

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.

START

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

END