

ACT 1, SCENE i

The play opens with a radio account of a woman murdered in London. Mollie and Giles have just opened a small guest house and inn with property that Mollie has inherited from her aunt. The action begins on their first day of business and with their first guests. Christopher Wren is the first guest to arrive. He is enthusiastic about the house and praises both the style and decor. Mrs. Boyle is the second guest to arrive, and she arrives complaining that a taxi did not meet her at the train (although she never provided an arrival time). The third guest to arrive, Major Metcalf, is carrying her luggage when he enters the hall a few moments later. Mrs. Boyle's complaints about everything, including the lack of servants and experienced hosts, result in Giles offering to cancel her stay, but she declines and insists she will stay.

Miss Casewell arrives next with news that the snow is worse, and they are all likely to be snowed in for some days. She brings a newspaper account of the murder earlier that afternoon and joins with Wren and Giles in speculating about the murderer. There is a knock at the door and Mr. Paravicini arrives claiming to be stranded in the storm and seeking a room. Mr. Paravicini announces that the roads are so snowed in that there will be no further arrivals or departures. His strange pronouncement

that the inn is just “perfect” makes Mollie and Giles uneasy.