry.

LUPIN

That's fine, that's fine.

(to the waiter)

Tell me, *garçon*, can you tell me how soon there will be a train to Cherbourg?

WAITER

I don't know, Monsieur. I work for the café—I handle the hot coffee.

Lupin exasperated, turns around and notices the Conductor.

LUPIN

Ah, a conductor.

CONDUCTOR

Monsieur?

LUPIN

What time is the train for Cherbourg?

CONDUCTOR

I don't know, Monsieur.

LUPIN

What do you mean, you don't know? Ah, this is insane. No one knows anything in this station. And there's not one sign.

CONDUCTOR

On the West-East, the trains come and go when they please. That's the general rule.

LUPIN

(bitter)

That's charming.

Fouinard notices a piece of cutlery on the table, takes off his goggles and puts the cutlery in his pocket.

FOUINARD

Oh, nice cutlery.

LUPIN

I still must take the boat to Cherbourg this very day.

HOLMES

(low to Frederick)

To Cherbourg! Did you hear, Frederick?

FREDERICK

Yes, Papa.

Meanwhile, Lupin has noticed Fouinard's petty theft.

LUPIN

What is that you've got hidden in your pocket again?

FOUINARD

Oh, boss, a no-account piece of cutlery.

Lupin makes an angry, silent gesture at his assistant.

FOUINARD

It's not silver, it's only electroplated.

LUPIN

(exasperated)

It's for that that this idiot—

FOUINARD

What can I do? I can't help myself!

LUPIN

Come on! Leave it.

Fouinard replaces the cutlery.

HOLMES

(low)

Frederick, listen to what I'm going to tell you.

FREDERICK

Yes, Papa.

Holmes whispers in his son's ear. The Newspaper Salesman reappears.

NEWSPAPER SALESMAN

Ask for the Paris papers! Complete details of Arsène Lupin's latest theft.