

AGATHA CHRISTIE
THE DISSAPEARENCE
OF MR. DAVENHEIM



Poirot and I were expecting our old friend Inspector Japp of Scotland Yard to tea. We were sitting round the teatable awaiting his arrival. Poirot had just finished carefully straightening the cups and saucers which our land-lady was in the habit of throwing, rather than placing, on the table. He had also breathed heavily on the metal teapot, and polished it with a silk handkerchief. The kettle was on the boil, and a small enamel saucepan beside it contained some thick, sweet chocolate which was more to Poirot's palate than what he described as "your English poison." A sharp "rat-tat" sounded below, and a few minutes afterwards Japp entered briskly.

“Hope I’m not late,” he said as he greeted us. “To tell the truth, I was yarning with Miller, the man who’s in charge of the Davenheim case.”

I pricked up my ears. For the last three days the papers had been full of the strange disappearance of Mr Davenheim, senior partner of Davenheim and Salmon, the well-known bankers and financiers. On Saturday last he had walked out of his house, and had never been seen since. I looked forward to extracting some interesting details from Japp.

“I should have thought,” I remarked, “that it would be almost impossible for anyone to ‘disappear’ nowadays.”

Poirot moved a plate of bread and butter the eighth of an inch, and said sharply:

“Be exact, my friend. What do you mean by ‘disappear’? To which class of disappearance are you referring?”

“Are disappearances classified and labeled, then?” I laughed. Japp smiled also. Poirot frowned at us both.

“But certainly they are! They fall into three categories: First, and most common, the voluntary disappearance. Second, the much abused ‘loss of memory’ case - rare, but occasionally genuine. Third, murder, and a more or less successful disposal of the body. Do you refer to all three as impossible of execution?”

“Very nearly so, I should think. You might lose your own memory, but someone would be