

ACT TWO

(Scene – The same. Ten minutes later.)

(When the curtain rises MRS. BOYLE's body has been removed and everyone is assembled in the room. TROTTER is in charge and is sitting on the upstage side of the refectory table. MOLLIE is standing at the right end of the refectory table. The others are all sitting: MAJOR METCALF in the large armchair right, CHRISTOPHER in the desk chair, GILES on the stairs left, MISS CASEWELL at the right end of the sofa, and PARAVICINI at the left end.)

TROTTER. Now, Mrs. Ralston, try and think – *think...*

MOLLIE. *(at breaking point)* I can't think. My head's numbed.

TROTTER. Mrs. Boyle had only just been killed when you got to her. You came from the kitchen. Are you sure you didn't see or hear anybody as you came along the hallway?

MOLLIE. No – no, I don't think so. Just the radio blaring out in here. I couldn't think who'd turned it on so loud. I wouldn't hear anything else with that, would I?

TROTTER. That was clearly the murderer's idea – or *(meaningly)* murderess.

MOLLIE. How could I hear anything else?

TROTTER. You might have done. If the murderer had left the Hall that way *(He points left.)* he might have heard you coming from the kitchen. He might have slipped up the back stairs – or into the dining-room...

MOLLIE. I think – I'm not sure – I heard a door creak – and shut – just as I came out of the kitchen.

TROTTER. Which door?

MOLLIE. I don't know.

TROTTER. Think, Mrs. Ralston – try and *think*. Upstairs?
Downstairs? Close at hand? Right? Left?

MOLLIE. (*tearful*) I don't know, I tell you. I'm not even sure
I heard anything. (*She moves down to the armchair centre
and sits.*)

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?

GILES. (*moving to left of TROTTER*) Look here, aren't we wasting time? There's one person who...

TROTTER. Please, Mr. Ralston, I'm in charge of this investigation.

GILES. Oh, very well, but...

(**GILES** exits by the door down left.)

TROTTER. (*calling authoritatively*) Mr. Ralston!

(**GILES** re-enters grudgingly and stands by the door.)

Thank you. (*moving behind the refectory table*) We've got to establish opportunity, you know, as well as motive. And now let me tell you this – you *all* had opportunity.

(*There are several murmured protests.*)

(*He holds up his hand.*) There are two staircases – anyone could go up by one and come down by the other. Anyone could go down to the cellars by the door near the kitchen and come up by a flight of steps that leads up through a trap-door to the foot of the stairs over there. (*He points off right.*) The vital fact was that everyone of you was *alone* at the time the murder was committed.

GILES. But look here, Sergeant, you speak as though we were all under suspicion. That's absurd!

TROTTER. In a murder case, everyone is under suspicion.

GILES. But you know pretty well who killed that woman in Culver Street. You think it's the eldest of those three children at the farm. A mentally abnormal young man who is now twenty-three years of age. Well, damn it all, there's only one person here who fits the bill. *(He points to CHRISTOPHER and moves slightly towards him.)*

CHRISTOPHER. It's not true – it's not true! You're all against me. Everyone's always been against me. You're going to frame me for a murder. It's persecution, *(crossing to left of MAJOR METCALF)* that's what it is – persecution.

(GILES follows him but pauses at the left end of the refectory table.)

MAJOR METCALF. *(rising; kindly)* Steady, lad, steady. *(He pats CHRISTOPHER on the shoulder, then he takes out his pipe.)*

MOLLIE. *(rising and moving up to left of CHRISTOPHER)* It's all right, Chris. Nobody's against you. *(to TROTTER)* Tell him it's all right.

TROTTER. *(looking at GILES; stolidly)* We don't frame people.

MOLLIE. *(to TROTTER)* Tell him you're not going to arrest him.

TROTTER. *(moving to left of MOLLIE; stolidly)* I'm not arresting anyone. To do that, I've got to have evidence. I haven't got any evidence – yet.

(CHRISTOPHER moves to the fire.)

GILES. I think you're crazy, Mollie. *(Moving up centre. To TROTTER)* And you, too! There's just one person who fits the bill and, if only as a safety measure, he ought to be put under arrest. It's only fair to the rest of us.

MOLLIE. Wait, Giles, wait. Sergeant Trotter, can I – can I speak to you a minute?

TROTTER. Certainly, Mrs. Ralston. Will the rest of you go into the dining-room, please.

(The others rise and move down right to the door: first MISS CASEWELL, then MR. PARAVICINI, protesting, followed by CHRISTOPHER and MAJOR METCALF, who pauses to light his pipe. MAJOR METCALF becomes aware of being stared at. They all exit)

GILES. I'm staying.

MOLLIE. No, Giles, you, too, please.

GILES. *(furious)* I'm staying. I don't know what's come over you, Mollie.

MOLLIE. Please.

(GILES exits after the others down right, leaving the door open. MOLLIE shuts it. TROTTER moves to the arch up right.)

TROTTER. Yes, Mrs. Ralston, *(moving above the armchair centre)* what is it you want to say to me?

MOLLIE. *(moving up to left of TROTTER)* Sergeant Trotter, you think that this – *(she moves below the sofa)* this crazy killer must be the – eldest of those three boys at the Farm – but you don't know that, do you?

TROTTER. We don't actually know a thing. All we've got so far is that the woman who joined with her husband in ill-treating and starving those children, has been killed, and that the woman magistrate who was responsible for placing them there has been killed. *(He moves down to right of the sofa.)* The telephone wire that links me with police headquarters has been cut...

MOLLIE. You don't even know that. It may have been just the snow.

TROTTER. No, Mrs. Ralston, the line was deliberately cut. It was cut just outside by the front door. I found the place.

MOLLIE. *(shaken)* I see.

TROTTER. Sit down, Mrs. Ralston.

MOLLIE. *(sitting on the sofa)* But, all the same, you don't know...

TROTTER. (*moving in a circle left above the sofa and then right below it*) I'm going by probability. It all points one way; mental instability, childish mentality, desertion from the Army and the psychiatrist's report.

MOLLIE. Oh I know, and therefore it all seems to point to Christopher. But I don't believe it is Christopher. There must be other possibilities.

TROTTER. (*right of the sofa; turning to her*) Such as?

MOLLIE. (*hesitating*) Well – hadn't those children any relations at all?

TROTTER. The mother was a drunk. She died soon after the children were taken away from her.

MOLLIE. What about their father?

TROTTER. He was an Army sergeant, serving abroad. If he's alive, he's probably discharged from the Army by now.

MOLLIE. You don't know where he is now?

TROTTER. We've no information. To trace him may take some time, but I can assure you, Mrs. Ralston, that the police take every eventuality into account.

MOLLIE. But you don't know where he may be at this minute, and if the son is mentally unstable, the father may have been unstable, too.

TROTTER. Well, it's a possibility.

MOLLIE. If he came home, after being a prisoner with the Japs, perhaps, and having suffered terribly – if he came home and found his wife dead and that his children had gone through some terrible experience, and one of them had died through it, he might go off his head a bit and want – revenge!

TROTTER. That's only surmise.

MOLLIE. But it's possible?

TROTTER. Oh yes, Mrs. Ralston, it's quite possible.

MOLLIE. So the murderer may be middle-aged, or even old. (*She pauses.*) When I said the police had rung up, Major Metcalf was frightfully upset. He really was. I saw his face.

TROTTER. (*considering*) Major Metcalf? (*He moves to the armchair centre and sits.*)

MOLLIE. Middle-aged. A soldier. He seems quite nice and perfectly normal – but it mightn't show, might it?

TROTTER. No, often it doesn't show at all.

MOLLIE. (*rising and moving to left of TROTTER*) So, it's not only Christopher who's a suspect. There's Major Metcalf as well.

TROTTER. Any other suggestions?

MOLLIE. Well, Mr. Paravicini did drop the poker when I said the police had rung up.

TROTTER. Mr. Paravicini. (*He appears to consider.*)

MOLLIE. I know he seems quite old – and foreign and everything, but he mightn't really be as old as he looks. He moves like a much younger man, and he's definitely got make-up on his face. Miss Casewell noticed it, too. He might be – oh, I know it sounds very melodramatic – but he might be *disguised*.

TROTTER. You're very anxious, aren't you, that it shouldn't be young Mr. Wren?

MOLLIE. (*moving to the fire*) He seems so – helpless, somehow. (*turning to TROTTER*) And so unhappy.

TROTTER. Mrs. Ralston, let me tell you something. I've had *all* possibilities in mind ever since the beginning. The boy Georgie, the father – and someone else. There was a sister, you remember.

MOLLIE. Oh – the sister?

TROTTER. (*rising and moving to MOLLIE*) It could have been a woman who killed Maureen Lyon. A woman. (*moving centre*) 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. (*He moves above the sofa table.*) Yes, it might have been a woman.

MOLLIE. Miss Casewell?

TROTTER. (*moving to the stairs*) She looks a bit old for the part. (*He moves up the stairs, opens the library door, looks in, then shuts the door.*) Oh yes, Mrs. Ralston, there's a very wide field. (*He comes down the stairs.*) There's yourself, for instance.

MOLLIE. Me?

TROTTER. You're about the right age.

(*MOLLIE is about to protest.*)

(*checking her*) 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. (*crossing slowly to left of MOLLIE*) 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. (*significantly*) 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... (*She turns away.*)

TROTTER. You don't know it of your own knowledge.

MOLLIE. (*turning back quickly*) It's outrageous that...

TROTTER. You'd be surprised, Mrs. Ralston, if you knew how many cases rather like yours we get. Especially since the war. Homes broken up and families dead. Fellow says he's been in the Air Force, or just finished his Army training. Parents killed – no relations. There aren't any backgrounds nowadays and young people settle their own affairs – they meet and marry. It's parents and relatives who used to make the enquiries before they consented to an engagement. That's all done away with. Girl just marries her man. Sometimes she doesn't find out for a year or two that he's an absconding bank clerk, or an Army deserter or something equally undesirable. 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*. (*turning to the fire*) And it's absolutely absurd to suggest that he's some horrible crazy homicidal maniac. Why, he wasn't even in London yesterday when the murder took place.

TROTTER. Where was he? Here?

MOLLIE. He went across country to a sale to get some wire netting for our chickens.

TROTTER. Bring it back with him? (*He crosses to the desk.*)

MOLLIE. No, it turned out to be the wrong kind.

TROTTER. Only thirty miles from London, aren't you? Oh, you got an ABC? (*He picks up the ABC and reads it.*) Only an hour by train – a little longer by car.

MOLLIE. (*stamping her foot with temper*) I tell you Giles wasn't in London.

TROTTER. Just a minute, Mrs. Ralston. (*He crosses to the front hall, and comes back carrying a darkish overcoat. Moving to left of MOLLIE.*) This your husband's coat?

(*MOLLIE looks at the coat*)

MOLLIE. (*suspiciously*) Yes.

(TROTTER takes out a folded evening paper from the pocket.)

TROTTER. *Evening News*. Yesterday's. Sold on the streets about three-thirty yesterday afternoon.

MOLLIE. I don't believe it!

TROTTER. Don't you? (*He moves up right to the arch with the coat.*) Don't you?

(TROTTER exits through the archway up right with the overcoat. MOLLIE sits in the small armchair down right, staring at the evening paper. The door down right slowly opens. CHRISTOPHER peeps in through the door, sees that MOLLIE is alone and enters.)

CHRISTOPHER. Mollie!

(MOLLIE jumps up and hides the newspaper under the cushion in the armchair centre.)

MOLLIE. Oh, you startled me! (*She moves left of the armchair centre.*)

CHRISTOPHER. Where is he? (*moving to right of MOLLIE*)
Where has he gone?

MOLLIE. Who?

CHRISTOPHER. The sergeant.

MOLLIE. Oh, he went out that way.

CHRISTOPHER. If only I could get away. Somehow – some way. Is there anywhere I could hide – in the house?

MOLLIE. Hide?

CHRISTOPHER. Yes – from *him*.

MOLLIE. Why?

CHRISTOPHER. But, darling, they're all so frightfully against me. They're going to say I committed these murders – particularly your husband. (*He moves to right of the sofa.*)

MOLLIE. Never mind him. (*She moves a step to right of CHRISTOPHER.*) Listen, Christopher, you can't go on – running away from things – all your life.

CHRISTOPHER. Why do you say that?

MOLLIE. Well, it's true, isn't it?

CHRISTOPHER. *(hopelessly)* Oh yes, it's quite true. *(He sits at the left end of the sofa.)*

MOLLIE. *(sitting at the right end of the sofa; affectionately)*
You've got to grow up some time, Chris.

CHRISTOPHER. I wish I hadn't.

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

CHRISTOPHER. No.

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

CHRISTOPHER. No.

MOLLIE. Why did you...?

CHRISTOPHER. 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?

CHRISTOPHER. We needn't go into that. I ran away whilst I was doing my Army service. It was all so beastly – I hated it.

(MOLLIE has a sudden wave of unease, which CHRISTOPHER notices. She rises and moves to right of the sofa.)

(rising and moving down left) Yes, I'm just like the unknown murderer.

(MOLLIE moves up to left of the refectory table, and turns away from him.)

I told you I was the one the specification fitted. You see, my mother – my mother... *(He moves up to left of the sofa table.)*

MOLLIE. Yes, your mother?

CHRISTOPHER. 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.

CHRISTOPHER. One can't do that.

MOLLIE. Yes, one can.

CHRISTOPHER. You mean – you have? *(He moves up to left of MOLLIE.)*

MOLLIE. *(facing CHRISTOPHER)* Yes.

CHRISTOPHER. What was it? Something very bad?

MOLLIE. Something I've never forgotten.

CHRISTOPHER. Was it to do with Giles?

MOLLIE. No, it was long before I met Giles.

CHRISTOPHER. You must have been very young. Almost a child.

MOLLIE. Perhaps that's why it was so – awful. It was horrible – horrible... I try to put it out of my mind. I try never to think about it.

CHRISTOPHER. 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.

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

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

CHRISTOPHER. Anyway, you think I ought to stick it out.

MOLLIE. Well, frankly, what else can you do?

CHRISTOPHER. 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.

CHRISTOPHER. Sergeant Trotter thinks I'm guilty.

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

(She moves down to the armchair centre, pulls out the evening paper from under the cushion and stares at it. Suddenly, with passion) I hate him – I hate him – I hate him...

CHRISTOPHER. *(startled)* Who?

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

CHRISTOPHER. What is all this?

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

CHRISTOPHER. What won't you believe? *(He moves slowly to MOLLIE, puts his hands on her shoulders and turns her round to face him.)* Come on – out with it!

MOLLIE. *(showing the paper)* You see that?

CHRISTOPHER. Yes.

MOLLIE. What is it? Yesterday's evening paper – a London paper. And it was in Giles' pocket. But Giles didn't go to London yesterday.

CHRISTOPHER. Well, if he was here all day...

MOLLIE. But he wasn't. He went off in the car to look for chicken wire, but he couldn't find any.

CHRISTOPHER. Well, that's all right. *(moving left centre)* Probably he did go up to London after all.

MOLLIE. Then why shouldn't he tell me he did? Why pretend he'd been driving all round the countryside?

CHRISTOPHER. Perhaps, with the news of this murder...

MOLLIE. He didn't know about the murder. Or did he? Did he? *(She moves to the fire.)*

CHRISTOPHER. Good Lord, Mollie. Surely you don't think – the Sergeant doesn't think...

(During the next speech MOLLIE crosses slowly up stage to left of the sofa. CHRISTOPHER silently drops the paper on the sofa.)

MOLLIE. I don't know what the Sergeant thinks. And he can make you think things about people. You ask yourself questions and you begin to doubt. You feel that somebody you love and know well might be – a stranger. (*whispering*) That's what happens in a nightmare. You're somewhere in the middle of friends and then you suddenly look at their faces and they're not your friends any longer – they're different people – just pretending. Perhaps you can't trust anybody – perhaps everybody's a stranger. (*She puts her hands to her face.*)

(**CHRISTOPHER** moves to the left end of the sofa, kneels on it and takes her hands away from her face. **GILES** enters from the dining-room down right, but stops when he sees them. **MOLLIE** backs away, and **CHRISTOPHER** sits on the sofa.)

GILES. (*at the door*) I seem to be interrupting something.

MOLLIE. No, we were – just talking. I must go to the kitchen – there's the pie and potatoes – and I must do – do the spinach. (*She moves right above the armchair centre.*)

CHRISTOPHER. (*rising and moving centre*) I'll come and give you a hand.

GILES. (*moving up to the fire*) No, you won't.

MOLLIE. Giles.

GILES. *Tête-à-têtes* aren't very healthy things at present. You keep out of the kitchen and keep away from my wife.

CHRISTOPHER. But really, look here...

GILES. (*furious*) You keep away from my wife, Wren. She's not going to be the next victim.

CHRISTOPHER. So that's what you think about me.

GILES. I've already said so, haven't I? There's a killer loose in this house – and it seems to me you fit the bill.

CHRISTOPHER. I'm not the only one to fit the bill.

GILES. I don't see who else does.

CHRISTOPHER. How blind you are – or do you just pretend to be blind?

GILES. I tell you I'm worrying about my wife's safety.

CHRISTOPHER. So am I. I'm not going to leave you here alone with her. *(He moves up to left of MOLLIE.)*

GILES. *(moving up to right of MOLLIE)* What the hell...?

MOLLIE. Please go, Chris.

CHRISTOPHER. I'm not going.

MOLLIE. Please go, Christopher. Please. I mean it...

CHRISTOPHER. *(moving right)* I shan't be far away.

(Unwillingly CHRISTOPHER exits through the arch up right. MOLLIE crosses to the desk chair, and GILES follows her.)

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!

GILES. (*angrily*) What the hell are you...?

(MR. PARAVICINI *enters from the archway up right. He moves between them.*)

PARAVICINI. Now, now. I do hope you young people are not both saying a little more than you mean. One is so apt to in these lovers' quarrels.

GILES. "Lovers' quarrels!" That's good. (*He moves to left of the refectory table.*)

PARAVICINI. (*moving down to the small armchair right*) Quite so. Quite so. I know just how you feel. I have been through all this myself when I was a younger man. *Jeunesse – jeunesse –* as the poet says. Not been married long, I imagine?

GILES. (*crossing to the fire*) It's no business of yours, Mr. Paravicini...

PARAVICINI. (*moving down centre*) No, no, no business at all. But I just came in to say that the Sergeant cannot find his skis and I'm afraid he is very annoyed.

MOLLIE. (*moving to right of the sofa table*) Christopher!

GILES. What's that?

PARAVICINI. (*moving to face GILES*) He wants to know if you have by any chance moved them, Mr. Ralston.

GILES. No, of course not.

(SERGEANT TROTTER *enters from the archway up right looking red and annoyed.*)

TROTTER. Mr. Ralston – Mrs. Ralston, have you removed my skis from the cupboard back there where we put them?

GILES. Certainly not.

TROTTER. Somebody's taken them.

PARAVICINI. (*moving to right of TROTTER*) What made you happen to look for them?

TROTTER. The snow is still lying. I need help here, reinforcements. I was going to ski over to the police station at Market Hampton to report on the situation.

PARAVICINI. And now you can't – dear, dear... Somebody's seen to it that you certainly shan't do that. But there could be another reason, couldn't there?

TROTTER. Yes, what?

PARAVICINI. Somebody may want to get away.

GILES. *(moving to right of MOLLIE; to her)* What did you mean when you said "Christopher" just now?

MOLLIE. Nothing.

PARAVICINI. *(chuckling)* So our young architect has hooked it, has he? Very, very interesting.

TROTTER. Is this true, Mrs. Ralston? *(He moves to centre of the refectory table)*

(CHRISTOPHER enters from the stairs left and comes to left of the sofa.)

MOLLIE. *(moving slightly left)* Oh, thank goodness. You haven't gone, after all.

TROTTER. *(crossing to right of CHRISTOPHER)* Did you take my skis, Mr. Wren?

CHRISTOPHER. *(surprised)* Your skis, Sergeant? No, why should I?

TROTTER. Mrs. Ralston seemed to think... *(He looks at MOLLIE.)*

MOLLIE. Mr. Wren is very fond of ski-ing. I thought he might have taken them just to – get a little exercise.

GILES. Exercise? *(He moves up to centre of the refectory table.)*

TROTTER. Now, listen, you people. This is a serious matter. Somebody has removed my only chance of communication with the outside world. I want everybody here – at once.

PARAVICINI. I think Miss Casewell has gone upstairs.

MOLLIE. I'll get her.

(MOLLIE exits up the stairs. TROTTER moves to left of the arch up left.)

PARAVICINI. (*moving down right*) I left Major Metcalf in the dining-room. (*He opens the door down right and looks in.*) Major Metcalf! He's not there now.

GILES. I'll try and find him.

(*GILES exits up right. MOLLIE and MISS CASEWELL enter from the stairs. MOLLIE moves to right of the refectory table and MISS CASEWELL to left of it. MAJOR METCALF enters up left from the library.*)

MAJOR METCALF. Hullo, wanting me?

TROTTER. It's a question of my skis.

MAJOR METCALF. Skis? (*He moves to left of the sofa.*)

PARAVICINI. (*moving to the archway up right and calling*) Mr Ralston!

(*GILES enters up right and stands below the arch. PARAVICINI returns and sits in the small armchair down right.*)

TROTTER. Did either of you two remove a pair of skis from the cupboard near the kitchen door?

MISS CASEWELL. Good Lord, no. Why should I?

MAJOR METCALF. And *I* didn't touch 'em.

TROTTER. Nevertheless they are gone. (*to MISS CASEWELL*) Which way did you go to your room?

MISS CASEWELL. By the back stairs.

TROTTER. Then you passed the cupboard door.

MISS CASEWELL. If you say so – I've no idea where your skis are.

TROTTER. (*to MAJOR METCALF*) You were actually *in* that cupboard today.

MAJOR METCALF. Yes, I was.

TROTTER. At the time Mrs. Boyle was killed.

MAJOR 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?

MAJOR METCALF. I haven't the least idea.

TROTTER. Didn't you see them there?

MAJOR METCALF. Can't remember.

TROTTER. You must remember if those skis were there then?

MAJOR METCALF. No good shouting at me, young fellow. I wasn't thinking about any damned skis. I was interested in the cellars. *(He moves to the sofa and sits.)* 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. *(moving down to left of the sofa)* You realize that you, yourself, had an excellent opportunity of taking them?

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

TROTTER. The question is, where are they now?

MAJOR 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. *(He rises and crosses right towards the door.)*

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

MAJOR 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.

MISS CASEWELL. You still don't believe that?

TROTTER. Yes, Miss Casewell. I do. Three blind mice. Two mice cancelled out – a third mouse still to be dealt with. *(moving down centre, with his back to the audience)* There are six of you here listening to me. One of you's a killer!

(There is a pause. They are all affected and look uneasily at one another.)

One of you's a killer. *(He moves to the fire.)* I don't know which yet, but I shall. And another of you is the killer's prospective victim. That's the person I'm speaking to. *(He crosses to MOLLIE.)* Mrs. Boyle held out on me – Mrs. Boyle is dead. *(He moves up centre.)* You – whoever you are – are holding out on me. Well – don't. Because you're in danger. Nobody who's killed twice is going to hesitate to kill a third time. *(He moves to right of MAJOR METCALF.)* And as it is, I don't know which of you it is who needs protection.

(There is a pause.)

(Crossing down centre and turning his back to the audience)
Come on, now, anybody here who has anything, however slight, to reproach themselves for in that bygone business, had better come out with it.

(There is a pause.)

All right – you won't. I'll get the killer – I've no doubt of that – but it may be too late for one of you. *(He moves up to centre of the refectory table.)* And I'll tell you another thing. The killer's enjoying this. Yes, he's enjoying himself a good deal...

(There is a pause.)

(He moves round the right end of the refectory table to behind it. He opens the right curtain, looks out and then sits at the right end of the window seat.) All right – you can go.

(MAJOR METCALF exits into the dining-room down right. CHRISTOPHER exits up the stairs left. MISS CASEWELL crosses to the fire and leans on the mantelpiece. GILES moves centre and MOLLIE follows; GILES stops and turns right. MOLLIE turns her back on him and moves behind the armchair centre. PARAVICINI rises and moves to right of MOLLIE.)

PARAVICINI. Talking of chicken, dear lady, have you ever tried chicken's livers served on toast that has been thickly smeared with *foie gras*, with a very thin rasher of bacon just touched with a *soupçon* of fresh mustard? I will come with you to the kitchen and we will see what we can concoct together. A charming occupation.

(PARAVICINI takes MOLLIE's right arm and starts to move up right.)

GILES. *(taking MOLLIE's left arm)* I'm helping my wife, Paravicini.

(MOLLIE throws off GILES' arm.)

PARAVICINI. Your husband is afraid for you. Quite natural under the circumstances. He doesn't fancy your being alone with me.

(MOLLIE throws off PARAVICINI's arm.)

It is my sadistic tendencies he fears – not my dishonourable ones. *(He leers.)* Alas, what an inconvenience the husband always is. *(He kisses her fingers.)* *A riverderla...*

MOLLIE. I'm sure Giles doesn't think...

PARAVICINI. He is very wise. Take no chances. *(He moves down to right of the armchair centre.)* Can I prove to you or to him or to our dogged Sergeant that I am *not* a homicidal maniac? So difficult to prove a negative. And suppose that instead I am really... *(He hums the tune of "Three Blind Mice.")*

MOLLIE. Oh don't. *(She moves to the back of the armchair centre.)*

PARAVICINI. But such a gay little tune? Don't you think? She cut off their tails with a carving knife – snick, snick, snick – delicious. Just what a child would adore. Cruel little things, children. *(leaning forward)* Some of them never grow up.

(MOLLIE gives a frightened cry.)

GILES. (*moving to right of the refectory table*) Stop frightening my wife at once.

MOLLIE. It's silly of me. But you see – I found her. Her face was all purple. I can't forget it...

PARAVICINI. I know. It's difficult to forget things, isn't it. You aren't really the forgetting kind.

MOLLIE. (*incoherently*) I must go – the food – dinner – prepare the spinach – and the potatoes all going to pieces – please, Giles.

(**GILES** and **MOLLIE** exit through the archway up right. **PARAVICINI** leans on the left side of the arch and looks after them, grinning. **MISS CASEWELL** stands by the fireplace, lost in thought.)

TROTTER. (*rising and crossing to left of PARAVICINI*) What did you say to the lady to upset her, sir?

PARAVICINI. Me, Sergeant? Oh, just a little innocent fun. I've always been fond of a little joke.

TROTTER. There's nice fun – and there's fun that's not so nice.

PARAVICINI. (*moving down centre*) Now I do wonder what you mean by that, Sergeant?

TROTTER. I've been doing a little wondering about you, sir.

PARAVICINI. Indeed?

TROTTER. I've been wondering about that car of yours, and how it happened to overturn in a snowdrift (*He pauses and draws the right curtain.*) so conveniently.

PARAVICINI. Inconveniently, you mean, don't you, Sergeant?

TROTTER. (*moving down to right of PARAVICINI*) That rather depends on the way you're looking at it. Just where were you bound for, by the way, when you had this – accident?

PARAVICINI. Oh – I was on my way to see a friend.

TROTTER. In this neighbourhood?

PARAVICINI. Not so very far from here.

TROTTER. And what was the name and address of this friend?

PARAVICINI. Now really, Sergeant Trotter, does that matter now? I mean, it has nothing to do with this predicament, has it? *(He sits at the left end of the sofa.)*

TROTTER. We always like the fullest information. What did you say this friend's name was?

PARAVICINI. I didn't say. *(He takes a cigar from a case in his pocket.)*

TROTTER. No, you didn't say. And it seems you're not going to say. *(He sits on the right arm of the sofa.)* Now that's very interesting.

PARAVICINI. But there might be – so many reasons. An *amour* – discretion. These jealous husbands. *(He pierces the cigar.)*

TROTTER. Rather old to be running round with the ladies at your time of life, aren't you?

PARAVICINI. My dear Sergeant, I am not, perhaps, quite so old as I look.

TROTTER. That's just what I've been thinking, sir.

PARAVICINI. What? *(He lights the cigar.)*

TROTTER. That you may not be as old as you – try to look. There's a lot of people trying to look younger than they are. If somebody goes about trying to look older – well, it does make one ask oneself why.

PARAVICINI. Having asked questions of so many people – you ask questions of yourself as well? Isn't that overdoing things?

TROTTER. I might get an answer from myself – I don't get many from you.

PARAVICINI. Well, well – try again – that is, if you have any more questions to ask.

TROTTER. One or two. Where were you coming from last night?

PARAVICINI. That is simple – from London.

TROTTER. What address in London?

PARAVICINI. I always stay at the Ritz Hotel.

TROTTER. Very nice, too, I'm sure. What is your permanent address?

PARAVICINI. I dislike permanency.

TROTTER. What's your business or profession?

PARAVICINI. I play the markets.

TROTTER. Stockbroker?

PARAVICINI. No, no, you misunderstand me.

TROTTER. Enjoying this little game, aren't you? Sure of yourself, too. But I shouldn't be too sure. You're mixed up in a murder case, and don't you forget it. Murder isn't just fun and games.

PARAVICINI. Not even this murder? *(He gives a little giggle, and looks sideways at TROTTER.)* Dear me, you're very serious, Sergeant Trotter. I always have thought policemen have no sense of humour. *(He rises and moves to left of the sofa.)* Is the inquisition over – for the moment?

TROTTER. For the moment – yes.

PARAVICINI. Thank you so much. I shall go and look for your skis in the drawing-room. Just in case someone has hidden them in the grand piano.

(PARAVICINI exits down left. TROTTER looks after him, frowning, moves down to the door and opens it. MISS CASEWELL crosses quietly towards the stairs left. TROTTER shuts the door.)

TROTTER. *(without turning his head)* Just a minute, please.

MISS CASEWELL. *(pausing at the stairs)* Were you speaking to me?

TROTTER. Yes. *(crossing to the armchair centre)* Perhaps you'd come and sit down. *(He arranges the armchair for her.)*

(MISS CASEWELL looks at him warily and crosses below the sofa.)

MISS CASEWELL. Well, what do you want?

TROTTER. You may have heard some of the questions I was asking Mr. Paravicini?

MISS CASEWELL. I heard them.

TROTTER. (*moving to the right end of the sofa*) I'd like to have a little information from you.

MISS CASEWELL. (*moving to the armchair centre and sitting*) What do you want to know?

TROTTER. Full name, please.

MISS CASEWELL. Leslie Margaret (*she pauses*) Katherine Casewell.

TROTTER. (*with just a nuance of something different*) Katherine...

MISS CASEWELL. I spell it with a "K."

TROTTER. Quite so. Address?

MISS CASEWELL. Villa Mariposa, Pine d'or, Majorca.

TROTTER. That's in Italy?

MISS CASEWELL. It's an island – a Spanish island.

TROTTER. I see. And your address in England?

MISS CASEWELL. Care of Morgan's Bank, Leadenhall Street.

TROTTER. No other English address?

MISS CASEWELL. No.

TROTTER. How long have you been in England?

MISS CASEWELL. A week.

TROTTER. And you have been staying since your arrival...?

MISS CASEWELL. At the Ledbury Hotel, Knightsbridge.

TROTTER. (*sitting at the right end of the sofa*) What brought you to Monkswell Manor, Miss Casewell?

MISS CASEWELL. I wanted somewhere quiet – in the country.

TROTTER. How long did you – or do you – propose to remain here? (*He starts twirling his hair with his right hand.*)

MISS CASEWELL. Until I have finished what I came here to do. (*She notices the twirling.*)

(TROTTER looks up startled by a force in her words. She stares at him.)

TROTTER. And what was that?

(There is a pause.)

And what was that? *(He stops twirling his hair.)*

MISS CASEWELL. *(with a puzzled frown)* Eh?

TROTTER. What was it you came here to do?

MISS CASEWELL. I beg your pardon. I was thinking of something else.

TROTTER. *(rising and moving to left of MISS CASEWELL)* You haven't answered my question.

MISS 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...

MISS CASEWELL. *(rising and moving to the fire)* No, I don't think we'll argue about it.

TROTTER. *(following her)* Would you mind telling me your age?

MISS CASEWELL. Not in the least. It's on my passport. I am twenty-four.

TROTTER. Twenty-four?

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

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

MISS CASEWELL. My bank will reassure you as to 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?

MISS CASEWELL. In Majorca – and other places.

TROTTER. Were you born abroad?

MISS CASEWELL. No, I left England when I was thirteen.

(There is a pause, with a feeling of tension in it.)

TROTTER. You know, Miss Casewell, I can't quite make you out. *(He backs away left slightly.)*

MISS CASEWELL. Does it matter?

TROTTER. I don't know. *(He sits in the armchair centre.)* What are you doing here?

MISS CASEWELL. It seems to worry you.

TROTTER. It does worry me... *(He stares at her.)* You went abroad when you were thirteen?

MISS CASEWELL. Twelve – thirteen – thereabouts.

TROTTER. Was your name Casewell then?

MISS CASEWELL. It's my name now.

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

MISS CASEWELL. What are you trying to prove? *(She loses her calm.)*

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

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

TROTTER. There are things one doesn't forget.

MISS CASEWELL. Possibly.

TROTTER. Unhappiness – despair...

MISS CASEWELL. I daresay...

TROTTER. What's your real name?

MISS CASEWELL. I told you – Leslie Margaret Katherine Casewell. *(She sits in the small armchair down right.)*

TROTTER. *(rising)* Katherine...? *(He stands over her.)* What the hell are you doing here?

MISS CASEWELL. I... Oh God... *(She rises, moves centre, and drops on the sofa. She cries, rocking herself to and fro.)* I wish to God I'd never come here.

(TROTTER, startled, moves to right of the sofa.

CHRISTOPHER enters from the door down left)

CHRISTOPHER. *(coming to left of the sofa)* I always thought the police weren't allowed to give people the third degree.

TROTTER. I have merely been interrogating Miss Casewell.

CHRISTOPHER. You seem to have upset her. *(to MISS CASEWELL)* What did he do?

MISS CASEWELL. No, it's nothing. It's just – all this – murder – it's so horrible. *(She rises and faces TROTTER.)* It came over me suddenly. I'll go up to my room.

(MISS CASEWELL exits up the stairs left.)

TROTTER. *(moving to the stairs and looking up after her)* It's impossible... I can't believe it...

CHRISTOPHER. *(moving up and leaning over the desk chair)* What can't you believe? Six impossible things before breakfast like the Red Queen.

TROTTER. Oh yes. It's rather like that.

CHRISTOPHER. Dear me – you look as though you'd seen a ghost.

TROTTER. *(resuming his usual manner)* I've seen something I ought to have seen before. *(He moves centre.)* Blind as a bat, I've been. But I think now we may be able to get somewhere.

CHRISTOPHER. *(impertinently)* The police have a clue.

TROTTER. *(moving right of the sofa table; with a hint of menace)* Yes, Mr. Wren – at last the police *have* a clue. I want everyone assembled in here again. Do you know where they are?

CHRISTOPHER. *(moving to left of TROTTER)* Giles and Mollie are in the kitchen. I have been helping Major Metcalf to look for your skis. We've looked in the most entertaining places – but all to no avail. I don't know where Paravicini is.

TROTTER. I'll get him. *(He moves down left to the door.)* You get the others.

(CHRISTOPHER exits up right.)

(opening the door) Mr. Paravicini. *(moving below the sofa)* Mr. Paravicini. *(returning to the door and shouting)* Paravicini! *(He moves up to centre of the refectory table.)*

(PARAVICINI enters gaily down left.)

PARAVICINI. Yes, Sergeant? (He moves to the desk chair.) What can I do for you? Little Bo Policeman has lost his skis and doesn't know where to find them. Leave them alone, and they'll come home, dragging a murderer behind them. (He moves down left.)

(MAJOR METCALF enters through the arch up right.
GILES and MOLLIE enter up right, with CHRISTOPHER.)

MAJOR METCALF. What is all this? (He moves down to the fire.)

TROTTER. Sit down, Major, Mrs. Ralston...

(No-one sits. MOLLIE moves above the armchair centre, GILES moves to right of the refectory table and CHRISTOPHER stands between them)

MOLLIE. Must I come now? It's very inconvenient.

TROTTER. There are more important things than meals, Mrs. Ralston. Mrs. Boyle, for instance, won't want another meal.

MAJOR METCALF. That's a very tactless way of putting things, Sergeant.

TROTTER. I'm sorry, but I want co-operation and I intend to get it. Mr. Ralston, will you go and ask Miss Casewell to come down again? She went up in her room. Tell her it will only be for a few minutes.

(GILES exits to the stairs left.)

MOLLIE. (moving to right of the refectory table) Have your skis been found, Sergeant?

TROTTER. No, Mrs. Ralston, but I may say I have a very shrewd suspicion of who took them, and of why they were taken. I won't say any more at the present moment.

PARAVICINI. Please don't. (He moves up to the desk chair.) I always think explanations should be kept to the very end. That exciting last chapter, you know.

TROTTER. (reprovingly) This isn't a game, sir.

CHRISTOPHER. Isn't it? Now there I think you are wrong. I think it *is* a game – to somebody.

PARAVICINI. You think the murderer is enjoying himself. Maybe – maybe. (*He sits in the desk chair.*)

(**GILES** and **MISS CASEWELL**, now quite composed, enter from the stairs left.)

MISS CASEWELL. What is happening?

TROTTER. Sit down, Miss Casewell, Mrs. Ralston...

(**MISS CASEWELL** sits on the right arm of the sofa, **MOLLIE** moves down and sits in the armchair centre. **GILES** remains standing at the bottom of the stairs.)

(officially) Will you all pay attention, please? (*He sits centre on the refectory table.*) You may remember that after the murder of Mrs. Boyle, I took statements from you all. Those statements related to your positions at the time the murder was committed. These statements were as follows: (*He consults his notebook.*) Mrs. Ralston in the kitchen, Mr. Paravicini playing the piano in the drawing-room, Mr. Ralston in his bedroom. Mr. Wren ditto. Miss Casewell in the library. Major Metcalf (*he pauses and looks at MAJOR METCALF*) in the cellar.

MAJOR METCALF. Correct.

TROTTER. Those were the statements you made. I had no means of checking these statements. They may be true – they may not. To put it quite clearly, five of those statements are true, but one is false – which one? (*He pauses while he looks from one to the other.*) Five of you were speaking the truth, one of you was lying. I have a plan that may help me to discover the liar. And if I discover that one of you lied to me – then I know who the murderer is.

MISS CASEWELL. Not necessarily. Someone may have lied – for some other reason.

TROTTER. I rather doubt that.

GILES. But what's the idea? You've just said you had no means of checking these statements.

TROTTER. No, but supposing everyone was to go through these actions a second time.

PARAVICINI. (*sighing*) Ah, that old chestnut. Reconstruction of the crime.

GILES. That's a foreign idea.

TROTTER. Not a reconstruction of the *crime*, Mr. Paravicini. A reconstruction of the movements of apparently innocent persons.

MAJOR METCALF. And what do you expect to learn from that?

TROTTER. You will forgive me if I don't make that clear just at the moment.

GILES. You want – a repeat performance?

TROTTER. Yes, Mr. Ralston, I do.

MOLLIE. It's a trap.

TROTTER. What do you mean, it's a trap?

MOLLIE. It is a trap. I know it is.

TROTTER. I only want people to do exactly what they did before.

CHRISTOPHER. (*also suspicious*) But I don't see – I simply can't see – what you can possibly hope to find out by just making people do the things they did before. I think it's just nonsense.

TROTTER. Do you, Mr. Wren?

MOLLIE. Well, you can count me out. I'm too busy in the kitchen. (*She rises and moves up right.*)

TROTTER. I can't count anybody out. (*He rises and looks round at them.*) One might almost believe that you're *all* guilty by the looks of you. Why are you all so unwilling?

GILES. Of course, what you say goes, Sergeant. We'll all co-operate. Eh, Mollie?

MOLLIE. (*unwilling*) Very well.

GILES. Wren?

(**CHRISTOPHER** *nods.*)

Miss Casewell?

MISS CASEWELL. Yes.

GILES. Paravicini?

PARAVICINI. (*throwing up his hands*) Oh yes, I consent.

GILES. Metcalf?

MAJOR METCALF. (*slowly*) Yes.

GILES. Are we all to do exactly what we did before?

TROTTER. The same actions will be performed, yes.

PARAVICINI. (*rising*) Then I will return to the piano in the drawing-room. Once again I will pick out with one finger the signature tune of a murderer. (*He sings, gesturing with his finger.*) Tum, dum, dum – dum dum dum... (*He moves down left.*)

TROTTER. (*moving down centre*) Not quite so fast, Mr. Paravicini. (*to MOLLIE*) Do you play the piano, Mrs. Ralston?

MOLLIE. Yes, I do.

TROTTER. And you know the tune of *Three Blind Mice*?

MOLLIE. Don't we all know it?

TROTTER. Then you could pick it out on the piano with one finger just as Mr. Paravicini did.

(MOLLIE *nods.*)

Good. Please go into the drawing-room, sit at the piano, and be ready to play when I give you the signal.

(MOLLIE *crosses left below the sofa.*)

PARAVICINI. But, Sergeant, I understood that we were each to repeat our former roles.

TROTTER. The same actions will be performed, *but not necessarily by the same people*. Thank you, Mrs. Ralston.

(PARAVICINI *opens the door down left. MOLLIE exits.*)

GILES. I don't see the point.

TROTTER. (*moving up to centre of the refectory table*) There is a point. It is a means of checking up on the original statements, and maybe *one* statement in particular. Now then, will you all pay attention, please. I will

assign each of you your new stations. Mr. Wren, will you kindly go to the kitchen. Just keep an eye on Mrs. Ralston's dinner for her. You're very fond of cooking, I believe.

(CHRISTOPHER *exits up right.*)

Mr. Paravicini, will you go up to Mr. Wren's room. By the back stairs is the most convenient way. Major Metcalf, will you go up to Mr. Ralston's room and examine the telephone there. Miss Casewell, would you mind going down to the cellars? Mr. Wren will show you the way. Unfortunately, I need someone to reproduce my own actions. I am sorry to ask it of you, Mr. Ralston, but would you go out by that window and follow the telephone wire round to near the front door. Rather a chilly job – but you're probably the toughest person here.

MAJOR METCALF. And what are you going to do?

TROTTER. (*crossing to the radio and switching it on and off*) I am enacting the part of Mrs. Boyle.

MAJOR METCALF. Taking a bit of a risk, aren't you?

TROTTER. (*reeling against the desk*) You will all stay in your places and remain there until you hear me call you.

(MISS CASEWELL *rises and exits up right. GILES moves behind the refectory table and opens the right curtain, MAJOR METCALF exits up left. TROTTER nods to PARAVICINI to leave.*)

PARAVICINI. (*shrugging his shoulders*) Parlour games!

(PARAVICINI *exits up right.*)

GILES. No objection to my wearing a coat?

TROTTER. I should advise it, sir.

(GILES *fetches his overcoat from the front hall, puts it on and returns to the window. TROTTER moves centre below the refectory table and writes in his notebook.*)

Take my torch, sir. It's behind the curtain.

(GILES climbs out through the window and exits. TROTTER crosses to the library door up left and exits. After a short pause he re-enters, switches off the library light, goes up to the window, shuts it and closes the curtain. He crosses to the fire and sinks into the large armchair. After a pause he rises and goes to the door down left.)

(calling) Mrs. Ralston, count twenty and then begin to play.

(TROTTER shuts the door down left, moves to the stairs and looks off. "Three Blind Mice" is heard being played on the piano. After a pause, he moves down right and switches off the right wall brackets, then moves up right and switches off the left wall brackets. He moves quickly down to the table lamp and switches it on, then crosses down left to the door.)

(calling) Mrs. Ralston! Mrs. Ralston!

(MOLLIE enters down left and moves below the sofa.)

MOLLIE. Yes, what is it?

(TROTTER shuts the door down left and leans against the downstage side of the door reveal.)

You're looking very pleased with yourself. Have you got what you wanted?

TROTTER. I've got exactly what I wanted.

MOLLIE. You know who the murderer is?

TROTTER. Yes, I know.

MOLLIE. Which of them?

TROTTER. You ought to know, Mrs. Ralston.

MOLLIE. I?

TROTTER. Yes, you've been extraordinarily foolish, you know. You've run a very good chance of being killed by holding out on me. As a result, you've been in serious danger more than once.

MOLLIE. I don't know what you mean.