

At RISE:

Spiritual medium, Madame La FAYETTE sits at a round table overlaid with a velvet cloth. In the middle of the table three tall church candles burn. Opposite La FAYETTE sit husband and wife BILL and DEB Toohey.

Madame La FAYETTE stares ahead, eyes open.

Pause.

FAYETTE: Mon Dieu.

DEB: What do you see?

FAYETTE: I see a woodland setting. Beautiful scenery. A duck takes to water, or at least it did. In the distance...beyond the lake, a house...

Pause.

BILL: Go on.

FAYETTE: The guttering is in a state of disrepair...A man with blue eyes and ruddy complexion waves to me.

BILL: Sounds like dad!

FAYETTE: His name is...Geoffrey. No...Martin...

BILL: George –

FAYETTE: George! Yes, that's right...So clear. So clear. He waves to me. In his left hand a...what is it Geoffrey? –

BILL: George.

FAYETTE: George. George. What is it, George? Show me what you have...

DEB: *(To BILL)* So exciting.

FAYETTE: In his left hand...a clarinet.

DEB: Oh, he loved music –

BILL: Yes! Exactly! My last birthday present to him was a classical album.

FAYETTE: What is that? Speak up, spirit. Speak up...he says he wished he could have been a clarinetist but gave up his ambition when he realised it would mean studying the clarinet.

DEB: What else?

FAYETTE: In his right hand...a... show me...come closer...a...

Now Nikolai RIMSKY-Korsakov in his 40s and dressed in uniform approaches from the shadows. He walks around surveying the scene with an air of disbelief, as if he has been taken from some place and placed here quite suddenly. Only La FAYETTE can see or hear him and she tries to mask her horror as best she can. This is new to her – seeing spirits.

Gravy boat.

BILL: Dear old Dad loved his Sunday lunches.

DEB: Yes, loved them! Tell us more...

FAYETTE: He is...bald...he enjoys wearing hats. One or more at a time on certain days of the week...

RIMSKY: *(To FAYETTE)* Listen, can I sit down? I'm shaking like a leaf.

RIMSKY sits to La FAYETTE's left, his interest piqued by the séance. He soon realises that BILL and DEB cannot see or hear him.

FAYETTE: What was that? I'm losing it. I'm losing George. He's fading...

BILL / DEB: Bring him back, bring him back!

FAYETTE: He waves...he turns from me and walks back towards the house.

BILL: Dad!

DEB: Oh!

FAYETTE: Bye, bye.

La FAYETTE stares in front of her for some time then turns to look nervously at RIMSKY. She does well to hide her fear. Meanwhile, DEB comforts BILL.

RIMSKY: Is it Halloween?

La FAYETTE shakes her head briefly.

FAYETTE: *(Whispers, to RIMSKY)* What do you want with me?

RIMSKY: What do I want with *you*? One moment I'm sat in the dress circle of the Bolshoi listening to The Snow Maiden and thinking if the little *shiksa* had been honest in the first place the opera could have been over by the end of Act Two. The next I'm here. What do I want? The way out!

BILL: *(To FAYETTE)* Is there any way that you can try again Madame?

RIMSKY stands and looks around the room.

RIMSKY: Nice place, by the way. You do it yourself?

FAYETTE: *(To BILL, but flinching at RIMSKY's question)* I do not think...

DEB: Please Madame La Fayette. We'd be so grateful.

Pause.

RIMSKY: Please...continue...I'm fascinated. These good people deserve answers to the unending riddle of foreboding final farewells and irrepressible hopes of return.

DEB: *(To FAYETTE)* He was a little deaf...perhaps you need to...speak up?

FAYETTE: Deaf yes, but...

RIMSKY, BILL and DEB look expectantly to La FAYETTE.

(A long pause. La FAYETTE affects a deeper voice, clearly for show, this until further notice).

Good morning Bill, Deb. Can you hear me?

BILL / DEB: Yes, we can hear you. / That voice it's him!

FAYETTE: Well, how nice to be able to talk to you all again. How are you both?

BILL: We're fine Dad. How are you getting on?

FAYETTE: Very well, thanks. No regrets.

Looking around the room RIMSKY is confused, he looks at La FAYETTE and shrugs his shoulders.

RIMSKY: Where is 'Dad'?

BILL: We miss you. It seems like such a long time...

FAYETTE: Well, I suppose it is but it isn't really when you come to think about it.

RIMSKY: You're making this stuff up, why?

FAYETTE: *(Ignoring RIMSKY)* Time is of no value to us except that we are conscious of a kind of time when we talk to you or park around Kensington and Chelsea. Otherwise, time means nothing.

DEB: Hello George.

FAYETTE: Who's that?

DEB: Debbie here.

FAYETTE: Goodness is that the time.

DEB: What are you up to these days?

FAYETTE: Me? Well you know. This and that...

RIMSKY: It's not interesting enough for you...you have to make it all up?

FAYETTE: What are you going to do, make a civil case?

DEB: Pardon?

FAYETTE: Err, nothing my dear. Ignore me. To be honest, I don't really feel inclined to do anything. I suppose eventually I shall.

DEB: *(A little laugh)* You don't have to work anymore, George.

RIMSKY: You're playing with people's emotions. This is all they have between here and their loved one, between them and the great divide. To Bill and Debbie this is proof of an afterlife and a meaning to existence...yet you are messing with them...you're *lying* to them.

FAYETTE: *(Suddenly angry, the voice slipping)* What and I can't make a living somehow?

DEB: *(To FAYETTE)* No, it's not that at all. --

FAYETTE: *(To RIMSKY, harshly)* I'm sorry if I've disappointed you.

BILL: You haven't, Dad. That's not what Deb meant...

Pause.

FAYETTE: *(Back into voice, recovering)* Sorry, sorry. That's my bad. I...need a moment...

Pause.

RIMSKY: In truth, I should report back to Trading Standards.

FAYETTE: *(Out of voice)* Holy Christ.

DEB: Is *he* there too, George?

FAYETTE: *(In voice, quickly gathering herself)* Yes, yes...at least I think it's him, quite a young man.

DEB: My goodness.

FAYETTE: He reminds me a bit of Jared Leto but he wears a...trench coat and Jared Leto is not dead. I think it has to be. He was here when I arrived.-
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RIMSKY: This is absurd.—

DEB: Did he talk? What did he say?

FAYETTE: He said to me, 'Aha, you've arrived George. *Tubular!*' And I remember I said to him, 'Arrived? Where? I was on my way to Welshpool,' then he

said, 'this is way better than that, grandpa,' so I said, 'I don't think so,' and he said, 'Well, you better just dig it for now.' So, I said, 'Snaps,' and he walked off.

DEB: Incredible.

RIMSKY: I'm not going to just sit here and let this happen. Tell them the truth!

BILL: What's it really like over there?

RIMSKY: *(Angry)* The truth, will you?

FAYETTE: *(Ignoring RIMSKY)* Like? It – it all feels very natural. To be honest, I can't tell you how marvellous it is to be dead, only...

BILL: What Dad?

RIMSKY: ...only I'm getting a little drama going at your expense and making all of this up for the sweet smell of spondulicks, hope you don't mind.
(Pause) Tell them things from my perspective, will you? That contrary to what I always believed there *is* something after death just not all it's cracked up to be. Tell them there's no such place heaven or hell. No pearly gates and Zion is a crock. More or less you follow a condition of life which is as real as anything you've ever known before, and that life beyond what you call death is a state of mind --

BILL: Madame La Fayette, are you okay?

Pause, DEB places a hand on BILL's arm, as if to assure him.

DEB: George?

FAYETTE: *(In voice)* I have the strangest feeling...as though everything is as real as when I was living. Merely a...state of mind...

RIMSKY: That is better.

FAYETTE: And that I'm being followed or following someone. *(Pause)* Everywhere we float, we float with an audible pop...

RIMSKY looks at her incredulously and throws up his hands in despair.

BILL: 'We'? There are others?

FAYETTE: Err, yes sure...err...why not son.

BILL: Who?

FAYETTE: *(Pause)* Everyone, my boy.

BILL: Like who?

FAYETTE: *(Pause)* Gertrude, Melissa...

BILL: I've never heard of them.

FAYETTE: Jeremy?

Pause.

DEB: *(To BILL)* Jeremy Penhaligon, perhaps? --

FAYETTE: Everyone...Incidentally did you find that recipe for braised chicken
chasseur I left in the kitchen? *(Pause)* I'm losing him...I'm losing him.
George!