THE INVESTIGATION

a short play

by

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5.30.03
THE INVESTIGATION

CHARACTERS:

THE PSYCHIC - Male or female, early 30s or older. A legitimate practitioner of the mystical arts and sciences.

ESSALYN TOMPKINS - Female, late 20s or older. She is not well-educated and a little nervous, but she needs desperately to obtain the information she is seeking.

CLAUDE DAVIES - Male, about Essalyn’s age and of her background, and her close friend. A skeptic and very ill-at-ease about what might be revealed.

VIVIAN MORRISSEY - Female, at least Essalyn’s age, perhaps significantly older. Essalyn’s next door neighbor. Among other things.

THE SETTING: The Psychic’s parlor.

THE TIME: A day in the late fall of this year.

synopsis

A man and a woman seek the help of a psychic to discover the reason a spirit seems to be present in the woman’s house, and, in the process, discover a surprising revelation.

Production/award history

PRODUCTIONS: Dragon Lady Players, Syracuse, NY (2009)
Blacktown City Community Theatre (Seven Hills, NSW, Australia) (2008)
Carrollwood Players, Tampa, FL (2006)
Panoply Arts Festival, Huntsville, AL (2005)
Lebanon (PA) Community Theatre (2003)

AWARDS: Winner, 2003 Lebanon (PA) Community Theatre Playwriting Competition
Winner, 2005 Panoply Arts Festival Competition

For Roxanna
AT RISE: The PSYCHIC is seated at a table, reviewing papers, as CLAUDE and ESSALYN are heard offstage. As the PSYCHIC hears them, S/HE tucks the paper into a folder and puts the folder on a table or desk other than the one at which S/HE was seated.

ESSALYN

(OFF)  
... certainly a very nice vestibule.

CLAUDE

(OFF)  
I still don’t like it, comin’ ---

ESSALYN

(OFF)  
Ssh! [S/He’ll] hear you, you don’t ---

(THEY enter the PARLOR area and stop.)

Oh. We, um, we don’t mean to intrude, but the, the sign on the door said to just come in...

PSYCHIC

(His/Her back to them)
Good afternoon. Just one moment, please.

(S/HE finishes with the folder and returns to the table but remains standing.)

CLAUDE

We, um, we made an appointment? Claude Davies and Essalyn Tompkins?

PSYCHIC

And you are exactly on time. Please come in. Would you like a cup of tea? Or some water?

ESSALYN

(TOGETHER)  
No. Thank you.  
CLAUDE

Unh-uh.

PSYCHIC

Well, I’m going to have some.  
(S/HE pours hot tea from a carafe.)

Have you ever met with a psychic before?

ESSALYN

No; we never done nothing like this.
CLAUDE
But you, um, you were highly recommended?

ESSALYN
By Vivian Morrissey. She’s my neighbor.

CLAUDE
New neighbor. She just moved into the house next door to Ess’s. Last month?

PSYCHIC
Yes, Vivian and I are old friends. She mentioned you. (S/HE returns to the table and sits.)

Well -- what did you need.

ESSALYN
We’ve come about -- well, it’s - sorta hard to talk about it.

CLAUDE
We, um, Mrs. Morrissey told us? that you - knew.

Things.

CLAUDE
Or, or that you could - divine, them. Using your, what-do-they-call-’em cards and crystals and - stuff?

PSYCHIC
I can help find things. Find out things. Some things. These (A Tarot deck) can be helpful.

ESSALYN
Uh-huh. Tarot. (SHE pronounces it TARE-OTT)

Tarot.

PSYCHIC

ESSALYN
Oh. Tar-ohhhh.
PSYCHIC
But they have more to do with glimpsing possibilities of the future.

CLAUDE
Oh. We’re here, um, it’s, um, about ... well, we’re tryin’ to - find out somethin’.

ESSALYN
About --- well, there are these - sounds.

PSYCHIC
What sort of sounds, Ms. Tompkins?

ESSALYN
In my house. At night.

CLAUDE
And durin’ the day too, sometimes.

ESSALYN
Yeah. They’re real - peculiar. We told Mrs. Morrissey about them and she said you could maybe help.

PSYCHIC
Help? You mean make them stop? Or tell you what they are.

CLAUDE
Well, we, um, we think it’s maybe gotta do with Essalyn’s husband.

Why would you think that?

PSYCHIC

CLAUDE
Well -- he, um, died.

ESSALYN
In June. It was real sudden. They started, right after that.

He was an older man?

ESSALYN
Oh, no, just about my age. It was - an accident. He’d went for a drive, right after supper -- he’d drank wine, three ’r four glasses, and, and he - fell asleep drivin’, and....
I’m very sorry.

Thank you.

But see, what we wanna find out? We need t’ find out if, um, if, um...

If he’s - all right. ’Cause there’re these - sounds.

And Vivian? um, Mrs. Morrissey? she said you c’d help us - find out.

I’ll certainly try. Please: be seated.

If it’s all the same to you? we wanna stand.

We need to form a circle of hands, Mr. Davies.

Well, if you say we should.

Ess ...

You said you’d do whatever [s/he] said.

I know, but ...

We gotta find out, Claude.

All right, all right. I’ll - sit down.

(THEY do.)
PSYCHIC

(Lighting a candle as S/HE speaks)
Now: I will try to get in touch with your husband’s spirit. What is his name?

ESSALYN

Henry. His name was Henry.

PSYCHIC

And his full name?

ESSALYN

Henry Stephen Tompkins.

PSYCHIC

Henry Stephen Tompkins. Now: We must all join hands and close our eyes while I try ---

CLAUDE

Close our eyes! How come we gotta cl---

ESSALYN

Claude!

CLAUDE

It’s silly, Ess. I mean, if he’s gonna - appear or somethin’? I wanna be able t’ see him, in case, um, in case ...

PSYCHIC

He won’t appear, Mr. Davies.

ESSALYN

He won’t?

PSYCHIC

Ghosts and spirits are very different. Ghosts often have a visible form, but spirits are ethereal and possess only a voice.

ESSALYN

Oh. Etheeer-reuhl.

CLAUDE

C’n we, um, c’n just we talk t’ him? Privately?