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GILES, MRS. BOYLE MOLLIE, MAJOR METCALF

P 17-19

THE MOUSETRAP

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GILES. I'm so sorry. We didn't know what train you would be coming by, you see, otherwise of course, we'd have seen that someone was – er – standing by.

MRS. BOYLE. All trains should have been met.

GILES. Let me take your coat.

(MRS. BOYLE hands GILES her gloves and magazines. She stands by the fire warming her hands.)

My wife will be here in a moment. I'll just go along and give Metcalf a hand with the bags.

(GILES exits up right to the front door.)

MRS. BOYLE. *(moving up to the arch as GILES goes)* The drive might at least have been cleared of snow. *(after his exit)* Most offhand and casual, I must say. *(She moves down to the fire and looks round her disapprovingly.)*

(MOLLIE hurries in from the stairs left, a little breathless.)

MOLLIE. I'm so sorry I...

MRS. BOYLE. Mrs. Ralston?

MOLLIE. Yes. I... *(She crosses to MRS. BOYLE, half puts out her hand, then draws it back, uncertain of what guest house proprietors are supposed to do.)*

(MRS. BOYLE surveys MOLLIE with displeasure.)

MRS. BOYLE. You're very young.

MOLLIE. Young?

MRS. BOYLE. To be running an establishment of this kind. You can't have had much experience.

MOLLIE. *(backing away)* There has to be a beginning for everything, hasn't there?

MRS. BOYLE. I see. Quite inexperienced. *(She looks round.)* An old house. I hope you haven't got dry rot. *(She sniffs suspiciously.)*

MOLLIE. *(indignantly)* Certainly not!

MRS. BOYLE. A lot of people don't know they have got dry rot until it's too late to do anything about it.

MOLLIE. The house is in perfect condition.

MRS. BOYLE. H'm – it could do with a coat of paint. You know, you've got worm in this oak.

GILES. (off) This way, Major.

(**GILES** and **MAJOR METCALF** enter up right. **MAJOR METCALF** is a middle-aged, square-shouldered man, very military in manner and bearing. **GILES** moves up centre. **MAJOR METCALF** puts down a suitcase he is carrying and moves above the armchair centre; **MOLLIE** moves up to meet him.)

This is my wife.

MAJOR METCALF. (shaking hands with **MOLLIE**) How d'you do? Absolute blizzard outside. Thought at one time we shouldn't make it. (He sees **MRS. BOYLE**.) Oh, I beg your pardon. (He removes his hat.)

(**MRS. BOYLE** exits down right.)

If it goes on like this I should say you'll have five or six feet of snow by morning. (He crosses to the fire.) Not seen anything like it since I was on leave in nineteen-forty.

GILES. I'll take these up. (Picking up the cases. To **MOLLIE**) Which rooms did you say? Blue Room and the Rose Room.

MOLLIE. No – I put Mr. Wren in the Rose Room. He liked the fourposter so much. So it's Mrs. Boyle in the Oak Room and Major Metcalf in the Blue Room.

GILES. (authoritatively) Major! (He moves left towards the stairs.)

MAJOR METCALF. (instinctively the soldier) Sir!

(**MAJOR METCALF** follows **GILES** and they exit up the stairs left. **MRS. BOYLE** enters down right and moves up to the fireplace.)

MRS. BOYLE. Do you have much servant difficulty here?

MOLLIE. We have quite a good local woman who comes in from the village.

MRS. BOYLE. And what indoor staff?

MOLLIE. No indoor staff. Just us. (She moves down to left of the armchair centre.)

BEAT 5
BEAT 6 ↓

MRS. BOYLE. Indeed. I understood this was a guest house in full running order.

MOLLIE. We're only just starting.

MRS. BOYLE. I would have said that a proper staff of servants was essential before opening this kind of establishment. I consider your advertisement was most misleading. May I ask if I am the only guest – with Major Metcalf, that is?

MOLLIE. Oh no, there are several here.

MRS. BOYLE. This weather, too. A blizzard (*She turns to the fire.*) – no less – all very unfortunate.

MOLLIE. But we couldn't very well foresee the weather! *Pen + Cat*