

#5
~~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 current. 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.)~~

START
 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!

END