

THE DANGER OF STRANGERS

By Glenn Alterman

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SYNOPSIS: Two strangers are sitting in an apartment. Their conversation starts out playful and a bit seductive when something happens that changes the tone dramatically. There's Her side, His side, and the truth—this short thriller is sure to leave you in suspense.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 1 male)

HE (m)	An attractive man in his 30's or early 40's. Friendly and outgoing. <i>(113 lines)</i>
SHE (f).....	An attractive woman in her 30's or early 40's. She is friendly and polite, fully seductive. <i>(115 lines)</i>

DURATION: 20 minutes.

TIME: The present, a hot August afternoon, lunch time.

SETTING: The living room of a one bedroom apartment in the West 50's overlooking Ninth Avenue in New York City.

AT START: *The living room of a one bedroom apartment in the West 50's overlooking 9th Avenue in New York City. Bright sunlight is shining in from a window. An attractive man and a woman are sitting opposite each other, just finishing their coffee. A small coffee table separates them. His sport jacket is neatly folded on the back of his chair. His tie and the top couple of buttons on his shirt are opened. He's sweating but trying not to show it. She, on the other hand, doesn't seem to notice the heat at all. In her light beige blouse and tan skirt, she seems cool and crisp. There is a polite, yet playful sexual tension in the air. A small, rotating floor fan attempts to cool them off.*

SHE: More?

HE: Hm?

SHE: More coffee?

HE: No, thanks.

SHE: Sure?

HE: Yeah.

SHE: You sure?

HE: Uh-huh. *(A wink in his voice.)* But I am tempted.

SHE: Are you?

HE: *You* are tempting me.

SHE: *(Slightly coy.)* Am I?

HE: C'mon, you know you are.

SHE looks down at her coffee cup, lifts it to her lips, takes a sip. HE watches her, then smiles.

SHE: What's so funny?

HE: Funny?

SHE: You're smiling.

HE: Am I?

SHE: C'mon, you know you are.

HE: I don't know, just seems funny.

SHE: What?

HE: My bein' here.

SHE: Does it?

HE: See, you really don't know me.

SHE: No, I don't.

HE: So you don't know that this isn't me. —Well, it's me, yeah, sure.

But it's not like typical me.

SHE: No?

HE: I don't usually do this.

SHE: Do what?

HE: Come up to a strange woman's apartment, middle of the afternoon, on my lunch hour.

SHE: No?

HE: No, s'a first. See, I'm basically an old-fashioned guy

SHE: Are you?

HE: Yeah, big believer in the old "how do you do's. Y'know like introductions, formalities, like that. Even at work, everything's always in order; my desk—perfect, every pencil...

SHE: How do you do?

HE: Hm?

SHE: (*Smiling, slowly, each word, deliberate.*) How... do... you... do?

HE: No, c'mon, I'm serious here.

SHE: So am I. It's Herb, right?

HE: Yeah, Herb, Herbie.

SHE: (*Playfully, offering her hand.*) How do you do, Herbie?

HE: (*Shaking her hand, slightly confused.*) I'm fine, thanks.

SHE: See how simple that was? Now we know each other.

HE: Well...

SHE: So how about a drink?

HE: Drink?

SHE: Scotch alright?

HE: Told ya, I gotta get back.

SHE: C'mon, surely you've got time for a small cocktail.

HE: I can't, I'm sorry. Wish I could.

SHE: (*Softly seductive.*) Have a drink with me Herb. C'mon, nice, cool, scotch on the rocks. Lemon twist. Cool you right off. You're sweating, you know that?

HE: Yeah, s'hot.

SHE: Must be at least ninety today.

HE: At least.

SHE: So how about that scotch?

HE: You don't give up, do ya?

SHE: (*Getting up.*) On the rocks? (*Smiling.*) Or do you like it straight up?

HE: (*A slight pause, then smiling.*) Couple of cubes, not much scotch, little water; short one.

SHE: Coming right up.

SHE goes over to the counter, HE watches her. SHE takes a couple of glasses from the cupboard, starts to make their drinks. SHE notices him watching her, smiles.

HE: (*Smiling.*) Short one.

SHE: I know, I heard you.

SHE starts cutting lemon peels for their drinks. HE turns back around, opens a couple of buttons on his shirt, takes his tie off, rolls up his sleeves, looks around. The lights come down on everything except for her. HE freezes in place. She speaks straight out, seems upset.

SHE: (*Her alibi.*) I had a few drinks. Alright, maybe more than a few. I don't know. I've been... My sister died recently. She was murdered here, in the bedroom. They still don't know who... We were close, Claire and I, very close. I'd been straightening out some of her things, putting them in boxes. And I decided to take a nap. Went into the bedroom to lie down. I was almost asleep when I heard something. Felt like someone was in the room. It was dark, I looked up. And he was standing there, this man. Maybe I'd left the door opened, I don't know. He was just standing there in the dark. I could barely see him, but I saw the knife, the kitchen knife! He told me if I screamed, made a sound, he'd kill me. Told me to get undressed. I was numb, didn't know what to do. I couldn't move! He started unbuttoning my blouse. I... let him. He got on top of me. I said, "Don't, please don't!" I felt... heard his zipper. His face was right in mine. His eyes, breath! Then... Was like the room started spinning! I just... I went crazy, threw him off me! All my strength! The knife, it fell. The two of us scrambling in the dark. I grabbed it—the knife! He was right there. He was... I... (*SHE jabs in the air.*) IN! IN! I kept... (*Jabbing the air.*) IN! IN! Then... he fell; fell down. I... He tried...! He would have raped me, you understand?! I had no...!

He's probably the one who killed Claire. Don't you see? He was probably... He tried... He... He...!

The lights quickly come back up, the scene continues as before.

HE: S'a nice place ya got here.

SHE: *(Smiling, calmly.)* Thanks, s'my sisters.

HE: Oh, you share?

SHE: No, she's out of town. I'm just taking care of things.

HE: What's it a one bedroom?

SHE: Uh-huh.

HE: S'very nice. I like how she decorated.

SHE: I'll tell her.

HE: This the window?

SHE: Hm?

HE: Can you see the pay phone on the corner from that window there?

SHE: No, that's not the one. The window you're talking about is in the bedroom.

HE: Where's...?

SHE: The bedroom? In the back. I'll show you later. But first... *(SHE brings their drinks over.)* Here we go, iced and ready.

HE takes his glass, toasts.

HE: Bottoms.

SHE: *(Smiling, toasting.)* Bottoms up.

They both take a sip of their drinks.

HE: I can probably use a good drink.

SHE: Yeah?

HE: S'been so crazy at work lately. Stress city. I work for Honda, over at fifty-fifth and eleventh.

SHE: Hm.

HE: So I said. Let me get outta here, y'know? 'Fore I get a heart attack or somethin'. Figured a light lunch. Maybe take a little walk—escape. Go over to Ninth Avenue, get some Chinese. And so I'm walking...

SHE: When you heard the phone ring.

HE: Right. And normally, well normally, I never would have picked up.

SHE: No?

HE: Nah, figure it's some crazy or something. Y'know, New York.

SHE: But you did.

HE: *(Smiling.)* Guess old Mister Curiosity got a hold of me.

SHE: *(Smiling.)* I'm glad he did.

HE: So am I.

SHE: And isn't this better?

HE: Better?

SHE: Better than some greasy Chinese food shoved down too fast.
Comfy, cozy, cooling off with a nice, cool drink. You took your tie off.

HE: What? Yeah, s'kina hot in here.

SHE: It is warm, I'm sorry. Air conditioner's broke. And this fan doesn't help much, does it?

HE: No.

SHE: Why don't you make yourself more comfortable?

HE: Hm?

SHE: Take your shirt off.

HE: My shirt?

SHE: Go ahead.

HE: You sure?

SHE: *(Smiling.)* Don't be shy.

HE slowly takes his shirt off. SHE watches him, takes a sip of her drink. He has a very good build. HE carefully folds his shirt. Then, indicating the back of the chair.

HE: S'here okay?

SHE: There's fine. *(HE neatly places his shirt on the chair and sits down.)* Now isn't that better?

HE: Much.

SHE stares at his body, smiles. HE smiles back. Then HE slowly leans back, stretches, opens his legs, drops his hand and slowly moves it along the inside of his thigh, smiling at her.

SHE: So there you are.

HE: (*HE stops moving his hand.*) Here I am.

SHE: Having a scotch, few cubes, little water, with a stranger. A lady you never met before, in her sister's third floor walkup.

HE: You got a sexy voice, you know that?

SHE: Do I?

HE: S'what turned me on downstairs.

SHE: Did it?

HE: I never got turned on by someone's voice before.

SHE: No? Well today's a day of firsts, huh Herb?

HE: So you do this a lot?

SHE: Hm?

HE: Y'know, "window shoppin'?" Lookin' out your window, some guy passes by, you like, you dial?

SHE: Not a lot, no.

HE: No?

SHE: Special occasions, like today. When it's so hot, and the air conditioner's broke, and... well, when I'm in the mood. You have a very nice body, you know that?

HE: Thanks, I work out.

SHE: It shows.

HE: Henry Hudson Health Club. S'just a few blocks from here. Pump a little, swim, sit in the steam, work up sweat. Y'know you really had me going down there.

SHE: Did I?

HE: Hadda close my sport jacket.

SHE: Did you?

HE: I got like embarrassed.

SHE: Embarrassed?

HE: Y'know, was showing.

SHE: I know.

HE: You knew?

SHE: I saw, was watching from my window, remember?

HE: Yeah, but all I had was your sexy voice on the phone. Kept wondering what you looked like. Your face, your body. I wondered what you were wearing.

SHE: What I was wearing?

HE: Uh-huh.

SHE: I wasn't wearing anything.

HE: No?

SHE: Just a smile.

HE: I knew it! S'why I got "embarrassed." I imagined you standing naked by a window somewhere. Looking out, staring at me, getting all excited. (*A gentle order.*) Take your blouse off.

SHE: Why?

HE: Cause it's hot in here, and I took my shirt off... and I asked you to. (*A bit more authoritative.*) Take it off.

SHE dosen't.

SHE: Don't you want to know about the bedroom first?

HE: The bedroom?

SHE: In the back, where the window is.

HE: What about it?

SHE: It's very dark in there.

HE: Is it?

SHE: Very.

HE: Yeah?

SHE: There's no light.

HE: No?

SHE: It's pitch black.

HE: Is it?

SHE: And there's nothing in there. Just that one window I was looking out. And it's covered with a thick, dark curtain.

HE: So there's just a bed in there?

SHE: No, no bed.

HE: A mattress?

SHE: (*Suddenly serious.*) No. Nothing Herb, nothing at all. Pitch black, warm and empty. You understand?

HE: Sure.

SHE: Do you?

HE: I've been in rooms like that before.

SHE: Have you?

HE: Many times.

SHE: So then you know.

HE: Know what?

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