

Heide's Last Hit

by Michael Olsen

Characters: Heide, the assassin, 20s (F)
 Clare, the client, 30s (F)
 Thomas, the target, late 20s (M)
 Danielle, the housemate, 20s (F)

Lights come up on a living room that is stylish and chic. In addition to a rug C, there is a couch upper SR, with a coffee table in front of it. SL there is a CD player. Silence.

HEIDE enters SL and goes to the CD player. She drops a fat contract beside the CD player. She puts in a CD, hits play, and exits SL. Heide enters again from SL, only this time, in stops and starts, she drags the body of THOMAS. She looks around for a moment, then drags him behind the couch, but we can still see his legs poking out one end.

Heide goes off SR and returns in a moment with a truly horrible multi-coloured quilt with shaggy bits hanging off it. She shakes the quilt and a cloud of dust comes off it. She then throws the quilt over the body.

Heide checks her watch. Seemingly satisfied, she unbuttons her coat and throws it onto the couch.

Heide goes off SR and returns a moment later with a bottle of champagne and a glass. She pours herself a glass, and raises it as in a toast.

HEIDE: To retirement.

DANIELLE enters SR. She has short hair, and wears a black suit and tie. Almost without trying she looks gorgeous and glamorous.

HEIDE: Danielle!

DANIELLE: Heide.

HEIDE: I—I didn't expect you home so soon.

DANIELLE: I finished early. I—What the hell is that? (*pointing to the coat*)

HEIDE: That's Thomas. He—

DANIELLE: No—that! (*pointing again at the coat*) That!

HEIDE: Oh. Sorry.

Heide snatches up her coat.

- DANIELLE:** You know my House Rule: Cleanliness isn't next to Godliness—cleanliness *is* godliness.
- HEIDE:** I'm sorry. It won't happen again.
- DANIELLE:** It was nice of you to celebrate my arrival, though. Thank you.
Danielle takes the glass of champagne off Heide and downs it in one gulp.
- DANIELLE:** You were going to ask me what kind of day I've had, weren't you?
- HEIDE:** Oh yes. What kind of day have you had?
- DANIELLE:** An absolute brute of a day.
- HEIDE:** Really?
- DANIELLE:** As a lesbian working in a bra shop I am in a constant state of arousal. I'm so visual, you see. It's so nice to finally come home and see you and feel all that free-floating lust and desire totally evaporate.
- HEIDE:** Glad to be of help.
- DANIELLE:** Now who is this Thomas?
- HEIDE:** Just another target.
- DANIELLE:** That's what you say about all of them, darling. "Just another target." What did you use this time? Hemlock? Foxglove? I know: thornapple.
- HEIDE:** That is so Harry Potter. I used an overdose of barbiturates.
- DANIELLE:** How very professional of you.
- HEIDE:** *(flatly)* I suppose so.
- DANIELLE:** Why so glum? I thought this was to be your last hit. You said you were retiring, didn't you? I would have thought the prospect of becoming a total burden on society would fill you with joy.
- HEIDE:** It does, it does, but there is always sadness, isn't there?
- DANIELLE:** True happiness wouldn't be complete without it, my dear.
- HEIDE:** Why can't I be happy like you?
- DANIELLE:** But I'm miserable!
- HEIDE:** You don't look it.
- DANIELLE:** That's the art of true misery: to hide it. When suffering is a joy, why share it?
- HEIDE:** Maybe you should try something new, something different.
- DANIELLE:** Like what?

- HEIDE:** I don't know. What about cooking?
- DANIELLE:** My womanhood is based around the fact that my culinary skills extend as far as toast and absolutely no further. It will have to be something else.
- HEIDE:** Well I don't know what it could be, but there has to be something out there that will challenge and stimulate you. Play the field!
- DANIELLE:** I will. For your sake, I will. I'll try. *(looking down at Thomas)* What did you say you gave this fellow? Barbiturates?
- HEIDE:** Yes.
- DANIELLE:** Why did you give him that?
- HEIDE:** To make it look like he overdosed on sleeping pills.
- DANIELLE:** Well, darling, he seems to be waking up.
- HEIDE:** What?
- Heide rushes over to check. We hear a groan escape Thomas.*
- HEIDE:** Oh no!
- DANIELLE:** I sincerely hope you're not planning on inviting him for dinner. I find men usually only come to dinner for the food.
- HEIDE:** No no of course not.
- Heide pulls out her gun. Danielle lays a restraining hand on the gun.*
- DANIELLE:** Oh, and another thing: don't do it here. Red wine is hard enough to get out of the rug let alone blood.
- HEIDE:** Alright.
- Heide holsters her gun.*
- HEIDE:** What am I going to do? The client's due here any minute!
- DANIELLE:** So you failed, darling. That's no crime. One should trumpet one's failures because they're usually so much more interesting than one's triumphs—and usually in greater supply.
- HEIDE:** But—
- DANIELLE:** Why don't you just roll him up in that beautiful quilt of yours and strangle him or something? You've always said you've felt a little removed from your work.
- HEIDE:** Yes, but I've never strangled anyone!
- DANIELLE:** Isn't that the wonderful thing about your job? You're learning and growing right up to the last moment.

Heide glances nervously at Thomas.

- HEIDE:** I can't do it.
- DANIELLE:** Of course you can do it. You're a professional. I've seen you bring your work home numerous times.
- HEIDE:** No, I mean, I really can't do it. I can't! Because—because...
- DANIELLE:** Because why? I mean, it's not like you slept with the fellow, is it? *(Pause)* Oh. My. God.
- HEIDE:** It just happened.
- DANIELLE:** How wicked of you! Sleeping with the pay cheque!
- HEIDE:** I told you it just happened! I—
- DANIELLE:** It never “just happens,” darling. It takes effort, will power and alcohol. In your case probably a lot of alcohol.
- HEIDE:** It was great! It was fantastic!
- DANIELLE:** Please spare me the details. I'm still trying to come to terms with the idea that you slept with a man of all things. I know you're heterosexual but that's no excuse. If you want company why not get what God intended and get a dog? They might have fleas but at least you can train them.
- HEIDE:** He actually made me—you know—
- DANIELLE:** Made you what? Breakfast?
- Heide pants heavily.*
- DANIELLE:** No! Really?
- HEIDE:** For the first time ever with someone else.
- DANIELLE:** You're making a mistake, my dear.
- HEIDE:** How so?
- DANIELLE:** It's not *who* you have them with that matters, it's that you have them at *all*.
- HEIDE:** Haven't you ever been in love?
- DANIELLE:** Love? My goodness of course I have. One night last year at the Hellfire Club. I'm firmly of the view you should always try everything once.
- HEIDE:** Who was she?
- DANIELLE:** She called herself Madame X. After the first lash I was in love. After the fifth I was in ecstasy. The woman used a stock whip like a drover and swore like one as well.
- HEIDE:** But what happened? Didn't you see her again?

- DANIELLE:** Never. But true love is always about loss.
- HEIDE:** That's so sad!
- DANIELLE:** I comfort myself that there are all sorts of love, though.
Danielle pulls out a small vibrator from her bag.
- DANIELLE:** If you ever need help, just let me know.
- HEIDE:** Thank you no, but—
- DANIELLE:** Not for you? I know what you need.
Danielle pulls out an impossibly large black dildo.
- DANIELLE:** I call him Big Jim and he sings to me.
- HEIDE:** No, no, I'm fine. Really. Thank you.
There is another groan from Thomas, and this time his feet move. Heide goes over and checks on him.
- HEIDE:** Help me get him up.
- DANIELLE:** I have a policy of never touching men. I don't touch them, they don't touch me.
- HEIDE:** I thought rules were meant to be broken
- DANIELLE:** Only rules worth breaking!
- HEIDE:** If we don't get him up and out of here—
- DANIELLE:** If *you* don't get him up and out of here.
- HEIDE:** I'll pay you.
- DANIELLE:** How much?
- HEIDE:** Fifty dollars?
- DANIELLE:** Seventy.
- HEIDE:** Sixty.
- DANIELLE:** Done. It's rather tedious having everyone know I'll do anything for money.
- HEIDE:** Come on!
Together Heide and Danielle drag Thomas out from behind the couch.
- DANIELLE:** Why couldn't you have chosen an anorexic?
- HEIDE:** Help me stand him up!
- DANIELLE:** Stand him up? How will that help? Is he going to dance the tango?

They heft Thomas to his feet.

DANIELLE: That's my job done.

Danielle walks away. Thomas sags but is caught by Heide.

HEIDE: Danielle!

DANIELLE: I expect payment in full by the end of the week.

HEIDE: *(hissing)* Danielle!

But Danielle has gone off SR. Heide sways with Thomas and finally manoeuvres him or lets him fall onto the couch. Heide sits Thomas up, but he keeps falling over. Finally, Heide rummages in her coat and pulls out a syringe. She injects Thomas. Instantly Thomas is awake and aware—but his body hasn't quite woken up. Heide holds his head up straight.

THOMAS: Heide!

Thomas goes to throw his arms around Heide but his head flops down and his arms flop in front of him.

THOMAS: What's the matter? My arms! My head!

Heide again holds Thomas' head up.

HEIDE: You're supposed to be dead.

THOMAS: Am I? I don't feel dead. I don't feel normal, but I certainly don't feel dead.

HEIDE: No, I failed.

THOMAS: What do you mean you failed?

HEIDE: Clare paid me to kill you.

THOMAS: No. Clare? But she loves me!

HEIDE: No she doesn't.

Heide goes over to the CD player and retrieves the contract. Thomas flops over on the couch. Heide pulls Thomas up and shows him the last page.

HEIDE: See? This is the contract she signed.

THOMAS: That does look like Clare's signature. Can you flip over the pages?

Heide flips over page after page of the contract.

THOMAS: I'm a speed reader. *(Thomas finally flops back on the couch)* I must say it's rather depressing to wake and find out that your nearest and dearest wants you dead.

HEIDE: Aren't you mad at me?

THOMAS: Mad at you? What on earth for?

- HEIDE:** For trying to kill you.
- THOMAS:** I must admit that's put a bit of a dampener on things, but I'm sure we can overcome it. Couples have come back from far worse.
- HEIDE:** Are you calling us a couple?
- Heide pulls Thomas to an upright position.*
- THOMAS:** One night with you my dear has erased every other woman from my mind. When you came like a banshee and stripped the wallpaper off with those screams I was truly terrified. It was the most exhilarating moment of my life.
- Heide throws her arms around Thomas.*
- HEIDE:** Everything's OK, then, isn't it?
- THOMAS:** Everything's OK. *(Pause)* I am a tiny bit put out, though, I must admit.
- HEIDE:** By what?
- THOMAS:** Well, even after we'd made love you still tried to bump me off.
- HEIDE:** But I'm a professional. That's what being professional means: following through on a job you hate—for the money. It was nothing personal.
- THOMAS:** That's OK then. By the way, how much do you charge?
- HEIDE:** Ten thousand dollars. It's the going rate.
- THOMAS:** No more than that?
- HEIDE:** It's an all-inclusive fee. I even dispose of the body.
- THOMAS:** Where was I going to wind up?
- HEIDE:** In Caroline Springs. As landfill.
- THOMAS:** How wonderful.
- HEIDE:** Oh my God!
- THOMAS:** What?
- HEIDE:** She's coming! She's coming!
- THOMAS:** Who?
- HEIDE:** Clare. Miss Briar. She's coming to pay the balance of the account!
- THOMAS:** In person?
- HEIDE:** Yes!

- THOMAS:** I don't know if I want to see her. I think her actions have definitely highlighted a problem or two in our relationship. This will take months of therapy to sort out.
- HEIDE:** You two see a therapist?
- THOMAS:** Of course. Doesn't everyone? Doctor Angelica has been very helpful in helping us identify our commitment issues.
- HEIDE:** What commitment issue is that?
- THOMAS:** Clare thinks I should be committed—not to the relationship, just committed—and I think she's not committed to me at all.
- HEIDE:** There could be something in that.
- THOMAS:** Yes.
- HEIDE:** But what are we going to do?
- THOMAS:** Do? There's nothing to do. All I'm going to do is confront her and let her know I'm very disappointed in her.
- HEIDE:** But she won't pay me!
- THOMAS:** Of course not. I'm not dead.
- HEIDE:** Exactly.
- THOMAS:** I don't see your point.
- HEIDE:** This was going to be my last hit! I was going to retire! But I can't retire if I don't have the money!
- THOMAS:** I see your point. How much do you still need?
- HEIDE:** I've budgeted it all down to the cent. I need that five thousand she owes me.
- THOMAS:** Only five thousand dollars? That doesn't seem like a lot. Only poor people would think that's a lot of money. *(Pause)* Hang on, aren't you too young to retire?
- HEIDE:** Retirement's wasted on the old. I want to enjoy mine.
- THOMAS:** But what exactly are you going to do when you retire?
- Heide retrieves the horrible quilted blanket from behind the couch and holds up the quilt for Thomas to see.*
- THOMAS:** It's beautiful.
- HEIDE:** I want to quilt—free form—full time. That's why I need the money! Materials are so expensive.
- THOMAS:** Free form quilting. You certainly have a gift for it. The colours, the design.

- HEIDE:** You think so?
- THOMAS:** Quality can never be denied.
We hear the sound of a doorbell.
- THOMAS:** *(hissing)* She's here!
- HEIDE:** *(calling out)* I'll get it!
- THOMAS:** *(hissing)* What are we going to do? Clare will be very disappointed when she finds out I'm not dead, and believe me, you wouldn't like her when she's disappointed.
- HEIDE:** *(hissing)* Then let's pretend. Here, lie down behind the couch.
The doorbell rings again. Thomas lies down behind the couch and Heide drapes the quilt over him so we don't see his feet.
- THOMAS:** *(hissing)* I love you.
- HEIDE:** You do?
Another ring of the doorbell. Heide finally goes to the door.
- HEIDE:** Miss Briar.
CLARE enters and takes a commanding stance in the centre of the room where she can't see Thomas' feet.
- CLARE:** There seems to be something wrong with your doorbell.
- HEIDE:** Last time I checked it was working perfectly.
- CLARE:** We rang three times before you came to the door.
- HEIDE:** I'm sorry. I was busy.
- CLARE:** What is the point in having a doorbell if the occupants don't respond immediately?
- HEIDE:** I've often thought that.
- CLARE:** No you haven't but we'll let it pass for now. *(Clare takes out a pen and notebook)* Now, where is the merchandise?
- HEIDE:** You mean the body?
- CLARE:** What we contracted for.
Heide gestures to the couch.
- CLARE:** You have turned him into a couch.
- HEIDE:** No, no. *(Heide points out Thomas behind the couch)* Here.
- CLARE:** Ah. Very good.

- HEIDE:** The balance is—
- CLARE:** Were there any complications?
- HEIDE:** Complications?
- CLARE:** We did ask that it be painless. For some unfathomable reason the boy thinks pain is not a pleasure.
- HEIDE:** I used an overdose of barbiturates.
- CLARE:** Very good. And how did you deliver the dose?
- HEIDE:** I'm sorry I never discuss my methods with clients. Professional ethics.
- CLARE:** How quaint. Ethics in the assassination business. You sound like a doctor—or a pet shop owner. Ethics.
- HEIDE:** If there are no rules we're no better than animals.
- CLARE:** Animals have their own ethics. They're a lot simpler than ours—but they do have standards. But we didn't come here for a debate, did we?
- HEIDE:** No.
- CLARE:** How much did we agree on?
- Clare pulls out a cheque book and pen.*
- THOMAS:** Five thousand dollars.
- HEIDE:** Five thousand. Yes.
- Clare fills out the cheque and is about to hand it over when we hear a sneeze from behind the couch.*
- CLARE:** We heard something.
- HEIDE:** Did you? I didn't—
- We hear another sneeze.*
- CLARE:** Unmistakable this time.
- Clare glances behind the couch.*
- CLARE:** Hello, Thomas.
- THOMAS:** I can explain everything.
- CLARE:** No explanation necessary. *(to Heide)* You've obviously failed and will be returning our deposit.