

*(MADAME ARCATI produces a notebook from her bag and takes notes through the following speeches.)*

**MADAME ARCATI.** Forgive this formality, but I shall have to make a report to the Psychical Research people.

**RUTH.** I would be very much obliged if there were no names mentioned.

**MADAME ARCATI.** The report will be confidential.

**RUTH.** This is a small village, you know, and gossip would be most undesirable.

**MADAME ARCATI.** I quite understand. You say she is visible only to your husband?

**RUTH.** Yes.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Visible only to husband. Audible too, I presume?

**RUTH.** Extremely audible.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Extremely audible. Your husband was devoted to her?

**RUTH.** *(With slight irritation.)* I believe so!

**MADAME ARCATI.** Husband devoted.

**RUTH.** It was apparently a reasonably happy marriage...

**MADAME ARCATI.** Oh, tut tut!

**RUTH.** I beg your pardon?

**MADAME ARCATI.** When did she pass over?

**RUTH.** Seven years ago.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Aha! That means she must have been on the waiting list.

**RUTH.** Waiting list?

**MADAME ARCATI.** Yes, otherwise she would have got beyond the materialization stage by now. She must have marked herself down for a return visit and she'd never have been able to manage it unless there was a strong influence at work.

**RUTH.** Do you mean that Charles – my husband – wanted her back all that much?

**MADAME ARCATI.** Possibly, or it might have been her own determination.

**RUTH.** That sounds much more likely.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Would you say that she was a woman of strong character?

**RUTH.** *(With rising annoyance.)* I really don't know, Madame Arcati – I never met her. Nor am I particularly interested in how and why she got here. I am solely concerned with the question of how to get her away again as soon as possible.

**MADAME ARCATI.** I fully sympathize with you, Mrs. Condomine, and I assure you I will do anything in my power to help. But at the moment I fear I cannot offer any great hopes.

**RUTH.** But I always understood that there was a way of exorcizing ghosts, some sort of ritual?

**MADAME ARCATI.** You mean the old Bell and Book method?

**RUTH.** Yes – I suppose I do.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Poppycock, Mrs. Condomine! It was quite effective in the old days of genuine religious belief, but that's all changed now. I believe the decline of faith in the Spirit World has been causing grave concern.

**RUTH.** *(Impatiently.)* Has it indeed?

**MADAME ARCATI.** There was a time of course when a drop of holy water could send even a poltergeist scampering for cover, but not any more. 'Où sont les neiges d'Antan?'

**RUTH.** Be that as it may, Madame Arcati, I must beg of you to do your utmost to dematerialize my husband's first wife as soon as possible.

**MADAME ARCATI.** The time has come for me to admit to you frankly, Mrs. Condomine, that I haven't the faintest idea how to set about it.

**RUTH.** *(Rising.)* Do you mean to sit there and tell me that having mischievously conjured up this ghost or spirit, or whatever she is, and placed me in a hideous position, you are unable to do anything about it at all?

**MADAME ARCATI.** Honesty is the best policy.

**RUTH.** But it's outrageous! I ought to hand you over to the police.

*(She crosses to the fireplace.)*

**MADAME ARCATI.** You go too far, Mrs. Condomine.

**RUTH.** *(Furiously.)* I go too far indeed! Do you realize what your insane amateur muddling has done?

**MADAME ARCATI.** I have been a professional since I was a child, Mrs. Condomine. 'Amateur' is a word I cannot tolerate.

**RUTH.** It seems to me to be the height of amateurishness to evoke malignant spirits and not be able to get rid of them again.

**MADAME ARCATI.** *(With dignity.)* I was in a trance. Anything might happen when I am in a trance.

**RUTH.** Well, all I can suggest is that you go into another one immediately and get this damned woman out of my house.

**MADAME ARCATI.** I can't go into trances at a moment's notice. It takes hours of preparation. In addition to which I have to be extremely careful of my diet for days beforehand. Today, for instance, I happened to lunch with friends and had pigeon pie which, plus these cucumber sandwiches, would make a trance out of the question.

**RUTH.** Well, you'll have to do something.

**MADAME ARCATI.** I will report the whole matter to the Society for Psychical Research at the earliest possible moment.

**RUTH.** Will they be able to do anything?

**MADAME ARCATI.** I doubt it. They'd send an investigation committee, I expect, and do a lot of questioning and wall-tapping and mumbo-jumbo, and then they'd have a conference and you would probably have to go up to London to testify.

**RUTH.** *(Near tears.)* It's too humiliating - it really is.

**MADAME ARCATI.** *(Rising and going to RUTH at the fireplace.)*

Please try not to upset yourself. Nothing can be achieved by upsetting yourself.

**RUTH.** It's all very fine for you to talk like this, Madame Arcati. You don't seem to have the faintest realization of my position.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Try to look on the bright side.

**RUTH.** Bright side indeed! If your husband's first wife suddenly appeared from the grave and came to live in the house with you, do you suppose you'd be able to look on the bright side?

**MADAME ARCATI.** *(Crossing away to left and up to center.)* I resent your tone, Mrs. Condomine; I really do.

**RUTH.** You most decidedly have no right to. You are entirely to blame for the whole horrible situation.

**MADAME ARCATI.** Kindly remember that I came here the other night on your own invitation.

**RUTH.** On my husband's invitation.

**MADAME ARCATI.** I did what I was requested to do, which was to give a séance and establish contact with the Other Side. I had no idea that there was any ulterior motive mixed up with it.

**RUTH.** Ulterior motive?

**MADAME ARCATI.** Your husband was obviously eager to get in touch with his former wife. If I had been aware of that at the time I should naturally have consulted you beforehand. After all, 'Noblesse oblige'!

**RUTH.** He had no intention of trying to get in touch with anyone. The whole thing was planned in order for him to get material for a mystery story he is writing about a homicidal medium.

**MADAME ARCATI.** *(Drawing herself up.)* Am I to understand that I was only invited in a spirit of mockery?

**RUTH.** Not at all. He merely wanted to make notes of some of the tricks of the trade.

**MADAME ARCATI.** *(Incensed.)* Tricks of the trade! Insufferable! I've never been so insulted in my life.



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. *(Scrambling over to the tea table.)* Oh, yes, you did