

# STRANGERS ON A TRAIN

"Shall I tell you one of my ideas for murdering my father?"

"No", Guy said. He put his hand over the glass Bruno was about to refill.

"Which do you want, the busted light socket in the bathroom or the carbon monoxide garage?"

5 "Do it and stop talking about it!"

"I'll do it, don't think I won't! Know what else I'll do some day? Commit suicide if I happen to feel like committing suicide and fix it so it looks like my worst enemy murdered me."

10 Guy looked at him in disgust. Bruno seemed to be growing indefinite at the edges, as if by some process of deliquescence. He seemed only a voice and a spirit now, the spirit of evil. All he despised, Guy thought, Bruno represented. All the things he would not want to be, Bruno was, or would become.

"Want me to dope out a perfect murder of your wife for you? You might want to use it some time." Bruno squirmed with self-consciousness under Guy's scrutiny.

15 Guy stood up. "I want to take a walk."

Bruno slammed his palms together. "Hey! Cheeses, what an idea! We murder for each other, see? I kill your wife and you kill my father! We meet on the train, see, and nobody knows we know each other! Perfect alibis! Catch?"

20 The wall before his eyes pulsed rhythmically, as if it were about to spring apart. *Murder*. The word sickened him, terrified him. He wanted to break away from Bruno, get out of the room, but a nightmarish heaviness held him. He tried to steady himself by straightening out the wall, by understanding what Bruno was saying, because he could feel there was logic somewhere, like a problem or a puzzle to be solved.

25 Bruno's tobacco-stained hands jumped and trembled on his knees. "Air-tight alibis!" he shrieked. "It's the idea of my life! Don't you get it? I could do it some time when you are out of town and you could do it when I was out of town."

Guy understood. No one could ever, possibly, find out.

30 "It would give me a great pleasure to stop a career like Miriam's and to further a career like yours." Bruno giggled. "Don't you agree she ought to be stopped before she ruins a lot of other people? Sit down, Guy!"

She hasn't ruined me, Guy wanted to remind him, but Bruno gave him no time.

35 "I mean, just supposing the set-up was that. Could you do it? You could tell me all about where she lived, you know, and I could do the same for you, as good as if you lived there. We could leave fingerprints all over the place and only drive the dicks batty!" He snickered. "Months apart, of course, and strictly no communication. Christ, it's a cinch!" He stood up and nearly toppled, getting his drink. Then he was saying, right in Guy's face, with suffocating confidence: "You could do it, huh, Guy? Wouldn't be any hitches, I swear. I'd fix everything, I swear, Guy."

**Patricia Highsmith, *Strangers on a train* (1950)**

