

He says leave it all to him and don't come back for half an hour. If our guests want to do the cooking themselves, it will save a lot of trouble.

GILES. Why on earth did you give him the best room?

MOLLIE. I told you, he liked the fourposter.

GILES. He liked the pretty fourposter. Twerp!

MOLLIE. Giles!

GILES. I've got no use for that kind. (*significantly*) You didn't handle his suitcase, I did.

MOLLIE. Had it got bricks in it? (*She crosses to the armchair centre and sits.*)

GILES. It was no weight at all. If you ask me there was *nothing* inside it. He's probably one of those young men who go about tilking hotel keepers.

MOLLIE. I don't believe it. I like him. (*She pauses.*) I think

Miss Casewell's rather peculiar/don't you?

GILES. Terrible female – if she is a female.

MOLLIE. It seems very hard that all our guests should be either unpleasant or odd. Anyway, I think Major Mercial's all right, don't you?

GILES. Probably drinks!

MOLLIE. Oh, do you think so?

GILES. No, I don't. I was just feeling rather depressed. Well, at any rate we know the worst now. They've all arrived.

(*The door bell rings.*)

MOLLIE. Who can that be?

GILES. Probably the Colver Street murderer.

MOLLIE. (*rising*) Don't!

(*GILES exits up right to the front door. MOLLIE crosses to the fire.*)

GILES. (*off*) Oh.

(*MR. PARAVICINI staggers in up right, carrying a small bag. He is foreign and dark and elderly with a rather flamboyant moustache. He is a slightly taller edition of*

Paravicini
(w/ Mollie & Giles)

Hercule Poirot, which may give a wrong impression to the audience. He wears a heavy fur-lined overcoat. He leans on the left side of the arch and puts down the bag.
(GILES enters.)

PARAVICINI. A thousand pardons. I am – where am I?

GILES. This is Monkswell Manor Guest House.

PARAVICINI. But what stupendous good fortune! Madame!

(*He moves down to MOLLIE, takes her hand and kisses it.*)

(GILES crosses above the armchair centre.)

What an answer to prayer. A guest house – and a charming hostess. My Rolls Royce, alas, has run into a snowdrift. Blinding snow everywhere. I do not know where I am. Perhaps, I think to myself, I shall freeze to death. And then I take a little bag, I stagger through the snow, I see before me big iron gates. A habitation! I am saved. Twice I fall into the snow as I come up your drive, but at last I arrive and immediately – (*He looks round.*) despair turns to joy. (*dangling his manner*) You can let me have a room – yes?

GILES. Oh yes...

MOLLIE. It's rather a small one, I'm afraid.

PARAVICINI. Naturally – naturally – you have other guests.

MOLLIE. We've only just opened this place as a guest house today, and so we're – we're rather new at it.

PARAVICINI. (*leaning at MOLLIE*) Charming – charming...

GILES. What about your luggage?

PARAVICINI. That is of no consequence. I have locked the car securely.

GILES. But wouldn't it be better to get it in?

PARAVICINI. No, no. (*He moves up to right of GILES.*) I can assure you on such a night as this, there will be no thieves abroad. And for me, my wants are very simple. I have all I need – here – in this little bag. Yes, all that I need.

Stop.

MOLLIE. You'd better get thoroughly warm.