

Sudbury after she'd been firmly entrenched in the private chapel for over seventeen years.

CHARLES. How? Can you remember how?

MADAME ARCATI. Chance – a fluke! I happened on it by the merest coincidence.

CHARLES. What fluke? What was it?

MADAME ARCATI. Wait! All in good time.

(She begins to walk about the room.)

Now let me see – who was in the house during our first séance?

(She moves to the writing desk.)

CHARLES. Only the Bradmans, Ruth and me and yourself.

MADAME ARCATI. Ah yes – yes, to be sure! But the Bradmans weren't here last night, were they?

CHARLES. No.

MADAME ARCATI. Quickly – my crystal –

CHARLES. *(Moving below the sofa and getting the crystal from the table left and giving it to MADAME ARCATI above the sofa.)* Here...

MADAME ARCATI. *(Shaking it crossly.)* Damn the thing, it gives me the pip. It's cloudy again!

(She looks again.)

Ah! That's better – it's there again – it's there again! I'm beginning to understand.

CHARLES. I wish I was. What's there again?

MADAME ARCATI. A bandage...a white bandage – hold on to a white bandage...

CHARLES. I haven't got a white bandage.

MADAME ARCATI. Sssh!

(She crosses to the séance table and puts the crystal down. She stands silently for a moment.)

ELVIRA. She's too good, you know. She ought to be in a circus.

(**MADAME ARCATI** runs across and leaps on to the pouffe. Then she raises her arms slowly - begins to intone.)

MADAME ARCATI. Be you in nook or cranny, answer me,
Be you in still-room or closet, answer me,
Be you behind the panel, above the stairs,
Beneath the eaves - waking or sleeping,
Answer me!

(*She jumps down.*)

That ought to do it or I'm a Dutchman.

(*She moves to the middle of the room.*)

CHARLES. Do what?

MADAME ARCATI. Hush - wait - !

(**MADAME ARCATI** crosses to the window and picks up a bunch of garlic and crosses to the writing desk, making cabalistic signs. She picks up one of the birch branches and waves it solemnly to and fro.)

RUTH. (*Rising and moving to the gramophone.*) For God's sake don't let her throw any more of that garlic about. It nearly made me sick last time.

CHARLES. Would you like the gramophone on or the lights out or anything?

MADAME ARCATI. No, no - it's near - it's very near -

ELVIRA. (*Rising and coming left to the gramophone, above RUTH.*) If it's a ghost, I shall scream.

RUTH. I hope it's nobody we know. I shall feel so silly.

(*Suddenly the door opens and EDITH comes into the room. She is wearing a pink flannel dressing gown and bedroom slippers. Her head is bandaged.*)

EDITH. Did you ring, sir?

MADAME ARCATI. The bandage! The white bandage!

CHARLES. No, Edith.

EDITH. I'm sorry, sir – I could have sworn I heard the bell – or somebody calling. I was asleep – I don't rightly know which it was.

MADAME ARCATI. Come here, child.

EDITH. Oh!

(She looks anxiously at CHARLES.)

CHARLES. *(Moving up to left of EDITH, who comes center, left of MADAME ARCATI.)* Go on! Go to Madame Arcati – it's quite all right!

MADAME ARCATI. Whom do you see in this room, child?

EDITH. Oh dear...

MADAME ARCATI. Answer, please.

EDITH. *(Falteringly.)* You, Madame –

(She stops.)

MADAME ARCATI. Go on.

EDITH. The master.

MADAME ARCATI. Anyone else?

EDITH. Oh, no, Madame...

MADAME ARCATI. *(Inflexibly.)* Look again.

EDITH. *(Imploringly, to CHARLES.)* I don't understand, sir
– I –

MADAME ARCATI. Come, child – don't beat about the bush.
Look again.

(ELVIRA moves across to the fireplace below the sofa, almost as though she were being pulled. RUTH follows. Both stand at the fire. ELVIRA upstage. EDITH follows them with her eyes.)

RUTH. Do concentrate, Elvira, and keep still.

ELVIRA. I can't...

MADAME ARCATI. Do you see anyone else now?

EDITH. *(Slyly.)* Oh, no, Madame.

MADAME ARCATI. She's lying.

EDITH. Oh, Madame!

MADAME ARCATI. They always do.

CHARLES. They?

MADAME ARCATI. (*Sharply.*) Where are they now?

EDITH. By the fireplace – oh!

CHARLES. She can see them – do you mean she can see them?

MADAME ARCATI. Probably not very clearly – but enough –

EDITH. (*Bursting into tears.*) Let me go! I haven't done nothing nor seen nobody! Let me go back to bed!

MADAME ARCATI. Give her a sandwich.

(**CHARLES** goes to the table and gets a sandwich for **EDITH.**)

EDITH. (*Drawing away.*) I don't want a sandwich. I want to get back to bed!

CHARLES. (*Handing EDITH the plate.*) Here, Edith.

MADAME ARCATI. Nonsense! A big healthy girl like you saying no to a delicious sandwich! I never heard of such a thing! Sit down!

(**MADAME ARCATI** brings **EDITH** to the right arm of the chair. **CHARLES** is left of her. **MADAME ARCATI** is in front of her.)

EDITH. (*To CHARLES.*) Please, sir, I...

CHARLES. Please do as Madame Arcati says, Edith.

EDITH. (*Sitting down on the arm of the armchair and sniffing.*) I haven't done nothing wrong.

CHARLES. It's all right – nobody said you had.

RUTH. If she's been the cause of all this unpleasantness I'll give her a week's notice tomorrow.

ELVIRA. You may not be here tomorrow.

MADAME ARCATI. Look at me, Edith.

(**EDITH** obediently does so.)

Cuckoo – cuckoo – cuckoo – !

EDITH. (*Jumping.*) Oh dear – what's the matter with her? Is she barmy?

MADAME ARCATI. Here, Edith – this is my finger. Look!

(She waggles it.)

Have you ever seen such a long, long, long finger? Look, now it's on the right – now it's on the left – backwards and forwards it goes – see – very quietly backwards and forwards – tic-toc – tic-toc – tic-toc.

ELVIRA. The mouse ran up the clock.

RUTH. Be quiet, you'll ruin everything.

(MADAME ARCATI whistles a little tune close to EDITH's face. Then she snaps her fingers. EDITH looks stolidly in front of her without flinching. MADAME ARCATI stands back.)

MADAME ARCATI. Well – so far so good – she's off all right.

CHARLES. Off?

MADAME ARCATI. She's a Natural. Just the same as the Sudbury case, it really is the most amusing coincidence. Now then – would you ask your wives to stand close together, please?

CHARLES. Where?

(He drops downstage left.)

MADAME ARCATI. Over there by you.

CHARLES. Elvira! Ruth!

(RUTH and ELVIRA move slowly behind the sofa to the French windows during the following sentences.)

RUTH. I resent being ordered about like this.

ELVIRA. I don't like this at all. I don't like any of it. I feel peculiar.

CHARLES. I'm afraid I must insist.

ELVIRA. It would serve you right if we flatly refused to do anything at all.

MADAME ARCATI. Are you sorry for having been so mischievous, Edith?

EDITH. *(Cheerfully.)* Oh, yes, Madame!

MADAME ARCATI. You know what you have to do now, don't you, Edith?

EDITH. Oh, yes, Madame.

(CHARLES moves across to the fireplace.)

RUTH. I believe it's going to work, whatever it is... Oh, Charles!

CHARLES. Sssh!

RUTH. This is goodbye, Charles.

ELVIRA. Tell her to stop for a minute. There's something I want to say before I go.

CHARLES. You should have thought of that before. It's too late now.

ELVIRA. Of all the mean, ungracious –

RUTH. Charles, listen a moment –

MADAME ARCATI. *(In a shrill voice.)* Lights!

(MADAME ARCATI rushes to the door and switches off the lights.)

(Light Cue No. 02. Act III, Scene Two.)

(In the dark EDITH is singing IRVING BERLIN'S ["ALWAYS"] in a very high Cockney voice.)*

(ELVIRA and RUTH both go through the window.)

ELVIRA. *(In the dark.)* I saw Captain Bracegirdle again, Charles – several times – I went to the Four Hundred with him twice when you were in Nottingham, and I must say I couldn't have enjoyed it more.

RUTH. Don't think you're getting rid of us quite so easily, my dear – you may not be able to see us, but we shall be here all right – I consider that you have behaved

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