

AUDITION SIDES BY CHARACTER:

CHARLES: Sides One, Two, Three, and Five

RUTH: Sides One and Five

ELVIRA: Sides Two and Five

MADAME ARCATI: Sides Three and Four

EDITH: Side Three

DR. BRADMAN: Side Four

MRS. BRADMAN: Side Four

Please note that many of these sides contain abridgements of the actual text. Some characters' lines have been exchanged to facilitate the audition process. The author's original text will be used in performance.

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SIDE ONE—Charles and Ruth

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.

RUTH: Does it still hurt? When you think of her?

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

CHARLES: She certainly had a great talent for living. It was a pity that she died so young.

RUTH: Poor Elvira!

CHARLES: That remark is getting monotonous.

RUTH: Poor Charles, then.

CHARLES: That's better.

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

SIDE TWO—Elvira and Charles

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

CHARLES: Oh, Elvira—how could you!

ELVIRA: Poor Ruth!

CHARLES: This is obviously an hallucination, isn't it?

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

CHARLES: What am I to do?

ELVIRA: What Ruth suggested—relax.

CHARLES: Where have you come from?

ELVIRA: Do you know, it's very peculiar, but I've sort of forgotten. I remember I was playing backgammon with a very sweet old 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. 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: Oh, Elvira...

ELVIRA: What is it, darling?

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

ELVIRA: That's better.

CHARLES: 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.

CHARLES: Only very, very gently.

ELVIRA: I loved you very much.

CHARLES: I loved you too... 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.

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

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

CHARLES: Like that?

ELVIRA: 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.

SIDE THREE—Madame Arcati, Edith, and Charles

ARCATI: (*having a sudden insight*) A bandage... a white bandage—hold on to a white bandage...

CHARLES: I haven't got a white bandage.

ARCATI: Sssh! (*She stands silently a moment, then begins to intone*)
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!

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

CHARLES: Do what?

ARCATI: Hush—wait—!

EDITH: (*having just arisen from bed*) Did you ring, sir?

ARCATI: (*seeing Edith's bandaged head*) 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.

ARCATI: Come here, child.

EDITH: Oh!

CHARLES: Go on! Go to Madame Arcati—it's quite all right!

ARCATI: Whom do you see in this room, child?

EDITH: Oh dear...

ARCATI: Answer, please.

EDITH: (*falteringly*) You, Madame— (*she stops*)

ARCATI: Go on.

EDITH: The master.

ARCATI: Anyone else?

EDITH: Oh, no, Madame...

ARCATI: (*inflexibly*) Look again.

EDITH: (*imploringly, to Charles*) I don't understand, sir—I—

ARCATI: Come, child—don't beat about the bush. Look again... Do you see anyone else now?

EDITH: (*slyly*) Oh, no, Madame.

ARCATI: Look at me, Edith. Cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo—!

EDITH: Oh dear—what's the matter with her? Is she barmy?

ARCATI: Here, Edith—this is my finger. Look! 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... Well—so far so good—she's off all right.

CHARLES: Off?

ARCATI: She's a Natural. Just the same as the Sudbury case, it really is the most amazing coincidence. *(To Edith)* Are you sorry for having been so mischievous, Edith?

EDITH: *(cheerfully)* Oh, yes, Madame!

ARCATI: You know what you have to do now, don't you, Edith?

EDITH: Oh, yes, Madame.

ARCATI: *(In a shrill voice)* Lights!

SIDE FOUR—Madame Arcati, Dr. and Mrs. Bradman

ARCATI: This is a moment I always hate.

MRS. BRADMAN: Are you nervous?

ARCATI: Yes. When I was a girl I always used to be sick.

DR. BRADMAN: How fortunate that you grew out of it.

MRS. BRADMAN: (*hurriedly*) Children are always much more prone to be sick than grown-ups, though, aren't they? I know that I could never travel in a train with any degree of safety until I was fourteen.

ARCATI: (*reciting*) 'Little Tommy Tucker sings for his supper. What shall he have but brown bread and butter?' I despise that because it doesn't rhyme at all; but Daphne loves it.

DR. BRADMAN: Who's Daphne?

MRS. BRADMAN: Daphne is Madame Arcati's control. She's a little girl.

DR. BRADMAN: Oh, I see—yes, of course. How old is she?

ARCATI: Rising seven when she died.

MRS. BRADMAN: And when was that?

ARCATI: February the sixth, eighteen eighty-four.

MRS. BRADMAN: Poor little thing.

DR. BRADMAN: She must be a bit long in the tooth by now, I should think.

ARCATI: You should think, Doctor Bradman, but I fear you don't; at least, not profoundly enough.

MRS. BRADMAN: Do be quiet, George. You'll put Madame Arcati off.

ARCATI: Don't worry, my dear, I am quite used to sceptics. They generally turn out to be the most vulnerable and receptive in the long run.

DR. BRADMAN: Please forgive me, Madame Arcati. I can assure you I am most deeply interested.

ARCATI: It is of no consequence. Will you all sit round the table, please, and place your hands downwards on it?

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SIDE FIVE—Ruth, Elvira, and Charles

[Note: In this scene only Charles can hear and see Elvira. She is invisible to Ruth.]

CHARLES: (*To Ruth*) Why did you ask Madame Arcati to tea?

ELVIRA: 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: 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.

RUTH: (*exasperated*) Where is Elvira at the moment?

CHARLES: In the chair by the table.

RUTH: 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: 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: 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: 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. 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: This is intolerable! 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. 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. 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 to your heart's content. 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...