

Major Metcalf \$

Mrs. Boyle

(PARAVICINI crosses to the fire.)

~~I'll see about your room. (She moves to the armchair
cefire.) 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 to 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.)~~

~~(MOLLIE looks at GILES and they both look at
PARAVICINI uneasily as - the curtain falls.)~~

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.~~

Stop.