

THE LANDLADY—IRONY, SUSPENSE, FORESHADOWING

IRONY

1. “On the carpet in front of the fire, a pretty little dachshund was curled up asleep with its nose tucked into its belly. The room itself, so far as he could see in the half-darkness, was filled with pleasant furniture. There was a baby-grand piano and a big soft sofa and several plump armchairs; in one corner he spotted a large parrot in a cage. Animals were usually a good sign in a place like this, Billy told himself; and all in all, it looked to him as though it would be a pretty decent place to stay in” (221).

Knowing how the story ends, which one of Billy’s observations proves to be ironic?

2. “I’m so glad you appeared,” she said, looking earnestly into his face. “I was beginning to get worried.” “That’s all right,” Billy answered brightly. “You musn’t worry about me” (223).

What is the Landlady worried about? How does Billy’s response make the Landlady’s statement an ironic one?

SUSPENSE

1. “As a matter of fact, now he came to think of it, he wasn’t at all sure that the second name didn’t have almost as much of a familiar ring about it as the first. “Gregory Temple?” he said aloud, searching his memory. “Christopher Mulholland?...” (224).

How is the author building suspense through what Billy is saying?

2. "There is nothing more tantalizing than a thing like this that lingers just outside the borders of one's memory. He hated to give it up.

"Now wait a minute," he said. "Wait just a minute. Mulholland...Christopher Mulholland...wasn't *that* the name of the Eton schoolboy who was on a hiking tour through the West Country, and then all of a sudden..."

"Milk?" she said. "And sugar?"

"Yes, please. And then all of a sudden..."

"Eton schoolboy?" she said. "Oh no, my dear, that can't possibly be right because *my* Mr. Mulholland was certainly not an Eton schoolboy when he came to me. He was a Cambridge undergraduate. Come over here now and sit next to me and warm yourself by this lovely fire" (225).

How is the suspense increased in this scene? Why does the Landlady ask Billy what he wants in his tea?

FORESHADOWING

4. "But I'm always ready. Everything is always ready day and night in this house just on the off chance that an acceptable young gentleman will come along. And it is such a pleasure, my dear, such a very great pleasure when now and again I open the door and I see someone standing there who is just *exactly* right." She was halfway up the stairs, and she paused with one hand on the stair rail, turning her head and smiling down at him with pale lips. "Like you," she added, and her blue eyes traveled slowly all the way down the length of Billy's body, to his feet, and then up again" (223).

What signs does Billy miss that something is not quite right about the landlady?

5. "But before you go to bed, would you be kind enough to pop into the sitting room on the ground floor and sign the book? Everyone has to do that because it's the law of the land, and we don't want to go breaking any laws at *this* stage in the proceedings, do we?" (223).

What is foreshadowed in this passage?

6. "he turned and saw his landlady sailing into the room with a large silver tea tray in her hands. She was holding it well out in front of her, and rather high up, as though the tray were a pair of reins on a frisky horse" (224).

"Now and again, he caught a whiff of a peculiar smell that seemed to emanate directly from her person...was it the corridors of a hospital?" (225).

"No, thank you," Billy said. The tea tasted faintly of bitter almonds, and he didn't much care for it" (226).

What do the following passages suggest about the tea?