

**MADAME ARCATI.** No, thank you. It's just that I make it a rule never to eat red meat before I work. It sometimes has an odd effect...

**CHARLES.** What sort of effect?

**MADAME ARCATI.** Oh, nothing of the least importance. If it isn't very red, it won't matter much. Anyhow, we'll risk it.

*(MADAME ARCATI goes out first with RUTH, followed by MRS. BRADMAN, DR. BRADMAN and CHARLES.)*

**RUTH.** Come along, then Mrs. Bradman – Madame Arcati – you're on Charles's right...

*(They all move into the dining room as the lights fade on the scene.)*

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

*(Curtain.)*

## 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.)*

**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~~  
~~times you find them very personally~~  
~~and you find them very~~

~~RUTH. What very very very~~

**MADAME ARCATI.** ~~Well, for one thing, they're frightfully~~  
~~and who who faced with any sort of difficulty they~~  
~~rather go to the root of the matter and~~  
~~which is naturally unintelligible. That generally spoils~~  
~~everything and wastes a great deal of time.~~ 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?

stunt

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**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.

**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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