

His hair is long and untidy and he wears a woven artistic tie. He has a confiding, almost childish manner.)

(MOLLIE enters and moves up centre.)

Weather is simply awful. My taxi gave up at your gate. (He crosses and places his hat on the sofa table.) Wouldn't attempt the drive. No sporting instinct. (moving up to MOLLIE) Are you Mrs. Ralston? How delightful! My name's Wren.

MOLLIE. How do you do, Mr. Wren?

CHRISTOPHER. You know you're not at all as I'd pictured you. I've been thinking of you as a retired general's widow, Indian Army. I thought you'd be terrifically grim and Memsahibish, and that the whole place would be simply crammed with Benares brass. Instead, it's heavenly (crossing below the sofa to left of the sofa table) – quite heavenly. Lovely proportions. (pointing at the desk) That's a fake! (pointing at the sofa table) Ah, but this table's genuine. I'm simply going to love this place. (He moves below the armchair centre.) Have you got any wax flowers or birds of Paradise?

MOLLIE. I'm afraid not.

CHRISTOPHER. What a pity! Well, what about a sideboard? A purple plummy mahogany sideboard with great solid carved fruits on it?

MOLLIE. Yes, we have – in the dining-room. (She glances at the door down right.)

CHRISTOPHER. (following her glance) In here? (He moves down right and opens the door.) I must see it.

(CHRISTOPHER exits into the dining-room and MOLLIE follows him. GILES enters through the archway up right. He looks round and examines the suitcase. Hearing voices from the dining-room, GILES exits up right.)

MOLLIE. (off) Do come and warm yourself.

(MOLLIE enters from the dining-room, followed by CHRISTOPHER. MOLLIE moves centre.)

CHRISTOPHER. (*as he enters*) Absolutely perfect. Real bedrock respectability. But why do away with a centre mahogany table? (*looking off right*) Little tables just spoil the effect.

(*GILES enters up right and stands left of the large armchair right.*)

MOLLIE. We thought guests would prefer them – this is my husband.

CHRISTOPHER. (*moving up to GILES and shaking hands with him*) How do you do? Terrible weather, isn't it? Takes one back to Dickens and Scrooge and that irritating Tiny Tim. So bogus. (*He turns towards the fire.*) Of course, Mrs. Ralston, you're absolutely right about the little tables. I was being carried away by my feeling for period. If you had a mahogany dining-table, you'd have to have the right family round it. (*He turns to GILES.*) Stern handsome father with a beard, prolific, faded mother, eleven children of assorted ages, a grim governess, and somebody called "poor Harriet," the poor relation who acts as general dogsbody and is very, very grateful for being given a good home!

GILES. (*disliking him*) I'll take your suitcase upstairs for you. (*He picks up the suitcase. To MOLLIE*) Oak Room, did you say?

MOLLIE. Yes.

CHRISTOPHER. I do hope that it's got a fourposter with little chintz roses?

GILES. It hasn't.

(*GILES exits left up the stairs with the suitcase.*)

CHRISTOPHER. I don't believe your husband is going to like me. (*Moving a few paces towards MOLLIE.*) How long have you been married? Are you very much in love?

MOLLIE. (*coldly*) We've been married just a year. (*moving towards the stairs left*) Perhaps you'd like to go up and see your room?

end. /