

PALAIS KRKOSCHKA

A play in four acts.

by
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PALAIS KRKOSCHKA

Characters

HOUSEKEEPER	(A voice.)
MARIJE	A maid. The type of woman with no apparent redeeming features yet men are attracted to like flies.
Vaclav (Vasik) KRKOSCHKA	Engineering Works magnate. Sturdy, stubby man, too perfectly groomed.
ALZBETA	His wife. Beautiful but anemic-looking and waiflike, reminiscent of Klimt's Hope I.
Josef HOFFMANN	Viennese architect, designer of the Krkoschka Palace and its interior. Only ever dresses in grayscale. Periodically pencils fastidious inspirations in a pocket notebook.
Gustav KLIMT	Viennese artist. Creator of the elaborate frieze being worked on in the dining room. Hearty physique. Devilish beard. Generally wears a long artist's smock he designed himself, with nothing under it.
The AURA	Alzbeta's subconscious. Looks like her twin, only saucy and extremely pregnant. Invisible to all but Klimt, at first.

Comment [A1]: Ref. Hope I
<http://www.wikiart.org/en/gustav-klimt/hope-i>

Comment [A2]: Ref. photo Gustav Klimt
<http://www.wikiart.org/en/gustav-klimt>

NB: ~16,000 words. I have included references to Klimt works where relevant. These are in case you choose to project or otherwise use the images in connection with the production. However, this isn't necessary—the play was made to stand alone without them. I have also included references to Wiener Werkstätte objects, for illustration.

ACT I

Scene 1

(Living Room, Krkoschka Palace, Brno, Moravia, spring 1912. Cavernous, sumptuously spare Jugendstil space with high ceilings and translucent white marble walls. Facing the audience, a low, oblong, white suede couch with strategically arranged plum, celadon and salmon appliquéd throw pillows. To the left of the couch, a pair of matching armchairs. Center rear, large double doors open into the partially visible dining room. Inside are a stepladder, drop cloths and a tarp-covered banquet table glimpsed from the side. An important mosaic frieze-in-progress graces the upper dining room walls. To the right of the DR doors, against the rear LR wall, stands a console table. At the left, somewhat downstage, sits a tall, closed, inlaid wood and gold writing desk with a cuboidal "disappearing armchair" stowed underneath.

Centerstage, MARIJE is on her hands and knees, bowl by her side, scrubbing at something on the couch seat.)

HOUSEKEEPER

(Offstage right)

Is it coming off?

MARIJE

No! What kind of idiot makes a sofa white suede?

HOUSEKEEPER

Keep working at it.

MARIJE

(Dips rag in bowl and goes on scrubbing)

This is just like last time. How does the mistress not notice?

HOUSEKEEPER

Have you tried peroxide?

MARIJE

No, we used it all up on the dining room rug when the master knocked the ham off the serving tray.

(Sits back on her heels)

Do we tell her?

HOUSEKEEPER

Comment [A3]: Ref. Palais Stoclet
<https://www.google.com/search?q=palais+stoclet&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewjirMnlrsXIAhXJpB4KHdcUCwUOsAQiKA&biw=1366&bih=631>

Comment [A4]: Ref. Beethoven Frieze, The Longing for Happiness Finds Repose in Poetry
<http://www.wikiart.org/en/gustav-klimt/the-beethoven-frieze-the-longing-for-happiness-finds-repose-in-poetry-right-wall-detail-1902-1>

Water Serpents I
<http://www.allpaintings.org/v/Art+Nouveau/Gustav+Klimt/Gustav+Klimt+-+Water+Serpents+I.jpg.html>

Comment [A5]: Image
https://www.google.com/search?q=wiener+werkstatte+disappearing+armchair&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewjs17f1i7fIAhXKPz4KHQCOBoIQ7AkISA&biw=1366&bih=631#imgcr=9_2KpUOQ_uHBKM%3A

About the blood? And set off that ruckus right before Herr Hoffmann's coming? She'll figure it out, soon enough. Ugh—never mind, leave it for now. I'll send Bedrich to the chemist for more peroxide.

(MARIJE stands up and looks around, rubbing her knees. She hides the stain with one of the throw pillows, which is now obviously out of place, then exits, upstage right. KRKOSCHKA enters downstage right, immediately sees the pillow is out of place, picks it up to straighten things and discovers the stain.)

Marije! KRKOSCHKA

Yes, sir? (Re-entering) MARIJE

What is this! KRKOSCHKA

. . . blood, sir. MARIJE

Blood? From— KRKOSCHKA

Madame, sir. Just like last time. MARIJE

Like last time? You mean—when she lost the baby? But—she hasn't said anything—this is terrible! And Herr Hoffmann—

MARIJE
—will be here any minute. Yes, I know. It will be clean as soon as Bedrich comes back with the peroxide.

KRKOSCHKA
(Re-covering the stain with the pillow, distracted)
Peroxide on suede? Is that—?

(ALZBETA enters downstage right in a sack-like, long white dress that is totally plain except for absurdly frilly sleeves. She is carrying a fledgling knitting project in magenta and gold, and is followed at a discreet distance by her saucy AURA, who is always dressed the same as Alzbeta and reacts to everything derisively.)

Comment [A6]: Dress images:
<http://theredlist.com/wiki-2-24-525-770-925-view-1900s-1-profile-emilie-floge.html>

ALZBETA

Look, Vasik! I'm making a cap! I know most baby things are white, but I always thought—well, white, for a baby, it's just so—dull.

(KRKOSCHKA glances at MARIJE, who shrugs back and exits right.)

KRKOSCHKA

Mila'chku—

ALZBETA

I'm a little afraid to show it to Herr Hoffmann. . . you know what he is. Always fussing about the décor. I mean, I know he designed the place, but it's yours—ours—now, so why can't we do what we want with it? Anyway, what harm could a little color do? It's all so silly.

KRKOSCHKA

Now, now—I paid to have the most fashionable house in Brno and I intend to keep it that way. Those Viennese know what they're doing.

ALZBETA

Yes, of course, Vasik—it's just that sometimes I feel like I'm living in a shop window. It's a bit of a strain, that's all.

(ALZBETA glances at the out-of-place throw pillow.)

Tsk! I told them yesterday to get the house ready—they never listen.

(ALZBETA turns her back to the audience in order to adjust the pillows—KRKOSCHKA isn't quick enough to stop her. We see the spreading red stain on the seat of her dress at the same time as she picks up the errant pillow and sees the red stain on the couch seat.)

What is this? Oh, no—

(She drops her knitting and starts to sink down onto the couch. KRKOSCHKA quickly steps over to embrace her and keep her standing.)

Not again. . . Marije!

(ALZBETA starts to cry. AURA rolls her eyes.)

KRKOSCHKA

Shhhhh.

ALZBETA

I thought it would be different, this time. . . the doctor said it was just by chance, that sometimes these things happen, and there wasn't anything really wrong. . .

KRKOSCHKA

Don't worry—we'll try again.

ALZBETA

No—I—it will never work. I never want to go through this again.

(MARIJE re-enters stage right with a box of baking soda and another wet rag, and starts scrubbing the couch a little more vigorously than before.)

KRKOSCHKA

Are you going to be all right? Come upstairs. Change your dress.

(ALZBETA twists the back of her dress around to see, then starts crying harder. Muffled voices of HOFFMANN and HOUSEKEEPER can be heard, stage left.)

Damn! It's Hoffmann! Marije, never mind that.

(MARIJE heads stage right, then darts back to retrieve the forgotten baking soda.)

Alzbeta, sit here.

(As MARIJE hurries out, upstage right, KRKOSCHKA quickly seats ALZBETA exactly on top of the stain. He puts the pillow in its rightful place, whips out a hanky and daubs at her face.)

Now stop crying and don't move. Work on this!

(KRKOSCHKA shoves the knitting back at ALZBETA. HOFFMANN strides in, stage left, looking around critically yet with satisfaction. AURA fades into the background.)