

## Tea-room's investigation

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*short story 30.04.2018*

*remade to play 9.04.2019*

*Characters:*

*Bartholomew Smith – private investigator (first time mentioned in play “Retired spies”).*

*Philomena Smith – Bartholomew's wife.*

*Elaine – private investigator's client, redecorates Ralph's house.*

*Ralph*

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*Scene 1.*



*Cozy tea-room not full furnished. On the mantelpiece there is clock, in front of fire-place is tea table with two arm-chairs in front of it.*



*Man and woman over sixty sit in front of each other. Man reads a newspaper. Woman disapprovingly looks at him.*

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Just cup of tea. I don't ask you for more.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Yes, dear. What's interesting in newspaper, Mr Smith?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: You didn't calm down, didn't you?

*Man puts his newspaper on the table.*

PHILOMENA SMITH: Me, I am calmest person in the room. Probably I am calmest person in the Britain in this moment. If didn't count cats on the porch in this sunny afternoon.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Why it's such important for you?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Probably it's started after our marriage. What left unchangeable, only our names. And now don't you think it's not smartest undercover for Philomena and Bartholomew to choose surname Smith.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: When it was about plastic surgery on cost of government you always agree to that.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Now you remember this. I wrote in letters only my name. What did you tell me yesterday?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: I didn't remember about what we had an argument.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Such simple for you. You said that in the end of the week we will find out which surname will have Alistair. Surname for our son will choose government, is it normal.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: There are some benefits of duty and also there are some uncomfortable moments. That's part of his recent job.

PHILOMENA SMITH: And for grandchildren?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: I heard you. I couldn't change anything. Could we just have a tea?

PHILOMENA SMITH: I heard this story since we returned to England. I don't know which furniture to choose. Could I plant flowers in the garden or again we move somewhere?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: You always could plant flowers.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Thank you. When we returned to England, at least, after all your important trips around the world, commander...

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: You try to remind me one of promises, which one, Lumenea.

PHILOMENA SMITH: I remind to you, that when we will return home, I will no more be just a wife of yours.

*Philomena puts her tea spoon on the saucer.*

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: I didn't plan retirement, you know that. On retirement, I wanted to have house at the seaside, not home in village near London. But it's what I had to do.

PHILOMENA SMITH: I never asked who are that people in our house? I never checked them if doors were closed.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Dear, hope we didn't discuss divorce. I should remember such things. Usually I'm attentive to details.

PHILOMENA SMITH: No. But thanks for fresh idea. You have your hobby.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Me? Hobby?

PHILOMENA SMITH: What else I could name your frequent visits to military base during your walking trips with easel and tripod.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Should I show to you my sketches?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Really?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: It was stupid, sorry.

PHILOMENA SMITH: And open private investigator's office here is smarter decision in your whole life?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Why not?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Main question here is why yes?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: You can't return in advertisement business after so many years.

PHILOMENA SMITH: I remember.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: I get it. This is real reason for confrontation with me. You didn't decide what you will do.

PHILOMENA SMITH: You could be right and could be not right. In all this countries I was busy in studying languages, visiting all possible women gathering, find friends, learning how to cook new dishes, change style of the flat. And here what – should I spend time with your guests in the tea-room.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: As idea it shouldn't be a tea-room's investigation. But you will find what to do.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Are you sure, Commander Smith?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: I don't like when you call me such way. It sounds like you are angry.

PHILOMENA SMITH: You know, it sounds as I am angry, because I am angry. And don't remind me that your parents also were spies.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: I never supported or denied this spies story. But I could assure that my life never had connection with my parents.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Strong statement.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: I talked about my professional life, you know it.

PHILOMENA SMITH: With your explanation everything is much better.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: And if you didn't mind, you could still call me as usual, Barty, not formal as commander Smith.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Barty? You? Barty is my husband, who wanted to work in the bank when we return home. Barty, my husband, promised that we will only live in London. Barty didn't promise that I will propose tea to clients of private investigator.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Till time when you figure out what you want to do, there is one suggestion.

PHILOMENA SMITH: What?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: You could be my assistant.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Assistant of private investigator?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Without trial period. It will be some kind of real work. I will talk with people, you could receive later, on cost of government, license. You know, courses, new people. Lumena, what do you think?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Since our first meeting, I believe that all your crazy ideas are inspiring.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: You about marriage after ten days from first meeting and only after that I first time picked up you on date from your parents' house?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Yes, this also.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: What do you think? You will have plenty of free time, I promise.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Plenty free time for knitting, cooking. And I almost forgot – preparing tea for your clients. If you excuse me, I need to clean the table.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Hope it was yes.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Yes, if you pay me from the day when we returned to England.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Fine.

PHILOMENA SMITH: So what I should do for your clients.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: About that, good that you mentioned. First client will come in half an hour.

*Bartholomew checked watch.*

PHILOMENA SMITH: What?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Twenty-seven minutes or so...

PHILOMENA SMITH: You put advertisement in Times three days ago.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Reputation walks quickly.



*Bartholomew kisses his wife, takes his newspaper.*



BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: If you didn't mind, I will finish reading in the office.

There is still strict rule against pipe in the house?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Yes.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Could you change your mind and agree that pipe's collection will look properly at walls of private detective's office?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Like Holmes pipes?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: No. How you could think about it? Like Commissar Jules Maigret's pipes.

PHILOMENA SMITH: What's the big difference?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Holmes is amateur. Maigret is professional.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Like you said, Barty, as you wish.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Just asked. We will work in this direction, discuss it later. And I saw in newspaper advertisement about watercolor course. You could paint a garden, if you want flowers as endless inspiration.

PHILOMENA SMITH: You could find better reason to explain presence of not used artists materials in our house, when you don't need them for cover of your visits in military base.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Think of it, everything on government's cost.

PHILOMENA SMITH: I am glad that you thought about me.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: You are smart woman. I won't start to tell you sweet lies, you know what is true. I will be in home office, if you need me.

PHILOMENA SMITH: I already unpacked and put on your table nameplate "Commander B.Smith, private detective."

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: You are the best, I don't deserve you.

PHILOMENA SMITH: I know, good that you remember this.

*Bartholomew kisses Philomena and exits from the room.*



*Blackout.*

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*Scene 2.*

*Philomena walks from window.*

PHILOMENA SMITH: Black car with dark windows, how unusual. Who could predict it's normal? And house with little tower with own entrance, everything for "protect clients with delicate issues".



*Doorbell rings.*

PHILOMENA SMITH: Who it could be?

*Philomena exits.*

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*Scene 3.*

*Enter Philomena and Elaine.*

PHILOMENA SMITH: Yes, come in, to the tea-room.

ELAINE: I few times checked address on phone, it's not written "Private Investigator" on the door.



PHILOMENA SMITH: Maybe because it's private? Please, sit down. Would you like a cup of tea?

ELAINE: I read an advertisement in newspaper. Private investigation. "Smith – private investigations. We find answers to your secrets".

PHILOMENA SMITH: Yes. I am afraid Mr Smith now is busy with another client. Meanwhile, would you like a cup of tea?

ELAINE: Yes. My name is Elaine.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Mrs Smith, but call me Philomena.

ELAINE: Thank you.

PHILOMENA SMITH: If you want, you could tell me your story. I'm Mr Smith's assistant, I could help you.

ELAINE: But Mr Smith now is with other client.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Yes. When we divide our professional attention we could solve more cases.

ELAINE: Do you believe in ghosts, Mrs Smith?

PHILOMENA SMITH: I believe that lot of things in our life haven't any logical explanation and only paranormal rules could be as good help to understand that.

ELAINE: Yes. Or haunted house.



PHILOMENA SMITH: I once spend two weeks with my mother-in-law in one house during rain season. It was unforgettable experience. She walked at night and checked if all windows closed, it was more than we hoped to expect. But I believe that some places have story which is too complicated for logical explanation. Ghosts could be better name for it. What brought in your mind such thoughts?

ELAINE: I am thinking that now I work in such object.

PHILOMENA SMITH: How do you know? Something is just wrong?

ELAINE: Mainly. Nothing particular, but...

PHILOMENA SMITH: There are tiny moments which disturbs you?

ELAINE: Yes. Flowers!

PHILOMENA SMITH: Flowers? Which flowers?

ELAINE: In the house, where I work. Which is my new object of remade and design...

I am an architect and decorator. "Make everything around you lovely". It's motto of my firm.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Is beautiful garden with flowers?

ELAINE: Almost. There is greenhouse.

PHILOMENA SMITH: And you are not from this village.

ELAINE: No. How did you find out?

PHILOMENA SMITH: If you were from here, you won't check newspapers. You could ask neighbors. But you choose us as investigators of your delicate story.

ELAINE: Yes. Everyone are strangers for me here. To tell all to unknown person is much easier. I put flowers at my work desk, in that house. I took them from greenhouse.

PHILOMENA SMITH: They changed colour? Quantity?

ELAINE: They are fresh.

PHILOMENA SMITH: What's wrong with that?

ELAINE: In evening I noticed withered flowers, in the morning they are fresh.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Maybe they are just...

*Elaine shows photos on her phone.*

ELAINE: With dew on petals. I never watered them in the evening.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Did someone else?

ELAINE: It just fotos of different flowers in different time of day. I know how it looks like. Someone could be my secret admirer?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Sorry, I didn't want to...

ELAINE: Nothing it all. I checked. I am the first person who came and last who left object. No security left at night there.

PHILOMENA SMITH: And before your return in morning, someone or something changes flowers.

ELAINE: Exactly.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Did you checked meaning of them?

*Elaine opens and closes mouth, gasps and answers.*

ELAINE: I didn't think about it.

PHILOMENA SMITH: When have free time, check, it could be interesting.

ELAINE: You husband, Mr Smith, used language of flowers?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Barty, Bartholomew, never. He chooses the biggest bouquet in shop to "impress" or tiniest to show "gratefulness". Never in between. From red roses to daisies. I never know, he is unpredictable.

ELAINE: I see.

PHILOMENA SMITH: What about weekends?

ELAINE: Yes. At weekends also. After weekend or few days of holidays, when I work in morning are fresh flowers.

PHILOMENA SMITH: It's not usual, I agree. Is it enough to believe in haunted house? What else?

ELAINE: Letters.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Paper letters?

ELAINE: Yes, they are real.

PHILOMENA SMITH: What's wrong with letters?

ELAINE: They are always in mail box.

PHILOMENA SMITH: It's more than unsurprising place for letters.

ELAINE: I know, I asked. Postman said that last time he was near that house five years ago. In post there is instruction to resend letters to address somewhere in Uruguay. I asked about bills, everything redirected to the bank in London.

PHILOMENA SMITH: And letters are from?

ELAINE: Owner of the house, whom I didn't met. Only big beautiful portrait in the library.

PHILOMENA SMITH: In letters are...

ELAINE: Business, lot of details for renovation.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Do you send fotos of how you work?

ELAINE: Daily. By e-mail.

PHILOMENA SMITH: And his answers for this is usually written letters.

ELAINE: Yes. Handwritten.

PHILOMENA SMITH: How do you receive this job?

ELAINE: My agency, it's on-line. Without previous meetings or talks. And I wasn't suspicious, because made such kind of work before. Your house also need repair, sorry that I said that.

PHILOMENA SMITH: We are here only for two weeks, husband decided to stay. We will talk what you could do with this place when we solve your mystery.

ELAINE: Yes, sure. Do you know that you will find an answer?

PHILOMENA SMITH: I will investigate and show you results.

ELAINE: Yes. I didn't feel before that work at haunted places.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Why you are here?

ELAINE: I need help to solve this problem. I told you that already made attempt to made own investigation. It brought me nothing, if not count strange glances and polite, empty answers to my questions. Maybe such kind of troubles are not for you.

PHILOMENA SMITH: It's not in my character to be scary of troubles or of unknown. My marriage is main prove of it. It wasn't easy time, when all women with whom he talked in his voice and with his signature smile believed that received marriage proposal and waited impatiently when he will make next step and put ring on their finger. Do you want investigation?



ELAINE: Yes. I came here because of this.

PHILOMENA SMITH: I took your case. Smith's private investigators took it.

ELAINE: Yes. It will be enough to open case. I checked on-line.

*Elaine gives to Philomena envelope, Philomena looks at the check and nods.*

PHILOMENA SMITH: Yes. And if you don't mind, some proves, fotos, letters. At least his name.

ELAINE: His name is Ralph. If you still need letters, I will bring them next time. Here are keys from home. If you want to check everything by yourself. Tomorrow I made unscheduled day off for everyone. I in advance hoped that your agency will agree to take my case.

PHILOMENA SMITH: We will do all we could and little more.

ELAINE: And you name it "case with ghost"?

PHILOMENA SMITH: No, investigation of details connected with someone else's presence at the building of your business project in absence of main workers.

ELAINE: Impressive.

PHILOMENA SMITH: When will be results, you will know about it.

ELAINE: Thank you.

*Blackout.*

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*Scene 4.*

*Philomena knits.*



*Bartholomew comes to her arm chair.*



BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Sorry, it was longer that I could predict.

PHILOMENA SMITH: I saw when black car left.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: We had a visitor?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Just tea room stories, not important for government. I assure you. If we will live there we will need to redecorate the house.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: As you wish.

PHILOMENA SMITH: What do you think about this new pattern?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Lumena, it resembles the one you show me previous week as twin.

PHILOMENA SMITH: No. This pattern is in different direction.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: As you say. Tomorrow I probably will visit London, with morning train. Business trip. You will find what to do, dear?

PHILOMENA SMITH: I will listen to your advice and search inspiration in the garden. Or better we should create a greenhouse. What do you think?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: As you wish.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Will you return till diner?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: I won't spend night at London, for sure.

*Blackout.*

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*Scene 5.*

*Ralph's house. From living room, without wall starts greenhouse.*

*There are marks of repair everywhere. Different wallpapers samples are on the walls.*

*Sunny morning.*



*Enters Philomena.*



PHILOMENA SMITH: Hello? Is anybody home?

*Philomena makes few steps to the table with flowers on it.*

PHILOMENA SMITH: Mail box is empty. Flowers are a little withered.

*Sound of water in the iron bucket.*

PHILOMENA SMITH: Ralph? Ralph is that you?

*Sound of turned down iron bucket.*

PHILOMENA SMITH: Ralph? Ralph?



*Philomena walks from the stage and returns in the moment with empty bucket.*

PHILOMENA SMITH: Since when ghosts are like gardening and water flowers? Someone should work here daily. It doesn't look like five years without owner. I will never imagine that such ghost could exist. Garden ghost? Home helper ghost?

*Philomena stands among flowers.*

PHILOMENA SMITH: Such a beauty. Gorgeous. I need to buy a book about flowers garden. It will be amazing.

*Loud sound of sport car's engine not far away from house.*

PHILOMENA SMITH: Ghosts don't use cars, I'm sure about that. And this.

*Philomena takes hand trowel.*

PHILOMENA SMITH: I won't use it to check person's identity. Probably ghost prefer to work in gloves, but I will take a photo.

And how I should name it? Field operation or greenhouse operation?

What game choose owner of the house? It could be secret gardener, who loves garden and woman who renovates house? Good beginning of romance. Hope Elaine will like it.

*Blackout.*

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*Scene 6.*

*Tea-room in Philomena's house.*

*Philomena prepares table for tea.*



*Doorbell.*

*Philomena exits from room and returns with Ralph.*

PHILOMENA SMITH: Welcome, Ghost! I recognized your car.

RALPH: And I recognized your bicycle. Green and pink as fashion addicted zebra.

PHILOMENA SMITH: It was in the house when we bought it.

RALPH: Ralph. My name is Ralph.



PHILOMENA SMITH: Philomena Smith or Mrs Smith. Cup of tea?

RALPH: Yes. It would be nice.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Sure.

RALPH: Private investigators, it was...

PHILOMENA SMITH: Too much for your simple game.

RALPH: Probably, yes. Is she scared?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Asked me a person who pretends to be a ghost to receive girl's attention?

RALPH: Does she interested? Sorry.

PHILOMENA SMITH: What for?

RALPH: I mean, it was stupid idea. Pretend to be a ghost.

PHILOMENA SMITH: If she didn't use private investigators. What next? When you planned to stop?

RALPH: She didn't show letters to you, did she?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Don't worry, she kept it private from private investigator.



RALPH: Good. I mean, it's about house rebuilding. What interesting could be in such letters to private investigators?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Yes. Exactly. If they are boring and about business, you'll show them to private detective. In letters also is something sweet, isn't it?

RALPH: Nothing that I could remember.

PHILOMENA SMITH: In my opinion it's not wrong when woman is happy in relationship with ghost. I am married. Every man sometimes behaves as uncatchable ghost, so nothing to be amazed about.

RALPH: I am so sorry, if my visit will make some troubles and bring discomfort to you. I am here because of Elaine.

PHILOMENA SMITH: You are owner of the house.

*Ralph nods.*

PHILOMENA SMITH: Answer is yes.

RALPH: What disturbs Elaine?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Not to mention that you are a ghost?

RALPH: I am not a ghost...

PHILOMENA SMITH: Calm down. You are here more or less alive. You are not a ghost. No matter that you were good in proving that to Elaine.

RALPH: It's because of flowers?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Yes. And letters also. You could use a post office.

RALPH: What does she think about that?

PHILOMENA SMITH: That she is not alone in house and when she is out, something is happening.

RALPH: I didn't want to scary her. Is she interested?

PHILOMENA SMITH: In what?

RALPH: In whom?

PHILOMENA SMITH: You made perfect mystery.

RALPH: Does she have wish to connect with me, have conversation?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Probably this time with police?

RALPH: Police?!

PHILOMENA SMITH: Don't worry. She accepted challenge.

RALPH: Challenge?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Not everyone wants to renovate haunted house. By the way, you house isn't hunted?

RALPH: No. I live in it.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Why all the fuss?

RALPH: I liked her foto on renovation advertisement. And...

PHILOMENA SMITH: Be mystery for woman, it's interesting choice. You have keys. Letters and flowers. Elaine thought about it.

RALPH: Owner has keys and could be at home at any moment. What do you think I should do, Mrs Smith? Open myself?

PHILOMENA SMITH: You have doubts or wait that I will convince you don't do it? Did she answer to your letters?

RALPH: Time to time.

PHILOMENA SMITH: In that case, I am sure that Elaine will be happy to have own ghost, every girl's dream. But better if it will be real man with not common idea of courtship. Give her chance to know this. It's always impressive, when man tries to win woman's attention. Still it could be chasing person without normal explanation. You should understand that not all your

actions are harmless kid's joke. Impress woman and made her afraid of everything are two different results of complicated flirt.

RALPH: Are you sure?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Meanwhile I will suggest to you stop there and try to be less para normal. Deal? I will message to Elaine and ask her to come here immediately. I will tell that found new evidence.

*Blackout.*



RALPH: Will she come?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Did you change your mind? Do you want to disappear in the sunset?

RALPH: What she will think about me?

PHILOMENA SMITH: I will give you the best opportunity to find out this. By the way, if not mention your personal interest, Elaine is good architect?

RALPH: Yes. Why you ask?

PHILOMENA SMITH: I am thinking after this investigation to propose her work in my house. You won't mind that?

RALPH: No, I could only highly recommend her as professional.

PHILOMENA SMITH: Let's say that I am impressed and will talk with her.

RALPH: It's her car.

*Blackout.*

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*Scene 7.*

*Philomena knits, enters Bartholomew.*



PHILOMENA SMITH: You didn't manage to catch evening train?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Train?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Of course, if it was trip on train and if this trip was to London.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Sorry, dear.

PHILOMENA SMITH: How was your day?

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Work, nothing to tell you, sorry. And your day?

PHILOMENA SMITH: Also nothing important. By the way, I found decorator for the house.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: Really? How you manage?

PHILOMENA SMITH: I have own little secrets.

BARTHOLOMEW SMITH: I always knew, you are proper candidate for investigation job. Any chocolate cakes remained?

PHILOMENA SMITH: In our house it's stupid question, as usual, covered on the plate.

*Bartholomew kisses Philomena in cheek.*

*Philomena winks.*

*CURTAIN.*





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