

MADAME ARCATI. Do you know anybody who has passed over recently?

CHARLES. Not recently, except my cousin in the Civil Service, and he wouldn't be likely to want to communicate with me. We haven't spoken for years.

MADAME ARCATI. (*Hysterically.*) Are you Mr. Condomine's cousin in the Civil Service?

(The table bumps violently several times.)

I'm afraid we've drawn a blank. Can't you think of anyone else? Rack your brains.

RUTH. (*Helpfully.*) It might be old Mrs. Plummett, you know. She died on Whit Monday.

CHARLES. I can't imagine why old Mrs. Plummett should wish to talk to me. We had very little in common.

RUTH. It's worth trying, anyhow.

MADAME ARCATI. Are you old Mrs. Plummett?

(The table remains still.)

RUTH. She was very deaf. Perhaps you'd better shout.

MADAME ARCATI. (*Shouting.*) Are you old Mrs. Plummett?

(Nothing happens.)

There's nobody there at all.

MRS. BRADMAN. How disappointing; just as we were getting on so nicely.

DR. BRADMAN. Violet, be quiet.

MADAME ARCATI. (*Rising.*) Well, I'm afraid there's nothing for it but for me to go into a trance. I had hoped to avoid it because it's so exhausting – however, what must be must be. Excuse me a moment while I start the gramophone again.

(She comes to the gramophone.)

CHARLES. (*In a strained voice.*) Not 'Always.' Don't play 'Always' –

RUTH. Why ever not, Charles? Don't be absurd.

MADAME ARCATI. (*Gently.*) I'm afraid I must. It would be imprudent to change horses in midstream, if you know what I mean.

(She restarts the gramophone.)

CHARLES. Have it your own way.

(MADAME ARCATI starts to moan and comes back slowly to the stool and sits. Then in the darkness a CHILD'S VOICE is heard reciting rather breathlessly: 'Little Tommy Tucker.')

DR. BRADMAN. That would be Daphne. She ought to have had her adenoids out.

MRS. BRADMAN. George – please.

(MADAME ARCATI suddenly gives a loud scream and falls off the stool on to the floor.)

CHARLES. Good God!

RUTH. Keep still, Charles...

(CHARLES subsides. Everyone sits in silence for a moment, then the table starts bouncing about.)

MRS. BRADMAN. It's trying to get away. I can't hold it.

RUTH. Press down hard.

(The table falls over with a crash.)

There now!

MRS. BRADMAN. Ought we to pick it up or leave it where it is?

DR. BRADMAN. How the hell do I know?

MRS. BRADMAN. There's no need to snap at me.

ELVIRA. (*Behind the fireplace opening, on the other side, a perfectly strange and very charming voice.*) Leave it where it is.

CHARLES. Who said that?

RUTH. Who said what?

CHARLES. Somebody said, 'Leave it where it is.'

RUTH. Nonsense, dear.

CHARLES. I heard it distinctly.

RUTH. Well, nobody else did – did they?

MRS. BRADMAN. I never heard a sound.

CHARLES. It was you, Ruth. You're playing tricks.

RUTH. I'm not doing anything of the sort. I haven't uttered.

(There is another pause, and then the voice says:)

ELVIRA. *(Behind the doorway center.)* Good evening, Charles.

CHARLES. *(Very agitated.)* Ventriloquism – that's what it is – ventriloquism.

RUTH. *(Irritably.)* What is the matter with you?

CHARLES. You must have heard that. One of you must have heard that!

RUTH. Heard *what?*

CHARLES. You mean to sit there solemnly and tell me that you none of you heard anything at all?

DR. BRADMAN. I certainly didn't.

MRS. BRADMAN. Neither did I. I wish I had. I should love to hear something.

RUTH. It's you who are playing the tricks, Charles. You're acting to try to frighten us.

CHARLES. *(Breathlessly.)* I'm not. I swear I'm not.

ELVIRA. *(Behind the windows.)* It's difficult to think of what to say after seven years, but I suppose good evening is as good as anything else.

CHARLES. *(Intensely.)* Who are you?

ELVIRA. *(As before.)* Elvira, of course – don't be so silly.

CHARLES. I can't bear this for another minute...

(He rises violently.)

Get up, everybody – the entertainment's over.

(Light Cue No. 03. Act I, Scene Two.)

(He rushes across the room and switches on the lights. Then he moves to the fireplace. All

the others rise. MADAME ARCATI is on the floor, her head towards the audience and her feet on the stool.)

RUTH. Oh, Charles, how tiresome of you. Just as we were beginning to enjoy ourselves.

CHARLES. Never again – that's all I can say. Never, never again as long as I live.

RUTH. What on earth's the matter with you?

CHARLES. Nothing's the matter with me. I'm just sick of the whole business, that's all.

DR. BRADMAN. Did you hear anything that we didn't hear really?

CHARLES. *(With a forced laugh.)* Of course not – I was only pretending.

RUTH. I know you were.

MRS. BRADMAN. Oh dear – look at Madame Arcati!

(MADAME ARCATI is still lying on the floor with her feet upon the stool from which she fell. She is obviously quite unconscious.)

RUTH. What are we to do with her?

CHARLES. Bring her round – bring her round as soon as possible.

DR. BRADMAN. *(Going over and kneeling down beside her.)* I think we'd better leave her alone.

RUTH. But she might stay like that for hours.

(DR. BRADMAN is kneeling left of MADAME ARCATI, RUTH is above her. MRS. BRADMAN to the left of DR. BRADMAN. CHARLES goes to the right of MADAME ARCATI below the sofa.)

DR. BRADMAN. *(After feeling her pulse and examining her eye.)* She's out all right.

CHARLES. *(Almost hysterically.)* Bring her round! It's dangerous to leave her like that.

RUTH. Really, Charles, you are behaving most peculiarly.

CHARLES. (*Kneeling right of MADAME ARCATI, shaking her violently.*) Wake up, Madame Arcati! Wake up! It's time to go home!

DR. BRADMAN. Here – go easy, old man!

CHARLES. Get some brandy – give her some brandy, lift her into the chair – help me, Bradman!

(RUTH goes to the drinks table left and pours out some brandy. CHARLES and DR. BRADMAN lift MADAME ARCATI and put her in the armchair. MRS. BRADMAN takes the stool from her feet and puts it back under the piano.)

(Leaning over her.) Wake up, Madame Arcati! Little Tommy Tucker, Madame Arcati!

(RUTH brings the brandy to above the armchair. CHARLES takes it and gives some to MADAME ARCATI on her right. DR. BRADMAN pats her hand on her left. MRS. BRADMAN is above DR. BRADMAN.)

RUTH. Here's the brandy.

(MADAME ARCATI gives a slight moan and a shiver.)

CHARLES. (*Forcing some brandy between her lips.*) Wake up!

(MADAME ARCATI gives a prolonged shiver and chokes slightly over the brandy.)

MRS. BRADMAN. She's coming round.

RUTH. Be careful, Charles, you're spilling it all down her dress.

MADAME ARCATI. (*Opening her eyes.*) Well, that's that.

RUTH. (*Solicitously.*) Are you all right?

MADAME ARCATI. Certainly I am. Never felt better in my life.

CHARLES. Would you like some more brandy?

MADAME ARCATI. So that's the funny taste in my mouth. Well, really! Fancy allowing them to give me brandy,

Doctor Bradman. You ought to have known better – brandy on top of a trance might have been catastrophic. Take it away, please. I probably shan't sleep a wink tonight as it is.

CHARLES. I know I shan't.

RUTH. Why on earth not?

(CHARLES moves away to right to the fireplace and takes a cigarette.)

CHARLES. The whole experience has unhinged me.

MADAME ARCATI. Well, what happened? Was it satisfactory?

RUTH. Nothing much happened, Madame Arcati, after you went off.

MADAME ARCATI. Something happened all right, I can feel it –

(She rises, crosses to the fireplace, above CHARLES, and sniffs.)

No poltergeist, at any rate – that's a good thing. Any apparitions?

DR. BRADMAN. Not a thing.

MADAME ARCATI. No ectoplasm?

RUTH. I'm not quite sure what it is, but I don't think so.

MADAME ARCATI. Very curious. I feel as though something tremendous has taken place.

RUTH. Charles pretended he heard a voice in order to frighten us.

CHARLES. *(Lighting a cigarette.)* It was only a joke.

MADAME ARCATI. A very poor one, if I may say so.

(She goes round above the sofa to right center.)

Nevertheless, I am prepared to swear that there is someone else psychic in this room apart from myself.

RUTH. I don't see how there can be really, Madame Arcati.

MADAME ARCATI. I do hope I haven't gone and released something. However, we are bound to find out within a day or two. If any manifestation should occur or you