

TROTTER. (*moving to the stairs*) She looks a bit old for the part. (*He moves up the stairs, opens the library door, looks in, then shuts the door.*) Oh yes, Mrs. Ralston, there's a very wide field. (*He comes down the stairs.*) There's yourself, for instance.

MOLLIE. Me?

TROTTER. You're about the right age.

(*MOLLIE is about to protest.*)

(*checking her*) No, no. Whatever you tell me about yourself, I've got no means of checking it at this moment, remember. And then there's your husband.

MOLLIE. Giles, how ridiculous!

TROTTER. (*crossing slowly to left of MOLLIE*) He and Christopher Wren are much of an age. Say, your husband looks older than his years, and Christopher Wren looks younger. Actual age is very hard to tell. How much do you know about your husband, Mrs. Ralston?

MOLLIE. How much do I know about Giles? Oh, don't be silly.

TROTTER. You've been married – how long?

MOLLIE. Just a year.

TROTTER. And you met him – where?

MOLLIE. At a dance in London. We went in a party.

TROTTER. Did you meet his people?

MOLLIE. He hasn't any people. They're all dead.

TROTTER. (*significantly*) They're all dead?

MOLLIE. Yes – but, oh you make it sound all wrong. His father was a barrister and his mother died when he was a baby.

TROTTER. You're only telling me what *he* told you.

MOLLIE. Yes – but... (*She turns away.*)

TROTTER. You don't know it of your own knowledge.

MOLLIE. (*turning back quickly*) It's outrageous that...

TROTTER. You'd be surprised, Mrs. Ralston, if you knew how many cases rather like yours we get. Especially since the war. Homes broken up and families dead. Fellow says he's been in the Air Force, or just finished his Army training. Parents killed – no relations. There aren't any backgrounds nowadays and young people settle their own affairs – they meet and marry. It's parents and relatives who used to make the enquiries before they consented to an engagement. That's all done away with. Girl just marries her man. Sometimes she doesn't find out for a year or two that he's an absconding bank clerk, or an Army deserter or something equally undesirable. How long had you known Giles Ralston when you married him?

MOLLIE. Just three weeks. But...

TROTTER. And you don't know anything about him?

MOLLIE. That's not true. I know everything about him! I know exactly the sort of person he is. He's *Giles*. (*turning to the fire*) And it's absolutely absurd to suggest that he's some horrible crazy homicidal maniac. Why, he wasn't even in London yesterday when the murder took place.

TROTTER. Where was he? Here?

MOLLIE. He went across country to a sale to get some wire netting for our chickens.

TROTTER. Bring it back with him? (*He crosses to the desk.*)

MOLLIE. No, it turned out to be the wrong kind.

TROTTER. Only thirty miles from London, aren't you? Oh, you got an ABC? (*He picks up the ABC and reads it.*) Only an hour by train – a little longer by car.

MOLLIE. (*stamping her foot with temper*) I tell you Giles wasn't in London.

TROTTER. Just a minute, Mrs. Ralston. (*He crosses to the front hall, and comes back carrying a darkish overcoat. Moving to left of MOLLIE.*) This your husband's coat?

(*MOLLIE looks at the coat*)