

**CHARLES.** Well, what the hell are we talking about him for then? It's sheer waste of valuable time.

**RUTH.** I only brought him up as an example.

**CHARLES.** I think I'm going mad.

**RUTH.** How do you feel now?

**CHARLES.** Physically, do you mean?

**RUTH.** Altogether.

**CHARLES.** *(After due reflection.)* Apart from being worried, I feel quite normal.

**RUTH.** Good. You're not hearing or seeing anything in the least unusual?

**CHARLES.** Not a thing.

*(Light Cue No. 03. Act II, Scene One.)*

*(ELVIRA enters by the windows, carrying a bunch of grey roses. She crosses to the writing table upstage right, and throws the zinnias into the waste paper basket and puts her roses into the vase. The roses are as grey as the rest of her.)*

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**ELVIRA.** You've absolutely ruined that border by the sundial. It looks like a mixed salad.

**CHARLES.** Oh, my God!

**RUTH.** What's the matter now?

**CHARLES.** She's here again!

**RUTH.** What do you mean? Who's here again?

**CHARLES.** Elvira.

**RUTH.** Pull yourself together and don't be absurd.

**ELVIRA.** It's all those nasturtiums; they're so vulgar.

**CHARLES.** I like nasturtiums.

**RUTH.** You like what?

**ELVIRA.** *(Putting her grey roses into the vase.)* They're all right in moderation, but in a mass like that they look beastly.

**CHARLES.** *(Crossing over to right of RUTH, center.)* Help me, Ruth – you've got to help me –



**RUTH.** (*Rising and retreating a pace to left.*) What did you mean about nasturtiums?

**CHARLES.** (*Taking RUTH's hands and coming round to the left of her.*) Never mind about that now. I tell you she's here again.

**ELVIRA.** (*Coming to above the sofa.*) You have been having a nice scene, haven't you? I could hear you right down the garden.

**CHARLES.** Please mind your own business.

**RUTH.** If you behaving like a lunatic isn't my business, nothing is.

**ELVIRA.** I expect it was about me, wasn't it? I know I ought to feel sorry, but I'm not. I'm delighted.

**CHARLES.** How can you be so inconsiderate?

**RUTH.** (*Shrilly.*) Inconsiderate! I like that, I must say!

**CHARLES.** Ruth – darling – please...

**RUTH.** I've done everything I can to help. I've controlled myself admirably. And I should like to say here and now that I don't believe a word about your damned hallucination. You're up to something, Charles – there's been a certain furtiveness in your manner for weeks. Why don't you be honest and tell me what it is?

**CHARLES.** You're wrong – you're dead wrong! I haven't been in the least furtive – I –

**RUTH.** You're trying to upset me.

*(She moves away from CHARLES.)*

For some obscure reason you're trying to goad me into doing something that I might regret.

*(She bursts into tears.)*

I won't stand for it any more. You're making me utterly miserable!

*(She crosses to the sofa and falls into the right end of it.)*

**CHARLES.** (*Crosses to RUTH.*) Ruth – please –

**RUTH.** Don't come near me!

ELVIRA. Let her have a nice cry. It'll do her good.

*(She saunters round to downstage left.)*

CHARLES. You're utterly heartless!

RUTH. Heartless!

CHARLES. *(Wildly.)* I was not talking to you! I was talking to Elvira.

RUTH. Go on talking to her then, talk to her until you're blue in the face, but don't talk to me.

CHARLES. *(Crossing to ELVIRA.)* Help me, Elvira –

ELVIRA. How?

CHARLES. Make her see you or something.

ELVIRA. I'm afraid I couldn't manage that. It's technically the most difficult business – frightfully complicated, you know – it takes years of study –

CHARLES. You are here, aren't you? You're not an illusion?

ELVIRA. I may be an illusion, but I'm most definitely here.

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CHARLES. How did you get here?

ELVIRA. I told you last night – I don't exactly know –

CHARLES. Well, you must make me a promise that in future you only come and talk to me when I'm alone.

ELVIRA. *(Pouting.)* How unkind you are, making me feel so unwanted. I've never been treated so rudely.

CHARLES. I don't mean to be rude, but you must see –

ELVIRA. It's all your own fault for having married a woman who is incapable of seeing beyond the nose on her face. If she had a grain of real sympathy or affection for you she'd believe what you tell her.

CHARLES. How could you expect anybody to believe this?

ELVIRA. You'd be surprised how gullible people are; we often laugh about it on the Other Side.

*(RUTH, who has stopped crying and been staring at CHARLES in horror, suddenly rises.)*

RUTH. *(Gently.)* Charles!

CHARLES. *(Surprised at her tone.)* Yes, dear –

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