

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

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

(She jumps down.)

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

(She moves to the middle of the room.)

CHARLES. Do what?

MADAME ARCATI. Hush - wait - !

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

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

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

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

ELVIRA. (Rising and coming left to the gramophone, above

RUTH.) If it's a ghost, I shall scream.

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

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

EDITH. Did you ring, sir?

MADAME ARCATI. The bandage! The white bandage!

CHARLES. No, Edith.



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

MADAME ARCATI. Come here, child.

EDITH. Oh!

*(She looks anxiously at CHARLES.)*

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

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

EDITH. Oh dear...

MADAME ARCATI. Answer, please.

EDITH. *(Falteringly.)* You, Madame -

*(She stops.)*

MADAME ARCATI. Go on.

EDITH. The master.

MADAME ARCATI. Anyone else?

EDITH. Oh, no, Madame...

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

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

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

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

RUTH. Do concentrate, Elvira, and keep still.

ELVIRA. I can't...

MADAME ARCATI. Do you see anyone else now?

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

MADAME ARCATI. She's lying.

EDITH. Oh, Madame!

Edith 3063

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?

---

end



MRS Bradman

1 of 2

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



Mrs Bradman  
2062

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 -

end

Dr Bradman  
1 of 3

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 -



Dr Bradman  
2 of 3

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.

Dr Bradman  
3 of 3

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.

end

---

*(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?



Charles  
10f2

*(CHARLES watches her into the hall and then comes back into the room.)*

CHARLES. *(Starting to speak at the door. Softly.)* Ruth!  
- Elvira! - are you there? *(A pause.)* Ruth! - Elvira!  
- I know damn well you're there. *(Another pause.)*  
I just want to tell you that I'm going away, so there's  
no point in your hanging about any longer - I'm going  
a long way away - somewhere where I don't believe  
you'll be able to follow me - in spite of what Elvira  
said I don't think spirits can travel over water. Is that  
quite clear, my darlings? You said in one of your more  
acid moments, Ruth, that I had been hag-ridden all my  
life! How right you were! But now I'm free, Ruth dear,  
not only of Mother and Elvira and Mrs. Winthrop-  
Llewellyn, but free of you too, and I should like to  
take this farewell opportunity of saying I'm enjoying it  
immensely -

*(The vase on the mantelpiece falls on to the  
hearth-stone and smashes.)*

Aha! - I thought so - you were very silly, Elvira, to  
imagine that I didn't know all about you and Captain  
Bracegirdle. I did. But what you didn't know was that  
I was extremely attached to Paula Westlake at the time!

*(The picture above the piano crashes to the  
ground.)*

I was reasonably faithful to you, Ruth, but I doubt if  
it would have lasted much longer. You were becoming  
increasingly domineering, you know, and there's  
nothing more off-putting than that, is there?

*(The clock strikes sixteen very quickly.)*

Goodbye for the moment, my dears! I expect we are  
bound to meet again one day, but until we do I'm going  
to enjoy myself as I've never enjoyed myself before.

*(A sofa cushion is thrown into the air towards  
CHARLES from behind the sofa.)*

Charles  
2012

BLITHE SPIRIT

137

You can break up the house as much as you like - I'm leaving it anyhow. Think kindly of me, and send out good thoughts.

*(The curtains are pulled up and down, the gramophone lid opens and shuts.)*

*(The overmantel begins to shake and tremble as though someone were tugging at it.)*

Nice work, Ruth - get Elvira to help you...persevere!

*(A figure from above the right bookshelves falls off on to the floor.)*

Goodbye again! Parting is such *sweet* sorrow!

*(A vase from the bookshelves upstage falls. The window curtains fall. The gramophone starts playing IRVING BERLIN'S ["ALWAYS"] very quickly and loudly.)*

*(CHARLES goes out of the room just as the overmantel crashes to the floor and the curtain pole comes tumbling down.)*

*(Curtain.)*

---

\*If this song is under copyright in your territory, a performance license will be required to perform.



Charles  
10+5

BLITHE SPIRIT

11

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?

Charles  
2065

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



Charles  
30f5

BLITHE SPIRIT

13

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.)

Charles  
4 of 5

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.



Charles  
50 f5

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.

end

*(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.)*

Ruth  
1 of 2

~~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

← Start



Ruth  
20x2

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.

Ruth  
1063

~~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~~



Ruth  
2 of 3

BLITHE SPIRIT

13

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.)

Ruth  
30+3

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.



Elvira  
1 of 1

~~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.

Elvira  
Pg 1063

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.



Elvira  
2043

CHARLES. Don't be idiotic. I can't let her go like that. I must be a little nice and sympathetic to her.

ELVIRA. I don't see why! If she's set on being disagreeable, I should just let her get on with it.

CHARLES. The whole business is very difficult for her - we must be fair.

ELVIRA. She should learn to be more adaptable.

CHARLES. She probably will in time - it's been a shock -

ELVIRA. Has it been a shock for you too, darling?

CHARLES. Of course! What did you expect?

ELVIRA. A nice shock?

CHARLES. What do you want, Elvira?

ELVIRA. Want? I don't know what you mean.

CHARLES. I remember that whenever you were overpoweringly demure it usually meant that you wanted something.

ELVIRA. It's horrid of you to be so suspicious. All I want is to be with you.

CHARLES. Well, you are.

ELVIRA. I mean alone, darling. If you go and pamper Ruth and smarm her over, she'll probably come flouncing down again and our lovely quiet evening together will be spoilt.

CHARLES. You're incorrigibly selfish.

ELVIRA. Well, I haven't seen you for seven years - it's only natural that I should want a little time alone with you - to talk over old times. I'll let you go up just for a little while if you really think it's your duty.

CHARLES. Of course it is.

ELVIRA. (*Smiling.*) Then I don't mind.

CHARLES. You're disgraceful, Elvira.

ELVIRA. You won't be long, will you? You'll come down again very soon?

CHARLES. I shall probably dress for dinner while I'm upstairs. You can read the *Tatler* or something.

Elvira  
3 of 3

ELVIRA. Darling, you don't have to dress - for me.

CHARLES. I always dress for dinner.

ELVIRA. What are you going to have? I should like to watch you eat something really delicious.

CHARLES. (*Moving up to the door.*) Be a good girl now - you can play the gramophone if you like.

ELVIRA. (*Demurely.*) Thank you, Charles.

(CHARLES goes out.)

(ELVIRA gets up, looks in the gramophone cupboard, finds the record of IRVING BERLIN'S ["ALWAYS"] and puts it on. She starts to waltz lightly round the room to it.)

(EDITH comes in to fetch the tea tray. She sees the gramophone playing by itself and so she turns it off and puts the record back in the cupboard. While she is picking up the tray, ELVIRA takes the record out and puts it on again. EDITH gives a shriek, drops the tray and rushes out of the room. ELVIRA continues to waltz gaily.)

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

(Curtain.)



Madame  
Arcati  
1062

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.

Madame  
Arcati  
20f2

**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.



Madame  
Arcati  
1 of 2

Now let me see - what have we here? Brahms - oh dear me, no; Rachmaninoff - too florid. Where is the dance music?

RUTH. They're the loose ones on the left.

MADAME ARCATI. I see.

*(She stoops down and produces a pile of dance records.)*

CHARLES. I'm afraid they're none of them very new.

MADAME ARCATI. Daphne is really more attached to Irving Berlin than anybody else. She likes a tune she can hum. Ah, here's one - 'Always.'

CHARLES. *(Half jumping up again.)* 'Always'!

RUTH. Do sit down, Charles. What is the matter?

CHARLES. *(Subsiding.)* Nothing - nothing at all.

MADAME ARCATI. The light switch is by the door?

RUTH. Yes, all except the small one on the desk, and the gramophone.

MADAME ARCATI. *(Moving above them to center on right of RUTH.)* Very well, I understand.

RUTH. Charles, do keep still.

MRS. BRADMAN. Fingers touching, George. Remember what Madame Arcati said.

MADAME ARCATI. Now there are one or two things that I should like to explain; so will you all listen attentively?

RUTH. Of course.

MADAME ARCATI. Presently, when the music begins, I am going to switch out the lights. I may then either walk about the room for a little or lie down flat. In due course I shall draw up this dear little stool and join you at the table. I shall place myself between you and your wife, Mr. Condomine, and rest my hands lightly upon yours. I must ask you not to address me or move or do anything in the least distracting. Is that quite, quite clear?

CHARLES. Perfectly.

Madame  
Arcati  
2062

**MADAME ARCATI.** Of course, I cannot guarantee that anything will happen at all. Daphne may be unavailable. She had a head cold very recently, and was rather under the weather, poor child. On the other hand, a great many things might occur. One of you might have an emanation, for instance; or we might contact a poltergeist, which would be extremely destructive and noisy.

**RUTH.** (*Anxiously.*) In what way destructive?

**MADAME ARCATI.** They throw things, you know.

**RUTH.** No, I didn't know.

**MADAME ARCATI.** But we must cross that bridge when we come to it, mustn't we?

**CHARLES.** Certainly - by all means.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Fortunately an Elemental at this time of the year is most unlikely.

**RUTH.** What do Elementals do?

**MADAME ARCATI.** Oh, my dear, one can never tell. They're dreadfully unpredictable. Usually they take the form of a very cold wind.

**MRS. BRADMAN.** I don't think I shall like that.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Occasionally reaching almost hurricane velocity.

**RUTH.** You don't think it would be a good idea to take the more breakable ornaments off the mantelpiece before we start?

**MADAME ARCATI.** (*Indulgently.*) That really is not necessary, Mrs. Condomine. I assure you I have my own methods of dealing with Elementals.

**RUTH.** I'm so glad.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Now, then; are you ready to empty your minds?

**DR. BRADMAN.** Do you mean we're to try to think of nothing?

**MADAME ARCATI.** Absolutely nothing, Doctor Bradman. Concentrate on a space or a nondescript colour. That's really the best way.

end