

Mousetrap

Audition

Reading

1

Mollie

Christopher

MOLLIE. How do you do, Mr. Wren?

CHRISTOPHER. You know you're not at all as I'd pictured you. I've been thinking of you as a retired general's widow, Indian Army. I thought you'd be terrifically grim and Memsahibish, and that the whole place would be simply crammed with Benares brass. Instead, it's heavenly (*crossing below the sofa to left of the sofa table*) – quite heavenly. Lovely proportions. (*pointing at the desk*) That's a fake! (*pointing at the sofa table*) Ah, but this table's genuine. I'm simply going to love this place. (*He moves below the armchair centre.*) Have you got any wax flowers or birds of Paradise?

MOLLIE. I'm afraid not.

CHRISTOPHER. What a pity! Well, what about a sideboard? A purple plummy mahogany sideboard with great solid carved fruits on it?

MOLLIE. Yes, we have – in the dining-room. (*She glances at the door down right.*)

CHRISTOPHER. (*following her glance*) In here? (*He moves down right and opens the door.*) I must see it.

(**CHRISTOPHER** exits into the dining-room and **MOLLIE** follows him. **GILES** enters through the archway up right. He looks round and examines the suitcase. Hearing voices from the dining-room, **GILES** exits up right.)

MOLLIE. (*off*) Do come and warm yourself.

(**MOLLIE** enters from the dining-room, followed by **CHRISTOPHER**. **MOLLIE** moves centre.)

CHRISTOPHER. *(as he enters)* Absolutely perfect. Real bedrock respectability. But why do away with a centre mahogany table? *(looking off right)* Little tables just spoil the effect.

(GILES enters up right and stands left of the large armchair right.)

MOLLIE. We thought guests would prefer them – this is my husband.

CHRISTOPHER. *(moving up to GILES and shaking hands with him)* How do you do? Terrible weather, isn't it? Takes one back to Dickens and Scrooge and that irritating Tiny Tim. So bogus. *(He turns towards the fire.)* Of course, Mrs. Ralston, you're absolutely right about the little tables. I was being carried away by my feeling for period. If you had a mahogany dining-table, you'd have to have the right family round it. *(He turns to GILES.)* Stern handsome father with a beard, prolific, faded mother, eleven children of assorted ages, a grim governess, and somebody called "poor Harriet," the poor relation who acts as general dogsbody and is very, very grateful for being given a good home!

GILES. *(disliking him)* I'll take your suitcase upstairs for you. *(He picks up the suitcase. To MOLLIE)* Oak Room, did you say?

MOLLIE. Yes.

CHRISTOPHER. I do hope that it's got a fourposter with little chintz roses?

GILES. It hasn't.

(GILES exits left up the stairs with the suitcase.)

CHRISTOPHER. 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 left)* Perhaps you'd like to go up and see your room?

CHRISTOPHER. 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 CHRISTOPHER*) some are not.

CHRISTOPHER. 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 as at some secret joke.*)

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

CHRISTOPHER. No, thank you. (*moving to right 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 centre.*) it comes out – (*He sits on the right arm of the sofa.*) on the canvas.

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

CHRISTOPHER. 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 left and crosses to the arch up right.*)

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.

GILES. (*coldly*) Indeed.

CHRISTOPHER. (*turning to look at MOLLIE*) And really very beautiful.

MOLLIE. Oh, don't be absurd.

(**GILES** *leans on the back of the large armchair.*)

CHRISTOPHER. 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.

MOLLIE. *(hastily)* Come up and see your room. *(She crosses to the arch up left.)*

CHRISTOPHER. Shall I?

MOLLIE. *(to GILES)* Could you stoke up the hot water boiler?

(MOLLIE and CHRISTOPHER exit up the stairs left.)

GILES *scowls and crosses to centre. The door bell peals.*

There is a pause then it peals several times impatiently.

GILES *exits hurriedly up right to the front door. The sound of wind and snow is heard for a moment or two.)*

Mousetrap

Audition

Reading

2

Mrs. Boyle

Giles

Mollie

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

GILES. *(off)* Yes...

(MRS. BOYLE enters through the archway up right, carrying a suitcase, some magazines and her gloves. She is a large, imposing woman in a very bad temper.)

MRS. BOYLE. I am Mrs. Boyle. *(She puts down the suitcase.)*

GILES. I'm Giles Ralston. Come in to the fire, Mrs. Boyle, and get warm.

(MRS. BOYLE moves down to the fire.)

Awful weather, isn't it? Is this your only luggage?

MRS. BOYLE. A Major – Metcalf, is it? – is seeing to it.

GILES. I'll leave the door for him.

(GILES goes out to the front door.)

MRS. BOYLE. The taxi wouldn't risk coming up the drive.

(GILES returns and comes down to left of MRS. BOYLE.)

It stopped at the gate. We had to share a taxi from the station – and there was great difficulty in getting *that*. *(accusingly)* 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.

MRS. BOYLE. All trains should have been met.

GILES. Let me take your coat.

(MRS. BOYLE hands GILES her gloves and magazines. She stands by the fire warming her hands.)

My wife will be here in a moment. I'll just go along and give Metcalf a hand with the bags.

(GILES exits up right to the front door.)

MRS. BOYLE. *(moving up to the arch as GILES goes)* The drive might at least have been cleared of snow. *(after his exit)* Most offhand and casual, I must say. *(She moves down to the fire and looks round her disapprovingly.)*

(MOLLIE hurries in from the stairs left, a little breathless.)

MOLLIE. I'm so sorry I...

MRS. BOYLE. Mrs. Ralston?

MOLLIE. Yes. I... *(She crosses to MRS. BOYLE, half puts out her hand, then draws it back, uncertain of what guest house proprietors are supposed to do.)*

(MRS. BOYLE surveys MOLLIE with displeasure.)

MRS. BOYLE. You're very young.

MOLLIE. Young?

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

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

MRS. BOYLE. I see. Quite inexperienced. *(She looks round.)* An old house. I hope you haven't got dry rot. *(She sniffs suspiciously.)*

MOLLIE. *(indignantly)* Certainly not!

MRS. 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.

MRS. BOYLE. H'm – it could do with a coat of paint. You know, you've got worm in this oak.

Mousetrap

Audition

Reading

3

Paravicini

Giles

Mollie

PARAVICINI. A thousand pardons. I am – where am I?

GILES. This is Monkswell Manor Guest House.

PARAVICINI. But what stupendous good fortune! Madame!

(He moves down to MOLLIE, takes her hand and kisses it.)

(GILES crosses above the armchair centre.)

What an answer to 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?

GILES. Oh yes...

MOLLIE. It's rather a 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. *(leering at MOLLIE)* Charming – charming...

GILES. What about your luggage?

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

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

PARAVICINI. No, no. *(He moves up to right of GILES.)* 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.

(PARAVICINI crosses to the fire.)

I'll see about your room. (*She moves to the armchair centre.*) 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. (*He laughs.*)

(MOLLIE laughs and looks at GILES, who grins feebly.)

PARAVICINI nods his head at MOLLIE in high good humour)

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. (*He moves down to the small armchair right.*)

MOLLIE. Oh yes. Ours is Ralston.

(GILES moves to left of MOLLIE.)

PARAVICINI. Mr. and Mrs. Ralston? (*He nods his head as they agree. He looks round him and moves up to right of MOLLIE.*) And this – is Monkswell Manor Guest House, you said? Good. Monkswell Manor Guest House. (*He laughs.*) Perfect. (*He laughs.*) Perfect. (*He laughs and crosses to the fireplace.*)

Mousetrap

Audition

Reading

4

Mrs. Boyle

Metcalfe

Christopher

Giles

Mollie

Casewell

Scene II

(Scene – The same. The following afternoon.)

(When the curtain rises it is not snowing, but snow can be seen banked high against the window. MAJOR METCALF is seated on the sofa reading a book, and MRS. BOYLE is sitting in the large armchair right in front of the fire, writing on a pad on her knee.)

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

MAJOR 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.

MRS. BOYLE. Amateurs – there should be a proper staff.

MAJOR METCALF. Excellent lunch, too.

MRS. BOYLE. Cornbeef.

MAJOR METCALF. But very well disguised cornbeef. Red wine in it. Mrs. Ralston promised to make a pie for us tonight.

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

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

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

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

MRS. 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.

MAJOR METCALF. Regular old tabbies' delight.

MRS. BOYLE. I beg your pardon.

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

(CHRISTOPHER enters left from the stairs unnoticed.)

MRS. BOYLE. No, indeed, I shan't stay here long.

CHRISTOPHER. (*laughing*) No. No, I don't suppose you will.

(CHRISTOPHER exits into the library up left.)

MRS. BOYLE. Really that is a very peculiar young man. Unbalanced mentally, I shouldn't wonder.

MAJOR METCALF. Think he's escaped from a lunatic asylum.

MRS. BOYLE. I shouldn't be at all surprised.

(MOLLIE enters through the archway up right.)

MOLLIE. (*calling upstairs*) Giles?

GILES. (*off*) Yes?

MOLLIE. Can you shovel the snow away again from the back door?

GILES. (*off*) Coming.

(MOLLIE disappears through the arch.)

MAJOR METCALF. I'll give you a hand, what? (*He rises and crosses up right to the arch.*) Good exercise. Must have exercise.

(MAJOR METCALF exits. GILES enters from the stairs, crosses and exits up right. MOLLIE returns, carrying a duster and a vacuum cleaner, crosses the hall and runs upstairs. She collides with MISS CASEWELL who is coming down the stairs.)

MOLLIE. Sorry!

MISS CASEWELL. That's all right.

(MOLLIE exits. MISS CASEWELL comes slowly centre.)

MRS. BOYLE. Really! What an incredible young woman. Doesn't she know anything about housework? Carrying a carpet sweeper through the front hall. Aren't there any back stairs?

MISS CASEWELL. (*taking a cigarette from a packet in her handbag*)

Oh yes – nice back stairs. (*She crosses to the fire.*) Very convenient if there was a fire. (*She lights the cigarette.*)

MRS. BOYLE. Then why not use them? Anyway, all the housework should have been done in the morning before lunch.

MISS CASEWELL. I gather our hostess had to cook the lunch.

MRS. BOYLE. All very haphazard and amateurish. There should be a proper staff.

MISS CASEWELL. Not very easy to get nowadays, is it?

MRS. BOYLE. No, indeed, the lower classes seem to have no idea of their responsibilities.

MISS CASEWELL. Poor old lower classes. Got the bit between their teeth, haven't they?

MRS. BOYLE. (*frostily*) I gather you are a Socialist.

MISS CASEWELL. Oh, I wouldn't say that. I'm not a Red – just pale pink. (*She moves to the sofa and sits on the right arm.*) But I don't take much interest in politics – I live abroad.

MRS. BOYLE. I suppose conditions are much easier abroad.

MISS CASEWELL. I don't have to cook and clean – as I gather most people have to do in this country.

MRS. BOYLE. This country has gone sadly downhill. Not what it used to be. I sold my house last year. Everything was too difficult.

MISS CASEWELL. Hotels and guest houses are easier.

MRS. BOYLE. They certainly solve some of one's problems. Are you over in England for long?

MISS CASEWELL. Depends. I've got some business to see to. When it's done – I shall go back.

MRS. BOYLE. To France?

MISS CASEWELL. No.

MRS. BOYLE. Italy?

MISS CASEWELL. No. (*She grins.*)

(**MRS. BOYLE** looks at her inquiringly but **MISS CASEWELL** does not respond. **MRS. BOYLE** starts writing. **MISS CASEWELL** grins as she looks at her, crosses to the radio, turns it on, at first softly, then increases the volume.)

MRS. BOYLE. (*annoyed, as she is writing*) Would you mind not having that on quite so loud! I always find the radio rather distracting when one is trying to write letters.

MISS CASEWELL. Do you?

MRS. BOYLE. If you don't particularly want to listen just now...

MISS CASEWELL. It's my favourite music. There's a writing table in there. (*She nods towards the library door up left.*)

MRS. BOYLE. I know. But it's much warmer here.

MISS CASEWELL. Much warmer, I agree. (*She dances to the music.*)

(**MRS. BOYLE**, after a moment's glare, rises and exits into the library up left. **MISS CASEWELL** grins, moves to the sofa table, and stubs out her cigarette. She moves up stage and picks up a magazine from the refectory table.)

Bloody old bitch. (*She moves to the large armchair and sits.*)

Mousetrap

Audition

Reading

5

Mrs. Boyle

Mollie

Paravicini

Metcalf

MRS. BOYLE. Mrs. Ralston, if you don't mind my saying so, that is a very extraordinary young man you have staying here. His manners – and his ties – and does he ever brush his hair?

MOLLIE. He's an extremely brilliant young architect.

MRS. BOYLE. I beg your pardon?

MOLLIE. Christopher Wren is an architect...

MRS. BOYLE. My dear young woman. I have naturally heard of Sir Christopher Wren. (*She crosses to the fire.*) Of course, he was an architect. He built St Paul's. You young people seem to think that no-one is educated but yourselves.

MOLLIE. I meant *this* Wren. His name is Christopher. His parents called him that because they hoped he'd be an architect. (*She crosses to the sofa table and takes a cigarette from the box.*) And he is – or nearly one – so it turned out all right.

MRS. BOYLE. Humph. Sounds a fishy story to me. (*She sits in the large armchair.*) I should make some inquiries about him if I were you. What do you know of him?

MOLLIE. Just as much as I know about you, Mrs. Boyle – which is that you are both paying us seven guineas a week. (*She lights her cigarette.*) That is really all I need to know, isn't it? And all that concerns me. It doesn't matter to me whether I like my guests, or whether (*meaningly*) I don't.

MRS. BOYLE. You are young and inexperienced and should welcome advice from someone more knowledgeable than yourself. And what about this foreigner?

MOLLIE. What about him?

MRS. BOYLE. You weren't expecting him, were you?

MOLLIE. To turn away a *bona fide* traveller is against the law, Mrs. Boyle. *You* should know that.

MRS. BOYLE. Why do you say that?

MOLLIE. (*moving down centre*) Weren't you a magistrate, sitting on the bench, Mrs. Boyle?

MRS. BOYLE. All I say is that this Paravicini, or whatever he calls himself, seems to me...

(PARAVICINI enters softly from the stairs left.)

PARAVICINI. Beware, dear lady. You talk of the devil and here he is. Ha, ha.

(MRS. BOYLE jumps.)

MRS. BOYLE. I didn't hear you come in.

(MOLLIE moves behind the sofa table.)

PARAVICINI. I came in on tiptoe – like this. (*He demonstrates, moving down centre.*) Nobody ever hears me if I do not want them to. I find that very amusing.

MRS. BOYLE. Indeed?

PARAVICINI. (*sitting in the armchair centre*) Now there was a young lady...

MRS. BOYLE. (*rising*) Well, I must get on with my letters. I'll see if it's a little warmer in the drawing-room.

(MRS. BOYLE exits to the drawing-room down left.

MOLLIE follows her to the door.)

PARAVICINI. My charming hostess looks upset. What is it, dear lady? (*He leers at her.*)

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

PARAVICINI. Yes. Snow makes things difficult, does it not? (*He rises.*) Or else it makes them easy. (*He moves up to the refectory table and sits.*) 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. (*moving to left of the sofa table and stubbing out her cigarette*) 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 doubt an enchanting cook. (*He moves behind the sofa table and takes MOLLIE's hand.*)

(**MOLLIE** *draws it away and moves below the sofa down centre.*)

May I give you a little word of warning, Mrs. Ralston? (*moving below the sofa*) You and your husband must not be too trusting, you know. Have you references with these guests of yours?

MOLLIE. Is that usual? (*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.

MOLLIE. Well, as far as Mrs. Boyle goes...

(**MRS. BOYLE** *enters from the drawing-room. MOLLIE moves up centre to the refectory table.*)

MRS. BOYLE. The drawing-room is far too cold to sit in. I shall write my letters in here. (*She crosses to the large armchair.*)

PARAVICINI. Allow me to poke the fire for you. (*He moves right and does so.*)

(**MAJOR METCALF** *enters up right through the archway.*)

MAJOR METCALF. (*to MOLLIE; with old-fashioned modesty*) Mrs. Ralston, is your husband about? I'm afraid the pipes of the – er – the downstairs cloakroom are frozen.

MOLLIE. Oh dear. What an awful day. First the police and then the pipes. (*She moves to the arch up right.*)

(PARAVICINI drops the poker with a clatter. MAJOR METCALF stands as though paralysed.)

MRS. BOYLE. (startled) Police?

MAJOR METCALF. (loudly, as if incredulous) Police, did you say? (He moves to the left end of the refectory table.)

MOLLIE. They rang up. Just now. To say they're sending a sergeant out here. (She looks at the snow.) But I don't think he'll ever get here.

Mousetrap

Audition

Reading

6

Giles

Trotter

Mrs. Boyle

Casewell

Christopher

Mollie

Paravicini

Metcalf

GILES. Safety? What danger does he think we're in? Good Lord, he's not suggesting that somebody is going to be killed here.

TROTTER. I don't want to frighten any of the ladies – but frankly, yes, that is the idea.

GILES. But – why?

TROTTER. That's what I'm here to find out.

GILES. But the whole thing's crazy!

TROTTER. Yes, sir. It's because it's crazy that it's dangerous.

MRS. BOYLE. Nonsense!

MISS CASEWELL. I must say it seems a bit far-fetched.

CHRISTOPHER. I think it's wonderful. (*He turns and looks at MAJOR METCALF.*)

(*MAJOR METCALF lights his pipe.*)

MOLLIE. Is there something that you haven't told us, Sergeant?

TROTTER. Yes, Mrs. Ralston. Below the two addresses was written "Three Blind Mice." And on the dead woman's body was a paper with "This is the First" written on it, and below the words, a drawing of three little mice and a bar of music. The music was the tune of the nursery rhyme *Three Blind Mice*. You know how it goes. (*He sings*) "Three Blind Mice..."

MOLLIE. (*singing*)

"THREE BLIND MICE,
SEE HOW THEY RUN,
THEY ALL RAN AFTER THE FARMER'S WIFE..."

Oh, it's horrible.

GILES. There were three children and one died?

TROTTER. Yes, the youngest, a boy of eleven.

GILES. What happened to the other two?

TROTTER. The girl was adopted by someone. We haven't been able to trace her present whereabouts. The elder boy would now be about twenty-two. Deserted from the Army and has not been heard of since. According

to the Army psychologist, was definitely schizophrenic.
(*explaining*) A bit queer in the head, that's to say.

MOLLIE. They think that it was he who killed Mrs. Lyon – Mrs. Stanning? (*She moves down to the armchair centre.*)

TROTTER. Yes.

MOLLIE. And that he's a homicidal maniac (*she sits*) and that he will turn up here and try to kill someone – but why?

TROTTER. That's what I've got to find out from you. As the Superintendent sees it, there must be some connection. (*to GILES*) Now you state, sir, that you yourself have never had any connection with the Longridge Farm case?

GILES. No.

TROTTER. And the same goes for you, madam?

MOLLIE. (*not at ease*) I – no – I mean – no connection.

TROTTER. What about servants?

(*MRS. BOYLE registers disapproval.*)

MOLLIE. We haven't got any servants. (*She rises and moves up right to the arch.*) That reminds me. Would you mind, Sergeant Trotter, if I went to the kitchen? I'll be there if you want me.

TROTTER. That's quite all right, Mrs. Ralston.

(*MOLLIE exits by the archway up right. GILES crosses up right to the arch, but he is stopped as TROTTER speaks.*)

Now can I have all your names, please?

MRS. BOYLE. This is quite ridiculous. We are merely staying in a kind of hotel. We only arrived yesterday. We've nothing to do with this place.

TROTTER. You'd planned to come here in advance, though. You'd booked your rooms here ahead.

MRS. BOYLE. Well, yes. All except Mr—? (*She looks at PARAVICINI.*)

PARAVICINI. Paravicini. (*He moves to the left end of the refectory table.*) My car overturned in a snowdrift.

TROTTER. I see. What I'm getting at is that anyone who's been following you around might know very well that you were coming here. Now, there's just one thing I want to know and I want to know it quick. Which one of you is it that has some connection with that business at Longridge Farm?

(There is a dead silence.)

You're not being very sensible, you know. One of you is in danger – deadly danger. I've got to know which one that is.

(There is another silence.)

All right, I'll ask you one by one. *(to PARAVICINI)* You, first, since you seem to have arrived here more or less by accident, Mr. Pari—?

PARAVICINI. Para – Paravicini. But, my dear Inspector, I know nothing, but nothing of what you have been talking about. I am a stranger in this country. I know nothing of these local affairs of bygone years.

TROTTER. *(rising and moving down to left of MRS. BOYLE)* Mrs—?

MRS. BOYLE. Boyle. I don't see – really I consider it an impertinence... Why on earth should *I* have anything to do with such – this distressing business?

(MAJOR METCALF looks sharply at her.)

TROTTER. *(looking at MISS CASEWELL)* Miss—?

MISS CASEWELL. *(slowly)* Casewell. Leslie Casewell. I never heard of Longridge Farm, and I know nothing about it.

TROTTER. *(moving to right of the sofa; to MAJOR METCALF)* You, sir?

MAJOR METCALF. Metcalf – Major. Read about the case in the papers at the time. I was stationed at Edinburgh then. No personal knowledge.

TROTTER. *(to CHRISTOPHER)* And you?

CHRISTOPHER. Christopher Wren. I was a mere child at the time. I don't remember even hearing about it.

TROTTER. (*moving behind the sofa table*) And that's all you have to say – any of you?

(*There is a silence.*)

(*moving centre*) Well, if one of you gets murdered, you'll have yourself to blame. Now then, Mr. Ralston, can I have a look round the house?

(**TROTTER** *exits up right with GILES. PARAVICINI sits at the window seat.*)

CHRISTOPHER. (*rising*) My dears, how melodramatic. He's very attractive, isn't he? (*He moves up to the refectory table.*) I do admire the police. So stern and hardboiled. Quite a thrill, this whole business. *Three Blind Mice.* How does the tune go? (*He whistles or hums it.*)

MRS. BOYLE. Really, Mr. Wren!

CHRISTOPHER. Don't you like it? (*He moves to left of MRS. BOYLE.*) But it's a signature tune – the signature of the murderer. Just fancy what a kick he must be getting out of it.

MRS. BOYLE. Melodramatic rubbish. I don't believe a word of it.

CHRISTOPHER. (*stalking behind her*) But just wait, Mrs. Boyle. Till I creep up behind you, and you feel my hands on your throat.

MRS. BOYLE. Stop... (*She rises.*)

MAJOR METCALF. That'll do, Christopher. It's a poor joke, anyway. In fact, it's not a joke at all.

CHRISTOPHER. Oh, but it *is!* (*He moves above the armchair centre.*) That's just what it is. A madman's joke. That's just what makes it so deliciously *macabre.* (*He moves up right to the archway, looks round and giggles.*) If you could just see your faces!

(**CHRISTOPHER** *exits through the archway.*)

Mousetrap

Audition

Reading

7

Trotter

Giles

Casewell

Christopher

Mollie

Paravicini

Metcalf

GILES. (*rising and moving to left of the refectory table; angrily*)
Can't you stop bullying her? Can't you see she's all in?

TROTTER. (*sharply*) We're investigating a murder, Mr. Ralston. Up to now, nobody has taken this thing seriously. Mrs. Boyle didn't. She held out on me with information. You all held out on me. Well, Mrs. Boyle is dead. Unless we get to the bottom of this – and quickly, mind – there may be another death.

GILES. Another? Nonsense. Why?

TROTTER. (*gravely*) Because there were *three* little blind mice.

GILES. A death for each of them? But there would have to be some connection – I mean another connection – with the Longridge Farm business.

TROTTER. Yes, there would have to be that.

GILES. But why another death *here*?

TROTTER. Because there were only two addresses in the notebook we found. Now, at twenty-four Culver Street there was only one possible victim. She's dead. But here at Monkswell Manor there is a wider field. (*He looks round the circle meaningly.*)

MISS CASEWELL. Nonsense. Surely it would be a most unlikely coincidence that there should be *two* people brought here by chance, both of them with a share in the Longridge Farm case?

TROTTER. Given certain circumstances, it wouldn't be so much of a coincidence. Think it out, Miss Casewell. (*He rises.*) Now I want to get down quite clearly where everyone was when Mrs. Boyle was killed. I've already got Mrs. Ralston's statement. You were in the kitchen preparing vegetables. You came out of the kitchen, along the passage, through the swing door into the

hall and in here. (*He points to the archway right.*) The radio was blaring, but the light was switched off, and the hall was dark. You switched the light on, saw Mrs. Boyle, and screamed.

MOLLIE. Yes. I screamed and screamed. And at last – people came.

TROTTER. (*moving down to left of MOLLIE*) Yes. As you say, people came – a lot of people from different directions – all arriving more or less at once. (*He pauses, moves down centre and turns his back to the audience.*) Now then, when I got out of that window (*He points.*) to trace the telephone wire, you, Mr. Ralston, went upstairs to the room you and Mrs. Ralston occupy, to try the extension telephone. (*moving up centre*) Where were you when Mrs. Ralston screamed?

GILES. I was still up in the bedroom. The extension telephone was dead, too. I looked out of the window to see if I could see any sign of the wires being cut there, but I couldn't. Just after I closed the window again, I heard Mollie scream and I rushed down.

TROTTER. (*leaning on the refectory table*) Those simple actions took you rather a long time, didn't they, Mr. Ralston?

GILES. I don't think so. (*He moves away to the stairs.*)

TROTTER. I should say you definitely – took your time over them.

GILES. I was thinking about something.

TROTTER. Very well. Now then, Mr. Wren, I'll have your account of where you were.

CHRISTOPHER. (*rising and moving to left of TROTTER*) I'd been in the kitchen, seeing if there was anything I could do to help Mrs. Ralston. I adore cooking. After that I went upstairs to my bedroom.

TROTTER. Why?

CHRISTOPHER. It's quite a natural thing to go to one's bedroom, don't you think? I mean – one does want to be alone *sometimes*.

TROTTER. You went to your bedroom because you wanted to be alone?

CHRISTOPHER. And I wanted to brush my hair – and – er – tidy up.

TROTTER. (*looking hard at CHRISTOPHER's dishevelled hair*) You wanted to brush your hair?

CHRISTOPHER. Anyway, that's where I was! (*GILES moves down left to the door.*)

TROTTER. And you heard Mrs. Ralston scream?

CHRISTOPHER. Yes.

TROTTER. And you came down?

CHRISTOPHER. Yes.

TROTTER. Curious that you and Mr. Ralston didn't meet on the stairs.

(*CHRISTOPHER and GILES look at each other.*)

CHRISTOPHER. I came down by the back stairs. They're nearer to my room.

TROTTER. Did you go to your room by the back stairs, or did you come through here?

CHRISTOPHER. I went up by the back stairs, too. (*He moves to the desk chair and sits.*)

TROTTER. I see. (*He moves to right of the sofa table.*) Mr. Paravicini?

PARAVICINI. I have told you. (*He rises and moves to left of the sofa.*) I was playing the piano in the drawing-room – through there, Inspector. (*He gestures left*)

TROTTER. I'm not an Inspector – just a Sergeant, Mr. Paravicini. Did anybody hear you playing the piano?

PARAVICINI. (*smiling*) I do not expect so. I was playing very, very softly – with one finger – so.

MOLLIE. You were playing *Three Blind Mice*.

TROTTER. (*sharply*) Is that so?

PARAVICINI. Yes. It is a very catchy little tune. It is – how shall I say? – a haunting little tune? Don't you all agree?

MOLLIE. I think it's horrible.

PARAVICINI. And yet – it runs in people's head. Someone was whistling it, too.

TROTTER. Whistling it? Where?

PARAVICINI. I am not sure. Perhaps in the front hall – perhaps on the stairs – perhaps even upstairs in a bedroom.

TROTTER. Who was whistling *Three Blind Mice*?

(There is no answer.)

Are you making this up, Mr. Paravicini?

PARAVICINI. No, no, Inspector – I beg your pardon – Sergeant, I would not do a thing like that.

TROTTER. Well, go on, you were playing the piano.

PARAVICINI. *(holding out a finger)* With one finger – so... And then I hear the radio – playing very loud – someone is shouting on it. It offended my ears. And after that – suddenly – I hear Mrs. Ralston scream. *(He sits at the left end of the sofa.)*

TROTTER. *(moving up to centre of the refectory table; gesturing with his fingers.)* Mr. Ralston upstairs. Mr. Wren upstairs. Mr. Paravicini in drawing-room. Miss Casewell?

MISS CASEWELL. I was writing letters in the library.

TROTTER. Could you hear what was going on in here?

MISS CASEWELL. No, I didn't hear anything until Mrs. Ralston screamed.

TROTTER. And what did you do then?

MISS CASEWELL. I came in here.

TROTTER. At once.

MISS CASEWELL. I – think so.

TROTTER. You say you were writing letters when you heard Mrs. Ralston scream?

MISS CASEWELL. Yes.

TROTTER. And got up from the writing table hurriedly and came in here?

MISS CASEWELL. Yes.

TROTTER. And yet there doesn't seem to be any unfinished letter on the writing desk in the library.

MISS CASEWELL. (*rising*) I brought it with me. (*She opens her handbag, takes out a letter, moves up to left of TROTTER and hands it to him.*)

TROTTER. (*looking at it and handing it back*) Dearest Jessie – h'm – a friend of yours, or a relation?

MISS CASEWELL. That's none of your damned business. (*She turns away.*)

TROTTER. Perhaps not. (*He moves round the right end of the refectory table to behind it centre.*) You know if I were to hear someone screaming blue murder when I was writing a letter, I don't believe I'd take the time to pick up my unfinished letter, fold it and put it in my handbag before going to see what was the matter.

MISS CASEWELL. You wouldn't? How interesting. (*She moves up the stairs and sits on the stool.*)

TROTTER. (*moving to left of MAJOR METCALF*) Now, Major Metcalf, what about you? You say you were in the cellar. Why?

MAJOR METCALF. (*pleasantly*) Looking around. Just looking around. I looked into that cupboard place under the stairs near the kitchen. Lot of junk and sports tackle. And I noticed there was another door inside it, and I opened it and saw a flight of steps. I was curious and I went down. Nice cellars you've got.

MOLLIE. Glad you like them.

MAJOR METCALF. Not at all. Crypt of an old monastery, I should say. Probably why this place is called "Monkswell."

TROTTER. We're not engaged in antiquarian research, Major Metcalf. We're investigating a murder. Mrs. Ralston has told us that she heard a door shut with a faint creak. (*He moves to right of the sofa.*) That particular door shuts with a creak. It could be, you know, that

after killing Mrs. Boyle, the murderer heard Mrs. Ralston (*moving to left of the armchair centre*) coming from the kitchen and slipped into the cupboard pulling the door to after him.

MAJOR METCALF. A lot of things could be.

(MOLLIE rises, moves down to the small armchair and sits. There is a pause.)

CHRISTOPHER. (*rising*) There would be fingerprints on the inside of the cupboard.

MAJOR METCALF. Mine are there all right. But most criminals are careful to wear gloves, aren't they?

TROTTER. It's usual. But all criminals slip up sooner or later.

PARAVICINI. I wonder, Sergeant, if that's really true?

Mousetrap

Audition

Reading

8

Giles

Mollie

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. *(She moves down left.)*

GILES. *(moving down to right of MOLLIE)* 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. Perhaps you'd met him before. Perhaps you suggested to him to come here and that you'd both pretend to meet for the first time. All cooked up between you, was it?

MOLLIE. Giles, have you gone out of your mind? How dare you suggest these things?

GILES. *(moving up to centre of the refectory table)* 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 Casewell 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. (*He moves down centre.*) Where did you first know him? How long has this been going on?

MOLLIE. You're being absolutely ridiculous. (*She moves right slightly.*) 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. (*in a peculiar tone*) 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? (*He takes out MOLLIE's glove from his pocket and draws out of it the bus ticket.*)

(**MOLLIE starts.**)

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. (*looking guilty*) Oh – that...

GILES. (*turning away right centre*) 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. (*with emphasis*) Whilst you were racing round the countryside...

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

MOLLIE. All right. (*She moves centre below the sofa.*) 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. *(in horror; whispering)* Didn't you – are you sure you didn't?

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

(MOLLIE recoils, backing away down left.)

MOLLIE. Go away. Don't come near me.

GILES. *(following her)* 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 changes her manner. She smiles in a dreamy fashion.)

MOLLIE. I – shan't tell you that. Perhaps – now – I've forgotten why I went... *(She crosses towards the archway up right.)*

GILES. *(moving to left of MOLLIE)* 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!