

Scene Three

When the lights come up, MYRA is sitting near centre, thinking, an empty brandy glass in her hand. The moonlight outside the french doors is stronger now and coming from directly overhead.

MYRA looks at her glass, and after a moment, rises and goes to the buffet; pours herself a small amount of brandy. SIDNEY comes to the french doors, wipes his feet, brushes dirt from his trouser legs, and enters. He looks at MYRA—who has turned and is looking at him—and closes the doors and pulls the draperies over them. He comes farther into the room.

SIDNEY Make mine a double. I've got myself a bit of a chill. (Takes the breast-pocket handkerchief from his jacket on the chair; wipes his hands.) Along with incipient blisters, aching arms, and small devils poking pitchforks into what I believe is my lumbago. (Picks up the jacket, puts it on.) In Murderer's Child I had Dr Mannheim bury Teddy in forty-five minutes. In future I'll know better.

MYRA goes and resumes her seat while SIDNEY puts the handkerchief back in his breast pocket and picks up the wrong handcuff key from the floor.

We're out one hearth-rug, but I saw some nice ones in the Yield House the other day. (He pockets the key, puts the chair in its exact place; sees MYRA sitting and no sign of his brandy. He considers this, then picks up the ginger ale glasses and heads for the buffet.) I have a feeling you're about to deliver a speech. Would you mind holding off until I've poured my own brandy and sat down?

MYRA I had intended to. I've learned something in eleven years of melodrama.

SIDNEY Good girl. (Pours his brandy and crosses with it, groaning and rubbing the small of his back; sits, painfully,

downstage right, sips the brandy, and stretches out a bit more comfortably.) Go.

MYRA (waits a moment, and does) I'd be very happy living on your money, but I don't relish the thought of living on his. I've tried to understand how you could do it, bearing in mind your disappointments and your-embarrassment in our financial situation—but I can't. And how will you be able to feel like a winner when we'll both know it's his play? I can't understand that either. You're-alien to me, Sidney, and it can't be only since five o'clock this afternoon. You must always have been very different from the person I thought you were.

SIDNEY is troubled by the speech.

I don't think the police are going to be as unconcerned as you do, so I don't want anything to happen that will look suspicious if they come to question us, but—

SIDNEY (interrupting her) How will they? He vanished from Milford; this is Westport.

MYRA They'll check into his past associations! He must have gotten your address from the university even if he did lie about the phone number!

SIDNEY If they come I'll simply say he wrote to me. A twerpy little letter asking for advice. And I answered it. Or maybe I just threw it away.

MYRA (rises, goes to the buffet, puts her glass down and turns) 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 towards 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 (*offstage*) I am your neighbour 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 apologise for so late I come but you will forgive when I make the explaining. (*She comes downstage 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! (*Sees MYRA and recognises her as the source of it; approaches her*) Pain. Pain. Pain. Pain... (*Moves her hands about MYRA, as if wanting to touch and comfort her but unable to*) Pain. Pain. Pain!

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

HELGA (*turns, sees the weapons*) Eit! Just as I see them! *Utouch!* 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. Peter Hukos 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.