

CHARLES. Yes - I suppose so.

RUTH. I must say it was extremely funny at moments.

CHARLES. Yes - it certainly was.

RUTH. What's the matter?

CHARLES. The matter?

RUTH. Yes. You seem old, somehow. Do you feel quite well, Charles dear?

CHARLES. Perfectly. I think I'll have a drink. Do you want one?

RUTH. No, thank you, dear.

CHARLES. (Moving to the drinks table and pouring ou whisky and soda.) It's rather chilly in this room.

RUTH. Come over by the fire.

CHARLES. I don't think I'll make any notes tonight. I'll stat fresh in the morning.

(CHARLES turns, the glass in his hand. He sees ELVIRA and drops the glass on the floor.) My God!

RUTH. Charles!

ELVIRA. That was very clumsy, Charles dear.

CHARLES. Elvira! - then it's true - it was you!

ELVIRA. Of course it was.

RUTH. (Starts to go to CHARLES.) Charles - darling Charles-what are you talking about?

CHARLES. (To ELVIRA.) Are you a ghost?

ELVIRA. (Crossing below the sofa to the fire.) I suppose I must be. It's all very confusing.

RUTH. (Moving to right of CHARLES and becoming agitated.)

Charles - what do you keep looking over there for?

Look at me. What's happened?

CHARLES. Don't you see?

RUTH. See what?

CHARLES. Elvira.

RUTH. (Staring at him incredulously.) Elvira!!

CHARLES. (With an effort at social grace.) Yes. El this is Ruth. Ruth, this is Elvira.

(RUTH tries to take his arm. CHARLES retreats downstage left.)

RUTH. (With forced calmness.) Come and sit down, darling.

CHARLES. Do you mean to say you can't see her?

RUTH. Listen, Charles - you just sit down quietly by the fire and I'll mix you another drink. Don't worry about the mess on the carpet, Edith can clean it up in the morning.

(She takes him by the arm.)

CHARLES. (Breaking away.) But you must be able to see her - she's there - look - right in front of you - there!

RUTH. Are you mad! What's happened to you?

CHARLES. You can't see her?

RUTH. If this is a joke, dear, it's gone quite far enough. Sit down, for God's sake, and don't be idiotic.

CHARLES. (Clutching his head.) What am I to do! What the hell am I to do!

ELVIRA. I think you might at least be a little more pleased to see me. After all, you conjured me up.

CHARLES. I didn't do any such thing.

ELVIRA. Nonsense; of course you did. That awful child with the cold came and told me you wanted to see me urgently.

CHARLES. It was all a mistake, a horrible mistake.

RUTH. Stop talking like that, Charles. As I told you before the joke's gone far enough.

CHARLES. I've gone mad, that's what it is, I've just gone raving mad.

RUTH. (Pouring out some brandy and bringing it to CHARLES before the piano.) Here - drink this.

CHARLES. (Mechanically - taking it.) This is appalling!

RUTH. Relax.

CHARLES. How can I relax? I shall never be able to relax again as long as I live.

RUTH. Drink some brandy.

CHARLES. (Drinking it at a gulp.) There! Now are you satisfied?

RUTH. Now sit down.

CHARLES. Why are you so anxious for me to sit down? What good will that do?

RUTH. I want you to relax. You can't relax standing up.

ELVIRA. African natives can. They can stand on one leg for hours.

CHARLES. I don't happen to be an African native.

RUTH. You don't happen to be a what?

CHARLES. (Savagely.) An African native!

RUTH. What's that got to do with it?

CHARLES. It doesn't matter, Ruth; really it doesn't matter.

(CHARLES sits in the armchair. RUTH moves above him.)

We'll say no more about it. See, I've sat down.

RUTH. Would you like some more brandy?

CHARLES. Yes, please.

(RUTH goes up to the drinks table with the  
glass.)

ELVIRA. Very unwise. You always had a weak head.

CHARLES. I could drink you under the table.

RUTH. There's no need to be aggressive, Charles. I'm doing my best to help you.

CHARLES. I'm sorry.

RUTH. (Coming to CHARLES with the brandy.) Here, drink this; and then we'll go to bed.

ELVIRA. Get rid of her, Charles; then we can talk in peace.

CHARLES. That's a thoroughly immoral suggestion. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

RUTH. What is there immoral in that?

CHARLES. I wasn't talking to you.

RUTH. Who were you talking to, them!

CHARLES. Elvira, of course.

RUTH. To hell with Elvira!

ELVIRA. There now - she's getting cross.

CHARLES. I don't blame her.

RUTH. What don't you blame her for?

CHARLES. (Rising and backing doronstage left a pace.) Oh, God!

RUTH. Now, look here, Charles. I gather you ve got some sort of plan behind all this. I'm not quite a fool. I suspected you when we were doing that idiotic séance.

CHARLES. Don't be so silly. What plan could I have?

RUTH. I don't know. It's probably something to do with the characters in your book - how they, or one of them, would react to a certain situation. I refuse to be used as a guinea pig unless I'm warned beforehand what it's all about.

CHARLES. (Moving a couple of paces towards RUTH.) Elvira is here, Ruth - she's standing a few yards away from you.

RUTH. (Sarcastically.) Yes, dear, I can see her distinctly - under the piano with a zebra!

CHARLES. But Ruth -

RUTH. I am not going to stay here arguing any longer.

ELVIRA. Hurray!

CHARLES. Shut up!

RUTH. (Incensed.) How dare you speak to me like that?

CHARLES. Listen, Ruth. Please listen -

RUTH. I will not listen to any more of this nonsense. I am going up to bed now; I'll leave you to turn out the lights. I shan't be asleep. I'm too upset. So you can come in and say goodnight to me if you feel like it.

ELVIRA. That's big of her, I must say.

CHARLES. Be quiet. You're behaving like a guttersnipe.