

Madame Olga



A melodrama translated and adapted by JL Hérin
Based on *La Voyante* by André Roussin and Sacha Guitry

ACT 1 – Dolores’ apartment
ACTS 2 and 3 – Olga’s apartment
ACT 4 – Dolores’ apartment

Characters

Olga – a clairvoyant – Bridget
Cookie – her secretary – Sarah
Dolores – a clairvoyant – Maura
Daphne – a clairvoyant – Liz
Miss A. (Angela) – A young woman – Eva
Miss B (Beth) – A young woman – Agnes
Mrs. C (Claire) – A middle-aged widow – Sylvia
Mrs. D (Deirdre) – A middle-aged woman – Carmen
Mr E (Edward) – A harmless-looking older man – Tony
Dave – A cheeky radio journalist – PJ
Dr Leatherby – a famous surgeon – Manel
Elvis – a parrot – Steve
Recorded radio voices – Michael and Anne Other.

ACT 1

CURTAIN OPENS

Dolores's flat, the tiny, stuffy drawing-room of an old-school clairvoyant. A young woman rushes in, looking very pale. Dolores, panicked, rushes in after her.

Scene 1

MISS A. Right here! Where you predicted it. Yes, that's where I'm going to kill myself! That was not a prediction, that was a spell you cast on me! Everything happened just as you had said! We met and all he talked about was his work! His work! So I screamed: 'All right then, since your work will always come between us, I'm leaving you! *(Long pause)* Only **he** left me. The selfish bastard! If all men left us every time we told them to go, there wouldn't be any romance. *(Sits down, gravely)* There is no more romance. No more love. No more love for me.

DOLORES Please calm down.

MISS A. I am calm. I feel cold. *(Desperate, lashing out)* I was his plaything, his instrument of pleasure. That's all I was when I lay in his arms... but I was giving him my soul!

DOLORES Let's not dwell on...

MISS A. Oh yes I will dwell on this. What else do you expect me to do? My whole world revolved around this man! Don't you understand there is no other way out except... perhaps death?

DOLORES I tell you - Death is not upon you.
MISS A. How can you say that death is not upon me when I keep it right here in my pocket!

She pulls out a gun.

DOLORES Help! Please don't do this.

MISS A. Yes I'm going to do it! Right here! In front of you!

Olga appears. She touches Miss A. shoulder and face.

Scene 2

OLGA *(Sharp)* No, you won't!

DOLORES Olga? You? Please help!

OLGA *(Slowly and calmly, Olga gradually moves Miss A. to a chair)* You won't do it because you do not kill yourself for a man you have chosen to leave. He did not abandon you. You don't want to kill yourself the day you start to breathe again. Breathe, my dear. Breathe deeply. Sit down... here. Like this. And now give me this gun. *(She takes it from her calmly.)* There... there... there... Close your eyes and breathe. Your life is starting now. Now breathe deeply. Feel the air coming into your lungs. *(She turns to Dolores. Waits a few moments. The young woman sleeps peacefully. Olga gets up and hands the revolver to Dolores who puts it away Stage Right.)* There. Put this away in a drawer. She's going to sleep for at least an hour.

DOLORES Oh, Olga! How could I ever thank you?

OLGA Ah! Part of the job!

DOLORES In all the thirty-five years I've been practicing, I've never experienced anything quite like this. She barged in like a fury saying she wanted to kill herself in front of me. And there you were and you spoke as if you'd known everything about her. How could you read her story so quickly?

OLGA Ah! I could let you think I'm the greatest clairvoyant on earth but I hadn't 'read' anything. I just eavesdropped.

DOLORES Eavesdropped?

OLGA Yes for a clairvoyant, eavesdropping isn't particularly honest but it can be useful. And in this case, speed was of the essence. She was just waiting for a voice ordering her to live. (*Gently stroking Miss A. 's hair*) Look at her. If she'd killed herself she would also be sitting there with her eyes shut. (*Change to sarcastic tone*) And I bet you'd already be searching for her 'spirit' to have a chat with it... on your phone.

DOLORES We each practice in our own way, you know that very well.

OLGA And you know I don't believe in this one.

DOLORES Well I believe in yours. (*Harrumph*) So you could be kind enough not to treat me as a crazy old bat.

OLGA You know I'm just pulling your leg, Dolly. Anyway it's the others who are the crazy ones.

DOLORES What others?

OLGA Those who don't believe in us. And that's why our moment of truth has come with what's going on in Wales. We need

to strike while the iron is hot. Have you made a note of our Saturday evening meeting?

DOLORES Still on?

OLGA Eight thirty. I'm off to Aberystwyth tomorrow morning. I'll be back on Saturday for our meeting.

DOLORES You're travelling to Wales!

OLGA Yes, it's vital for our future.

DOLORES I don't like the hype around this Welsh fellow.

OLGA I know, but if he truly is what they say, this could be what we've been hoping for.

DOLORES A medium from Wales... I'd be suspicious. Well, at least he's not Irish. That lot, they see ghosts everywhere! To them, it's not spiritualism, it's just folklore.

OLGA Well, I'll tell you about him on Saturday.

DOLORES Is Daphne coming? I haven't seen her for so long. (*Olga nods and rolls and her eyes*) As mad as ever?

OLGA True to herself. But we need her.

DOLORES But what are we going to talk about?

OLGA You'll find out on the night. Eight thirty. Don't forget.

DOLORES I won't.

OLGA (*Pause – getting ready to leave*) Give us a hug. See you Saturday. Let her sleep a bit longer.

DOLORES But, wait a minute... Did you just happen to be around this part of town this afternoon?

OLGA No, I was in Waterloo but suddenly a voice told me:
 ‘Dolores is going to call for help.’ Twice! So I got on the
 tube and here I am.

DOLORES *(Dolores walks Olga out)* Ah, Olga, you are truly the best.

CURTAIN

ACT 2

Scene 3

Cookie introduces a young woman through one door.

COOKIE Madame Olga won't mind if I let you in. I know she's quite fond of you.

MISS B. I'm very fond of her too, such an extraordinary woman.

COOKIE Isn't she? What a gift! She is never wrong.

MISS B. I envy you for being close to her.

COOKIE Yes, I've been her secretary and confidante for twelve years. She won't be long. *(Noise)* Ah, that'll be her!

Scene 4

OLGA *(Voice off)* Cookie!

COOKIE Yes... in here!

Enter Olga.

OLGA Are you snacking again in a corner? Here, I brought you these. *(Hands Cookie a biscuit tin.)*

COOKIE *(Smirks)* Cookies? Oh, thank you. I was here with this young lady who was waiting for you.

OLGA Ah! Hello my sweet. How nice of you to drop in.

MISS B. Hello, Madame Olga. I'm afraid I haven't got an appointment.

OLGA That's no problem. *(To Cookie)* Keep only three clients, and reschedule those who turn up.

Door bell rings.

COOKIE All right. I'll leave you to it.

Exit Cookie.

Scene 5

MISS B. Miss Cookie is so charming.

OLGA Yes, she is. So how are things, my dear? *(And as if she suddenly realised it.)* Aha! There's something new.

MISS B. Sorry?

OLGA Well.... *(Checking herself)* If you come and see me, I suppose something is new! Has he made up his mind?
Door bell rings.

MISS B. *(Hesitant)* – I've brought you his latest message.

OLGA You read his messages and I, with my eyes closed, must tell you what's in them! *(Olga expects a letter but Miss B. gives her a phone. Olga is disappointed.)* Oh, the good old days when people still wrote each other letters! *Olga takes the phone in both her hands, and sits down showing what appears to be pain.)* Oh... This e-mail must have hurt.

MISS B. Do you hear something? Do you think it's over? *(She sits down)*

OLGA Oh no, he loves you. His father is the problem. Why doesn't he want... ? *(Pause)*. His father... is... domineering... but not mean... He had other plans for his son. So he is resisting. But he won't for long.
Door bell rings.

MISS B. Really? Can you see that?

OLGA You did tell me he'd promised to marry you if you were... in the family way?

MISS B. He swore it.

OLGA Then why aren't you telling me you're pregnant?

MISS B. *(Springs up)* Me?

OLGA Yes? What? You don't know?

MISS B. Err... no!

OLGA Didn't you even suspect it?

MISS B. NO!

OLGA Is that not the reason why you've come to see me today?

MISS B. Absolutely not!

OLGA You're expecting my dear. *(Door bell)* I heard it a moment ago.

MISS B. But are you sure?

OLGA Never been wrong in front of a pregnant woman.

MISS B. But that's wonderful! Can you see if he is going to keep his word?

OLGA I can hear bells. *(Door bell. Olga rolls her eyes with impatience.)* You'll be married before June!

MISS B. Oh, Madame Olga, I am so grateful! *(She takes Olga's hands.)* Would you accept to be the baby's godmother?

OLGA No, my dear. It wouldn't be right. *(Aside)* Who the hell wants a witch for a godmother?
(Miss B looks disappointed – Door bell – Back to Miss B.)
I speak from experience. I receive artists, businessmen, ministers. I've seen vicars and priests, even a bishop once – without the mitre. But none will ever admit to having been here. I wouldn't want your child to feel ashamed of me.

(Door bell)

MISS B. So you are quite sure that I am pregnant?

OLGA As sure as I **am not**.

MISS B. Thank you. Thank you for everything.

Olga shows her out.

OLGA Call Cookie for me, will you? Good bye, my dear.

MISS B. I will. Good bye.

Exit Miss B. Re-enter Cookie holding her biscuit tin. Her mouth is full.

Scene 6

OLGA They seem to be good?

COOKIE Scrumptious!

OLGA Jolly good! Have you sent the rest away?

COOKIE Yes, yes. Only three are waiting now.

OLGA Fine.

COOKIE Shall I let the first one in?

OLGA Who is it?

COOKIE A lady. First time here.

Scene 7

Cookie opens to the left and lets in a woman in her fifties.

Sensibly dressed, half-mourning. Exit Cookie.

OLGA Hello, please be seated.

MRS C. Thank you. *(They sit and Mrs C puts her bag on the table.)*

OLGA May I ask who recommended...

MRS C. No one. I know of you like everybody does. So I ‘made up my mind’.

OLGA When people come here for their first time, they always ‘make up their mind’. A little like a faithful wife taking a lover for the first time.

MRS C. I’m sorry if you found my words offensive.

OLGA Not at all! (*Mrs C is about to speak, Olga stops her and “listens”.*) Your husband died... what... eighteen months ago?

MRS C. Err... Yes.... That’s right. But how do you...

OLGA *You* are telling me. I’m just repeating, nothing else. Now... It’s something it’s to do with a crook, ... some business papers...

MRS C. Yes, a crook is involved.

OLGA Tell me more.

MRS C. Well, shortly before he died my husband had financial problems. He had to borrow a large sum from a man he didn’t want to owe money to. So we sold a property and my husband repaid his debt. You must understand that he and I had no secrets from each other. Then suddenly, shortly after he died, this man showed up to claim *his due*. But if my husband had told me he had repaid the sum, then I know he had. And I assume he would have had a receipt but as he died very suddenly, we never had a chance to discuss it. I was unable to find a receipt of any kind and now my solicitor tells me I could be in serious trouble.

OLGA This lender wants his money back in cash, obviously.

MRS C. Yes.

OLGA You've brought me a letter from him, haven't you?

MRS C. I thought you would ask for this.

OLGA Can I have an object belonging to your husband?

MRS C. I brought his wedding ring.

OLGA Could you give me your own wedding ring too? *(She takes the letter in one hand and the two rings in the other.)*

 I'll say... if this fellow's not swindling you, he's certainly swindled a few others... unpleasant character...

MRS C. Yes he is. *(Gritting teeth)*Very unpleasant indeed.

OLGA In your house there's a room on the first floor... that used to be... your husband's study, and in it... there's a desk.

MRS C. You see all that! But I went through every single one of his papers. I couldn't find anything in it.

OLGA Your receipt is there though. Is someone home right now?

MRS C. Yes, my daughter.

OLGA Can you ring her?

(The widow takes out a mobile and makes a call)

MRS C. Hello darling. Yes... yes... No... I'm fine. Listen...
Wait...

OLGA Ask her to open the third drawer in the desk.

MRS C. Can you go upstairs to dad's study and open the third drawer of his desk. *(Pause as Mrs C points to "upstairs")*

OLGA Ask her to pull it out completely.

MRS C. Pull it out completely. Have you done it? *(Longish pause.)*

OLGA So now... Ouch! (*Olga stands up and whimpers.*) Oh...

MRS C. What's the matter? (*Into her phone*) Just a second. Wait...
(*Mrs C stands up. To Olga*) Are you alright? Do you want
me to call for help?

OLGA No. It's nothing. No. Just tell your daughter to see if there
is a catch at the back, without touching anything else.

MRS C. (*They sit down again*) Darling, look for a catch at the back.
And don't touch anything else. (*Pause*) Yes, she says the
catch is there.

OLGA Tell her to put the drawer back in its place and to wait for
you to come back.

MRS C. Darling, leave everything as it is, replace the drawer and
wait for me. Yes... I'll be home in time for tea. Bye. (*She
hangs up.*) What is the matter? You're sure that the receipt
is not there?

OLGA Sometimes my job can be fraught with moral dilemmas.

MRS C. I saw you turn white as a sheet all of a sudden.

OLGA I have good news and bad news for you.

MRS C. Bad news?

OLGA Yes, bad news too. And I cannot tell you one while hiding
the other. That's what I would have done otherwise but it's
too late now. When you get home, you will press on the
catch at the back of the drawer. There's a secret
compartment. The receipt is there.

MRS C. Are you quite sure?

OLGA Yes. But you will also find... some holiday photos.

MRS C. *(Gasps)* You mean...

OLGA I've helped you beat a crook at his game and saved you from bankruptcy. *(Sigh)* You had told me that you and your husband had no secrets from each other. I hope you will forgive me if the photos you find shatter your illusions. I didn't want your daughter to find out. That was the least I could do.

MRS C. Holiday photos... Do you mean of him with another woman?

OLGA They had to be found to get to the receipt.

MRS C. *(Mrs C takes her handbag and makes for the exit.)* What you are telling me is awful!

OLGA I know. Please forgive me. You should burn these photos right away without looking at them then it won't hurt so much.

The widow, speechless, sobs and walks out.

Scene 8

Back at her desk or table

OLGA *(To herself)* What could I do? Let her face ruin at the hands of a crook or save her and tell her that her husband had a mistress?

Cookie enters.

Ah! Cookie... sometimes I hate this job!

COOKIE That poor lady looked very upset.

OLGA She thought that her husband had always been faithful. I was forced to give her evidence to the contrary.

COOKIE Oh, how awful!

OLGA Yes, it's awful to force a dead man's secrets out in the open. Goodness knows what awaits me next! Man or woman?

COOKIE One of each.

OLGA Send one in.

COOKIE Right away.

Scene 9

She opens on the left. A young woman enters. Exit Cookie.

MRS D. Good afternoon.

OLGA Good afternoon.

MRS D. You may think I'm crazy when I tell you why I'm here.

OLGA Now that would surprise me very much.

MRS D. Yes, I imagine people start by saying this when they consult you. Allow me to explain. *(They both sit down)*
I've just consulted a highly respected surgeon who says my only chance of survival is an operation on my left breast. Of course, surgeons never tell you everything. But in some cases you can understand what's on their mind.

OLGA A highly respected surgeon?

MRS D. I'd rather not reveal his name, I'm sure you'll understand.

OLGA I wasn't asking for it.

MRS D. His reputation is excellent but so is yours and I heard that in such cases, your diagnosis has always been correct.

OLGA Give me your hand, first. *(She takes her hand in hers and closes her eyes. After a pause, she gently shakes her head)*
The left breast you said?

MRS D. Yes. *(Another moment goes by when Olga keeps her eyes closed.)*

OLGA I've always heard the condition you are referring to. Let's be candid with each other, we are talking about cancer, aren't we? *(MRS D., nods nervously)* In your case, I hear nothing.

MRS D. Is that so? You don't believe... there is anything wrong with me?

OLGA It's not a matter of belief. I hear it or I don't.

MRS D. And if you had to make a decision?

OLGA I would advise you to consult Dr Leatherby. He's the only one I trust. Whenever I've sent him a patient we've always come up with the same diagnosis.

MRS D. In that case I might as well tell you... that Dr Leatherby is the surgeon who said I needed the operation.

OLGA *(She stands, shocked)* He did?

MRS D. Yes.

OLGA *(Goes to Mrs. D, takes her hands again and listens.)*
No! This time he is wrong! Refuse! Don't do it!

MRS D. But what shall I tell him? I cannot contest his diagnosis after going to...

OLGA ... a fortune-teller? A clairvoyant?

MRS D. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to put it that way.

OLGA If you've come to me, it's for a reason, isn't it?

MRS D. It's true. I am scared and I wanted to be sure. But my husband...

OLGA He'd say you're mad, of course! That I'm no match for a respectable surgeon. *(Olga sits again)* Tell me something, could you leave London for a day without alerting your husband?

MRS D. Yes, I suppose that's quite feasible... *(Olga writes something on a post-it notepad.)* Why?

OLGA Then take a train or your car and leave tomorrow for Aberystwyth.

MRS D. Oh! To see the medium they're all talking so much about?

OLGA Yes. I've been to see him. He is extraordinary. His name's Jones. *(Mrs D. winces, she is not convinced.)* Yes, I know! If he concurs with Dr Leatherby, I will accept defeat. If he concurs with me, come back to see me and I'll deal with the doctor myself. *(She stands up.)*

MRS D. I'll go there tomorrow and I'll keep you informed. Thank you. Good bye.

Exit Mrs. D.

Scene 10

A "harmless-looking" man enters. He wears a scarf which he removes slowly and leaves on the back of a chair. She still has her back turned to him. But instantly she puts her hands on her ears and screams:

OLGA Oh! Oh! The scream!' *(And suddenly she turns to the man, violently)* Why are you here? Do you want me to tell you that you can go murder another one? That scream in your head! That scream you cannot stop hearing, isn't that enough? *(Mr E. moves back defensively)* What did you do to her to make her scream like this?

MR E. *(He panics.)* No!

OLGA *(She grabs an umbrella from the fire place side and chases him.)* You monster! You murderer!

MR E. You filthy witch!

OLGA Murderer! Murderer!

He runs out forgetting his scarf. Cookie rushes back in.

Scene 11

COOKIE What on earth was that?

OLGA *(Sits on a chair, out of breath.)* He murdered a woman.

COOKIE Do you want me to call the police?

OLGA The police? No, it's not our job and, even if we called them, they wouldn't believe us. On top of that, the crime is over a year old. *(Picks up the man's scarf and thinks for a bit with her eyes closed)*... Hmm... *(smiles)* I hear... Oh yes! New evidence... his wife's been suspecting something... blood stains in the boot of his car... she's been talking to the police... He'll be getting 25 years by the end of next week. Sorted!

COOKIE Phew, well that's a relief. *(Shocked)* He looked ever so harmless. Why would he want to come here?

OLGA To find out if he'd end up in prison. When some murderers see they don't get caught, they start finding it strange. They hope they will get away but sometimes they need a little reassuring. *(Olga sits down)* What a day, Cookie! Five hours on the train from Wales, and since I got back here: one life in ruins, one between life and death, and one harmless-looking murderer. Thank goodness for that pregnant girl. Cookie, that Welsh medium is a GENIUS. Next to him we are nothing.

COOKIE Oh! Not you Olga! *(Cookie sits with her.)*

OLGA Yes, me and the others. Picture this: he is a simple sheep farmer, he has never left his farm but in his hypnotic sleep, this man can see someone's illness and, in the most professional language, he spells out the diagnosis. To this day, in over one hundred cases he's never been wrong.

COOKIE That is miraculous!

OLGA What's not so miraculous is that the medical profession is ganging up against him, and soon it'll be against us. *(Sneer)* But I've got something up my sleeve...

COOKIE Oh don't forget the ladies from the committee tonight. *(Door bell)*

OLGA Talk of the devil... That'll be them. Gosh! They're early! *Exit Cookie and straight after Dolores and Daphne enter.*

Scene 12

DAPHNE *(Eager)* Dolores and I met on your doorstep, we're early! I hope you don't mind?

DOLORES When I saw the papers, I rushed here and since you'd told me you were going to Wales...

OLGA Girls, the heavens sent you because we need to get our act together before all the others arrive.

DAPHNE So? Aberystwyth?

OLGA That's what I wanted to talk to you about.

DOLORES But first, have you had a look at the Evening standard?

OLGA What?

DAPHNE Look.

OLGA, *Takes the paper off her hands and reads out loud* 'BMA VS. WELSH MEDIUM'. Three columns! 'bla... bla... bla... and expressed their concerns to Her Majesty's Dept of Health over the hype surrounding the man referred to as the 'Welsh medium'. bla... bla... bla... Excessive coverage could lead the general public to believe in the powers of a country faith healer without a single medical diploma to his name. Bla bla bla... Signed by ... GPs, consultants and surgeons from the BMA... What? Him too?

DAPHNE Who?

OLGA Leatherby. He's among the signatories.

DOLORES That's what I wanted to show you. I know you've got a soft spot for him.

OLGA, *stern* I haven't got a soft spot for Dr Leatherby, he just operated on a tumour I had.

DOLORES Yes but you're constantly singing his praises.

DAPHNE Now you can see, he's just like the others.

OLGA *(Sighs)* He sits on the BMA council so I suppose he had to tow the line.

DAPHNE They're all the same! As you know, Professor McQuillen is a cousin of my husband's. If you knew the rubbish he's been spreading about me in the family! It's quite simple, he thinks I'm completely mad! *(The other two look at each other sympathetically)* Saying I'm some crazy old bat who spends her life turning tables and brewing love potions! *Dolores fishes a small phial out of Daphne's handbag.*

DOLORES Double double, toil and trouble!

OLGA Fire burn and cauldron bubble! *(Playfully sarcastic)* Tell me dear, where do you get your eyes of newt and toes of frog?

DOLORES Your wool of bat and tongue of dog?

DAPHNE Not funny!

OLGA You're right it isn't. We're gonna give *them* toil and trouble. Daphne, your cousin is a moron.

DAPHNE Yes *(sarcastic)* dear, except he lectures at University College 'ospital! *(over dramatic)* 'e's an authority!

DOLORES Anyone who doesn't believe in turning tables and summoning spirits is a moron.

OLGA If I may get a word in edgeways, amidst all that turning and brewing... I had to speak to you before the others get here. And the article in the Standard couldn't come at a better time, I'm sorry Leatherby is in on it but, oh well, I'm not

going to back down now! Quite the opposite! Next time I see him I'll give him a piece of my mind. I'll tell him that before signing this kind of rubbish, he should have taken a train to Aberystwyth... like I did.

DOLORES So? You've seen that Welsh medium work?

DAPHNE Is he handsome? I was told he was very handsome!

OLGA Down girl! I'm about to tell you about a genius and you're asking me if he's handsome!

DAPHNE Beauty and genius go very well together.

OLGA Well... you are right actually he is... rather dishy when he's out of his wellies.

DOLORES But... Welsh! Beware of the Welsh!

OLGA Dolores, don't start with your prejudices about the Welsh and pay attention. Jones is the ultimate hypnotic medium. So we are going to stand by him and gather everybody to launch a campaign for the advancement of spiritualism! What I need from you tonight is your support to organize a meeting at a large venue.

DAPHNE *(Claps her hands.)* Oooh! Like the 'ackney Empire?

OLGA Earls Court if it comes to it! The witches are fighting back. *(Switching to oratorical voice.)* We may not be *the* Truth but we are one truth, one that used to be respected. We are the daughters of the Sibyls and the Pythias! *(Looking at Daphne, moved to tears.)* They were treated like goddesses while we're practically outlawed. The Delphi oracle was our ancestor. *He* was admitted to Apollo's temple while

some of us work from a damp basement flat in Camberwell. The time has come for us to step out of the shadow and show the world who we really are. (*Dolores blows her nose.*)

DAPHNE Bravo, well spoken! You've brought tears to my eyes.

OLGA Sounded pretty good, didn't it?

DAPHNE With arguments like these the committee will be entirely on your side!

DOLORES We should march down Whitehall! Imagine thousands of us. Or perhaps up Park Lane and then under Marble Arch. I'll wear a long red veil and hope for a breezy day.

DAPHNE Wonderful idea! I'll wear my ecru felt hat with a green feather!

OLGA No, no, no! That's precisely the opposite of what we need.

DOLORES Why ever not?

OLGA It would be catastrophic. Thousands of eccentric fortune-tellers marching under Marble Arch? It would take us fifty years to recover. We'd be a laughing stock. We need to be taken seriously.

DAPHNE You may be right. But it's a great idea to remind people about the Delphi Oracle being our ancestor. It's true, he's our ancestor in direct line.

OLGA You an' all! Seen as you're from... Grimsby.

DAPHNE That may be so but my mother was a *bona fide* gipsy. I'm a lot more gipsy than you're... Russian.

OLGA Well you can take the girl out of Bolton ... Giving up my real name as Angela Smith to become Madame Olga Simyonova was... an educated decision. Cultivating a Russian image and occasionally rolling my r's felt quite natural. Everybody's become so rational these days. In their mind a clairvoyant has to have something exotic – look at you two! – and most people have always associated Russia with the right to be insane.

(Door bell)

The others are here. Let's move to the dining-room. We'll be more comfortable around the table.

DOLORES Twelve psychics around a table!

OLGA There's going to be some heavy brewing!

Daphne and Dolores exit arm in arm as they carry on quoting Macbeth's witches:

DAPHNE & Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,

DOLORES Lizard's leg and owlet's wing

For a charm of powerful trouble,

Like a hell-broth boil and bubble...

Enter Cookie at the back.

Scene 13

COOKIE I let the others into the dining-room, is that OK?

OLGA Yes, dear. Now disconnect the phone.

(The phone rings. Cookie takes a cordless phone from the wings.)

COOKIE Shall I just take this one?

OLGA Yes. Then unplug it.

COOKIE Madame Olga's office. (...) Yes, her secretary, (...) yes Madam. Who's speaking? (...) Oh, yes. (.....) Right. I'll tell her. (...) Goodbye. (*She hangs up.*) It's one of the ladies who came earlier. She just said: 'Please tell Madame Olga that the photos were in the secret compartment but not the receipt. (*A pause when Olga freezes*) Anything serious?

OLGA Oh dear! Poor woman...

Olga is distraught then she makes a visible effort to pull herself together. She goes to the door.

Right, ladies, what's brewing?

CURTAIN

INTERVAL

ACT 3

Same set as Act 2. As the curtain opens, Cookie is kneeling on the ground surrounded by news-papers. She holds scissors and cuts out articles. Sound of a radio set fading in with the opening of the curtain.

Scene 14

RADIO

After our international update we return to the main news of the day at home... The headlines in many of this morning's papers are about a private member's bill (*Cookie listens attentively*) aimed at allowing certain psychics or healers to operate under medical supervision. This bill is in response to the spiritualist symposium that was just held at the Barbican Hall at the initiative of Mrs. Simyonova, a clairvoyant also known as Madame Olga. It marks a first victory for followers of the occult as Madame Olga's original ambition was to defend the Welsh medium from, I quote "the attacks of conventional science". We tried to contact the BMA but unfortunately no one was available for comment at this stage. As for the Welsh medium, he is said to be totally indifferent to the tumult that he's been causing. The latest we've heard from Aberystwyth is that he is still in bed. He may be able to tell us how this is all going to pan out when he wakes up from his legendary hypnotic sleep. And now let's have a look at the weather... *Cookie who has been listening to the bulletin switches the radio off angrily.*

Idiots! They think they're funny! Cretins! 'His legendary hypnotic sleep' For goodness' sake.

(The phone rings. She picks it up from the wings.)

Hello? Yes. (...) Yes. (...) Yes. (...) No, that is correct. Mme Olga is not consulting at the moment. (...) I cannot say, sir. (...) Possibly, yes... (...) In a week perhaps. (...) Call back then if you don't mind. (...) That's right! Good bye to you.

(She hangs up.) And the phone ringing off the hook.

(Phone keeps ringing. Door bell rings. Cookie checks the time. Switches phone off.)

That'll be him from the radio. To think I'll have to be pleasant to this riffraff.

(Cookie goes to the door. Back to audience talking to off stage visitor)

Please wait where you are. One minute.

Leaves the door ajar then quickly picks up the newspapers on the ground and puts them away stage right. Then she returns to the back and says:

There. Do come in.

Enter the reporter holding some recording device.

Scene 15

REPORTER I'll try to keep it short if you're in a hurry.

COOKIE Well... I'm not the one you're going to interview, am I?

REPORTER *Reading from a sheet of paper.* Oh, you're not Madame Olga?

COOKIE Her photo is on the front page of all the newspapers and you're asking me if I'm Madame Olga?

REPORTER Newspapers? (*Amused*) Oh, I ain't got time for that muck.

COOKIE Now, you do know where you are, don't you? And who you are going to interview?

REPORTER I was told I was going to meet the Queen of clairvoyants, regarding that Welsh bloke and that bill in parliament.

COOKIE Is that all you know?

REPORTER Err... yeah, basically, that's it.

COOKIE I see. Now I'm not surprised with the rubbish I heard on the radio five minutes ago.

REPORTER Gee, thanks!

COOKIE The superior tone of that speaker who thought he was witty cracking jokes on "that Welsh bloke" as you call him. It really doesn't do credit to the BBC.

REPORTER Now wait a minute... *I'm* from for Capital Radio, love. Nothing to do with them toffs at Bush House.

COOKIE Dear me! (*He snoops around*) Where are you going sir? Please stay here.

REPORTER Sorry, I was looking for the parrot.

COOKIE The parrot?

REPORTER I thought all fortune-tellers had a parrot. Too bad. Would have made great audio background for the story. (*Makes a parrot noise and laughs*)

OLGA (*Calling from backstage*) Cookie!

COOKIE Here I am Olga. *(To the reporter)* Just a second if you don't mind. And stop looking for a parrot because there isn't one.

(Exit right)

REPORTER Blimey! She's about as friendly as a bear with a sore head. I don't know what Mrs O. predicted for her but I predict she ain't likely to find a boyfriend soon.

Enter Olga and Cookie.

Scene 16

OLGA Please forgive me for keeping you waiting. Kindly stay with us Cookie. This lady is my secretary.

REPORTER *No longer vulgar and quite pleasant.*

I've had the pleasure. She made me feel very much at home.

OLGA I bet. What radio station are you from?

REPORTER Capital Radio. *(Olga smirks aside.)* We'll try to be as quick as possible.

OLGA Good. So what are we going to talk about?

REPORTER About your interests which will also be the interest of our listeners.

OLGA Do you know what you want to ask me?

REPORTER Well yes, I do.

OLGA So I'll know what to answer.

The reporter turns his recording device on. Olga is not paying attention to him and fiddles with something.

REPORTER So... 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, *(Trying to sound posh. Olga checks her mobile and does not listen to him.)* We find ourselves in the

apartment of the famous Mme Olga who's sometimes been called The Queen of Clairvoyants and who initiated the current stir in the media. Madame Olga, can you tell our listeners what motivated you to launch the current campaign in favour of spiritualism?

OLGA Oh, so we've started?

REPORTER Yes, we have.

OLGA Is that thing working? It's awfully small?

REPORTER *(Back to normal accent)* Yees, it may be small but it is working, don't worry about it. I'll edit out the bits we don't need.

OLGA Not at random I hope.

REPORTER *Stops his recorder.*

No. From the moment you answer my questions, I won't cut anything, you can rest assured. Let's start again *(A pause while he fiddles with the recorder and goes back to posh accent.)* That will be my first question. *(Directs the microphone to Olga.)*

OLGA What question?

REPORTER The one I said earlier. That was so I didn't have to repeat it. I would have linked it during editing.

OLGA Never mind the editing. If you don't repeat the question, how do you expect me to remember what you said earlier?

REPORTER So let me start again. *(To himself)* Let's keep calm. *(To her)* 5. 4. 3. 2. 1., *(Trying to sound posh again)* Dear Madame Olga, can you tell our listeners what motivated

you to launch the current campaign in favour of spiritualism? That will be my first question.

OLGA I started this movement to make the general public aware of certain facts which official science and the government still refuse to admit.

REPORTER Are you talking about the occult forces in general?

OLGA I am talking about everything that exists but cannot be grasped with a rational explanation.

REPORTER You've already won a substantial victory with the bill presented before parliament two days ago, haven't you?

OLGA It will be a victory the day it becomes law.

REPORTER If it does, what do you think the BMA's response will be?

OLGA My dear sir, you should put this question to Doctor Leatherby for instance, not me!

REPORTER Oh, you know Doctor Leatherby, the one from the BMA?

OLGA Yes, I was his patient once. An excellent surgeon.

REPORTER But wasn't he one of those who signed a statement warning against the Welsh medium?

OLGA That is correct.

REPORTER Weren't you tempted, since you know him, to tell him about Mr Jones?

OLGA He could have come and see me in person before signing but he didn't do it. I responded publicly, instead.

REPORTER I'll say! It was rather spectacular. How can you explain your power?

OLGA The Spirit.

REPORTER You believe in the... Spirit?

OLGA Yes.

REPORTER And what is your opinion of those who do not believe?

OLGA One is always allowed to think at the lowest level, that of the physical world, of “matter”.

REPORTER You don’t believe in “matter”?

OLGA Of course I believe in matter? *(Grabs her armrests)* I’m... I’m sitting on it! What I believe in is the victory of the Spirit over matter. That is what I am fighting for.

REPORTER With all of today’s technology and progress, don’t you think mankind has somehow conquered matter?

OLGA Mankind has progressed a lot and the stars might be the ultimate frontier. But when man finally reaches the stars, all he’s going to find is... stars. The mystery is not in the stars, it is in the extraordinary psychic power of a man who is fast asleep right now in Aberystwyth.

REPORTER So you consider that mankind’s future does not lie in conventional science but in invisible forces?

OLGA My dear sir, to speak of man’s future, one would have to be sure he has one. One can sometimes wonder about that. One can wonder whether conventional science will give him a future! This time, I’m the one asking you the question.

The reporter presses a button on his recording device and makes a triumphant sign that the interview is finished.

REPORTER Fantastic! You've wrapped it up beautifully! You've got the knack for sound-bites. Top notch!

OLGA Well, I am happy to be "top notch".

COOKIE So have you made up with clairvoyants now?

REPORTER Ah well, that's another matter.

OLGA What matter?

COOKIE I forgot to mention that this gentleman was rather ... sceptical.

REPORTER *(Defensive)* Well... not really... Actually Madame Olga... Could I take the liberty to make a personal enquiry?

OLGA Is it about your girlfriend? *(Cookie starts chuckling then tries to stay serious for the remainder of the exchange.)*

REPORTER What? No... Yes... Why? Have you seen that?

OLGA Seen what?

REPORTER That I wanted to ask you something about my girlfriend?

OLGA No, I haven't seen anything. It just happens...

REPORTER ... that men come and see you to find out if their girlfriends are cheating on them?

OLGA It happens quite frequently, yes.

REPORTER And what do you tell them?

OLGA Nothing, I never tell them anything.

REPORTER Why?

OLGA Because it's always true!

REPORTER That she... I mean that they cheat on them?

OLGA Of course! When men start asking the question, it's already happened.

REPORTER And you can see it?

OLGA What?

REPORTER That she's cheated on me? I mean them? You know that for sure?

OLGA Oh, I'm so sure I don't tell them, deliberately. It's a decision I made once and for all.

REPORTER Mind you, I was only joking when I asked you. Not because I was worried.

OLGA Oh I'm so glad you're... *(evil smirk)* not worried.
Cookie is still chuckling in her corner.

REPORTER Err... Yes... Right...

OLGA Well, now that we're done. Cookie, would you kindly show this gentleman out?

REPORTER Thank you very much *(to himself, doubting)* I think... *(To Olga)* Goodbye.
Exit Reporter. Cookie comes back in.

Scene 17

COOKIE He said your interview would be on the air tomorrow.

OLGA We'll listen to it. I'm glad he didn't ask too much about Doctor Leatherby. I couldn't say I was expecting him here in a few minutes. *(As if reading a headline)* Shocking revelation:
DOCTOR LEATHERBY VISITS MADAME OLGA.
Oh, I'm going to meet you head on, Doctor Leatherby!

COOKIE He's not going to be too happy.

OLGA With the bill in parliament? (*Delighted*) He's going to be furious.

COOKIE It was so funny the way you dealt with that reporter! You flipped him over like a pancake!

OLGA Unbelievers make the most gullible people. Anyway, he deserved to believe his girlfriend is cheating on him, whether it's true or not, don't you think? I went soft on him. I didn't mention his stomach ulcer but he probably knows about it already. By the way, has the lady I sent to Wales phoned yet?

COOKIE No. Not yet.

OLGA Ah! (*She thinks.*)

COOKIE Is it important?

OLGA Yes, very.

COOKIE Ah! I'd forgotten to tell you! The lady who was looking for a receipt, you know...

OLGA She found it?

COOKIE Yes.

OLGA In the secret compartment?

COOKIE No. In a wallet her husband had left in a suit pocket.

OLGA Ah! Thank goodness. (*Aside*) Too bad for me...

COOKIE Many people are asking when you are planning to resume your consultations.

OLGA Tell them I have no idea.

COOKIE You're going to get bored now that the symposium is over.

OLGA The thing is, Cookie, my heart is not in it anymore. The evening this woman rang to say she'd found the photos but not the receipt while all our friends were waiting for me next door, you have no idea how hard it was for me to go through that door.

(Door bell)

COOKIE That could be the doctor.

OLGA Let him in! This is going to be fun!

Exit Cookie. Then she comes back.

COOKIE Actually, no. It's a young woman. I told her you weren't receiving but she insists on seeing you for just a few minutes. She said you'd seen her at Dolores's not long ago and that you'd remember her.

OLGA Goodness! How could I forget! *(Aside)* I hope she's not carrying a gun this time. *(A pause.)* Yes, let her in. But tell her I have another important appointment. As soon as Doctor Leatherby gets here, take him to the small drawing-room and I'll send her away directly. I don't want anybody to see him here.

COOKIE Shall I let her in now?

OLGA Yes. And if you hear gunshots, call 999!

Cookie lets Miss A. in.

Scene 18

OLGA Good afternoon.

MISS A. Good afternoon. Do you recognize me?

OLGA Of course, my dear, I do.

MISS A. I know you have little time. I couldn't forget everything you told me at Dolores's when you calmed me down so gently.

OLGA I sense you're better, much better. I sense that this man is going away. Or no, that *you* are taking your distances. Life is back.

MISS A. That's precisely why I wanted to see you and not another clairvoyant. You see, I met another man, and he wants to marry me.

OLGA Congratulations!

MISS A. The problem is that I cannot make up my mind. I'm still living with the bitter memory that binds me to the man I once loved. This is the last message he left me. *(She takes out a folded piece of paper.)* Tell me if there is still a chance I may see him again.

OLGA No, my dear, you mustn't. This man is no longer yours. *(She takes the message, gasps then hesitates)* And I feel bound to tell you another thing. *(Pause)* No... Yes I must. You are about to be freed from this man forever, *(Pause)* for he is not going to live. He's about to meet with sudden death.

MISS A. What? But how can you say such...

OLGA It's the truth.

MISS A. But this is horrible!

OLGA *(Firm)* This man must die. And it may be to save *you* that his death was ordained. However cruel this may sound,

death is sometimes the best cure to the injuries of love. Do not see this man again under any pretext. Tell yourself that he is already dead, because he soon will be.

MISS A. *(Screaming)* What you are telling me is monstrous...

OLGA Please do not judge me. It is destiny that chooses for us.

MISS A. But he is young!

(Olga calms her down like she did at Dolores's)

OLGA The day he dies you will feel your heart open up because life always wins over death. And you must live.

(Door bell)

MISS A. I will try. Thank you.

OLGA You will be happy. I know you will find happiness. Believe me.

Olga walks her to the door. Exit young woman. The door to the left opens.

Scene 19

COOKIE Shall I let the doctor in?

Olga stands stage left waiting for Cookie to let him in. She does and Doctor Leatherby enters. They stand in symmetrical positions and their body language is that of a stand-off.

OLGA So, you needed to see me, Doctor?

Dr L. I think it was quite necessary, my dear madam.

OLGA We'll get to the truth later. *(She turns to him and opens her arms)* Come and give your mother a hug first. *(He smiles*

and hugs her.) You look well. Still working hard at saving people's lives?

Dr L. Yes but let's talk about you first. How are you?

OLGA Strong enough to take a train from London to Aberystwyth and back.

Dr L. I see you're on the bandwagon... waving Welsh flags?

OLGA *(Playful)* Annoying, isn't it?

Dr L. Why didn't you tell me about it?

OLGA Like, when?

Dr L. Before starting all this commotion?

OLGA Did you speak to me before signing that statement against Jones?

Dr L. Mother! I sit on the BMA council. I couldn't NOT sign it. Besides it was just a brief statement to the Department of Health, it had a very limited scope.

OLGA Did any one on the BMA council travel to Aberystwyth?

Dr L. I don't think so.

OLGA And you call yourselves serious?

Dr L. We know what is happening there. There is a healer who is unanimously considered as excellent but what matters to us...

OLGA Is that he helps sick people?

Dr L. Uh-uh! What matters to us is that he is *not* a medical doctor. And as such we have to sound the alarm.

OLGA *(By then they face and each other in the chest to stress their points)* His diagnosis is excellent.

Dr L. Until the day when he's going to be wrong.

OLGA What would happen then?

Dr L. *(Dr. L moves away)* We'd rather not face this eventuality, or the errors of other less gifted healers. Ours is a perfectly sensible position.

OLGA But when medical doctors are wrong you cover them!

Dr L. Science isn't infallible and erring is human.

OLGA So why is it *human* for doctors to make a mistake and *not human* for mediums? Are we not included in humanity?

Dr L. Mother, you are sweet.

OLGA Sure, make fun of me while you are at it.

Dr L. Not at all! I'm delighted to see you that you've regained your vitality. *(Amused he lays his hand on her shoulder, they are face to face again.)* I love watching you get up your high horse.

OLGA And isn't it funny that we should end up on opposite side of the barricades?

Dr L. Rather!

OLGA If people knew.

Dr L. Yes but nobody does and I haven't come here to pick a fight.

OLGA What are you here for then?

Dr L. To see my mother and my patient.

OLGA Now come on! You must be getting an earful about me at the moment! Speak freely. I know perfectly well you are furious.

Dr L. But I am not. Why should I be furious? What we're wondering is just what you're hoping for.

OLGA You're asking me what we're hoping for? If you are one of London's top surgeons today, it's because for decades I have forbidden myself to be your mother, so that children did not make fun of you and so you could pursue a great career. You're asking me what I'm hoping for! I hope that one day a clairvoyant like me can have a son like you, without making him an orphan.

Dr L. Mother, I am aware of all you have done for me. And if it were only for me...

OLGA I know, I know. I was the one who set the rules. At the hospital you called me Madam, and still today you struggle to call me Mum. I only wish your lot at the BMA could try and think out of the box for once! How many patients have I sent you? How many? Do you want to see the list I keep?

Dr L. Fine, fine. You are an extraordinary woman... mum. There is no doubt about it.

OLGA Far less extraordinary than the Aberystwyth medium, I can assure you.

Dr L. *(Sits down)* Actually I wanted to tell you something interesting about that Mr Jones. A while back I diagnosed an advanced tumour on a patient's left breast so I scheduled an operation immediately. And what did she do the next day? She took the train to Aberystwyth. She was honest enough to admit it. Fortunately your Welsh medium

told her to have the op so I removed her tumour and she should be all right. But she also confessed that if the medium's diagnosis had gone against mine, she would NOT have come back to see me. This woman might be dying right now. *(A pause.)*

OLGA Tumour. Left breast?

Dr L. Yes.

OLGA ... And the medium agreed with you? *(Pause. Suspicious)* It wasn't really to talk to me about my public actions that you came to see me today, was it? You came to tell me this woman's story. *(Points finger at him)* You came to gloat!

Dr L. No mother, I did not. *(Sound of a Whatsapp. He turns away to read his phone.)* I'm sorry, *(deep sigh)* they're calling me in for an urgent transplant. I'm afraid we must leave it here today. I have to go now. I will come back soon. *(He gives her a kiss.)* Next week I hope.

OLGA You know that my only happiness is to see you.

Dr L. And do not strain yourself! You need to be careful for a little longer... Madam.

OLGA Yes... Doctor.

Exit Leatherby. She sits down exhausted. Cookie walks in.

Scene 20

COOKIE How is the doctor?

OLGA He's quite well.

COOKIE Cup of tea?

OLGA No, thank you. (*Olga invites Cookie to sit*) Look at me
Cookie. Do you find me changed since my operation?

COOKIE Changed? No!

OLGA Do not humour me, I'm asking you if I have changed.

COOKIE Not at all. What would make you think that?

OLGA (*To herself*) Twice now. This is getting serious.

COOKIE Beg your pardon?

OLGA Nothing dear. Nothing.

COOKIE By the way... that young woman you're so fond of, she
rang to tell you that everything is OK and that she is
engaged now, as you had predicted.

OLGA She didn't tell you she was NOT expecting a child, I hope.

COOKIE No... No... She just told me everything was absolutely
fine.
Exit Cookie, looking happy.

OLGA, (*Smiling*) I can still work a little magic...

CURTAIN

Dolores and Daphne are on stage. Cookie is bringing tea on a tray.

Scene 21

COOKIE Olga told me to bring you some tea. She won't be long.
Cookie pours them tea.

DOLORES Cookie, is it really true that Olga has stopped consulting?

COOKIE Yes. For the past ten days.

DOLORES Is she poorly?

COOKIE I don't think so.

DOLORES Olga, ten days without consulting? That's not normal.

COOKIE She's been very busy since you were last here. Of course she doesn't tell me everything.

DAPHNE That's not a good sign.
Exit Cookie.

DOLORES What did I tell you! It's serious. That Welsh medium must have made such an impression on her, she might have developed an inferiority complex. Could have been a shock.

DAPHNE Come on, Olga's not crazy.

DOLORES Not crazy but strange. For thirty years she's been making fun of me because she doesn't believe I communicate by telephone with the dead.

DAPHNE Of course she believes in it! She's just having you on.

DOLORES Not at all! She's always making fun of me about it!

DAPHNE I'm sure you're mistaken.
(Enter Olga)

OLGA Hello my dears, thanks for coming. *(Pause)* I've asked you to come today to tell you that I am resigning from the chair of the British Society of Spiritualists. We need to think about who's going to replace me.

DAPHNE What?

DOLORES Have you lost your mind?

DAPHNE After everything you got into gear you want to resign! It's going to sound very suspicious.

OLGA We'll say it's for health reasons.

DOLORES But why, really?

OLGA I made a wrong prediction, and it happened twice.

DAPHNE Twice? But my dear, we've all got it wrong hundreds of times!

DOLORES *(Shocked)* Speak for yourself! But of course it's happened to us too. Let us say a few times.

DAPHNE If you leave us now we're done for! Who on earth is going to take your place?

OLGA How about you? *(Daphne is not listening)* Daphne!!

DAPHNE Me? Chair? Out of the question. I'm far too batty for that.

DOLORES Well I'm not batty at all but I'm not chair material. My voice doesn't carry enough for public speaking.

DAPHNE What?

DOLORES *(Very loud)* I said my voice doesn't carry enough for public speaking.

OLGA So who? Wanda?

DAPHNE Wanda?

DOLORES She looks like she's just drowned.

OLGA That's true, *(makes a face)* like she'd been rescued from a shipwreck! If she chaired the society, it would sink! Who then? Flora?

DOLORES She can't make a speech in public with those dentures.

DAPHNE She doesn't talk, she whistles!

OLGA Come on! Apart from those who whistle, look drowned, are batty and have no voice, there's got to be one who's half-way normal!

DAPHNE We're clairvoyants. Normal? That'll be the day!

Enter Cookie with a radio set.

COOKIE Sorry to barge in but I remembered your interview was on.

OLGA Blast! It's five past. I completely forgot!

Cookie tunes to the radio sender. She stays by the radio.

OLGA'S RECORDED VOICE

'My dear sir, to speak of man's future, one would have to be sure he has one. One can sometimes wonder about that. One can wonder whether conventional science will give him a future! This time, I'm the one asking you the question.'

OLGA Ah! Too late!

Jingle. They carry on listening to the end of the interview.

SPEAKER We just heard an interview with Madame Olga, chairwoman of the British Society of Spiritualists who rose to fame recently for organizing a rally in defence of Mr Jones, the Welsh medium, after the British Medical Association raised strong objections to the publicity surrounding him. Incidentally one member on the BMA council was the famous surgeon Dr Michael Leatherby and as we finished broadcasting this interview, we learnt that Doctor Leatherby was the victim of a fatal car accident at

3:30 this afternoon on the M6. (*Cookie switches the radio off.*)

OLGA

(*Screaming*) No!!!!

The other women freeze to the spot.

CURTAIN

ACT 4

Back at Dolores's flat, the light is very low. There is a parrot in a cage on a hook. Dolores is talking on the telephone? After a short while we hear her speaking softly.

Scene 22

DOLORES Hello!... Hello? Hello? I'm listening. I'm here. Hello? Can we get on with it? Let's talk. Hello? *(Giving up, discouraged, hangs up)* That's unusual. What's wrong with them today? I've said it and I'll say it again, with all those sputniks they've managed to disrupt the next world. The ether is full of interference and the spirits are afraid. It got worse still with the Internet; I felt they didn't like it. And just when they got used to it, here we go, missiles and drones flying all over the world! *(She increases the light in the room. The parrot suddenly comes to life)*

ELVIS Hello! Hello?

DOLORES Oh shut up Elvis. There's no point, they're not responding today.

ELVIS Sugar!

DOLORES Yes, sugar indeed! But that's the way it is! Now I'm going to take you into the kitchen. We need peace and quiet today.

ELVIS Sugar!

DOLORES Yeah, yeah. And if you don't like it, tough.

ELVIS Help!

DOLORES You're impossible. Come on!
She takes the cage off the hook and they move towards the wings.

ELVIS Help!

DOLORES Calm down. Be a good boy. You're going into the kitchen.
You'll be just fine.

ELVIS *(Muffled and distant)* Hello? Hello?

DOLORES That's right! I'll come and fetch you a bit later. I've got a
visitor now, do you understand?

ELVIS Sugar!
Dolores has popped out for 3 seconds, comes back without the cage. Door bell.

DOLORES Oh, here she is!
She opens the door. Enter Olga in mourning, very pale. Dolores follows her, shuts the door then comes near her.

Scene 23

DOLORES My poor darling! *(Olga, looking very upset, does not speak.)*

Why didn't you want me to come to you? I would have.

OLGA I know, I know...
She sits down. Dolores too, facing her.

DOLORES So he was your son Olga!

OLGA Yes. He was my son.

DOLORES None of us knew.

OLGA No one did.

DOLORES Such a good surgeon too! Was it you who didn't want...

OLGA Yes and you understand why.

DOLORES His career of course. My poor darling...

OLGA, *(Pulling herself together)*
Now you remember the evening when you weren't expecting me and I barged in to stop that woman from killing herself?

DOLORES Oh yes, how could I forget!

OLGA A few days ago she came to see me. She gave me a message from the man she had loved to find out whether she would see him again, whether she could still hope. And when I had this message in my hands, I sensed death instantly. When I feel death I never say so. But, Dolores, you know what some women are like when they are unhappy in love. They can waste their entire life obsessing about a man who no longer wants to see them. In her case, I chose to speak the truth. I told her that this man was going to die and that she should accept his death. Then three days after my son's death, I received a message from her. In it she wrote: "You had announced the imminent death of the man I loved so much. You were right. He was killed in a car accident last Tuesday on the M6."
She observes Dolores.

DOLORES I don't believe it... The man she wanted to kill herself for... was your son, Dr Leatherby?

OLGA Yes. I rushed here to save this woman. *(Dramatic)* the voice used me. From that day I became part of my son's

destiny. Then she came back to me, placed a message from this man in my hands, I sensed death and nothing else, nothing inside me spoke to warn me that the person whose death I'd foretold was my child. *(Very upset.)* In my apartment he'd come in through one door while I was showing her out through another one! And I sensed NOTHING! Not a single fibre within me twitched to warn me! Me! Madame Olga! So what can I believe in now? *(They cry together. Dolores takes Olga's hands, kisses them, stands up and goes and open a little cabinet from which she takes out a bottle of spirit and a glass which she fills with something after pouring a few drops into it.)*

DOLORES Drink a little of this, Olga. Drink.

OLGA As if it wasn't enough to lose my gift, I also had to lose my reason to live, my son.

DOLORES Don't say this Olga, you will live.

OLGA Who for? What for?

DOLORES That's what we always say after a great misfortune. But Olga I know that the dead live on, and that we can talk to them.

OLGA Speak to the dead? Dolores, look at me in the eyes and do not make fun of me like I have made fun of you so many times... I beg your forgiveness. In all humility, I have come to ask you a question: Do you really speak to the dead?

DOLORES But of course Olga! How could you ever doubt it? The spirits come when you call them, they answer. All they ask for is to talk to us!

OLGA And do you believe that if you called my son...

DOLORES We'll call him together!

OLGA And are you sure that he will answer us?

DOLORES I cannot say for sure that he will return every time...

OLGA But will he return? And will he speak to me?

DOLORES I'm sure he will!

OLGA Swear it! Swear to me that he will come back to me!

DOLORES I swear!

OLGA Swear! Swear! Swear!

Sobbing she takes her hand and holds it in the position of an oath.

CURTAIN

