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MOLLIE, GILES + PARAVICINI

p 24-26

Mollie: →

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 bilking 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 Metcalf'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 Culver 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

~~BEAT 107~~
BEAT 114

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. *(changing 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. *(leering 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.

MOLLIE. You'd better get thoroughly warm.

THE MOUSETRAP

(PARAVICINI crosses to the fire.)

I'll see about your room. *(She moves to the armchair centre.)* 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 at 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.)

~~BEAT 11A~~
~~BEAT 12B~~