

Scene 3

The lights come up. The draperies are open; it's an overcast afternoon. The axe, the crossbow, and Sidney's jacket are gone, as well as the two bodies. The fireplace is empty. Otherwise everything is as it was.

Helga, in mid-trance, stands by the chair where Myra dies. Porter stands nearby, watching Helga intently.

HELGA. They kill Mrs. Bruhl.

PORTER. What? She died of a heart attack!

HELGA. They...make it to happen. (*Holding the chair with both hands, eyes closed.*) Pain she feels—is that she sees Bruhl kill boy.

PORTER. Now hold on a minute; the boy didn't—

HELGA. (*Interrupting him.*) Quiet! (*Stays in her trance.*) Bruhl shows her play from boy, good play. Boy comes, Bruhl kills—around neck, tight—to take play. She helps him carry boy out. Pain brings me, but now I am gone—and boy is from grave! Comes with log! No! No! Please! I tried to stop—EIIII!

Helga winces, and lets out a breath.

She dies.

She comes out of the trance, blinks.

PORTER. My God! A fake murder to bring about a real one! Are you sure that's what happened?

Helga nods, leaves the chair, is drawn to the desk.

I thought it was strange, the boy stepping in on such short notice...

HELGA. (*At Clifford's side of the desk.*) Was no play...

PORTER. There wasn't?

HELGA. But now boy writes it... All they have done... (*Moving to Sidney's side.*) Bruhl discovers...

PORTER. I saw the boy locking his drawer!

HELGA. Is afraid, Bruhl. Play will bring shame.

PORTER. A play about *them*? Killing Myra?

Helga nods.

I'll bet he was afraid!

HELGA. Pretends to help, but...tricks boy to take axe...for play... and—shoots with gun? Ja, but is no bullet! Boy has tricked *him*, to use to make more of play! Chains him, will go! But chains come apart!

PORTER. The Houdini set!

HELGA. Shoots boy with arrow! On stairs!

PORTER. And drags him in and puts him by the axe!

HELGA. Burns play...

PORTER. The ashes in the fireplace!

HELGA. (*Her hand on Sidney's chair.*) Calls police.

PORTER. And while he was speaking—

HELGA. Boy pulls arrow from chest and— (*A stabbing gesture.*) —attacks. Just as I saw four weeks ago...

She draws a deep, spent breath.

PORTER. My God, what a story! It's—it's better than *The Murder Game*!

A thought strikes him; he ponders it, moving near Clifford's chair. Helga looks across the desk at him.

HELGA. You are thinking—it could be play?

PORTER. It has the *feel* of one, doesn't it? (*Looks around.*) Everything happening in the one room... (*Thinks, finger-counts.*) Five characters...

HELGA. (*Looks into the distance.*) *Deathtrap*...

PORTER. Say, *that's* a catchy title.

Porter thinks, wonders.

I couldn't write *Frankfurter*...but maybe I could write *Deathtrap*...

HELGA. Ja, ja, I see theater! Inside, much applause! Outside, long line of ticket-buyers, shivering in cold!

PORTER. My goodness, that's encouraging!

HELGA. (*Turns to him.*) But— (*Taps her chest.*) —is my idea.

PORTER. Your idea? How can you say that? It's—it was *Sidney's* idea, and the boy's! They lived it!

HELGA. But if I not tell, you not know.

PORTER. (*Considers the point.*) That's true; I can't deny that. And you've supplied me with a title—which I may or may not use...

HELGA. We share money half and half.

PORTER. Are you serious? I'm going to go home and work nights and weekends, for months, maybe even give up my vacation. All you've done is come in here and touch the furniture for two minutes. *If I do in fact—*

HELGA. (*Interrupting him.*) If you not share money—I tell about telephone.

PORTER. Telephone?

HELGA. (*Looking into the distance again.*) You speak through handkerchief, in high voice. Say dirty words to all your friends.

Porter blanches. Helga turns to him.

For shame, a man like you, important lawyer with wife and two daughters—no, three daughters—to make such telephonings! Tsk tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk!

Porter starts menacingly toward her.

PORTER. You interfering busybody...

Helga runs to the wall; grabs up and brandishes the dagger.

HELGA. Be careful, knife is sharp. Amsterdam police have taught me self-defense. I warn you, I am strong and unafraid!

PORTER. (*Simultaneously.*) Bitch! Whore! Foreign slut. Dutch pervert!

The curtain falls as they circle the desk.

End of Play

Scene 2

When the lights come up, Clifford, in a different shirt, is standing at his side of the desk squaring up a sizable thickness of paper and looking pleased with himself. Sidney's typewriter is covered, Clifford's isn't. The room is quite dark; the desk lamp and a light outside the front door fan-light are the only illumination. Wind can be heard. Through the darkness outside the closed French doors a flashlight approaches; the person holding it raps at the doors. Clifford starts. He puts the papers down and, as the person raps again, goes warily toward the doors.

HELGA. (*Shining the flashlight onto her face.*) Mr. Bruhl? Is I, Helga ten Dorp!

Clifford turns a lamp on at R. and goes and unbolts the French doors and opens them.

CLIFFORD. Come in. Mr. Bruhl isn't here now.

HELGA. (*Coming in, in a raincoat and kerchief.*) I come through wood; is less to walk.

CLIFFORD. (*Closing the doors.*) He should be back any minute.

HELGA. You are?

CLIFFORD. His secretary, Clifford Anderson.

HELGA. (*Offers her hand.*) I am Helga ten Dorp. I am psychic.

CLIFFORD. (*Shaking her hand.*) I know, Mr. Bruhl's told me about you. I understand you predicted his wife's death.

HELGA. (*Coming into the room, pocketing her flashlight.*) Ja, ja, was much pain. Right here. (*Pats her chest.*) Very sad. Such a nice lady. Ei, this room... He is well, Mr. Bruhl?

CLIFFORD. Yes, fine. He went out to dinner, the first time since... He said he'd be back by ten and it's about a quarter past now.

HELGA. Will be big storm! Much wind and rain, lightning and thunder. Trees will fall.

CLIFFORD. Are you sure?

HELGA. Ja, was on radio. (*Takes her kerchief off.*) I come to borrow candles. Are none in house. You have?

CLIFFORD. I don't know. I haven't noticed any but there must be some; I'll go look. Why don't you sit down?

HELGA. Thank you.

Clifford starts for the foyer. Helga starts to sit but rises, pointing.
You wear boots!

Clifford stops, and after a moment turns.

CLIFFORD. Everyone does these days. They're very comfortable.

HELGA. You are for long time secretary to Mr. Bruhl?

CLIFFORD. No. I just came here—about three weeks ago. After Mrs. Bruhl died.

Helga turns from him, worried and perplexed.

I'll go look for—

He is interrupted by the unlocking and opening of the front door. Sidney comes in, switching the foyer light on and the outside light off. He's in a trenchcoat over a shirt, tie, and jacket. As he closes the door:

SIDNEY. Hi. What a bore that—

CLIFFORD. (*Interrupting him.*) Mr. Bruhl! Hello. Mrs. ten Dorp is here.

He and Sidney exchange a look.

SIDNEY. Oh.

He comes to the doorway, smiling.

Hello.

HELGA. (*Going toward him.*) Good evening, Mr. Bruhl.

SIDNEY. (*Meeting her, shaking her hand.*) How are you?

HELGA. Well.

SIDNEY. Did you get my note?

HELGA. Ja, thank you.

SIDNEY. (*Taking his coat off.*) Yours was most kind. And the flowers...

CLIFFORD. Do we have any candles? There's a storm coming up and Mrs. ten Dorp wants to borrow some.

Myra rises, goes to the buffet, puts her glass down and turns.

MYRA. In a month or so, if we haven't been arrested, I want you to leave. We'll have a few arguments in people's living rooms—you can write them for us, little tiffs about money or something—and then you'll move out. I wish you could take the vegetable patch with you, but since you can't, you'll buy it from me, as soon as the money starts rolling in. Before the Rolls-Royce and before you go to the Riviera!

Sidney, concerned, rises and starts toward her; she's growing more distraught.

You'll buy the vegetable patch, and the house, and the whole nine-point-three acres! We'll get Buck Raymond or Maury Escher to set a fair price!

She turns and moves away, near tears, as Sidney reaches for her.

SIDNEY. Darling, you've had a shocking and—

MYRA. Get away from me!

SIDNEY. You've had a shocking and painful experience and so have I. I'm terrified that I'll be caught and absolutely guilt-ridden about having been insane enough to do it. I'm going to give half the money to the New Dramatists League, I swear I am! This isn't the time to talk about *anything*. In a few days, when we're both ourselves again, things will look much cheerier.

MYRA. You *are* yourself, right now. And so am I. In a few days—

The doorbell chime stops her. Sidney freezes. Myra points toward the door.

Go ahead. "He wrote me a twerpy letter, Officer."

SIDNEY. It must be Lottie and Ralph, come to yammer about the movie...

MYRA. (*Wiping her cheeks.*) It's probably Helga ten Dorp.

SIDNEY. Don't be silly.

The doorbell chimes again.

It's Lottie and Ralph, damn them. We've got to let them in; can you face them? Maybe you'd better go upstairs; I'll tell them you—

MYRA. (*Interrupting him.*) No. I'll stay here, and let you worry that I'll fall apart!

Sidney eyes her anxiously. The doorbell chimes a third time. Sidney starts for the door.

SIDNEY. Coming!

Myra tries to compose herself, moves into view of the door.

Who is it?

HELGA. (*Off.*) I am your neighbor in house of McBains. Please, will you let me come in?

Sidney turns, wide-eyed. Myra too is startled and frightened.

Is most urgent I speak to you. I call the information but the lady will tell me not your number. Please, will you let me come in?

Sidney turns to the door.

I am friend of Paul Wyman. Is most urgent!

SIDNEY. (*Opening the door.*) Come in.

Helga ten Dorp comes into the foyer, a stocky, strong-jawed Teutonic woman in her early fifties, in the throes of considerable distress. She wears slacks and a hastily seized and unfastened jacket.

HELGA. I apologize for so late I come but you will forgive when I make the explaining.

She comes D. into the study. Sidney closes the door.

Ja, ja, is room I see. Beams, and window like so... (*Holds her forehead, wincing.*) And the pain! Such pain!

Helga sees Myra and recognizes her as the source of it; approaches her.

Pain. Pain. Pain. Pain...

She moves her hands about Myra, as if wanting to touch and comfort her but unable to.

Pain. Pain. Pain!

SIDNEY. (*Coming nervously D.*) We're neither of us up to snuff today...

Helga turns, sees the weapons.

HELGA. Ei! Just as I see them! *Uuuch!* Why keep you such pain-covered things?

SIDNEY. They're antiques, and souvenirs from plays. I'm a playwright.

HELGA. Ja, Sidney Bruhl; Paul Wyman tells me. We make together book.

SIDNEY. My wife, Myra...

MYRA. How do you do...

HELGA. What gives you such pain, dear lady?

MYRA. Nothing. I'm—fine, really.

HELGA. No, no; something you see pains you. *(To both of them.)* Paul tells you of *me*? I am Helga ten Dorp. I am psychic.

SIDNEY. Yes, he did. In fact we were going to ask—

HELGA. *(Interrupting him.)* For hours now I feel the pain from here. And more than pain. Since eight-thirty, when begins the *Merv Griffin Show*. I am on it next week; you will watch?

SIDNEY. Yes, yes, certainly. Make a note of that, Myra.

HELGA. Thursday night. The Amazing Kreskin also. What they want *him* for, I do not know. I call the information but the lady will tell me not your number. I call Paul but he is not at home; he is in place with red walls, eating with chopsticks. I call the information again. I say, "Is urgent, you *must* tell me number; I am Helga ten Dorp, I am psychic." She say, "Guess number." I try, but only I see the two-two-six, which is everybody, ja? So I come here now. *(Looking sympathetically at Myra.)* Because pain gets worse. And more than pain...

She moves away and wanders the room, a hand to her forehead. Sidney and Myra look anxiously at each other.

MYRA. More than pain?

HELGA. Ja, is something else here, something frightening. No, it will interfere.

SIDNEY. What will?

HELGA. The drink you would give me. Must keep unclouded the head. Never drink. Only when images become too many. Then I get drunk.