Cracks in the Facade: Act 1 of The Visit

Welcome to Guellen! Throughout Act 1, the citizens of Guellen work hard to present a particular image of themselves and their town. The Mayor rehearses speeches, the townspeople prepare celebrations, and everyone seems eager to convince Claire Zachanassian that Guellen is a respectable community deserving of her generosity. Yet Dürrenmatt repeatedly introduces small details that create doubt about people and places. Certain objects seem oddly out of place. Some figures, particularly the Schoolmaster, notice things that others would rather ignore. And Claire herself drops some pretty heavy hints about the role she would like certain characters to play in her scheme for justice… or revenge! These moments act as *foreshadowing*, hinting at developments that will become important later in the play.

Skim and scan Act 1 looking for 'cracks in the facade.' What details might make an audience suspicious that there is more going on beneath the surface of the town, and of Claire's return, even before she makes her incredible offer?

People and Places of Guellen	Audience Suspicions
Guellen Railway Station: *The bustling gateway to a once proud and prosperous town.*	The dilapidated station and the trains that no longer stop reveal Guellen's economic decline.
The Golden Apostle Hotel: *An elegant venue showcasing Guellen's hospitality and civic pride.*	
Petersen's Barn: *A charming reminder of Guellen's rural heritage.*	
The Mayor: *A principled civic leader dedicated to the welfare of Guellen.*	
Alfred Ill: *Respected shopkeeper, family man, and future mayor.*	
Matilda Ill: *A devoted spouse and respected member of the community who runs the shop.*	
The Policeman: *Guardian of law, order, and justice.*	
The Priest: *Moral guide to the people of Guellen.*	
The Gymnast: *A symbol of Guellen's energy, health, and civic spirit.*	
Claire Zachanassian: *A generous daughter of Guellen returning to help her hometown.*	