Madame Arcati, Charles, Ruth, Dr. Bradman, Mrs. Bradman

CHARLES (*cheerfully*) Well, Madame Arcati—the time is drawing near.

MADAME ARCATI. Who knows? It may be receding!

CHARLES. How very true.

DR BRADMAN. I hope you feel in the mood, Madame Arcati.

MADAME ARCATI. It isn't a question of mood. It's a question of concentration.

RUTH. You must forgive us being impatient. We can perfectly easily wait though, if you're not quite ready to start.

MADAME ARCATI. Nonsense, my dear, I'm absolutely ready. (*She rises*) Heigho, heigho, to work we go!

CHARLES. Is there anything you'd like us to do?

MADAME ARCATI. Do?

CHARLES. Yes—hold hands or anything?

MADAME ARCATI. All that will come later. (*She goes to the window*)

(*The others all rise*)

First a few deep, deep breaths of fresh air—— (*Over her shoulder*) You may talk if you wish, it will not disturb me in the least. (*She flings the windows wide open and inhales deeply and a trifle noisily*)

RUTH (*with a quizzical glance at Charles*) Oh dear!

CHARLES (*putting his finger to his lips warningly*) An excellent dinner, darling. I congratulate you.

RUTH. The mousse wasn't quite right.

CHARLES. It looked a bit hysterical, but it tasted delicious.

MADAME ARCATI. That cuckoo is very angry.

CHARLES. I beg your pardon?

MADAME ARCATI. I said that cuckoo is very angry. Listen.

(*They all listen obediently*)

CHARLES. How can you tell?

MADAME ARCATI. Timbre. No moon; that's as well, I think. There's mist rising from the marshes. (*A thought strikes her*) There's no need for me to light my bicycle lamp, is there? I mean, nobody is likely to fall over it?

RUTH. No, we're not expecting anybody else.

MADAME ARCATI. Good night, you foolish bird. (*She closes the windows*) You have a table?

CHARLES. Yes. We thought that one would do.

MADAME ARCATI (*putting her hands on the small table below the piano and then pointing to the* C *table*) I think the one that has the drinks on it would be better.

(DR BRADMAN *comes to the* C *table and takes the tray from it and puts it up stage* R *on the drinks table, closes the doors and brings the chair from* R *of the door to down stage* L. CHARLES *brings the* C *table over to* L *between the armchair and the gramophone*)

DR BRADMAN. Change over.

CHARLES (*to Ruth*) You told Edith we didn't want to be disturbed?

RUTH. Yes, darling.

MADAME ARCATI (*crossing below the séance table, over to the mantelpiece. Then she walks about the room—twisting and untwisting her hands*) This is a moment I always hate.

RUTH. Are you nervous?

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

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

(RUTH *gets the desk-chair from up stage* R *and brings it to* LC *above the table*)

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

(MADAME ARCATI *is now walking* RC *above the sofa.* MRS BRADMAN *brings the pouffe over to* R *of the séance table*)

MADAME ARCATI (*still walking*) '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.

(MADAME ARCATI *has now arrived below the sofa. The others are grouped round the séance table,* DR BRADMAN *down* L, RUTH *on his* R, *then* CHARLES *and* MRS BRADMAN *by the pouffe*)

DR BRADMAN. Who's Daphne?

RUTH. Daphne is Madame Arcati's control. She's a little girl.

DR BRADMAN. Oh, I see—yes, of course.

CHARLES. How old is she?

MADAME ARCATI. Rising seven when she died.

MRS BRADMAN. And when was that?

MADAME ARCATI. February the sixth, eighteen eighty-four.

MRS BRADMAN. Poor little thing.

(DR BRADMAN *brings the chair above the gramophone to the table*)

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

MADAME ARCATI (*at the fireplace. She stops walking and addresses Dr Bradman across the stage*) 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.

MADAME 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.