

START

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.

STOP