

**ACT I**

**Scene One**

*(The scene is the living room of the Condomines' house in Kent. The room is light, attractive and comfortably furnished. On the left there are French windows opening onto the garden. On the right there is an open fireplace. At the back there are double doors leading to the hall, the dining room, the stairs, and the servants' quarters.)*

*(Light Cue No. 01, Act I, Scene One.)*

*(When the curtain rises it is about eight o'clock on a summer evening. There is a wood fire burning because it is an English summer evening. The doors are open, the windows are closed. The curtains are partially closed.)*

*(EDITH comes in from the hall carrying, rather uneasily, a large tray of cocktail things. She comes to the center table with the tray of drinks. She sees there is no room, so puts it on the drinks table upstage right with a sigh of relief.)*

*(RUTH enters center briskly. She is a smart-looking woman in the middle thirties. She is dressed for dinner, but not elaborately.)*

**RUTH.** That's right, Edith.

**EDITH.** Yes'm.

**START**

**RUTH.** Now you'd better fetch the ice bucket.

**EDITH.** Yes'm.

**RUTH.** *(Arranging the ornaments on the piano.)* Did you manage to get the ice out of those little tin trays?

**EDITH.** Yes'm - I 'ad a bit of a struggle though - but it's all right.

**RUTH.** And you filled the little trays up again with water?

**EDITH.** Yes'm.

**RUTH.** *(Moving to the window and arranging the curtains.)* Very good, Edith - you're making giant strides.

**EDITH.** Yes'm.

**RUTH.** Madame Arcati, Mrs. Bradman and I will have our coffee in here after dinner, and Mr. Condomine and Doctor Bradman will have theirs in the dining room - is that quite clear?

**EDITH.** Yes'm.

**RUTH.** And when you're serving dinner, Edith, try to remember to do it calmly and methodically.

**EDITH.** Yes'm.

**RUTH.** As you are not in the Navy, it is unnecessary to do everything at the double.

**EDITH.** Very good, 'm.

**RUTH.** Now go and get the ice.

**EDITH.** *(Straining at the leash.)* Yes'm.

*(She starts off at full speed.)*

**RUTH.** Not at a run, Edith.

**EDITH.** *(Slowing down.)* Yes'm.

*(EDITH goes.)*

**END**

*(RUTH crosses to the fireplace and then gives a comprehensive glance round the room.)*

*(CHARLES comes in center and moves to the back of the sofa. He is a nice-looking man of about forty, wearing a loose-fitting velvet smoking jacket.)*

# B - 1M, 1W - Ruth/Charles

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BLITHE SPIRIT

START

**RUTH.** Yes, darling. I expect Madame Arcati will want something sweeter.

**CHARLES.** We'll have this one for ourselves, anyhow.

**RUTH.** Oh dear!

**CHARLES.** What's the matter?

**RUTH.** I have a feeling that this evening's going to be awful.

**CHARLES.** It'll probably be funny, but not awful.

**RUTH.** You must promise not to catch my eye. If I giggle – and I'm very likely to – it will ruin everything.

**CHARLES.** You mustn't. You must be dead serious and if possible a little intense. We can't hurt the old girl's feelings, however funny she is.

**RUTH.** But why the Bradmans, darling? He's as sceptical as we are. He'll probably say the most dreadful things.

**CHARLES.** I've warned him. There must be more than three people and we couldn't have the vicar and his wife because (a) they're dreary, and (b) they probably wouldn't have approved at all. It had to be the Bradmans.

*(EDITH rushes into the room with CHARLES's cigarette case.)*

*(Taking it.)* Thank you, Edith. Steady does it.

**EDITH.** *(Breathlessly.)* Yes, sir.

*(EDITH, with an obvious effort, goes out slowly.)*

**CHARLES.** We might make her walk about with a book on her head like they do in deportment lessons.

*(CHARLES comes to right of RUTH and gives her a cocktail. Then he moves to the fireplace.)*

Here, try this.

**RUTH.** *(Sipping it.)* Lovely – dry as a bone.

**CHARLES.** *(Raising his glass to her.)* To *The Unseen!*

**RUTH.** I must say that's a wonderful title.

**CHARLES.** If this evening's a success, I shall start on the first draft tomorrow.

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**RUTH.** How extraordinary it is.

**CHARLES.** What?

**RUTH.** Oh, I don't know – being right at the beginning of something. It gives one an odd feeling.

**CHARLES.** *(At the fireplace, facing RUTH.)* Do you remember how I got the idea for *The Light Goes Out*?

**RUTH.** Suddenly seeing that haggard, raddled woman in the hotel at Biarritz. Of course I remember. We sat up half the night talking about it.

**CHARLES.** She certainly came in very handy. I wonder who she was.

**RUTH.** And if she ever knew, I mean ever recognized, that description of herself. Poor thing...here's to her, anyhow.

*(She finishes her drink.)*

**CHARLES.** *(Going to her, taking her glass and moving up to the drinks table.)* Have another.

**RUTH.** Darling – it's most awfully strong.

**CHARLES.** *(Pouring it.)* Never mind.

**RUTH.** Used Elvira to be a help to you – when you were thinking something out, I mean?

**CHARLES.** *(Pouring out another cocktail for himself.)* Every now and then – when she concentrated – but she didn't concentrate very often.

**RUTH.** I do wish I'd known her.

**CHARLES.** I wonder if you'd have liked her.

**RUTH.** I'm sure I should. As you talk of her she sounds enchanting. Yes, I'm sure I should have liked her because you know I have never for an instant felt in the least jealous of her. That's a good sign.

**CHARLES.** Poor Elvira.

*(He comes to the left of RUTH and gives her a cocktail.)*

**RUTH.** Does it still hurt? When you think of her?

## B - 1M, 1W - Ruth/Charles (cont.)

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BLITHE SPIRIT

**CHARLES.** No, not really. Sometimes I almost wish it did.  
I feel rather guilty...

**RUTH.** I wonder if I died before you'd grown tired of me if you'd forget me so soon?

**CHARLES.** What a horrible thing to say.

**RUTH.** No, I think it's interesting.

**CHARLES.** (*Crossing below RUTH and sitting on the left end of the sofa.*) Well, to begin with, I haven't forgotten Elvira. I remember her very distinctly indeed. I remember how fascinating she was, and how maddening. I remember how badly she played all games and how cross she got when she didn't win. I remember her gay charm when she had achieved her own way over something and her extreme acidity when she didn't. I remember her physical attractiveness, which was tremendous, and her spiritual integrity, which was nil.

**RUTH.** You can't remember something that was nil.

**CHARLES.** I remember how morally untidy she was.

**RUTH.** Was she more physically attractive than I am?

**CHARLES.** That was a very tiresome question, dear, and fully deserves the wrong answer.

**RUTH.** You really are very sweet.

**CHARLES.** Thank you.

**RUTH.** And a little naïve, too.

**CHARLES.** Why?

**RUTH.** Because you imagine that I mind about Elvira being more physically attractive than I am.

**CHARLES.** I should have thought any woman would mind – if it were true. Or perhaps I'm old-fashioned in my view of female psychology.

**RUTH.** Not exactly old-fashioned, darling, just a bit didactic.

**CHARLES.** How do you mean?

**RUTH.** It's didactic to attribute to one type the defects of another type. For instance, because you know perfectly well that Elvira would mind terribly if you found another woman more attractive physically than she

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was, it doesn't necessarily follow that I should. Elvira was a more physical person than I. I'm certain of that. It's all a question of degree.

**CHARLES.** (*Smiling.*) I love you, my love.

**RUTH.** I know you do; but not the wildest stretch of imagination could describe it as the first fine careless rapture.

**CHARLES.** Would you like it to be?

**RUTH.** Good God, no!

**CHARLES.** Wasn't that a shade too vehement?

**RUTH.** We're neither of us adolescent, Charles; we've neither of us led exactly prim lives, have we? And we've both been married before. Careless rapture at this stage would be incongruous and embarrassing.

**CHARLES.** I hope I haven't been in any way a disappointment, dear.

**RUTH.** Don't be so idiotic.

**CHARLES.** After all, your first husband was a great deal older than you, wasn't he? I shouldn't like you to think that you'd missed out all along the line.

**RUTH.** There are moments, Charles, when you go too far.

**CHARLES.** Sorry, darling.

**RUTH.** As far as waspish female psychology goes, there's a rather strong vein of it in you.

**CHARLES.** I've heard that said about Julius Caesar.

**RUTH.** Julius Caesar is neither here nor there.

**CHARLES.** He may be for all we know. We'll ask Madame Arcati.

**RUTH.** (*Rising and crossing to left.*) You're awfully irritating when you're determined to be witty at all costs, almost supercilious.

**CHARLES.** That's exactly what Elvira used to say.

**RUTH.** I'm not at all surprised. I never imagined, physically triumphant as she was, that she was entirely lacking in perception.

(**CHARLES** rises and goes to the right of **RUTH**.)

B - 1M, 1W - Ruth / Charles (cont.)

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BLITHE SPIRIT

CHARLES. Darling Ruth!

RUTH. There you go again!

CHARLES. (*Kissing her lightly.*) As I think I mentioned before, I love you, my love.

RUTH. Poor Elvira!

CHARLES. Didn't that light, comradely kiss mollify you at all?

RUTH. You're very annoying, you know you are. When I said 'Poor Elvira' it came from the heart. You must have bewildered her so horribly.

CHARLES. Don't I ever bewilder you at all?

RUTH. Never for an instant. I know every trick.

CHARLES. Well, all I can say is that we'd better get a divorce immediately.

RUTH. Put my glass down, there's a darling.

CHARLES. (*Taking it.*) She certainly had a great talent for living. It was a pity that she died so young.

RUTH. Poor Elvira!

CHARLES. (*Crossing to and putting the glasses on the drinks table.*) That remark is getting monotonous.

RUTH. (*Moving upstage a pace.*) Poor Charles, then.

CHARLES. That's better.

RUTH. And later on, poor Ruth, I expect.

CHARLES. (*Coming to above the center table.*) You have no faith, Ruth. I really do think you should try to have a little faith.

RUTH. (*Moving to the left arm of the armchair.*) I shall strain every nerve.

CHARLES. Life without faith is an arid business.

RUTH. How beautifully you put things, dear.

CHARLES. I aim to please.

RUTH. If I died, I wonder how long it would be before you married again?

CHARLES. You won't die. You're not the dying sort.

RUTH. Neither was Elvira.

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CHARLES. Oh yes, she was, now that I look back on it. She had a certain ethereal, not-quite-of-this-world quality. Nobody could call you, even remotely, ethereal.

(*RUTH crosses below the sofa to the fire.*  
CHARLES moves to the armchair.)

RUTH. Nonsense! She was of the earth, earthy.

CHARLES. Well, she is now, anyhow.

RUTH. You know that's the kind of observation that shocks people.

CHARLES. It's discouraging to think how many people are shocked by honesty and how few by deceit.

RUTH. Write that down; you might forget it.

CHARLES. You underrate me.

RUTH. Anyhow, it was a question of bad taste more than honesty.

CHARLES. (*Moving to below the sofa.*) I was devoted to Elvira. We were married for five years. She died. I missed her very much.

(*He comes to RUTH, pats her cheek, and then goes back to the armchair.*)

That was seven years ago. I have now - with your help, my love - risen above the whole thing.

RUTH. Admirable. But if tragedy should darken our lives, I still say - with prophetic foreboding - poor Ruth!

(*A bell is heard.*)

CHARLES. That's probably the Bradmans.

RUTH. It might be Madame Arcati.

CHARLES. No, she'll come on her bicycle. She always goes everywhere on her bicycle.

RUTH. It really is very spirited of the old girl.

CHARLES. Shall I go, or shall we let Edith have her fling?

(*He moves left to below the piano.*)

RUTH. Wait a minute and see what happens.

(*There is a slight pause.*)

END

# C - 3W - Madame Arcati/Ruth/Mrs. Brandman

BLITHE SPIRIT

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BLITHE SPIRIT

## Scene Two

*(Light Cue No. 01. Act I, Scene Two.)*

*(When the lights go up, dinner is over, and RUTH, MRS. BRADMAN and MADAME ARCATI are sitting having their coffee; MRS. BRADMAN on the pouffe downstage right. MADAME ARCATI on the right end of the sofa, RUTH on the left end of the sofa. All have coffee cups. The doors are open, the windows are closed and the curtains are half closed.)*

START

**MADAME ARCATI.** ...on her mother's side she went right back to the Borgias, which I think accounted for a lot one way or another. Even as a child she was given to the most violent destructive tempers. Very inbred, you know.

**MRS. BRADMAN.** Yes; she must have been.

**MADAME ARCATI.** My control was quite scared the other day when we were talking. I could hear it in her voice. After all, she's only a child.

**RUTH.** Do you always have a child as a control?

**MADAME ARCATI.** Yes, they're generally the best. Some mediums prefer Indians, of course, but personally I've always found them unreliable.

**RUTH.** In what way unreliable?

**MADAME ARCATI.** Well, for one thing, they're frightfully lazy, and also, when faced with any sort of difficulty, they're rather apt to go off into their own tribal language, which is naturally unintelligible. That generally spoils everything and wastes a great deal of time. No, children are undoubtedly more satisfactory, particularly when they get to know you and understand your ways. Daphne has worked with me for years.

**MRS. BRADMAN.** And she still goes on being a child? I mean, she doesn't show signs of growing any older?

**MADAME ARCATI.** *(Patiently.)* Time values on the Other Side are utterly different from ours.

**MRS. BRADMAN.** Do you feel funny when you go off into a trance?

**MADAME ARCATI.** In what way funny?

**RUTH.** *(Hastily.)* Mrs. Bradman doesn't mean funny in its comic implication; I think she meant odd or strange.

**MADAME ARCATI.** The word was an unfortunate choice.

**MRS. BRADMAN.** I'm sure I'm very sorry.

**MADAME ARCATI.** It doesn't matter in the least. Please don't apologize.

**RUTH.** When did you first discover that you had these extraordinary powers?

**MADAME ARCATI.** When I was quite tiny. My mother was a medium before me, you know, and so I had every opportunity of starting on the ground floor, as you might say. I had my first trance when I was four years old and my first ectoplasmic manifestation when I was five and a half. What an exciting day that was! I shall never forget it. Of course the manifestation itself was quite small and of very short duration, but, for a child of my tender years, it was most gratifying.

**MRS. BRADMAN.** Your mother must have been so pleased.

**MADAME ARCATI.** *(Modestly.)* She was.

**MRS. BRADMAN.** Can you foretell the future?

**MADAME ARCATI.** Certainly not. I disapprove of fortune tellers most strongly.

**MRS. BRADMAN.** *(Disappointed.)* Oh, really? Why?

**MADAME ARCATI.** Too much guesswork and fake mixed up with it, even when the gift is genuine. And it only very occasionally is. You can't count on it.

**RUTH.** Why not?

**MADAME ARCATI.** Time again. Time is the reef upon which all our frail mystic ships are wrecked.

# C - 3W - Madame Arcati/Ruth/Mrs. Brandman (cont.)

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**RUTH.** You mean because it has never yet been proved that the past and the present and the future are not one and the same thing.

**MADAME ARCATI.** I long ago came to the conclusion that nothing has ever been definitely proved about anything.

**RUTH.** How very wise.

*(MADAME ARCATI hands her cup to RUTH. MRS. BRADMAN puts her cup behind her on the small table downstage right. EDITH comes in with a tray of drinks. She puts the tray down on the center table by RUTH. RUTH moves a coffee cup and a vase to make room for it. She takes the cigarette box and the ashtray from the table and gives them to EDITH, who puts them on the drinks table.)*

I want you to leave the dining room just as it is for tonight, Edith. You can clear the table in the morning.

**EDITH.** Yes'm.

**RUTH.** And we don't want to be disturbed for the next hour or so for any reason whatsoever. Is that clear?

**EDITH.** Yes'm.

**RUTH.** And if anyone should telephone, just say we are out and take a message.

**MRS. BRADMAN.** Unless it's an urgent call for George.

**RUTH.** Unless it's an urgent call for Doctor Bradman.

**EDITH.** Yes'm.

*(EDITH goes out swiftly.)*

**RUTH.** There's not likely to be one, is there?

**MRS. BRADMAN.** No, I don't think so.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Once I am off it won't matter, but an interruption during the preliminary stages might be disastrous.

**MRS. BRADMAN.** I wish the men would hurry up. I'm terribly excited.

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BLITHE SPIRIT

**MADAME ARCATI.** Please don't be. It makes everything much, much more difficult.

*(CHARLES and DR. BRADMAN come out of the dining room. They are smoking cigars. DR. BRADMAN comes to the fireplace and CHARLES to the left arm of the armchair.)*

**CHARLES.** *(Cheerfully.)* Well, Madame Arcati - the time is drawing near.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Who knows? It may be receding!

**CHARLES.** How very true.

**DR. BRADMAN.** I hope you feel in the mood, Madame Arcati.

**MADAME ARCATI.** It isn't a question of mood. It's a question of concentration.

**RUTH.** You must forgive us being impatient. We can perfectly easily wait though, if you're not quite ready to start.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Nonsense, my dear, I'm absolutely ready.

*(She rises.)*

Heigho, heigho, to work we go!

**CHARLES.** Is there anything you'd like us to do?

**MADAME ARCATI.** Do?

**CHARLES.** Yes - hold hands or anything?

**MADAME ARCATI.** All that will come later.

*(She goes to the window. The others all rise.)*

First a few deep, deep breaths of fresh air - *(Over her shoulder.)* You may talk if you wish, it will not disturb me in the least.

*(She flings the windows wide open and inhales deeply and a trifle noisily.)*

**RUTH.** *(With a quizzical glance at CHARLES.)* Oh dear!

**CHARLES.** *(Putting his finger to his lips warningly.)* An excellent dinner, darling. I congratulate you.

**RUTH.** The mousse wasn't quite right.

**CHARLES.** It looked a bit hysterical, but it tasted delicious.

END

# D - 1M, 2W - Charles/Ruth/Elvira

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BLITHE SPIRIT

~~CHARLES. Yes - I suppose so.~~

~~RUTH. I must say it was extremely funny at moments.~~

~~CHARLES. Yes - it certainly was.~~

~~RUTH. What's the matter?~~

~~CHARLES. The matter?~~

~~RUTH. Yes. You seem odd, somehow. Do you feel quite well?~~

~~CHARLES. Perfectly. I think I'll have a drink. Do you want one?~~

~~RUTH. No, thank you, dear.~~

~~CHARLES. (Moving to the drinks table and pouring out a whisky and soda.) It's rather chilly in this room.~~

~~RUTH. Come over by the fire.~~

~~CHARLES. I don't think I'll make any notes tonight. I'll start fresh in the morning.~~

~~(CHARLES turns, the glass in his hand. He sees ELVIRA and drops the glass on the floor.)~~

My God!

RUTH. Charles!

ELVIRA. That was very clumsy, Charles dear.

CHARLES. Elvira! - then it's true - it was you!

ELVIRA. Of course it was.

RUTH. (Starts to go to CHARLES.) Charles - darling Charles - what are you talking about?

CHARLES. (To ELVIRA.) Are you a ghost?

ELVIRA. (Crossing below the sofa to the fire.) I suppose I must be. It's all very confusing.

RUTH. (Moving to right of CHARLES and becoming agitated.) Charles - what do you keep looking over there for? Look at me. What's happened?

CHARLES. Don't you see?

RUTH. See what?

CHARLES. Elvira.

RUTH. (Staring at him incredulously.) Elvira!!

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CHARLES. (With an effort at social grace.) Yes. Elvira dear, this is Ruth. Ruth, this is Elvira.

(RUTH tries to take his arm. CHARLES retreats downstage left.)

RUTH. (With forced calmness.) Come and sit down, darling.

CHARLES. Do you mean to say you can't see her?

RUTH. Listen, Charles - you just sit down quietly by the fire and I'll mix you another drink. Don't worry about the mess on the carpet, Edith can clean it up in the morning.

(She takes him by the arm.)

CHARLES. (Breaking away.) But you must be able to see her - she's there - look - right in front of you - there!

RUTH. Are you mad! What's happened to you?

CHARLES. You can't see her?

RUTH. If this is a joke, dear, it's gone quite far enough. Sit down, for God's sake, and don't be idiotic.

CHARLES. (Clutching his head.) What am I to do! What the hell am I to do!

ELVIRA. I think you might at least be a little more pleased to see me. After all, you conjured me up.

CHARLES. I didn't do any such thing.

ELVIRA. Nonsense; of course you did. That awful child with the cold came and told me you wanted to see me urgently.

CHARLES. It was all a mistake, a horrible mistake.

RUTH. Stop talking like that, Charles. As I told you before the joke's gone far enough.

CHARLES. I've gone mad, that's what it is, I've just gone raving mad.

RUTH. (Pouring out some brandy and bringing it to CHARLES below the piano.) Here - drink this.

CHARLES. (Mechanically - taking it.) This is appalling!

RUTH. Relax.

START

**CHARLES.** How can I relax? I shall never be able to relax again as long as I live.

**RUTH.** Drink some brandy.

**CHARLES.** (*Drinking it at a gulp.*) There! Now are you satisfied?

**RUTH.** Now sit down.

**CHARLES.** Why are you so anxious for me to sit down? What good will that do?

**RUTH.** I want you to relax. You can't relax standing up.

**ELVIRA.** African natives can. They can stand on one leg for hours.

**CHARLES.** I don't happen to be an African native.

**RUTH.** You don't happen to be a *what*?

**CHARLES.** (*Savagely.*) An African native!

**RUTH.** What's that got to do with it?

**CHARLES.** It doesn't matter, Ruth; really it doesn't matter.

(*CHARLES sits in the armchair. RUTH moves above him.*)

We'll say no more about it. See, I've sat down.

**RUTH.** Would you like some more brandy?

**CHARLES.** Yes, please.

(*RUTH goes up to the drinks table with the glass.*)

**ELVIRA.** Very unwise. You always had a weak head.

**CHARLES.** I could drink you under the table.

**RUTH.** There's no need to be aggressive, Charles. I'm doing my best to help you.

**CHARLES.** I'm sorry.

**RUTH.** (*Coming to CHARLES with the brandy.*) Here, drink this; and then we'll go to bed.

**ELVIRA.** Get rid of her, Charles; then we can talk in peace.

**CHARLES.** That's a thoroughly immoral suggestion. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

**RUTH.** What is there immoral in that?

**CHARLES.** I wasn't talking to you.

**RUTH.** Who were you talking to, then?

**CHARLES.** Elvira, of course.

**RUTH.** To hell with Elvira!

**ELVIRA.** There now – she's getting cross.

**CHARLES.** I don't blame her.

**RUTH.** What don't you blame her for?

**CHARLES.** (*Rising and backing downstage left a pace.*) Oh, God!

**RUTH.** Now, look here, Charles. I gather you've got some sort of plan behind all this. I'm not quite a fool. I suspected you when we were doing that idiotic séance.

**CHARLES.** Don't be so silly. What plan could I have?

**RUTH.** I don't know. It's probably something to do with the characters in your book – how they, or one of them, would react to a certain situation. I refuse to be used as a guinea pig unless I'm warned beforehand what it's all about.

**CHARLES.** (*Moving a couple of paces towards RUTH.*) Elvira is here, Ruth – she's standing a few yards away from you.

**RUTH.** (*Sarcastically.*) Yes, dear, I can see her distinctly – under the piano with a zebra!

**CHARLES.** But Ruth –

**RUTH.** I am not going to stay here arguing any longer.

**ELVIRA.** Hurray!

**CHARLES.** Shut up!

**RUTH.** (*Incensed.*) How dare you speak to me like that?

**CHARLES.** Listen, Ruth. Please listen –

**RUTH.** I will not listen to any more of this nonsense. I am going up to bed now; I'll leave you to turn out the lights. I shan't be asleep. I'm too upset. So you can come in and say goodnight to me if you feel like it.

**ELVIRA.** That's big of her, I must say.

**CHARLES.** Be quiet. You're behaving like a guttersnipe.

**RUTH.** (*Icily.*) That is all I have to say. Goodnight, Charles.

# E - 1M, 1W - Charles/Elvira

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BLITHE SPIRIT

~~RUTH. (*Iceily.*) That is all I have to say. Goodnight, Charles.~~

~~(RUTH walks swiftly out of the room without looking at him again.)~~

~~CHARLES. (*Following RUTH to the door.*) Ruth -~~

ELVIRA. That was one of the most enjoyable half hours I have ever spent.

CHARLES. (*Putting down his glass on the drinks table.*) Oh, Elvira - how could you!

ELVIRA. Poor Ruth!

CHARLES. (*Staring at her.*) This is obviously an hallucination, isn't it?

ELVIRA. I'm afraid I don't know the technical term for it.

CHARLES. (*Coming down center.*) What am I to do?

ELVIRA. What Ruth suggested - relax.

CHARLES. (*Moving below the chair to the sofa.*) Where have you come from?

ELVIRA. Do you know, it's very peculiar, but I've sort of forgotten.

CHARLES. Are you to be here indefinitely?

ELVIRA. I don't know that either.

CHARLES. Oh, my God!

ELVIRA. Why? Would you hate it so much if I was?

CHARLES. Well, you must admit it would be embarrassing?

ELVIRA. I don't see why, really. It's all a question of adjusting yourself. Anyhow, I think it's horrid of you to be so unwelcoming and disagreeable.

CHARLES. Now look here, Elvira -

ELVIRA. (*Near tears.*) I do. I think you're mean.

CHARLES. Try to see my point, dear. I've been married to Ruth for five years, and you've been dead for seven...

ELVIRA. Not dead, Charles. 'Passed over.' It's considered vulgar to say 'dead' where I come from.

CHARLES. Passed over, then.

ELVIRA. At any rate, now that I'm here, the least you can do is to make a pretence of being amiable about it.

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CHARLES. Of course, my dear, I'm delighted in one way.

ELVIRA. I don't believe you love me anymore.

CHARLES. I shall always love the memory of you.

ELVIRA. (*Crossing slowly above the sofa by the armchair to downstage left.*) You mustn't think me unreasonable, but I really am a little hurt. You called me back; and at great inconvenience I came - and you've been thoroughly churlish ever since I arrived.

CHARLES. (*Gently.*) Believe me, Elvira, I most emphatically did not send for you. There's been some mistake.

ELVIRA. (*Irritably.*) Well, somebody did - and that child said it was you. I remember I was playing backgammon with a very sweet old Oriental gentleman, I think his name was Genghis Khan, and I'd just thrown double sixes, and then the child paged me and the next thing I knew I was in this room. Perhaps it was your subconscious...

CHARLES. You must find out whether you are going to stay or not, and we can make arrangements accordingly.

ELVIRA. I don't see how I can.

CHARLES. Well, try to think. Isn't there anyone that you know, that you can get in touch with over there - on the Other Side, or whatever it's called - who could advise you?

ELVIRA. I can't think - it seems so far away - as though I'd dreamed it...

CHARLES. You must know somebody else besides Genghis Khan.

ELVIRA. (*Moving to the armchair.*) Oh, Charles...

CHARLES. What is it?

ELVIRA. I want to cry, but I don't think I'm able to.

CHARLES. What do you want to cry for?

ELVIRA. It's seeing you again - and you being so irascible, like you always used to be.

CHARLES. I don't mean to be irascible, Elvira.

ELVIRA. Darling - I don't mind really - I never did.

START

CHARLES. Is it cold - being a ghost?

ELVIRA. No - I don't think so.

CHARLES. What happens if I touch you?

ELVIRA. I doubt if you can. Do you want to?

CHARLES. (*Sitting at the left end of the sofa.*) Oh, Elvira...

*(He buries his face in his hands.)*

ELVIRA. (*Moving to the left arm of the sofa.*) What is it, darling?

CHARLES. I really do feel strange, seeing you again.

ELVIRA. (*Moving to right below the sofa and round above it again to the left arm.*) That's better.

CHARLES. (*Looking up.*) What's better?

ELVIRA. Your voice was kinder.

CHARLES. Was I ever unkind to you when you were alive?

ELVIRA. Often.

CHARLES. Oh, how can you! I'm sure that's an exaggeration.

ELVIRA. Not at all. You were an absolute pig that time we went to Cornwall and stayed in that awful hotel. You hit me with a billiard cue.

*(Light Cue No. 05. Act I, Scene Two.)*

CHARLES. Only very, very gently.

ELVIRA. I loved you very much.

CHARLES. I loved you too...

*(He puts out his hand to her and then draws it away.)*

No, I can't touch you. Isn't that horrible?

ELVIRA. Perhaps it's as well if I'm going to stay for any length of time.

*(She sits on the left arm of the sofa.)*

CHARLES. I suppose I shall wake up eventually...but I feel strangely peaceful now.

*(Light Cue No. 06. Act I, Scene Two.)*

ELVIRA. That's right. Put your head back.

CHARLES. (*Doing so.*) Like that?

ELVIRA. (*Stroking his hair.*) Can you feel anything?

CHARLES. Only a very little breeze through my hair...

ELVIRA. Well, that's better than nothing.

CHARLES. (*Drowsily.*) I suppose if I'm really out of my mind they'll put me in an asylum.

ELVIRA. Don't worry about that - just relax.

CHARLES. (*Very drowsily indeed.*) Poor Ruth.

ELVIRA. (*Gently and sweetly.*) To hell with Ruth.

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*(By now the blackout is complete.)*

*(The curtain falls.)*

END

# F - 1M, 1W - Charles/Ruth

56

BLITHE SPIRIT

**CHARLES.** *(Coming back to the breakfast table.)* It's extraordinary about daylight, isn't it?

**RUTH.** How do you mean?

**CHARLES.** The way it reduces everything to normal.

**RUTH.** Does it?

**CHARLES.** *(Sitting right of the table opposite RUTH. Firmly.)*  
Yes - it does.

**RUTH.** I'm sure I'm very glad to hear it.

**CHARLES.** You're very glacial this morning.

**RUTH.** Are you surprised?

**CHARLES.** Frankly, yes. I expected more of you.

**RUTH.** Well, really!

**CHARLES.** I've always looked upon you as a woman of perception and understanding.

**RUTH.** Perhaps this is one of my off days.

*(EDITH comes in with some bacon and eggs and toast. She comes to above the table between CHARLES and RUTH.)*

**CHARLES.** *(Cheerfully.)* Good morning, Edith.

**EDITH.** Good morning, sir.

**CHARLES.** Feeling fit?

**EDITH.** Yes, sir, thank you, sir.

**CHARLES.** How's Cook?

**EDITH.** I don't know, sir, I haven't asked her.

**CHARLES.** You should. You should begin every day by asking everyone how they are. It oils the wheels.

**EDITH.** Yes, sir.

**CHARLES.** Greet her from me, will you?

**EDITH.** Yes, sir.

**RUTH.** That will be all for the moment, Edith.

**EDITH.** Yes'm.

*(EDITH goes out.)*

**RUTH.** I wish you wouldn't be facetious with the servants, Charles. It confuses them and undermines their morale.

BLITHE SPIRIT

57

**CHARLES.** I consider that point of view retrogressive, if not downright feudal.

**RUTH.** I don't care what you consider it. I have to run the house and you don't.

**CHARLES.** Are you implying that I couldn't?

**RUTH.** You're at liberty to try.

**CHARLES.** I take back what I said about it being a good morning. It's a horrid morning.

**RUTH.** You'd better eat your breakfast while it's hot.

**CHARLES.** It isn't.

**RUTH.** *(Putting down The Times.)* Now look here, Charles, in your younger days this display of roguish flippancy might have been alluring. In a middle-aged novelist it's nauseating.

**CHARLES.** Would you like me to writhe at your feet in a frenzy of self-abasement?

**RUTH.** That would be equally nauseating, but certainly more appropriate.

**CHARLES.** I really don't see what I've done that's so awful.

**RUTH.** You behaved abominably last night. You wounded me and insulted me.

**CHARLES.** I was the victim of an aberration.

**RUTH.** Nonsense. You were drunk.

**CHARLES.** Drunk?

**RUTH.** You had four strong dry martinis before dinner, a great deal too much Burgundy at dinner, heaven knows how much port and kummel with Doctor Bradman while I was doing my best to entertain that mad woman - and then two double brandies later. I gave them to you myself. Of course you were drunk.

**CHARLES.** So that's your story, is it?

**RUTH.** You refused to come to bed, and finally when I came down at three in the morning to see what had happened to you, I found you in an alcoholic coma on the sofa with the fire out and your hair all over your face.

START

**CHARLES.** I was not in the least drunk, Ruth. Something happened to me last night; something very peculiar happened to me.

**RUTH.** Nonsense.

**CHARLES.** It isn't nonsense. I know it looks like nonsense now in the clear remorseless light of day, but last night it was far from being nonsense. I honestly had some sort of hallucination.

**RUTH.** I would really rather not discuss it any further.

**CHARLES.** But you must discuss it. It's very disturbing.

**RUTH.** There I agree with you. It showed you up in a most unpleasant light. I find that extremely disturbing.

**CHARLES.** I swear to you that during the séance I was convinced that I heard Elvira's voice.

**RUTH.** Nobody else did.

**CHARLES.** I can't help that. I did.

**RUTH.** You couldn't have.

**CHARLES.** And later on I was equally convinced that she was in this room. I saw her distinctly and talked to her. After you'd gone up to bed we had quite a cosy little chat.

**RUTH.** And you seriously expect me to believe that you weren't drunk?

**CHARLES.** I *know* I wasn't drunk. If I'd been all that drunk I should have a dreadful hangover now, shouldn't I?

**RUTH.** I'm not at all sure that you haven't.

**CHARLES.** I haven't got a trace of a headache - my tongue's not coated - look at it.

*(He puts out his tongue.)*

**RUTH.** I've not the least desire to look at your tongue, kindly put it in again.

**CHARLES.** *(Rising, crossing to the mantelpiece and lighting a cigarette.)* I know what it is. You're frightened.

**RUTH.** Frightened! Rubbish. What is there to be frightened of?

**CHARLES.** Elvira. You wouldn't have minded all that much, even if I had been drunk; it's only because it was all mixed up with Elvira.

**RUTH.** I seem to remember last night before dinner telling you that your views of female psychology were rather didactic. I was right. I should have added that they were puerile.

**CHARLES.** That was when it all began.

**RUTH.** When what all began?

**CHARLES.** *(Moving up to above the right end of the sofa.)* We were talking too much about Elvira. It's dangerous to have somebody very strongly in your mind when you start dabbling with the occult.

**RUTH.** She certainly wasn't strongly in my mind.

**CHARLES.** She was in mine.

**RUTH.** Oh, she was, was she?

**CHARLES.** *(Crossing and facing RUTH at the breakfast table.)* You tried to make me say that she was more physically attractive than you, so that you could hold it over me.

**RUTH.** I did not. I don't give a hoot how physically attractive she was.

**CHARLES.** Oh yes, you do. Your whole being is devoured with jealousy.

*(He moves to the armchair.)*

**RUTH.** *(Rising.)* This is too much!

**CHARLES.** *(Sitting in the armchair.)* Women! My God, what I think of women!

**RUTH.** Your view of women is academic to say the least of it. Just because you've always been dominated by them, it doesn't necessarily follow that you know anything about them.

**CHARLES.** I've never been dominated by anyone.

**RUTH.** *(Crossing to below the right breakfast chair.)* You were hag-ridden by your mother until you were twenty-three, then you got into the clutches of that awful Mrs. Whatever her name was.

**CHARLES.** Mrs. Winthrop-Llewellyn.

**RUTH.** (*Clearing the plates on the breakfast table and working round with her back to CHARLES to above the table.*) I'm not interested. Then there was Elvira. She ruled you with a rod of iron.

**CHARLES.** Elvira never ruled anyone, she was much too elusive. That was one of her greatest charms.

**RUTH.** Then there was Maud Charteris.

**CHARLES.** My affair with Maud Charteris lasted exactly seven and a half weeks; and she cried all the time.

**RUTH.** The tyranny of tears! Then there was -

**CHARLES.** If you wish to make an inventory of my sex life, dear, I think it only fair to tell you that you've missed out several episodes. I'll consult my diary and give you the complete list after lunch.

**RUTH.** It's no use trying to impress me with your routine amorous exploits...

*(She crosses upstage center.)*

**CHARLES.** The only woman in my whole life who's ever attempted to dominate me is you. You've been at it for years.

**RUTH.** That is completely untrue.

**CHARLES.** Oh no, it isn't. You boss me and bully me and order me about. You don't even allow me to have an hallucination if I want to.

**RUTH.** (*Coming to CHARLES, about the sofa.*) Charles, alcohol will ruin your whole life if you allow it to get hold on you, you know.

**CHARLES.** (*Rising and coming upstage above the chair to face RUTH.*) Once and for all, Ruth, I would like you to understand that what happened last night was nothing whatever to do with alcohol. You've very adroitly rationalized the whole affair to your own satisfaction, but your deductions are based on complete fallacy. I am willing to grant you that it was an aberration, some sort of odd psychic delusion brought on by suggestion or

hypnosis. I was stone cold sober from first to last and extremely upset into the bargain.

**RUTH.** You were upset indeed? What about me?

**CHARLES.** You behaved with a stolid, obtuse lack of comprehension that frankly shocked me!

**RUTH.** I consider that I was remarkably patient. I shall know better next time.

**CHARLES.** Instead of putting out a gentle comradely hand to guide me, you shouted staccato orders at me like a sergeant major.

**RUTH.** You seem to forget that you gratuitously insulted me.

**CHARLES.** I did not.

**RUTH.** You called me a guttersnipe. You told me to shut up. And when I quietly suggested that we should go up to bed you said, with the most disgusting leer, that it was an immoral suggestion.

**CHARLES.** (*Exasperated.*) I was talking to Elvira!

**RUTH.** If you were I can only say that it conjures up a fragrant picture of your first marriage.

**CHARLES.** My first marriage was perfectly charming and I think it's in the worst possible taste for you to sneer at it.

**RUTH.** I am not nearly so interested in your first marriage as you think I am. It's your second marriage that is absorbing me at the moment. It seems to me to be on the rocks.

**CHARLES.** Only because you persist in taking up this ridiculous attitude.

**RUTH.** My attitude is that of any normal woman whose husband gets drunk and hurls abuse at her.

**CHARLES.** (*Crossing to the fireplace below the sofa. Shouting.*) I was not drunk!

**RUTH.** Be quiet. They'll hear you in the kitchen.

**CHARLES.** I don't care if they hear me in the Folkestone Town Hall. I was not drunk!

**RUTH.** Control yourself, Charles.

END

## Scene Two

*(The time is late on the following afternoon. The doors are shut. The windows are shut. The curtains are open.)*

*(Light Cue No. 01. Act II, Scene Two.)*

*(When the curtain rises RUTH is sitting alone at the tea table, which is set in front of the fire. After a moment or two she gets up and, frowning thoughtfully, goes to the mantelpiece and takes a cigarette out of a box and lights it. As she returns to the table, the front door bell rings. She hears it and straightens herself as though preparing for a difficult interview.)*

*(EDITH enters.)*

**EDITH.** Madame Arcati.

*(EDITH steps aside and MADAME ARCATI comes in. MADAME ARCATI is wearing a tweed coat and skirt, and a great many amber beads and, possibly, a beret. She goes to RUTH, who is standing below the sofa between the sofa and the armchair. EDITH goes out.)*

**MADAME ARCATI.** My dear Mrs. Condomine, I came directly I got your message.

**RUTH.** That was very kind of you.

**MADAME ARCATI.** *(Briskly.)* Kind? – nonsense. Nothing kind about it. I look upon it as an outing.

**RUTH.** I'm so glad. Will you have some tea?

**MADAME ARCATI.** China or Indian?

**RUTH.** China.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Good. I never touch Indian; it upsets my vibrations.

**RUTH.** Do sit down.

*(RUTH sits at the left end of the sofa and pours out tea. MADAME ARCATI sits in the armchair.)*

**MADAME ARCATI.** *(Turning her head and sniffing.)* I find this room very interesting – very interesting indeed. I noticed it the other night.

**RUTH.** I'm not entirely surprised.

*(She proceeds to pour out tea.)*

**MADAME ARCATI.** *(Pulling off her gloves.)* Have you ever been to Cowden Manor?

**RUTH.** No, I'm afraid I haven't.

**MADAME ARCATI.** That's very interesting too. Strikes you like a blow between the eyes the moment you walk into the drawing room. Two lumps of sugar, please, and no milk at all.

**RUTH.** I am profoundly disturbed, Madame Arcati, and I want your help.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Aha! I thought as much. What's in these sandwiches?

**RUTH.** Cucumber.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Couldn't be better.

*(She takes one.)*

Fire away.

**RUTH.** It's most awfully difficult to explain.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Facts first – explanations afterwards.

**RUTH.** It's the facts that are difficult to explain. They're so fantastic.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Facts very often are. Take creative talent, for instance, how do you account for that? Look at Shakespeare and Michelangelo! Try to explain Mozart snatching sounds out of the air and putting them down on paper when he was practically a baby – facts – plain facts. I know it's the fashion nowadays to ascribe it all to glands, but my reply to that is fiddlededee.

**RUTH.** Yes, I'm sure you're quite right.

**MADAME ARCATI.** There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Mrs. Condomine.

**RUTH.** There certainly are.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Come now – take the plunge – out with it. You’ve heard strange noises in the night, no doubt. Boards creaking – doors slamming – subdued moaning in the passages. Is that it?

**RUTH.** No – I’m afraid it isn’t.

**MADAME ARCATI.** No sudden gusts of cold wind, I hope?

**RUTH.** No, it’s worse than that.

**MADAME ARCATI.** I’m all attention.

**RUTH.** (*With an effort.*) I know it sounds idiotic, but the other night – during the séance – something happened.

**MADAME ARCATI.** I knew it! Probably a poltergeist; they’re enormously cunning, you know; they sometimes lie doggo for days.

**RUTH.** You know that my husband was married before?

**MADAME ARCATI.** Yes, I have heard it mentioned.

**RUTH.** His first wife, Elvira, died comparatively young.

**MADAME ARCATI.** (*Sharply.*) Where?

**RUTH.** Here – in this house – in this very room.

**MADAME ARCATI.** (*Whistling.*) Whew! I’m beginning to see daylight.

**RUTH.** She was convalescing after pneumonia and one evening she started to laugh helplessly at one of the B.B.C. musical programmes and died of a heart attack.

**MADAME ARCATI.** And she materialized the other evening – after I had gone?

**RUTH.** Not to me, but to my husband.

(**MADAME ARCATI** rises, crosses upstage left, then across to the fire below the sofa and to the windows again, above the sofa.)

**MADAME ARCATI.** (*Impulsively.*) Capital! Capital! Oh, but that’s splendid!

**RUTH.** (*Coldly.*) From your own professional standpoint I can see that it might be regarded as a major achievement.

**MADAME ARCATI.** (*Delighted.*) A triumph, my dear! Nothing more nor less than a triumph!

**RUTH.** But from my own personal point of view it is, to say the least of it, embarrassing.

**MADAME ARCATI.** (*Walking about the room.*) At last! At last! A genuine materialization!

**RUTH.** Please sit down again, Madame Arcati...

**MADAME ARCATI.** How could anyone sit down at a moment like this? It’s tremendous! I haven’t had such a success since the Sudbury case.

**RUTH.** (*Sharply.*) Nevertheless, I must insist upon you sitting down and controlling your natural exuberance. I appreciate fully your pride in your achievement, but I would like to point out that it has made my position in this house untenable and that I hold you entirely responsible.

**MADAME ARCATI.** (*Coming to the armchair and sitting; contrite.*) Forgive me, Mrs. Condomine. I am being abominably selfish. How can I help you?

**RUTH.** How? By sending her back immediately to where she came from, of course.

**MADAME ARCATI.** I’m afraid that that is easier said than done.

**RUTH.** Do you mean to tell me that she is liable to stay here indefinitely?

**MADAME ARCATI.** It’s difficult to say. I fear it depends largely on her.

**RUTH.** But my dear Madame Arcati...

**MADAME ARCATI.** Where is she now?

**RUTH.** My husband has driven her into Folkestone. Apparently she was anxious to see an old friend of hers who is staying at the Grand.

# H - 2W, 1M - Ruth/Elvira/Charles

80

BLITHE SPIRIT

I feel we have nothing more to say to one another, Mrs. Condomine. Goodbye!

*(She turns away upstage center to the door.)*

RUTH. Please don't go - please -

MADAME ARCATI. *(Turning and facing RUTH upstage center by the door.)* Your attitude from the outset has been most unpleasant, Mrs. Condomine. Some of your remarks have been discourteous in the extreme and I should like to say, without umbrage, that if you and your husband were foolish enough to tamper with the unseen for paltry motives and in a spirit of ribaldry, whatever has happened to you is your own fault, and, to coin a phrase, as far as I'm concerned you can stew in your own juice!

*(MADAME ARCATI goes majestically from the room.)*

RUTH. *(Stubbing out her cigarette in the ashtray on the small table downstage right.)* Damn - damn - damn!

*(After a moment or two CHARLES comes in with ELVIRA.)*

*(Light Cue No. 02. Act II, Scene Two.)*

*(CHARLES moves to above the sofa. ELVIRA turns to the piano and tidies her hair in the mirror.)*

CHARLES. What on earth was Madame Arcati doing here?

RUTH. She came to tea.

CHARLES. Did you ask her?

RUTH. Of course I did.

CHARLES. You never told me you were going to.

RUTH. You never told me you were going to ask Elvira to live with us.

CHARLES. I didn't.

ELVIRA. *(Sauntering over to the tea table.)* Oh, yes, you did, darling - it was your subconscious.

BLITHE SPIRIT

81

CHARLES. What was the old girl so cross about? She practically cut me dead.

RUTH. I told her the truth, about why we invited her the other night.

CHARLES. That was quite unnecessary and most unkind.

RUTH. She needed taking down a bit, she was blowing herself out like a pouter pigeon.

CHARLES. Why did you ask her to tea?

ELVIRA. *(Having moved over to above the armchair; leaning on the back.)* To get me exorcized, of course. Oh dear, I wish I could have a cucumber sandwich. I did love them so.

CHARLES. Is that true, Ruth?

RUTH. Is what true?

CHARLES. What Elvira said.

RUTH. You know perfectly well I can't hear what Elvira says.

CHARLES. She said that you got Madame Arcati here to try to get her exorcized. Is that true?

RUTH. We discussed the possibilities.

ELVIRA. *(Sitting in the armchair, her legs over the left arm.)* There's a snake in the grass for you.

CHARLES. You had no right to do such a thing without consulting me.

RUTH. I have every right. This situation is absolutely impossible, and you know it.

CHARLES. If only you'd make an effort and try to be a little more friendly to Elvira we might all have quite a jolly time.

RUTH. I have no wish to have a jolly time with Elvira.

ELVIRA. She's certainly very bad tempered, isn't she? I can't think why you married her.

CHARLES. She's naturally a bit upset - we must make allowances.

ELVIRA. I was never bad tempered though, was I, darling? Not even when you were beastly to me.

START

**CHARLES.** I was never beastly to you.

**RUTH.** (*Exasperated.*) Where is Elvira at the moment?

**CHARLES.** In the chair by the table.

**RUTH.** (*Crossing and sitting at the left end of the sofa; pointing at ELVIRA.*) Now look here, Elvira - I shall have to call you Elvira, shan't I? I can't very well go on saying Mrs. Condomine all the time, it would sound too silly.

**ELVIRA.** I don't see why.

**RUTH.** Did she say anything?

**CHARLES.** She said she'd like nothing better.

**ELVIRA.** (*Giggling.*) You really are sweet, Charles darling. I worship you.

**RUTH.** I wish to be absolutely honest with you, Elvira -

**ELVIRA.** Hold on to your hats, boys!

**RUTH.** I admit I did ask Madame Arcati here with a view to getting you exorcized; and I think that if you were in my position you'd have done exactly the same thing - wouldn't you?

**ELVIRA.** I shouldn't have done it so obviously.

**RUTH.** What did she say?

**CHARLES.** Nothing. She just nodded and smiled.

**RUTH.** (*With a forced smile.*) Thank you, Elvira; that's generous of you. I really would so much rather that there were no misunderstandings between us.

**CHARLES.** That's very sensible, Ruth - I agree entirely.

**RUTH.** (*To ELVIRA.*) I want, before we go any further, to ask you a frank question. Why did you really come here? I don't see that you could have hoped to have achieved anything by it beyond the immediate joke of making Charles into a sort of astral bigamist.

**ELVIRA.** I came because the power of Charles's love tugged and tugged and tugged at me.

(**CHARLES** chuckles in self-satisfaction.)

Didn't it, my sweet?

**RUTH.** What did she say?

**CHARLES.** She said that she came because she wanted to see me again.

**RUTH.** Well, she's done that now, hasn't she?

**CHARLES.** We can't be inhospitable, Ruth.

**RUTH.** I have no wish to be inhospitable; but I should like to have just an idea of how long you intend to stay, Elvira?

**ELVIRA.** I don't know - I really don't know! (*She giggles.*) Isn't it awful?

**CHARLES.** She says she doesn't know.

**RUTH.** Surely that's a little inconsiderate?

**ELVIRA.** Didn't the old spiritualist have any constructive ideas about getting rid of me?

**CHARLES.** What did Madame Arcati say?

**RUTH.** She said she couldn't do a thing.

**ELVIRA.** (*Rising and crossing to the window.*) Hurray!

**CHARLES.** Don't be upset, Ruth dear - we shall soon adjust ourselves, you know. You must admit it's a unique experience. I can see no valid reason why we shouldn't get a great deal of fun out of it.

**RUTH.** Fun! Charles, how can you - you must be out of your mind!

**CHARLES.** (*Crossing below the sofa to the fireplace.*) Not at all - I thought I was at first - but now I must say I'm beginning to enjoy myself.

**RUTH.** (*Bursting into tears.*) Oh, Charles - Charles -

**ELVIRA.** She's off again.

**CHARLES.** You really must not be so callous, Elvira. Try to see her point a little.

**RUTH.** I suppose she said something insulting.

**CHARLES.** No, dear, she didn't do anything of the sort.

**RUTH.** Now look here, Elvira...

**CHARLES.** She's over by the window now.

**RUTH.** Why the hell can't she stay in the same place?

**ELVIRA.** Temper again! My poor Charles, what a terrible life you must lead!

**CHARLES.** Do shut up, darling, you'll only make everything worse.

**RUTH.** Who was that 'darling' addressed to - her or me?

**CHARLES.** Both of you.

*(RUTH rises. ELVIRA drops downstage left to the gramophone.)*

**RUTH.** *(Stamping her foot.)* This is intolerable!

**CHARLES.** For heaven's sake don't get into another state.

**RUTH.** *(Furiously.)* I've been doing my level best to control myself ever since yesterday morning, and I'm damned if I'm going to try anymore, the strain is too much. She has the advantage of being able to say whatever she pleases without me being able to hear her, but she can hear me all right, can't she, without any modified interpreting?

**CHARLES.** Modified interpreting! I don't know what you mean.

**RUTH.** Oh, yes, you do - you haven't told me once what she really said - you wouldn't dare. Judging from her photograph she's the type who would use most unpleasant language.

**CHARLES.** Ruth - you're not to talk like that.

**RUTH.** I've been making polite conversation all through dinner last night and breakfast and lunch today - and it's been a nightmare - and I am not going to do it any more.

*(She moves to the left of the armchair.)*

I don't like Elvira any more than she likes me, and what's more, I'm certain that I never could have, dead or alive.

*(Going upstage a pace she turns to face CHARLES, at the fire.)*

If, since her untimely arrival here the other evening, she had shown the slightest sign of good manners, the slightest sign of breeding, I might have felt differently

towards her, but all she has done is try to make mischief between us and have private jokes with you against me. I am now going up to my room and I shall have my dinner on a tray. You and she can have the house to yourselves and joke and gossip with each other to your heart's content. *(Spoken in the doorway.)* The first thing in the morning I am going up to London to interview the Psychical Research Society, and if they fail me I shall go straight to the Archbishop of Canterbury...

*(RUTH exits.)*

~~**CHARLES.** *(Moving upstage to center, to follow her.)* Ruth...~~

~~**ELVIRA.** *(Crossing over to the fireplace.)* Let her go. She'll calm down later on.~~

~~**CHARLES.** It's unlike her to behave like this. She's generally so equable.~~

~~**ELVIRA.** No, she isn't. Not really. Her mouth gives her away. It's a hard mouth, Charles.~~

~~**CHARLES.** *(Coming downstage center between the armchair and the sofa.)* Her mouth's got nothing to do with it. I resent you discussing Ruth as though she were a horse.~~

~~**ELVIRA.** Do you love her?~~

~~**CHARLES.** Of course I do.~~

~~**ELVIRA.** As much as you loved me?~~

~~**CHARLES.** Don't be silly - it's all entirely different.~~

~~**ELVIRA.** I'm so glad. Nothing could ever have been quite the same, could it?~~

~~**CHARLES.** You always behaved very badly.~~

~~**ELVIRA.** Oh, Charles!~~

~~**CHARLES.** I'm grieved to see that your sojourn in the Other World hasn't improved you in the least.~~

~~**ELVIRA.** *(Curling up in right end of the sofa.)* Go on, darling - I love it when you pretend to be cross with me.~~

~~**CHARLES.** I'm now going up to talk to Ruth.~~

~~**ELVIRA.** Cowardy custard.~~

END

## Scene Three

*(The time is evening several days later. The doors are shut. The windows are also shut. The curtains are open.)*

*(Light Cue No. 01. Act II, Scene Three.)*

*(When the curtain rises, MRS. BRADMAN is sitting in the armchair. RUTH is standing by the window drumming on the pane with her fingers.)*

**MRS. BRADMAN.** Does it show any signs of clearing?

**RUTH.** No, it's still pouring.

**MRS. BRADMAN.** I do sympathize with you, really I do. It's really been quite a chapter of accidents, hasn't it?

**RUTH.** It certainly has.

**MRS. BRADMAN.** That happens sometimes, you know. Everything seems to go wrong at once. Exactly as though there were some evil forces at work.

*(RUTH comes down to the gramophone.)*

I remember once when George and I went away for a fortnight's holiday, not long after we were married, we were dogged by bad luck from beginning to end. The weather was vile - George sprained his ankle - I caught a cold and had to stay in bed for two days - and to crown everything the lamp fell over in the sitting room and set fire to the treatise George had written on hyperplasia of the abdominal glands.

**RUTH.** *(Absently.)* How dreadful!

*(She wanders upstage a little.)*

**MRS. BRADMAN.** He had to write it all over again, every single word.

**RUTH.** You're sure you wouldn't like a cocktail or some sherry or anything?

**MRS. BRADMAN.** No, thank you - really not. George will be down in a minute and we've got to go like lightning. We

were supposed to be at the Wilmots' at seven and it's nearly that now.

**RUTH.** *(Coming away from the window.)* I think I'll have a little sherry. I feel I need it.

*(She moves upstage right to the drinks table and pours out sherry.)*

**MRS. BRADMAN.** Don't worry about your husband's arm, Mrs. Condomine. I'm sure it's only a sprain.

**RUTH.** It's not his arm I'm worried about.

**MRS. BRADMAN.** And I'm sure Edith will be up and about again in a few days.

**RUTH.** My cook gave notice this morning.

*(She comes down to the fireplace.)*

**MRS. BRADMAN.** Well, really! Servants are awful, aren't they? Not a shred of gratitude. At the first sign of trouble they run out on you - like rats leaving a sinking ship.

**RUTH.** I can't feel that your simile was entirely fortunate, Mrs. Bradman.

**MRS. BRADMAN.** *(Flustered.)* Oh, I didn't mean that, really I didn't!

*(DR. BRADMAN comes in.)*

**DR. BRADMAN.** *(Above the sofa.)* Nothing to worry about, Mrs. Condomine - it's only a slight strain.

**RUTH.** I'm so relieved.

**DR. BRADMAN.** He made a good deal of fuss when I examined it. Men are much worse patients than women, you know - particularly highly-strung men like your husband.

**RUTH.** Is he highly-strung, do you think?

**DR. BRADMAN.** Yes. As a matter of fact I wanted to talk to you about that. I'm afraid he's been overworking lately.

**RUTH.** *(Frowning.)* Overworking?

**DR. BRADMAN.** He's in rather a nervous condition - nothing serious, you understand -

# I - 2W, 1M - Ruth/Mrs. Brandman/Dr. Brandman (cont.)

90

BLITHE SPIRIT

**RUTH.** What makes you think so?

**DR. BRADMAN.** I know the symptoms. Of course the shock of his fall might have something to do with it, but I certainly should advise a complete rest for a couple of weeks.

**RUTH.** You mean he ought to go away?

**DR. BRADMAN.** I do. In cases like that a change of atmosphere can work wonders.

**RUTH.** What symptoms did you notice?

**DR. BRADMAN.** Oh, nothing to be unduly alarmed about – a certain air of strain – an inability to focus his eyes on the person he is talking to – a few rather marked irrelevancies in his conversation.

**RUTH.** I see. Can you remember any specific example?

**DR. BRADMAN.** Oh, he suddenly shouted, 'What are you doing in the bathroom?' and then a little later, while I was writing him a prescription, he suddenly said, 'For God's sake behave yourself!'

**MRS. BRADMAN.** How extraordinary.

**RUTH.** (*Nervously.*) He often goes on like that. Particularly when he's immersed in writing a book.

**DR. BRADMAN.** Oh, I am not in the least perturbed about it really – but I do think a rest and a change would be a good idea.

**RUTH.** Thank you so much, Doctor. Would you like some sherry?

**DR. BRADMAN.** No, thank you. We really must be off.

**RUTH.** How is poor Edith?

**DR. BRADMAN.** She'll be all right in a few days. She's still recovering from the concussion.

**MRS. BRADMAN.** It's funny, isn't it, that both your housemaid and your husband should fall down on the same day, isn't it?

**RUTH.** Yes, if that sort of thing amuses you.

**MRS. BRADMAN.** (*Giggling nervously.*) Of course I didn't mean it like that, Mrs. Condomine.

BLITHE SPIRIT

91

**DR. BRADMAN.** Come along, my dear. You're talking too much as usual.

**MRS. BRADMAN.** You are horrid, George.

(*MRS. BRADMAN rises and crosses to RUTH right center below the sofa. Both BRADMANs move up to the door.*)

Goodbye, Mrs. Condomine.

**RUTH.** (*Shaking hands.*) Goodbye.

**DR. BRADMAN.** (*Also shaking hands.*) I'll pop in and have a look at both patients some time tomorrow morning.

**RUTH.** Thank you so much.

(*Light Cue No. 02. Act II, Scene Three.*)

(*CHARLES comes in and to above the table center. His left arm is in a sling. ELVIRA follows him in and crosses above the sofa to the fire and then across the front to left center. RUTH is at the mantelpiece.*)

**DR. BRADMAN.** Well – how does it feel?

**CHARLES.** All right.

**DR. BRADMAN.** It's only a slight sprain, you know.

**CHARLES.** Is this damned sling really essential?

**DR. BRADMAN.** It's a wise precaution. It will prevent you using your left hand except when it's really necessary.

**CHARLES.** I had intended to drive into Folkestone this evening.

**DR. BRADMAN.** It would be much better if you didn't.

**CHARLES.** It's extremely inconvenient.

**RUTH.** You can easily wait and go tomorrow, Charles.

**ELVIRA.** I can't stand another of those dreary evenings at home, Charles. It'll drive me dotty. And I haven't seen a movie for seven years.

**CHARLES.** (*Crossing below MRS. BRADMAN to the right of ELVIRA.*) Let me be the first to congratulate you.

**DR. BRADMAN.** (*Kindly.*) What's that, old man?

END

# J - 1M, 1W - Charles/ Elvira

BLITHE SPIRIT

97

~~place your wishes before mine in everything, I have nothing further to say.~~

~~(She moves up center and turns.)~~

~~I'm sure I hope you both enjoy yourselves.~~

~~(RUTH goes out and slams the door.)~~

START

CHARLES. There now.

ELVIRA. Oh, Charles! Have you been beastly to her?

CHARLES. No. Ruth doesn't like being thwarted any more than you do.

ELVIRA. She's a woman of sterling character. It's a pity she's so ungiving.

CHARLES. As I told you before, I would rather not discuss Ruth with you. It makes me uncomfortable.

ELVIRA. I won't mention her again. Are you ready?

CHARLES. What for?

ELVIRA. To go to Folkestone, of course.

CHARLES. I want a glass of sherry first.

ELVIRA. I don't believe you want to take me at all.

CHARLES. Of course I want to take you, but I still think it would be more sensible to wait until tomorrow. It's a filthy night.

ELVIRA. (*Moving to and flinging herself into the armchair; crossly.*) How familiar this is!

CHARLES. In what way familiar?

ELVIRA. All through our married life I only had to suggest something for you immediately to start hedging me off.

CHARLES. I'm not hedging you off, I merely said...

ELVIRA. All right - all right - we'll spend another cosy intimate evening at home with Ruth sewing away at that hideous table centre and snapping at us like a terrier.

CHARLES. Ruth is perfectly aware that the table centre is hideous. It happens to be a birthday present for her mother.

98

BLITHE SPIRIT

ELVIRA. It's no use trying to defend Ruth's taste to me. It's thoroughly artsy-craftsy and you know it.

CHARLES. It is not artsy-craftsy.

ELVIRA. She's ruined this room. Look at those curtains and that awful shawl on the piano.

CHARLES. Lady Mackinley sent it to us from Burma.

ELVIRA. Obviously because it had been sent to her from Birmingham.

CHARLES. (*Moving to right of ELVIRA.*) If you don't behave yourself I shan't take you into Folkestone ever.

ELVIRA. (*Rising, coaxingly.*) Please, Charles...don't be elderly and grand with me! Please let's go now!

CHARLES. (*Moving up to the drinks table.*) Not until I've had my sherry.

ELVIRA. You are tiresome, darling. I've been waiting about for hours.

CHARLES. A few more minutes won't make any difference then.

(*He pours himself out some sherry.*)

ELVIRA. (*Petulantly, flinging herself into the chair again.*) Oh, very well.

CHARLES. Besides, the car won't be back for half an hour at least.

ELVIRA. (*Sharply.*) What do you mean?

CHARLES. (*Sipping his sherry nonchalantly.*) Ruth's taken it. She had to go and see the vicar...

ELVIRA. (*Jumping up - in extreme agitation.*) What!!

CHARLES. What on earth's the matter?

ELVIRA. You say Ruth's taken the car?

CHARLES. Yes. To go and see the vicar, but she won't be long.

ELVIRA. (*Going upstage center, wildly.*) Oh, my God! Oh, my God!

CHARLES. Elvira!

ELVIRA. Stop her! You must stop her at once!

## J - 1M, 1W - Charles/ Elvira (cont.)

BLITHE SPIRIT

99

**CHARLES.** Why – what for?

**ELVIRA.** (*Jumping up and down.*) Stop her! Go out and stop her immediately!

**CHARLES.** It's too late now – I heard her go a couple of minutes ago.

**ELVIRA.** (*Retreating backwards slowly towards the window.*

**CHARLES** comes to her.) Oh, oh, oh, oh!!

**CHARLES.** What are you going on like this for? What have you done?

**ELVIRA.** (*Frightened.*) Done? I haven't done anything.

**CHARLES.** Elvira – you're lying.

**ELVIRA.** (*Backing away from him.*) I'm not lying – what is there to lie about?

**CHARLES.** What are you in such a state for?

**ELVIRA.** (*Almost hysterical.*) I'm not in a state – I don't know what you mean!

**CHARLES.** You've done something dreadful.

**ELVIRA.** Don't look at me like that, Charles! I haven't! I swear I haven't!

**CHARLES.** (*Stopping and taking a pace backwards away from her – striking his forehead.*) My God! The car!

**ELVIRA.** No, Charles, no...

**CHARLES.** Ruth was right. You did want to kill me! You've done something to the car!

**ELVIRA.** (*Howling like a banshee.*) Oh – oh – oh – oh!

**CHARLES.** (*Stepping towards her again.*) What did you do? Answer me!

*(At this moment the telephone rings. CHARLES goes to the telephone upstage right on the drinks table.)*

*(At the telephone.)* Hallo – hallo! Yes, speaking... I see... the bridge at the bottom of the hill...thank you – no, I'll come at once.

*(He slowly puts back the receiver. As he does so the door bursts open. ELVIRA stands facing the door.)*

100

BLITHE SPIRIT

**ELVIRA.** (*Obviously retreating from someone.*) Well, of all the filthy low-down tricks...!

*(She runs across, below the sofa, shielding her head with her hands and screaming.)*

Ow – stop it – Ruth! – leave go...!

END

*(ELVIRA runs above the sofa to the door and out of the room, slamming the door. It opens again immediately and slams again.)*

*(CHARLES, standing still by the telephone, stares aghast.)*

*(Light Cue No. 05. Act II, Scene Three.)*

*(Curtain.)*

**ACT III**

**Scene One**

*(Light Cue No. 1. Act III, Scene One.)*

*(The time is evening a few days later. The doors are shut, the curtains are drawn. The windows, behind the curtains, are open.)*

*(CHARLES is standing before the fire drinking his after dinner coffee. On both arms he wears a band of deep mourning. He finishes his coffee, puts the cup down on the mantelpiece, lights a cigarette and settles himself comfortably on the settee. He adjusts a reading lamp, and with a sigh of well-being opens a novel and begins to read.)*

*(There is a ring at the front door bell. With an exclamation of annoyance he puts down the book, gets up and goes into the hall. After a moment or so MADAME ARCATI comes in. CHARLES follows her and shuts the door. MADAME ARCATI is wearing the strange, rather barbaric evening clothes that she wore in Act I.)*

**MADAME ARCATI.** I hope you will not consider this an intrusion, Mr. Condomine.

**CHARLES.** Not at all. Please sit down, won't you?

**MADAME ARCATI.** Thank you.

*(She sits at the left end of the sofa.)*

**CHARLES.** *(Center.)* Would you like some coffee or a liqueur?

**MADAME ARCATI.** No, thank you. I had to come, Mr. Condomine.

**CHARLES.** *(Politely.)* Yes?

**MADAME ARCATI.** I felt a tremendous urge, like a rushing wind, and so I hopped on my bike and here I am.

**CHARLES.** It was very kind of you.

**MADAME ARCATI.** No, no, no. Not kind at all – it was my duty. I know it strongly.

**CHARLES.** Duty?

**MADAME ARCATI.** I reproach myself bitterly, you know.

**CHARLES.** Please don't. There is no necessity for that.

*(He sits in the armchair.)*

**MADAME ARCATI.** I allowed myself to get into a huff the other day with your late wife. I rode all the way home in the grip of temper, Mr. Condomine. I have regretted it ever since.

**CHARLES.** My dear Madame Arcati –

**MADAME ARCATI.** *(Holding up her hand.)* Please let me go on. Mine is the shame, mine is the blame. I shall never forgive myself. Had I not been so impetuous, had I listened to the cool voice of reason – so much might have been averted.

**CHARLES.** You told my wife distinctly that you were unable to help her. You were perfectly honest. Over and above the original unfortunate mistake I see no reason for you to reproach yourself.

**MADAME ARCATI.** I threw up the sponge! In a moment of crisis, I threw up the sponge instead of throwing down the gauntlet.

**CHARLES.** Whatever you threw, Madame Arcati, I very much fear nothing could have been done. It seems that circumstances have been a little too strong for all of us.

**MADAME ARCATI.** I cannot bring myself to admit defeat so easily. It is gall and wormwood to me. I could at least have concentrated – made an effort.

**CHARLES.** Never mind.

**MADAME ARCATI.** I do mind. I cannot help it. I mind with every fibre of my being. I have been thinking very carefully, I have also been reading up a good deal during the last few dreadful days... I gather that we are alone?

**CHARLES.** (*Looking round.*) My first wife is not in the room, she is lying down; the funeral exhausted her. I imagine that my second wife is with her; but of course I have no way of knowing for certain.

**MADAME ARCATI.** You have remarked no difference in the texture of your first wife since the accident?

**CHARLES.** No, she seems much as usual; a little under the weather, perhaps, a trifle low spirited, but that's all.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Well, that washes that out.

**CHARLES.** I'm afraid I don't understand.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Just a little theory I had. In the nineteenth century there was a pretty widespread belief that a ghost who had participated in the death of a human being disintegrated automatically.

**CHARLES.** How do you know that Elvira was in any way responsible for Ruth's death?

**MADAME ARCATI.** Elvira – such a pretty name – it has a definite lilt to it, hasn't it?

*(She hums for a moment.)*

Elvira – El-vi-ra...

**CHARLES.** (*Rather agitated.*) You haven't answered my question. How did you know?

**MADAME ARCATI.** It came to me last night, Mr. Condomine. It came to me in a blinding flash. I had just finished my Ovaltine and turned the light out when I suddenly started up in bed with a loud cry – 'Great Scott!' I said – 'I've got it!' After that, I began to put two and two together. At three in the morning – with my brain fairly seething – I went to work on my crystal for a little. But it wasn't very satisfactory – cloudy, you know.

**CHARLES.** (*Uneasily.*) I would be very much obliged if you would keep any theories you have regarding my wife's death to yourself, Madame Arcati...

**MADAME ARCATI.** My one desire is to help you. I feel I have been dreadfully remiss over the whole affair. Not only remiss, but untidy.

**CHARLES.** I am afraid there is nothing whatever to be done.

**MADAME ARCATI.** (*Triumphantly.*) But there is – there is!

*(She produces a piece of paper from her bag and brandishes it.)*

I have found a formula – here it is! I copied it out of Edmondson's *Witchcraft and its Byways*.

**CHARLES.** (*Irritably.*) What the hell are you talking about?

**MADAME ARCATI.** (*Rising.*) Pluck up your heart, Mr. Condomine! All is not lost!

**CHARLES.** (*Rising.*) Now look here, Madame Arcati –

**MADAME ARCATI.** You are still anxious to dematerialize your first wife, I suppose?

**CHARLES.** (*In a lower voice, with a cautious look towards the door.*) Of course I am – I'm perfectly furious with her – but...

**MADAME ARCATI.** But what?

**CHARLES.** Well – she's been very upset for the last few days. You see, apart from me being angry with her, which she always hated even when she was alive, Ruth, my second wife, has hardly left her side a moment. You must see that she's been having a pretty bad time what with one thing and another.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Your delicacy of feeling does you credit; but I must say, if you will forgive my bluntness, that you are a damned fool, Mr. Condomine.

**CHARLES.** (*Moving away to the left by the gramophone. Stiffly.*) You are at liberty to think whatever you please.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Now, now, now – don't get on your high horse! There's no sense in that, is there? I have a formula here that I think will be able to get rid of her

without hurting her feelings in the least. It's extremely simple and requires nothing more than complete concentration from you and a minor trance from me. I may even be able to manage it without lying down.

**CHARLES.** Honestly, I would rather –

END

*(At this moment the door opens and ELVIRA comes quickly into the room. She is obviously very upset.)*

*(Light Cue No. 02. Act III, Scene One.)*

**ELVIRA.** Charles!

*(She moves to above the sofa.)*

**CHARLES.** What on earth's the matter?

**ELVIRA.** *(Seeing MADAME ARCATI.)* Oh! What's she doing here?

**CHARLES.** She came to offer me her condolences.

**ELVIRA.** *(Moving above the sofa to the mantelpiece, then across, below MADAME ARCATI, and up to the piano.)* They should have been congratulations.

**CHARLES.** Please don't say things like that, Elvira – it is in the worst possible taste. Madame Arcati, allow me to introduce my first wife, Elvira.

**MADAME ARCATI.** How do you do?

**ELVIRA.** What does she want, Charles? Send her away.

*(She walks about the room.)*

**MADAME ARCATI.** In what part of the room is she at the moment?

**CHARLES.** She's moving about rather rapidly. I'll tell you when and where she settles.

**ELVIRA.** She's the one who got me here in the first place, isn't she?

**CHARLES.** Yes.

**ELVIRA.** Well, please tell her to get me away again as soon as possible. I can't stand this house another minute.

**CHARLES.** Really, Elvira – I'm surprised at you.

# L - 1M, 1W - Charles/Elvira

BLITHE SPIRIT

107

**MADAME ARCATI.** (*Clasping and unclasping her hands in a frenzy of excitement.*) This is first rate - it really is first rate! Absolutely stunning!

**CHARLES.** I'm so glad you're pleased.

**ELVIRA.** Please get rid of her. Ruth will be in in a minute.

**CHARLES.** Madame Arcati, would you think it most frightfully rude if I asked you to go into the dining room for a moment? My first wife wishes to speak to me alone.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Oh, must I? It's so lovely being actually in the room with her!

**CHARLES.** Only for a few minutes. I promise she'll be here when you come back,

**MADAME ARCATI.** Very well. Hand me my bag, will you? It's on the settee.

**ELVIRA.** (*Picking it up and handing it to her.*) Here you are.

**MADAME ARCATI.** (*Taking it and blowing her a kiss.*) Oh, you darling - you little darling!

(**MADAME ARCATI,** humming ecstatically, goes out and into the dining room and shuts the door.)

**ELVIRA.** How good is she really?

**CHARLES.** I don't know.

**ELVIRA.** Do you think she really could get me back again?

**CHARLES.** But my dear child...

**ELVIRA.** And don't call me your dear child. It's smug and supercilious.

**CHARLES.** There's no need to be rude.

**ELVIRA.** (*Moving downstage to the mantelpiece and turning away.*) The whole thing's been a failure - a miserable, dreary failure - and oh! what high hopes I started out with!

**CHARLES.** (*Moving towards ELVIRA.*) You can't expect much sympathy from me, you know. I am perfectly aware that your highest hope was to murder me.

108

BLITHE SPIRIT

**ELVIRA.** Don't put it like that. It sounds so beastly.

**CHARLES.** It is beastly. It's one of the beastliest ideas I've ever heard.

**ELVIRA.** There was a time when you'd have welcomed the chance of being with me forever and ever.

**CHARLES.** Your behaviour has shocked me immeasurably, Elvira. I had no idea you were so unscrupulous.

**ELVIRA.** (*Bursting into tears, and crossing below CHARLES to left center.*) Oh, Charles...

**CHARLES.** Stop crying.

**ELVIRA.** They're only ghost tears. They don't mean anything really - but they're very painful.

**CHARLES.** (*Moving to the mantelpiece.*) You've brought all this on yourself, you know.

**ELVIRA.** (*Coming to the back of the armchair.*) That's right - rub it in. Anyhow, it was only because I loved you. The silliest thing I ever did in my whole life was to love you. You were always unworthy of me.

**CHARLES.** That remark comes perilously near impertinence, Elvira.

**ELVIRA.** I sat there, on the Other Side, just longing for you day after day. I did really. All through your affair with that brassy-looking woman in the South of France I went on loving you and thinking truly of you. Then you married Ruth and even then I forgave you and tried to understand because all the time I believed deep inside that you really loved me best...that's why I put myself down for a return visit and had to fill in all those forms and wait about in draughty passages for hours. If only you'd died before you met Ruth, everything might have been all right. She's absolutely ruined you. I hadn't been in the house a day before I realized that. Your books aren't a quarter as good as they used to be, either.

**CHARLES.** (*Incensed.*) That is entirely untrue. Ruth helped me and encouraged me with my work, which is a damned sight more than you ever did.

**ELVIRA.** That's probably what's wrong with it.

START

## L - 1M, 1W - Charles/Elvira (cont.)

BLITHE SPIRIT

109

**CHARLES.** All you ever thought of was going to parties and enjoying yourself.

**ELVIRA.** Why shouldn't I have fun? I died young, didn't I?

**CHARLES.** You needn't have died at all if you hadn't been idiotic enough to go out on the river with Guy Henderson and get soaked to the skin.

**ELVIRA.** So we're back at Guy Henderson again, are we?

**CHARLES.** You behaved abominably over Guy Henderson and it's no use pretending that you didn't.

**ELVIRA.** (*Sitting on the left arm of the armchair.*) Guy adored me. And anyhow, he was very attractive.

**CHARLES.** You told me distinctly that he didn't attract you in the least.

**ELVIRA.** You'd have gone through the roof if I'd told you that he did.

**CHARLES.** (*Moving to below the sofa.*) Did you have an affair with Guy Henderson?

**ELVIRA.** I would rather not discuss it, if you don't mind.

**CHARLES.** Answer me; did you or didn't you?

**ELVIRA.** Of course I didn't.

**CHARLES.** You let him kiss you though, didn't you?

**ELVIRA.** How could I stop him! He was bigger than I was.

**CHARLES.** (*Furiously.*) And you swore to me -

**ELVIRA.** Of course I did. You were always making scenes over nothing at all.

**CHARLES.** Nothing at all!

**ELVIRA.** You never loved me a bit really. It was only your beastly vanity.

**CHARLES.** You seriously believe that it was only vanity that upset me when you went out in the punt with Guy Henderson?

**ELVIRA.** It was not a punt. It was a little launch.

**CHARLES.** I don't care if it was a three-masted schooner! You had no right to go!

BLITHE SPIRIT

110

**ELVIRA.** You seem to forget *why* I went! You seem to forget that you had spent the entire evening making sheep's eyes at that overblown harridan with the false pearls.

**CHARLES.** A woman in Cynthia Cheviot's position would hardly wear false pearls.

**ELVIRA.** They were practically all she was wearing.

**CHARLES.** I am pained to observe that seven years in the echoing vaults of eternity have in no way impaired your native vulgarity.

**ELVIRA.** That was the remark of a pompous ass.

**CHARLES.** (*Moving upstage right to above the sofa, by the writing table.*) There is nothing to be gained by continuing this discussion.

**ELVIRA.** You always used to say that when you were thoroughly worsted.

**CHARLES.** On looking back on our married years, Elvira, I see now, with horrid clarity, that they were nothing but a mockery.

**ELVIRA.** You invite mockery, Charles. It's something to do with your personality, I think. A certain seedy grandeur!

**CHARLES.** (*Crossing towards ELVIRA below the sofa.*) Once and for all, Elvira...

**ELVIRA.** You never suspected it, but I laughed at you steadily from the altar to the grave - all your ridiculous petty jealousies and your fussings and fumings -

**CHARLES.** You were feckless and irresponsible and morally unstable. I realized that before we left Budleigh Salterton.

**ELVIRA.** Nobody but a monumental bore would have thought of having a honeymoon at Budleigh Salterton.

**CHARLES.** What's the matter with Budleigh Salterton?

**ELVIRA.** I was an eager young bride, Charles - I wanted glamour and music and romance. All I got was potted palms, seven hours a day on a damp golf course, and a three-piece orchestra playing 'Merrie England.'

END

# M - 2W, 1M - Edith/Madame Arcati/Charles

128

BLITHE SPIRIT

*(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 stall-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.

BLITHE SPIRIT

129

**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.** *(Styly.)* Oh, no, Madame.

**MADAME ARCATI.** She's lying.

**EDITH.** Oh, Madame!

START

**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.

END

**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!

# N - 1M, 1W - Charles/Madame Arcati

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BLITHE SPIRIT

~~EDITH. Did I drop off? Do you think it's my concussion again? Oh dear!~~

~~CHARLES. Off you go, Edith, and thank you very much.~~

~~(He presses a pound note into her hands.)~~

~~Thank you very much indeed.~~

~~EDITH. Oh, sir, whatever for?~~

~~(She looks at him in sudden horror.)~~

~~Oh, sir!!~~

~~(EDITH bolts from the room.)~~

START

CHARLES. (Surprised.) What on earth did she mean by that?

MADAME ARCATI. (Sitting in the middle of the sofa.) Golly, what a night! I'm ready to drop in my tracks.

CHARLES. Would you like to stay here? There's the spare room, you know.

MADAME ARCATI. No, thank you. Each to his own nest. I'll pedal home in a jiffy, it's only seven miles.

(She rises and faces CHARLES.)

CHARLES. I'm deeply grateful to you, Madame Arcati. I don't know what arrangements you generally make, but I trust you will send in your account in due course.

MADAME ARCATI. Good heavens, Mr. Condomine - it was a pleasure! I wouldn't dream of such a thing.

CHARLES. But really I feel that all those trances...

MADAME ARCATI. I enjoy them, Mr. Condomine, thoroughly. I always have, since a child.

CHARLES. Perhaps you'd give me the pleasure of lunching with me one day soon?

MADAME ARCATI. When you come back, I should be delighted.

CHARLES. Come back?

(MADAME ARCATI crosses to the table left center and kneels to pick up the cards from the floor, CHARLES is center.)

BLITHE SPIRIT

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MADAME ARCATI. (Lowering her voice.) Take my advice, Mr. Condomine, and go away immediately.

CHARLES. But Madame Arcati! You don't mean that...?

MADAME ARCATI. This must be an unhappy house for you. There must be memories both grave and gay in every corner of it - also -

(She pauses.)

CHARLES. Also what?

MADAME ARCATI. (Thinking better of it.) There are more things in heaven and earth, Mr. Condomine.

(She places her finger to her lips.)

Just go. Pack your traps and go as soon as possible.

(She rises and goes to CHARLES.)

CHARLES. (Also in lowered tones.) Do you mean that they may still be here?

MADAME ARCATI. (Nodding and nonchalantly whistling a little tune.) Quien sabe, as the Spanish say.

(MADAME ARCATI goes to the table and collects her crystal, cards and Ouija board.)

CHARLES. (Looking furtively round the room.) I wonder - I wonder. I'll follow your advice, Madame Arcati. Thank you again.

MADAME ARCATI. Well, goodbye, Mr. Condomine. It's been fascinating - from first to last - fascinating. Do you mind if I take just one more sandwich to munch on my way home?

(She gets a sandwich from the table.)

CHARLES. By all means.

(MADAME ARCATI goes to the door, CHARLES follows her to see her safely out.)

MADAME ARCATI. (As they go.) Don't trouble - I can find my way. Cheerio once more, and Good Hunting!

END