

RUTH. (*Icily.*) 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.

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.

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.

(*By now the blackout is complete.*)

(*The curtain falls.*)

Stop