

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. Peter Hurkos 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. *(She goes close to the weapons, one hand to her forehead, the other hand passing back and forth)*

SIDNEY and MYRA stand motionless as HELGA's hand passes over the garrotte. She takes up the dagger, turns with it, closes her eyes.

Was used many times by beautiful dark-haired woman. But only pretending...

SIDNEY That's amazing! It's from my play The Murder Game and it was used every night by a beautiful dark-haired actress!

HELGA Will be used again. By another woman. Not in play. But...because of play... *(Opens her eyes)* Because of play, another woman uses this knife.

SIDNEY and MYRA stare at her. She replaces the dagger.

You should put away these things.

SIDNEY Yes, yes, I think I will. In a month or so I'll sell the whole collection. Tired of them anyway.

HELGA May be too late. *(Looks gravely at SIDNEY and MYRA)* I do not enjoy to make unhappy people, but I must speak when I see something, ja?

SIDNEY Well I don't know actually; you *could* keep quiet. I mean, you're supposed to be resting, aren't you? Not in your own country...

HELGA Must speak. Is why God gives gift. Is danger here. Much danger. *(To SIDNEY)* To you... *(To MYRA)* And to you. Is-death in this room. Is something that-invites death, that carries death... Deathtrap? This is word in English, "deathtrap"?

MYRA Yes...

SIDNEY It's the title of a play I've been working on. That's where you've got it from. There's a death in the play; I'm

sure that's what you're—responding to. I've been working there at the desk...

HELGA (*moving around the desk, touching it*) Maybe... But feels like *real* death...

SIDNEY I try to be convincing, act everything out as I write it...

HELGA's attention is caught by the chair in which CLIFFORD sat. She goes to it, takes hold of its back with both hands, closes her eyes, throws back her head. MYRA trembles; SIDNEY puts a hand to her shoulder.

HELGA Man...in boots... Young man... (*Opens her eyes, looks at SIDNEY*) Here in this room—he attacks you.

SIDNEY He—attacks me?

HELGA (*indicating the weapons*) With one of those. Comes as friend. To help you? To work with you? But attacks. (*Closes her eyes, shakes her head*) Is confusion here...

SIDNEY Yes, well I'll certainly be on the lookout for a young man in boots! We're going to be Japanese from now on; shoes off at the door!

HELGA He sits in this chair...and he talks of... Diane...

SIDNEY There's a Diane in the play...

HELGA And two other people... Smith—and Colonna. No, one person. Small. Black. (*Opens her eyes*) Is in play a black man, Smith Colonna?

SIDNEY Never heard the name before.

HELGA (*closes her eyes again*) Is very confusing image... (*Shakes her head, opens her eyes*) Is gone now. Nothing else comes.

SIDNEY Well...that was a most impressive demonstration! Wasn't it, dear?

HELGA *is coming away from the chair, collecting herself.*

(*to HELGA*) The way you picked up the name of the play, and Diane, and dagger business; really awesome!

HELGA Remember what else I tell you. Dagger is used again, by woman, because of play. And man in boots attacks you. Of these two things I am certain. All else is—confusing. (*To MYRA*) Pain is less now, ja?

MYRA Yes. There wasn't any, really. (*Smiles nervously at her*)

SIDNEY What a marvellous gift! I must confess I've been sceptical about ESP, but you've convinced me it's genuine.

HELGA Oh yes, is genuine, and sometime not happy gift to be owner of.

MYRA Have you always had it?

HELGA Since I was child. Never could I enjoy a game of hide-and-go-seek. Was too easy, you understand? And parents did not wrap Christmas presents; why wasting paper? Later, in my teen ages, walking with boys—ach, such images!

SIDNEY Won't you have that drink now? I'd like very much to talk with you.

HELGA No, thank you. I must go back to house. You will come take dinner with me some time. I will tell you all of my life. Would make very good play. (*To MYRA*) When child you are living in large house with yellow shutters, ja?

MYRA That's right! Yes!

HELGA (*nods complacently*) Always when moon is full I am in top form. (*Shakes MYRA's hand*) Goodnight.

MYRA Goodnight.

HELGA (*her face clouds; she touches MYRA's cheek*) Be careful... (*She releases MYRA's hand and turns and takes SIDNEY's, which he gives a shade uneasily*) You also...

SIDNEY I intend to. No boots allowed. Goodnight.

HELGA Goodnight.

HELGA *turns and starts toward the foyer, SIDNEY following. She stops, turns, points warningly at SIDNEY and at MYRA.*

The hand clutching his throat stops him; it pulls him backward and CLIFFORD comes up from behind the chair, stabbing again and again into SIDNEY's chest with the crossbow bolt. CLIFFORD stops stabbing and hauls himself erect, glassy-eyed, the bolt in his hand, his chest bloody. He crumples to the floor. SIDNEY, his hands to his own bloody chest, gasps and twitches and dies.

Thunder and—.

Blackout.

Scene Three

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 died. 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! *(Winces and lets out breath)* She dies. *(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... (*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. (*Thinks, wonders*) I couldn't write Frankfurter... but maybe I could write Deathtrap...

HELGA Ja, ja, I see theatre! 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 boys! 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*.

(*turning to him*) For shame, a man like you, important lawyer with wife and two daughters—no, three daughters—to make such telephon-ings! Tsk tsk, tsk, tsk!

PORTER (*starts menacingly toward her*) You interfering busybody...

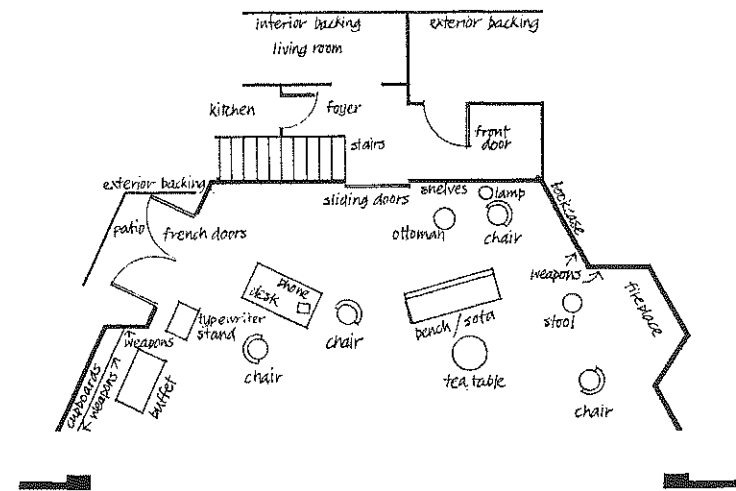
HELGA *runs to the wall; grabs up and brandishes the dagger*.

HELGA }
 PORTER } (together) { Be careful, knife is sharp. Amsterdam
 police have taught me self-defence. I
 warn you I am strong and unafraid!
 Bitch! Whore! Foreign slut! Dutch
 pervert!

They circle the desk as—.

The curtain falls.

FURNITURE AND PROPERTY LIST



ACT I

Scene One

Only essential pieces are listed. Further dressing may be added at the director's discretion

On stage: Bench/sofa

Three easy chairs. *On one:* Myra's glasses with case, needlework, needle and cotton, needlework bag

Ottoman

Tea table

Occasional table left. *On it:* table lamp (practical)

Occasional table right. *On it:* table lamp (practical)

Standard lamp (practical)

Bar/buffet. *On it:* Two decanters, bottles of brandy, Scotch, whisky, four brandy glasses, four small glasses, bottles of ginger ale, ice-tongs

Stool

Small filing cabinet

Typewriter stand

Sidney's desk with centre drawer lock (practical).

On it: desk lamp, telephone, reference books,