

DR. MONTAGUE. Indeed there were. We'll get to all that in due time. Now perhaps a bit of sherry would be appealing. Before we go in to dinner. *(To Luke.)* Luke, my boy, would you do the honors?

LUKE. *(Crossing u. to the sideboard.)* Delighted.

ELEANOR. *(Quickly.)* I could use something. I'm still a bit shaky after that . . . rabbit.

THEODORA. *(Lightly.)* We, you see, are two little girls who were planning a picnic down by the brook and got scared home by a rabbit. *(Dr. Montague reacts.)*

LUKE. *(At the sideboard.)* I go in mortal fear of rabbits, myself.

ELEANOR. *(Quietly.)* If that's what it was.

DR. MONTAGUE. *(To Eleanor.)* What else do you think it might have been?

ELEANOR. I don't know. We were sitting by the brook, and I felt as though someone or something was watching us. On the hill, across the brook. Then it moved—but I couldn't see anything—only the grass bending.

THEODORA. It was a rabbit. What else?

DR. MONTAGUE. *(Musing.)* Exactly. What else? *(Luke crosses D. with a tray of filled sherry glasses and a decanter. He serves the ladies first. Dr. Montague takes his glass in turn.)* Ah. Thank you. *(He raises his glass.)* Again, welcome to Hill House—and to our success here. *(They all drink.)*

LUKE. *(Curiously.)* How would one reckon success, exactly, in a situation like this?

DR. MONTAGUE. *(Pleasantly.)* Let's just say that I hope all of us will have an exciting visit and that the book which I shall write about our findings will rock my colleagues back on their heels.

THEODORA. Hear, hear. *(Luke raises his glass in agreement. Eleanor smiles at them both.)*

DR. MONTAGUE. You see, your visit here will be something more than a vacation. I'm hopeful of your working, or at least helping me to attain as thorough an understanding as possible of all that might happen while we're here.

ELEANOR. How, doctor?

DR. MONTAGUE. With notes. Notes on everything you see, or hear, or feel. As complete and detailed as you can manage. It shouldn't prove an unbearable task.

THEODORA. *(Holding her empty glass out to Luke.)* So long as

~~no one makes any puns about mixing spirits and spirits. May I?~~
~~*(Luke crosses to her and refills her glass.)*~~

~~DR. MONTAGUE. *(Peering at her.)* Spirits? Oh, of course. *(He laughs.)* Spirits, indeed.~~

Start

~~ELEANOR. Everything's so strange. I mean, this morning I was wondering what Hill House would be like, and now I can't believe that it's all quite real, and we're here.~~

~~LUKE. *(Offering more sherry to Eleanor.)* Since we are all here, shouldn't we get better acquainted? We only know names so far. For example, I know that it is Eleanor, here, who is wearing the red sweater, so, consequently it must be you, Theodora, *(He turns towards Theodora.)* who wears yellow.~~

~~THEODORA. *(Going along with him.)* Doctor Montague has a beard—so you must be Luke.~~

~~ELEANOR. *(To Theodora.)* And you are Theodora, because I am Eleanor.~~

~~LUKE. I have no beard, so *he* *(Pointing to Dr. Montague.)* must be Dr. Montague.~~

~~DR. MONTAGUE. *(Amused.)* Exactly. And I have a beard because my wife likes them. *(They laugh. Dr. Montague holds his glass out to Luke.)*~~

~~LUKE. *(Filling Dr. Montague's glass.)* Well, then, now that I know which of us is me let me identify myself further. I am, in private life, let me see . . . a bullfighter.~~

~~ELEANOR. *(Lightly.)* And I am an artist's model. I live a mad, abandoned life, draped in a shawl and going from garret to garret.~~

~~LUKE. Are you heartless and wanton?~~

~~THEODORA. Are you losing your beauty, and coughing a good deal?~~

~~ELEANOR. *(Reflectively.)* I rather think I have a heart of gold. At any rate my affairs are the talk of the cafes.~~

~~THEODORA. *(Loftily.)* And I am the daughter of the lord of the manor. Ordinarily I go clad in silk and lace, but I've borrowed my maid's finery to appear among you. I may of course become so enamored of the common life that I will never go back—and the poor girl will have to get herself new clothes. And you, Dr. Montague?~~

~~DR. MONTAGUE. *(Smiling.)* A pilgrim. A wanderer.~~

~~LUKE. Truly a congenial little group. Hill House has surely never seen our like.~~

THEODORA. I'll give the honor to Hill House. I've never seen its like. *(She glances about the room.)* This room, for example. What on earth do they call it?

DR. MONTAGUE. A parlor, perhaps. I considered that we might be more comfortable here than in one of the other rooms. It's well located to serve as a sort of center of operations. It may not be cheerful . . .

THEODORA. *(Breaking in.)* Of course it's cheerful. There is nothing more exhilarating than maroon upholstery and oak paneling, and what is that over there, *(She gestures towards the small door at L.)* the door to the snake pit?

DR. MONTAGUE. Tomorrow you will see it all for yourselves. We'll explore the entire house. *(Turning.)* As for that door—it leads into the stone tower, which you might have noticed as you came up the drive.

ELEANOR. *(Surprised.)* But that was at the far corner of the house. Here we're in the middle, without even a window.

DR. MONTAGUE. *(Smiling.)* So it seems. Let's just say that the house has its little oddities. I've studied a map of it, and I still can't quite explain the reasoning to you. For example, when we go in to dinner, which the now departed Mrs. Dudley has spread for us, we go through the doors there, *(He gestures U. C.)* down the passage, into the front hall, and then across the hall and through the billiard room and into the dining room. Roundabout, isn't it? But I'm sure you'll find it easy with practice.

THEODORA. ~~Someone is going to have to lead me. I'd starve if I had to find it on my own.~~

ELEANOR. But why so many little rooms?

LUKE. Maybe they liked to hide from each other.

THEODORA. That does explain why everything is so dark.

DR. MONTAGUE. Some of the rooms are entirely inside rooms, and therefore poorly lighted. However, a series of closed rooms is not altogether surprising in a house of this period. But tomorrow . . .

THEODORA. *(Concerned.)* We ought to make a practice of leaving the doors open.

ELEANOR. You'd have to prop them with something, then. Every door in this house swings shut when you let go of it.

DR. MONTAGUE. I'll make our first note. Door stops—lots of them. *(He rises.)* Now, shall we see about dinner?

THEODORA. Do you think we should? I mean when I look at this house, and then remember our dear Mrs. Dudley.

ELEANOR. Yes, what keeps her here?

THEODORA. And her husband. If that spectre I saw at the gate was Mr. Dudley.

DR. MONTAGUE. As I understand it, the Dudleys have taken care of Hill House as long as anyone can remember. The arrangement seems to be satisfactory to all concerned.

THEODORA. Maybe she and Dudley hoard their gold in a secret chamber—or there's oil under the house.

DR. MONTAGUE. *(Flatly.)* There are no secret chambers in Hill House. The possibility has been suggested, of course, but I think I may say with assurance that no such romantic devices exist here. But tomorrow . . .

LUKE. In any case, oil is definitely old hat. Nowadays it's uranium. Perhaps the Dudleys plan to murder me in cold blood for the uranium.

THEODORA. Or just for the pure fun of it.

ELEANOR. *(Suddenly quite serious.)* Yes, but why are we here?

THEODORA. *(After a moment of silence.)* Just what I was going to ask. Why are we here? What is wrong with Hill House? What is going to happen?

DR. MONTAGUE. Tomorrow—

THEODORA. *(Firmly.)* No. We are three adult, intelligent people, Doctor, and we have all come a long way to meet you here at Hill House. We want to know why.

LUKE. I second the motion.

ELEANOR. Why did you ask us to come, Doctor? How did you know about Hill House, and why does it have such a reputation, and what really goes on here?

DR. MONTAGUE. *(Quietly.)* Actually, I know less than I might wish about Hill House, except by reputation, although I intended to tell you everything I do know. As for what is going to happen, I will learn that when you do. But tomorrow is soon enough to talk about it, I think.

THEODORA. Not for me. Not if I'm going to get any sleep.

DR. MONTAGUE. I assure you that Hill House will be quiet tonight. There is a pattern in these things.

LUKE. I really think we ought to talk it over now.

ELEANOR. We're not afraid.