

In this scene three prominent women in the town are meeting for their weekly tea, scones, and gossip. This is set near the end of the events of the Visitor, probably before the mine incident. The ladies all want to talk about the creature, but it isn't a decent conversation topic so Mrs. Moore avoids the subject. However, Pearl Allcott is desperate to talk about it and soon the arguing over what the creature looked like and what it could be, and they are acting ridiculous and very unlady like as they try to emulate it. Shadow play is involved. It's quick and light, and for the ladies it is a well need release from their polite and proper personas they have to put on at all other times.

This could very well serve as a frame for the show. These women are not directly involved in this plot, but are still connected, and their gossip serves as a good informer for the audience. Anyone can write a ladies tea scene.

*The scene is a living room, parlor type room. Mrs. Moore is crocheting or something. Martha Moore is the wife of a prominent business owner, Pearl Allcott is the wife of Dr. Allcott, and Caroline Summers is the mother in law of Peter Dunn. Also Greta the housekeeper is there and could serve as a bridge character between the immigrants and the socialites.*

Greta: Mrs. Moore, Mrs. Allcott and Mrs. Summer are here.

Martha: Oh good, let them in.

*The women enter and exchange greetings.*

Martha: Greta, could you bring the tea?

*The housekeeper nods and exits the room. The women all sit.*

Martha: So, Caroline, how are Nina and Peter? It's been almost two months now hasn't it?

Caroline: Oh yes, just about. They seem to be settling into the marriage quite nicely. She calls me just about every day and seems quite happy.

Martha: And the business? He seems to be doing well at the bank. I wouldn't be surprised if Peter Dunn is running this town one day!

Caroline: Oh definitely, everyone quite admires him. But you know, with recent events... business could be better. Apparently a lot of people have stayed away from the bank this week. I mean the window isn't even fixed yet.

Martha: (*Clearly uncomfortable with where the conversation has gone*) Oh, right. Well give them my regards. I hope the bank can get back on its feet quickly. What about the practice Pearl? Fred brought back any strange cases this week?

Pearl: Oh no, just the regular batch of flus and injuries. Actually, it's been rather slow there as well. I guess people just prefer to stay inside considering (waves hand)...

Martha: Recent events?

Pearl: Yes... recent events. Plus, people don't really know what to think about going to him considering he was one of them who –

*Martha coughs. Greta has come in with a tray of teas. She sets them down.*

Greta: Anything else ma'am?

Martha: No Greta that will be all. Thank you very much.

*She leaves, the room is quiet for a beat until-*

Pearl: Oh, this is ridiculous Martha. It's clear we all want to talk about the creature and there's no point beating around the bush any longer. There is no good way to avoid that topic. . So let's talk about it, dammit, I've been dying to hear what you two know.

*The other women look a little taken aback.*

Martha: Walter says we shouldn't talk about it. *Beat.* Says it's a bunch of bullhockey, and he doesn't know what those nutcases, his words, are playing at, but there is no way there was any kind of – (*struggles to find/say the word*) creature.

Pearl: Well, Fred definitely saw it, and you can fight me on that. He described it so vividly... there's no way he's making it up.

Martha: Well, maybe he just thought he saw it, but in reality –

Pearl: Oh, don't give me any of that "something in the water" or "mass hysteria" nonsense, Martha. UG Griffith, my husband, Peter Dunn, OV White, and Sydney Gregg all saw it. Were they all hallucinating??

Martha: Well I-

Caroline: *(to Pearl, like she'd been holding back asking a question for too long and broke)* Nina said the creature was 10 feet tall? Can you believe that?

Pearl: *(Purposefully turns away from Martha)* Well Fred said it seemed only about eight foot tall, but still, for a bat that's quite terrifying don't you think?

Caroline: I heard it was a half bird, half human... thing.

Pearl: No, definitely a bat. It's wings were all spindly and what-not. No feathers to be found.

Caroline: But it had a beak, didn't it? Definitely more of a bird attribute.

Pearl: That doesn't –

Martha: Actually, she's right *(clearly desperate to jump in)*. At least that what Sydney Gregg claims. He said he saw it atop a telephone pole, remember? And then he says it climbed down using its beak like some tropical bird or something.

Caroline: What do you mean like a tropical bird?

Martha: You know-- like a parrot would? *(Caroline shakes her head.)* You know like – *(stands up and attempts to act this out. Pearl is trying not to laugh.)* Are you laughing at me?

Pearl: No of course not! Anyway, I don't think that's right. Maybe that's what Syd Gregg claims, but from the way Fred described it it was definitely more like a phantom or a demon. It moved all slow and creepy *(movement)*, like it was getting ready to suck out your soul and there's nothing you could do about it because shoot as you may the bullets went right through!

Caroline: No, OV said when he shot at it, the bullets bounced off like it was made of steel or something. I think it was some sort of machine! *(movement)*

Martha: That's absurd. Have you ever heard of a machine that could do all those things?

Caroline: Well, you've heard about what the Wright Brothers are doing, haven't you? How is this so far out of the realm of reason?

Martha: But why would someone be using a machine to terrorize Van Meter of all places?

Pearl: And really, can we even trust the word of OV White? (Whispers) The man blacked out.

Martha: That's right! There was that smell that knocked him out. There's no way such a stench could've come from a machine. It had to have been some kind of mutant bat thing.

Pearl: But then why didn't any of the other men smell it? It was obviously some sort of supernatural apparition that purposefully chose to unleash its rancor on Mr. White.

Martha: Now why would it want to do that?

Pearl: I don't know! Maybe Mr. White wronged someone or upset some Indian curse or something.

Caroline: Pearl, I know you're into all that spirit stuff, but isn't it more likely it was some kind of flying machine that someone was using to rob the bank or to play a joke?

Martha: She's got a point.

Pearl: (*Thinks very hard for a comeback. Snaps.*) The running! If it was a flying machine then how do you explain the running?

Martha: That's right! How did Sydney describe it? Like it took off running on two feet and then just lifted off the ground and soared away (*demonstrates this*).

Pearl: See I don't know any flying machine that could do that. It sounds downright demonic to me.

Caroline: Maybe it's very advanced technology! The world's fair is next year! You don't know what people have cooked up!

Martha: What if it's actually antediluvian?

Pearl: What if it's the devil itself?

Caroline: What if they made the whole thing up?

(*All quiet*)

Martha: (*Quickly*) Do you remember when we were young and Mrs. Jennings used to put on those shadow plays for the children at the Thanksgiving Day Festival?

Pearl: I'll get the sheets!

Caroline: I'll set up the frame!

Martha: Let me find us some props.

*They assemble all of this in front of the fireplace.*

Pearl: I call being the creature!

Caroline: Darn you!

*Martha hands Pearl all the props and she disappears behind the sheet.*

Martha: Caroline get the lights!

Caroline: (*Does as she's asked*) Ooohh.

Martha: Okay, Pearl, become the creature.

*Pearl takes the form of the creature.*

Martha: (*to Pearl*) That doesn't seem quite right does it?

Caroline: You're forgetting the horn, Pearl!

*Pearl manages this somehow.*

Martha: Try flying around some!

*Pearl opens her wings and starts moving around like a phantom.*

Caroline: No that's too ghosty! Try to move like a machine, like I did!

Pearl: It's not a machine Caroline!

Caroline: Just try it!

*Pearl tries it.*

Martha: (*Snaps*) Ladies, we've forgotten the most important part! (*They all wait for the answer.*) The light!

Caroline: The light!

Pearl: (*Pops out from behind the curtain*) That's right I completely forgot about the light.

Caroline: The light that Ulysses Griffith saw!

Pearl: The light that woke my husband up!

Martha: Here, Pearl, take this.

*She hands Pearl the lantern and pearl put it on her forehead and does some more bat stuff.*

Caroline: Why the light certainly seems mechanical doesn't it?

Pearl: Or other worldly!

Martha: That's good Pearl. I still maintain it was simply a giant bat.

Caroline: An eight foot tall bat with a light on its head?

Martha: Why not? They just found giant primates in Africa! And what about that sea creature in Scotland, huh? Why couldn't there be a giant horned bat with a light on its forehead in Iowa?

Pearl: Because it's Iowa!

Martha: (*Chooses to ignore Pearl's comment*) I feel like there's something still missing... What are we missing?

*They all think for a moment.*

Caroline: The sound!

Pearl: (*Comes out from behind curtain*) That's right! Didn't Peter Dunn describe it as some kind of strangling sound? Like (*makes strangling sound*).

Martha: No I imagine it definitely more like a screech. Like this (*screeches like a pterodactyl*).

Caroline: *Tries to imitate.*

*They both look at Pearl.*

Pearl: *Lets out a pathetic screech. Beat. All burst out laughing. They laugh so hard Martha falls back onto the couch. Greta comes in and Martha tries tries to regain her composure but is still stifling laughter.*

Martha: Yes Greta?

Greta: Sorry to interrupt, ma'am, but it's about suppertime. Should I set a place for Mrs. Summers and Mrs. Allcott or –

Pearl: Suppertime? Oh dear, I had no idea.

Caroline: Oh, Tom and the kids are surely worried about me; I'm never out this late.

Martha: Thank you Greta, but I think the ladies have to get home for their own supper. *Greta nods and leaves.* Well I don't think I've had such a fun afternoon in such a long time. Same time next week?

Pearl: Wouldn't miss it.

*They leave.*

Martha: Greta!

*Greta enters.*

Greta: Yes Mrs. Moore?

Martha: Did anyone, uh, hear us in here?

Greta: No ma'am.

Martha: *(Sigh of relief)* Did you hear us?

Greta: Yes ma'am.

Martha: I see. Thank you, Greta.

*Lights out.*