

Mollie & Giles

are double switches left of the arch up right, and on the downstage side of the door down left, and a single switch on the upstage side of the door down right. A table lamp stands on the sofa table.)

(See the Ground Plan.)

(Before the curtain rises the House Lights fade to a complete blackout and the music of "Three Blind Mice" is heard.)

(When the curtain rises the stage is in complete darkness. The music fades giving place to a shrill whistle of the same tune, "Three Blind Mice." A woman's piercing scream is heard when a mixture of male and female voices say: "My God, what's that?" "Went that way!" "Oh, my God!" Then a police whistle sounds, followed by several other police whistles, all of which fade to silence.)

VOICE ON THE RADIO... and according to Scotland Yard, the crime took place at twenty-four Culver Street, Paddington.

(The lights come up, revealing the Hall at Monkswell Manor. It is late afternoon and almost dark. Snow can be seen falling heavily through the windows up centre. There is a fire burning. A freshly painted sign board is standing on its side on the stairs against the archway left; it has on it in large letters: Monkswell Manor Guest House.)

The murdered woman was a Mrs. Maureen Lyon. In connection with the murder, the police are anxious to interview a man seen in the vicinity, wearing a dark overcoat, light scarf, and a soft felt hat.

(MOLLIE RALSTON enters through the arch up right. She is a tall, pretty young woman with an ingenuous air, in her twenties. She puts down her handbag and gloves on the armchair centre then crosses to the radio and switches it off during the next speech. She places a small parcel in the desk cupboard.)

Motorists are warned against ice-bound roads. The heavy snow is expected to continue, and throughout the country there will be a certain freezing, particularly at points on the north and northeast coast of Scotland.

MOLLIE. (calling) Mrs. Barlow! Mrs. Barlow! (Receiving no reply she crosses to the armchair centre, picks up her handbag and one glove and then goes out through the arch up right. She removes her overcoat and then returns.) Brr! It's cold. (She goes to the wall switch above the door down right and switches on the wall switch above the fireplace. She moves up to the window, feels the radiator and draws the curtains. Then she moves down to the sofa table and switches on the table lamp. She looks round and notices the large sign board lying on its side on the stairs. She picks it up and places it against the wall left of the window alcove. She steps back, nodding her head.) It really does look nice - oh! She notices that there is no "S" on the sign.) How stupid of Giles. (She looks at her watch then at the clock.) Gosh!

(MOLLIE hurries off up the stairs left. GILES enters from the front door right. He is a rather arrogant but attractive young man in his twenties. He stamps, his feet to shake off the snow, opens the oak chest and puts inside a big paper carrier he has been carrying. He takes off his overcoat, hat and scarf, moves down and throws them on the armchair centre. Then he goes to the fire and warms his hands.)

GILES. (calling) Mollie? Mollie? Where are you?

(MOLLIE enters from the arch left.)

MOLLIE. (cheerfully) Doing all the work, you brute. (She crosses to GILES.)

GILES. Oh, there you are - leave it all to me. Shall I stoke the Aga?

MOLLIE. Done.

GILES. (kissing her) Hallo, sweetheart. Your nose is cold.

MOLLIE. I've just come in. (She crosses to the fire.)

GILES. Why? Where have you been? Surely you've not been out in this weather?

MOULIE. I had to go down to the village for some stuff I'd forgotten. Did you get the chicken netting?

GILES. It wasn't the right kind. *(He sits on the left arm of the armchair centre.)* I went on to another dump but that wasn't any good either. Practically a whole day wasted. My God, I'm half frozen. Car was skidding like anything. The snow's coming down thick. What do you bet we're not snowed up tomorrow?

MOULIE. Oh dear, I do hope not. *(She crosses to the radiator and feels it.)* If only the pipes don't freeze.

GILES. *(Rising and moving up to MOULIE.)* We'll have to keep the central heating well stoked up. *(He feels the radiator.)* H'm, not too good - I wish they'd send the coke along. We've not got any too much.

MOULIE. *(Moving down to the sofa and sitting.)* Oh! I do so want everything to go well at first. First impressions are so important.

GILES. *(Moving down to right of the sofa.)* Is everything ready? Nobody's arrived yet, I suppose?

MOULIE. No, thank goodness. I think everything's in order. Mrs. Barlow's hooked it early. Afraid of the weather, I suppose.

GILES. What a nuisance these daily women are. That leaves everything on your shoulders.

MOULIE. And yours! This is a partnership.

GILES. *(Crossing to the fire.)* So long as you don't ask me to cook.

MOULIE. *(Rising.)* No, no, that's my department. Anyway, we've got lots of tins in case we are snowed up. *(Crossing to GILES.)* Oh, Giles, do you think it's going to be all right?

GILES. Got cold feet, have you? Are you sorry now we didn't sell the place when your aunt left it to you, instead of having this mad idea of running it as a guest house?

MOULIE. No, I'm not. I love it. And talking of a guest house. Just look at that! *(She indicates the sign board in an accusing manner.)*

GILES. *(Complacently.)* Pretty good, what? *(He crosses to left of the sign board.)*

MOULIE. It's a disaster! Don't you see? You've left out the "S." Monkwell instead of Monkwell.

GILES. Good Lord, so I did. However did I come to do that? But it doesn't really matter, does it? Monkwell is just as good a name.

MOULIE. You're in disgrace. *(She crosses to the desk.)* Go and stoke up the central heating.

GILES. Across that icy yard! Ugh! Shall I bank it up for the night now?

MOULIE. No, you don't do that until ten or eleven o'clock at night.

GILES. How appalling!

MOULIE. Hurry up. Someone may arrive at any minute now.

GILES. You've got all the rooms worked out?

MOULIE. Yes. *(She sits at the desk and picks up a paper from it.)* Mrs. Boyle, Front Fourposter Room. Major Metcalf, Blue Room. Miss Casewell, East Room. Mr. Wren, Oak Room.

GILES. *(Crossing to right of the sofa table.)* I wonder what all these people will be like. Oughtn't we to have got rent in advance?

MOULIE. Oh no, I don't think so.

GILES. We're rather mugs at this game.

MOULIE. They bring luggage. If they don't pay we hang on to their luggage. It's quite simple.

GILES. I can't help thinking we ought to have taken a correspondence course in hotel keeping. We're sure to get had in some way. Their luggage might be just bricks wrapped up in newspaper and where should we be then?

MOULIE. They all wrote from very good addresses.

Stop.