

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)

Colonial Playhouse, Aldan, PA (2004)

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
No. Thank you.

(TOGETHER)

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*.

ESSALYN

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)

PSYCHIC

Tarot.

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.

PSYCHIC

Why would you think that?

CLAUDE

Well -- he, um, died.

ESSALYN

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

PSYCHIC

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.

PSYCHIC

Thank you.

ESSALYN

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

CLAUDE

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

ESSALYN

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

CLAUDE

I'll certainly try. Please: be seated.

PSYCHIC

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

CLAUDE

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

PSYCHIC

Well, if you say we should.

ESSALYN

Ess ...

CLAUDE

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

ESSALYN

I know, but ...

CLAUDE

We gotta find out, Claude.

ESSALYN

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

CLAUDE

(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. Etheer-reuhl.

CLAUDE

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

