

## Side A

WREN

I don't believe your husband is going to like me. (*Moving a few paces towards MOLLIE*) How long have you been married? Are you very much in love?

MOLLIE

(*coldly*) We've been married just a year. (*Moving towards the stairs L*) Perhaps you'd like to go up and see your room?

WREN

Ticked off! (*He moves above the sofa table*) But I do so like knowing all about people. I mean, I think people are so madly interesting. Don't you?

MOLLIE

Well, I suppose some are and (*turning to WREN*) some are not.

WREN

No, I don't agree. They're *all* interesting, because you never really know what anyone is like – or what they are really thinking. For instance, *you* don't know what I'm thinking about now, do you? (*He smiles at some secret joke*)

MOLLIE

Not in the least. (*She moves down to the sofa table and takes a cigarette from the box*) Cigarette?

WREN

No, thank you. (*Moving to R of MOLLIE*) You see? The only people who really know what other people are like are artists – and they don't know why they know it! But if they're portrait painters (*he moves C*) it comes out- (*he sits on the right arm of the sofa*) on the canvas.

MOLLIE

Are you a painter? (*She lights her cigarette*)

WREN

No, I'm an architect. My parents, you know, baptized me Christopher, in the hope that I would be an architect. Christopher Wren! (*he laughs*) As good as halfway home. Actually, of course, everyone laughs about it and makes jokes about St. Paul's. However – who knows? – I may yet have the last laugh.

(*GILES enters from the archway up L and crosses to the arch up R*)

Chris Wren's Prefab Nests may yet go down in history! (*To GILES*) I'm going to like it here. I find your wife *most* sympathetic. And really very beautiful.

MOLLIE

Oh, don't be absurd.

WREN

There, isn't that like an Englishwoman? Compliments always embarrass them. European women take compliments as a matter of course, but Englishwomen have all the feminine spirit crushed out of them by their husbands. (*He turns and looks at GILES*) There's something very boorish about English husbands.

## Side B

BOYLE

*(off)* This *is* Monkswell Manor, I presume?

GILES

*(off)* Yes...

BOYLE

I am Mrs. Boyle.

GILES

I am Giles Ralston. Come in to the fire, Mrs. Boyle, and get warm. Awful weather, isn't it?

BOYLE

The taxi wouldn't risk coming up the drive. It stopped at the gate. We had to share a taxi from the station – and there was great difficulty in getting *that*. Nothing ordered to meet us, it seems.

GILES

I'm so sorry. We didn't know what train you would be coming by, you see, otherwise of course, we'd have seen that someone was – er - standing by.

BOYLE

All trains should have been met.

GILES

Let me take your coat. My wife will be here in a moment.

BOYLE

The drive might at least have been cleared of snow. Most offhand and casual, I must say.

MOLLIE

**(enter mollie)** I'm so sorry I...

BOYLE

Mrs. Ralston?

MOLLIE

Yes. I...

BOYLE

You're very young.

MOLLIE

Young?

BOYLE

To be running an establishment of this kind. You can't have much experience.

MOLLIE

(backing away) There has to be a beginning for everything, hasn't there?

BOYLE

I see. Quite inexperienced. An old house. I hope you haven't got dry rot.

MOLLIE

Certainly not!

BOYLE

A lot of people don't know they have got dry rot until it's too late to do anything about it.

MOLLIE

The house is in perfect condition.

BOYLE

Do you have much servant difficulty here?

MOLLIE

We have quite a good local woman who comes in from the village.

BOYLE

And what indoor staff?

MOLLIE

No indoor staff. Just us.

BOYLE

In-deed. I understood this was a guest house in full running order.

MOLLIE

We're only just starting.

BOYLE

I would have said that a proper staff of servants was essential before opening this kind of establishment. I consider your advertisement was most misleading. May I ask if I am the only guest – with Major Metcalf, that is?

MOLLIE

Oh no, there are several here.

BOYLE

This weather, too. A blizzard – no less – all very unfortunate.

MOLLIE

But we couldn't very well foresee the weather!

BOYLE

If I had not believed this was a running concern I should never have come here. I understand it was *fully* equipped with every home comfort.

GILES

There is no obligation for you to remain here if you are not satisfied, Mrs. Boyle.

BOYLE

No, indeed, I should not think of doing so.

GILES

If there has been any misapprehension it would perhaps be better if you went elsewhere. I could ring up for the taxi to return. The roads are not yet blocked. We have had so many applications for rooms that we shall be able to fill your place quite easily. In any case we are raising our terms next month.

BOYLE

I am certainly not going to leave before I have tried what the place is like. You needn't think you can turn me out now. Perhaps you will take me up to my bedroom, Mrs. Ralston.

MOLLIE

Certainly, Mrs. Boyle.

## Side C

PARAVICINI

But what stupendous good fortune! Madame! (*He moves down to MOLLIE, takes her hand and kisses it*) What an answer to a prayer. A guest house – and a charming hostess. My Rolls Royce, alas, has run into a snowdrift. Blinding snow everywhere. I do not know where I am. Perhaps, I think to myself, I shall freeze to death. And then I take a little bag, I stagger through the snow, I see before me big iron gates. A habitation! I am saved. Twice I fall into the snow as I come up your drive, but at last I arrive and immediately – (*he looks round*) despair turns to joy. (*Changing his manner*) You can let me have a room – yes?

MOLLIE

Oh yes...It's a rather small one, I'm afraid.

PARAVICINI

Naturally – naturally – you have other guests.

MOLLIE

We've only just opened this place as a guest house today, and so we're – we're rather new at it.

PARAVICINI

Charming – charming...

Mollie

What about your luggage?

PARAVICINI

That is of no consequence. I have locked the car securely.

Mollie

But wouldn't it be better to get it in?

PARAVICINI

No, no. I can assure you on such a night as this, there will be no thieves abroad. And for me, my wants are very simple. I have all I need – here – in this little bag. Yes, all that I need.

MOLLIE

You'd better get thoroughly warm. I'll see about your room. I'm afraid it's rather a cold room because it faces north, but all the others are occupied.

PARAVICINI

You have several guests, then?

MOLLIE

There's Mrs. Boyle and Major Metcalf and Miss Casewell and a young man called Christopher Wren – and now – you.

PARAVICINI

Yes – the unexpected guest. The guest that you did not invite. The guest who just arrived – from nowhere – out of the storm. It sounds quite dramatic, does it not? Who am I? You do not know. Where do I come

from? You do not know. Me, I am the man of mystery. But now, I tell you this. I complete the picture.

From now on there will be no more arrivals. And no departures either. By tomorrow – perhaps even already – we are cut off from civilization. No butcher, no baker, no milkman, no postman, no daily papers – nobody and nothing but ourselves. That is admirable – admirable. It could not suit me better. My name, by the way, is Paravicini.

MOLLIE

Oh yes. Ours is Ralston.

PARAVICINI

Mr. and Mrs. Ralston? And this – is Monkswell Manor Guest House, you said? Good. Monkswell Manor Guest House. (*He laughs*) Perfect. (*He laughs*) Perfect.

## Side D

BOYLE

I consider it *most* dishonest not to have told me they were only just starting this place.

METCALF

Well, everything's got to have a beginning, you know. Excellent breakfast this morning. Good coffee. Scrambled eggs, home-made marmalade. And all nicely served, too. Little woman does it all herself.

BOYLE

Amateurs – there should be a proper staff.

METCALF

Excellent lunch, too.

BOYLE

Corn beef.

METCALF

But very well disguised corn beef. Red wine in it. Mrs. Ralston promised to make a pie for us tonight.

BOYLE

*(rising and crossing to the radiator)* These radiators are not really hot. I shall speak about it.

METCALF

Very comfortable beds, too. At least mine was. Hope yours was, too.

BOYLE

It was quite adequate. *(She returns to the large armchair R and sits)* I don't quite see why the best bedroom should have been given to that *very* peculiar young man.

METCALF

Got here ahead of us. First come, first served.

BOYLE

From the advertisement I got *quite* a different impression of what this place would be like. A comfortable writing-room, and a much larger place altogether – with bridge and other amenities.

METCALF

Regular old tabbies' delight.

BOYLE

I beg your pardon.

METCALF

Er – I mean, yes, I quite see what you mean.

BOYLE

No, indeed, *I* shan't stay here long.

## Side E

PARAVICINI

My charming hostess looks upset. What is it, dear lady?

MOLLIE

Everything's rather difficult this morning. Because of the snow.

PARAVICINI

Yes. Snow makes things difficult, does it not? Or else it makes them easy. Yes – very easy.

MOLLIE

I don't know what you mean.

PARAVICINI

No, there is quite a lot you do not know. I think, for one thing, that you do not know very much about running a guest house.

MOLLIE

I daresay we don't. But we mean to make a go of it.

PARAVICINI

Bravo – bravo! (*He claps his hands and rises*)

MOLLIE

I'm not such a very bad cook...

PARAVICINI

(*leering*) You are without a doubt an enchanting cook. May I give you a word of warning, Mrs. Ralston? You and your husband must not be too trusting, you know. Have you references with these guests of yours?

MOLLIE

Is that unusual? (*She turns to PARAVICINI*) I always thought people just – just *came*?

PARAVICINI

It is advisable to know a little about the people who sleep under your roof. Take, for example, myself. I turn up saying that my car is overturned in a snowdrift. What do you know of me? Nothing at all! I may be a thief, a robber, (*he moves slowly towards MOLLIE*) a fugitive from justice – a madman – even – a murderer.

MOLLIE

(*backing away*) Oh!

PARAVICINI

You see! And perhaps you know just as little of your other guests.



## Side F

MOLLIE

What a horrid little tune that is.

CASEWELL

Don't you like it? Reminds you of your childhood perhaps – an unhappy childhood?

MOLLIE

I was very happy as a child.

CASEWELL

You were lucky.

MOLLIE

Weren't you happy?

CASEWELL

No.

MOLLIE

I'm sorry.

CASEWELL

But all that's a long time ago. One gets over things.

MOLLIE

I suppose so.

CASEWELL

Or doesn't one? Damned hard to say.

MOLLIE

They say that what happened when you're a child matters more than anything else.

CASEWELL

They say – they say. Who says?

MOLLIE

Psychologists.

CASEWELL

All humbug. Just a damned lot of nonsense. I've not use of psychologists and psychiatrists.

MOLLIE

I've never really had much to do with them.

CASEWELL

A good thing for you you haven't. It's all a lot of hooley – the whole thing. Life's what you make of it. Go straight ahead – don't look back.

MOLLIE

One can't always help looking back.

CASEWELL

Nonsense. It's a question of will power.

MOLLIE

Perhaps.

CASEWELL

*I know.*

MOLLIE

I expect you're right... But sometimes things happen – to make you remember...

CASEWELL

Don't give in. Turn your back on them.

MOLLIE

Is that really the right way? I wonder. Perhaps that's all wrong. Perhaps one ought really to – face them.

CASEWELL

Depends what you're talking about.

MOLLIE

Sometimes, I hardly know what I'm talking about.

CASEWELL

Nothing from the past is going to affect me – except in the way I want it to.

## Side G

TROTTER

It could have been a woman who killed Maureen Lyon. A woman. The muffler pulled up and the man's felt hat pulled well down, and the killer whispered, you know. It's the voice that gives the sex away. Yes, it might have been a woman.

MOLLIE

Miss Casewell?

TROTTER

She looks a bit old for the part. Oh yes, Mrs. Ralston, there's a very wide field. There's yourself, for instance.

MOLLIE

Me?

TROTTER

You're about the right age. No, no. Whatever you tell me about yourself, I've got no means of checking it at this moment, remember. And then there's your husband.

MOLLIE

Giles, how ridiculous!

TROTTER

He and Christopher Wren are much of an age. Say, your husband looks older than his years, and Christopher Wren looks younger. Actual age is very hard to tell. How much do you know about your husband, Mrs. Ralston?

MOLLIE

How much do I know about Giles? Oh, don't be silly.

TROTTER

You've been married – how long?

MOLLIE

Just a year.

TROTTER

And you met him – where?

MOLLIE

At a dance in London. We went in a party.

TROTTER

Did you meet his people?

MOLLIE

He hasn't any people. They're all dead.

TROTTER

They're all dead?

MOLLIE

Yes – but, oh you make it sound all wrong. His father was a barrister and his mother died when he was a baby.

TROTTER

You're only telling me what *he* told you.

MOLLIE

Yes – but...

TROTTER

You don't know it of your own knowledge.

*MOLLIE*

It's outrageous that...

TROTTER

How long had you known Giles Ralston when you married him?

MOLLIE

Just three weeks. But...

TROTTER

And you don't know anything about him?

MOLLIE

That's not true. I know everything about him! I know exactly the sort of person he is. He's *Giles*. And it's absolutely absurd to suggest that he's some horrible crazy homicidal maniac. I don't believe it!

TROTTER

Don't you? Don't you?

## Side H

MOLLIE

You've got to grow up some time, Chris.

WREN

I wish I hadn't.

MOLLIE

Your name isn't really Christopher Wren, is it?

WREN

No.

MOLLIE

And you're not really training to be an architect?

WREN

No.

MOLLIE

Why did you...?

WREN

Call myself Christopher Wren? It just amused me. And then they used to laugh at me at school and call me little Christopher Robin. Robin – Wren – association of ideas. It was hell being at school.

MOLLIE

What's your real name?

WREN

We needn't go into that. I ran away whilst I was doing my Army service. It was all so beastly – I hated it. Yes, I'm just like the unknown murderer. I told you I was the one the specifications fitted. You see, my mother – my mother...

MOLLIE

Yes, your mother?

WREN

Everything would be all right if she hadn't died. She would have taken care of me – and looked after me...

MOLLIE

You can't go on being looked after all your life. Things happen to you. And you've got to bear them – you've got to go on just as usual.

WREN

One can't do that.

MOLLIE

Yes, one can.

WREN

You mean – you have?

MOLLIE

Yes.

WREN

What was it? Something very bad?

MOLLIE

It was horrible – horrible...I try to put it out of my mind. I try never to think about it.

WREN

So – you're running away, too. Running away from things – instead of facing them?

MOLLIE

Yes – perhaps, in a way, I am. *(There is a silence)* Considering that I never saw you until yesterday, we seem to know each other rather well.

WREN

Yes, it's odd, isn't it?

MOLLIE

I don't know. I suppose there's a sort – sympathy between us.

WREN

Anyway, you think I ought to stick it out.

MOLLIE

Well, frankly, what else can you do?

WREN

I might pinch the sergeant's skis. I can ski quite well.

MOLLIE

That would be frightfully stupid. It would be almost like admitting you're guilty.

WREN

Sergeant Trotter thinks I'm guilty.

MOLLIE

No, he doesn't. At least – I don't know what he thinks. I hate him – I hate him – I hate him...

WREN

Who?

MOLLIE

Sergeant Trotter. He puts things into your head. Things that aren't true, that can't possibly be true.

WREN

What is all this?

MOLLIE

I don't believe it – I won't believe it...

## Side I

GILES

What is all this? MOLLIE, you must be crazy. Perfectly prepared to shut yourself up in the kitchen with a homicidal maniac.

MOLLIE

He isn't.

GILES

You've only got to look at him to see he's barmy.

MOLLIE

He isn't. He's just unhappy. I tell you, Giles, he isn't dangerous. I'd know if he was dangerous. And anyway, I can look after myself.

GILES

That's what Mrs. Boyle said!

MOLLIE

Oh Giles – don't.

GILES

Look here, what is there between you and that wretched boy?

MOLLIE

What do you mean by between us? I'm sorry for him – that's all.

GILES

Rather odd, isn't it, that he should come and stay at an out-of-the-way place like this?

MOLLIE

No odder than that Miss Cresswell and Major Metcalf and Mrs. Boyle should.

GILES

I read once in a paper that these homicidal cases were able to attract women. Looks as though it were true. Where did you first know him? How long has this been going on?

MOLLIE

You're being ridiculous. I never set eyes on Christopher Wren until he arrived yesterday.

GILES

That's what you say. Perhaps you've been running up to London to meet him on the sly.

MOLLIE

You know perfectly well that I haven't been up to London for weeks.

GILES

You haven't been up to London for weeks. Is – that – so?

MOLLIE

What on earth do you mean? It's quite true.

GILES

Is it? Then what's this? This is one of the gloves you were wearing yesterday. You dropped it. I picked it up this afternoon when I was talking to Sergeant Trotter. You see what's inside it – a London bus ticket!

MOLLIE

Oh – that...

GILES

So it seems that you didn't only go to the village yesterday, you went to London as well.

MOLLIE

All right, I went to...

GILES

Whilst I was safely away racing round the countryside.

MOLLIE

Whilst you were racing round the countryside...

GILES

Come on now – admit it. You went to London.

MOLLIE

All right.) I went to London. So did you!

GILES

What?

MOLLIE

So did you. You brought back an evening paper. (*She picks up the paper from the sofa*)

GILES

Where did you get hold of that?

MOLLIE

It was in your overcoat pocket.

GILES

Anyone could have put it in there.



MOLLIE

Did they? No, you were in London.

GILES

All right. Yes, I was in London. I didn't go to meet a woman there.

MOLLIE

Didn't you – are you sure you didn't?

GILES

Eh? What d'you mean? (*He comes nearer to her*)

MOLLIE

Go away. Don't come near me.

GILES

What's the matter?

MOLLIE

Don't touch me.

GILES

Did you go to London yesterday to meet Christopher Wren?

MOLLIE

Don't be a fool. Of course I didn't.

GILES

Then why did you go?

MOLLIE

I – shan't tell you that. Perhaps – now – I've forgotten why I went...

GILES

Mollie, what's come over you? You're different all of a sudden. I feel as though I don't know you any more.

MOLLIE

Perhaps you never did know me. We've been married how long – a year? But you don't really know anything about me. What I'd done or thought or felt or suffered before you knew me.

GILES

Mollie, you're crazy...

MOLLIE

All right then, I'm crazy! Why not? Perhaps it's fun to be crazy!

## Side J

TROTTER

You haven't answered my question.

CASEWELL

I really don't see, you know, why I should. It's a matter that concerns me alone. A strictly private affair.

TROTTER

All the same, Miss Casewell...

CASEWELL

No, I don't think we'll argue about it.

TROTTER

Would you mind telling me your age?

CASEWELL

Not in the least. It's on my passport. I am twenty-for.

TROTTER

Twenty-four?

CASEWELL

You were thinking I look older. That is quite true.

TROTTER

Is there anyone in this country who can – vouch for you?

CASEWELL

My ban will reassure you as my financial position. I can also refer you to a solicitor – a very discreet man. I am not in a position to offer you a social reference. I have lived most of my life abroad.

TROTTER

In Majorca?

CASEWELL

In Majorca – and other places.

TROTTER

Were you born abroad?

CASEWELL

No, I left England when I was thirteen.

TROTTER

You know, Miss Casewell, I can't quite make you out.)

CASEWELL

Does it matter?

TROTTER

I don't know. What are you doing here?

CASEWELL

It seems to worry you.

TROTTER

It does worry me... You went abroad when you were thirteen?

CASEWELL

Twelve - thirteen – thereabouts.

TROTTER

Was your name Caswell then?

CASEWELL

It's my name now.

TROTTER

What was your name then? Come on – tell me.

CASEWELL

What are you trying to prove?

TROTTER

I want to know what your name was when you left England?

CASEWELL

It's a long time ago. I've forgotten.

TROTTER

There are things one doesn't forget.

CASEWELL

Possibly.

TROTTER

Unhappiness – despair...

CASEWELL

I daresay...

TROTTER

What's your real name?

CASEWELL

I told you – Leslie Margaret Katherine Casewell.

TROTTER

*(rising)* Katherine...? What the hell are you doing here?

CASEWELL

I...Oh God... I wish to God I'd never come here.

## Side K

TROTTER

You were actually *in* that cupboard today.

METCALF

Yes, I was.

TROTTER

At the time Mrs. Boyle was killed.

METCALF

At the time Mrs. Boyle was killed I'd gone down to the cellar.

TROTTER

Were the skis in the cupboard when you passed through?

METCALF

I haven't the least idea.

TROTTER

Didn't you see them there?

METCALF

Can't remember.

TROTTER

You can't remember if those skis were there?

METCALF

No good shouting at me, young fellow. I wasn't thinking about any damned skis. I was interested in the cellars. Architecture of this place is very interesting. I opened the other door and I went on down. So I can't tell you whether the skis were there or not.

TROTTER

You realize that you, yourself, had an excellent opportunity of making them?

METCALF

Yes, yes, I grant you that. If I wanted to, that is.

TROTTER

The question is, where are they now?

METCALF

Ought to be able to find them if we all set to. Not a case of "Hunt the Thimble". Whacking great things, skis. Supposing we all set to.

TROTTER

Not quite so fast, Major Metcalf. That may be, you know, what we are meant to.

METCALF

Eh, I don't get you?

TROTTER

I'm in the position now where I've got to put myself in the place of a crazy cunning brain. I've got to ask myself what he wants us to do and what he, himself, is planning to do next. I've got to try and keep just one step ahead of him. Because, if I don't, there's going to be another death.