

SIDNEY & MYRA SIDES

the fireplace, up the chimney, and out over Fairfield County—pollution in its most grisly form. This arrived in the mail this morning. It's the property of one— (*Finds the covering letter.*) — Clifford Anderson. He was one of the the twerps at the seminar.

He reads the letter, twerpishly.

"Dear Mr. Bruhl: I hope you don't mind my sending you my play *Deathtrap*, which I finished retyping at two o'clock this morning. Since I couldn't have written it without the inspiration of your own work and the guidance and encouragement you gave me last summer, I thought it only fitting that you should be the first person to read it. If you find it one-tenth as good as any of your own thrillers, I'll consider my time well spent and the fee for the seminar more than adequately recompensed."

MYRA. (*Sitting.*) That's nice.

SIDNEY. No it isn't, it's fulsome. "Please excuse the carbon copy; the local Xerox machine is on the fritz and I couldn't stand the thought of waiting a few days to send my *firstborn child* off to its *spiritual father*." My italics, his emetics. "I hope you'll call or write as soon as you've read it and let me know whether you think it's worthy of submitting to" et cetera, et cetera. Son of a bitch even *types* well.

He tosses the letter on the desk.

I think I remember him. Enormously obese. A glandular condition. Four hundred pounds. I wonder where he got my address...

MYRA. From the university

SIDNEY. Probably.

START

Sidney rises and heads for the buffet.

MYRA. Is it really that good? His first play?

SIDNEY. It can't miss. A gifted director couldn't even hurt it. (*Fixing something on the rocks.*) It'll run for years. The stock and amateur rights will feed and clothe generations of Andersons. It can *easily* be opened up for a movie. George C. Scott—or Michael Caine.

MYRA. Oh, I love him.

SIDNEY. The damn thing is perfect.

MYRA. I should think you'd be proud that one of your students has written a salable play.

SIDNEY. (*Considers her.*) For the first time in eleven years of marriage, darling—drop dead.

MYRA. My goodness...

She puts things right at the buffet as Sidney moves away with his drink.

SIDNEY. I'm green with envy. I'd like to beat the wretch over the head with the mace there, bury him in a four-hundred-pound hole somewhere, and send the thing off under my own name. To...David Merrick. Or Hal Prince... (*Thinks a bit, looks at Myra.*) Now *there's* the best idea I've had in ages.

MYRA. (*Going to him.*) Ah, my poor Sidney... (*Hugs him, kisses his cheek.*)

SIDNEY. I mean, what's the point in owning a mace if you don't *use* it once in a while?

MYRA. Ah... You'll get an idea of your own, any day now, and it'll turn into a better play than that one.

SIDNEY. Don't bet on it. Not that you have any money to bet with.

MYRA. We're doing very nicely in that department: not one creditor beating at the door.

SIDNEY. But for how long? I've just about cleaned you out now, haven't I?

MYRA. We've cleaned me out, and it's been joy and delight every bit of the way. (*Kisses him.*) Your next play will simply have to be a terrific smash.

SIDNEY. (*Moving away.*) Thanks, that's what I need, an easing of the pressure.

Sidney moves to the desk, toys with the manuscript.

MYRA. Why don't you call it to Merrick's attention? Maybe you could get—a commission of some kind.

SIDNEY. A finder's fee, you mean?

MYRA. If that's what it's called.

SIDNEY. A great and glorious one percent. Maybe one and a half.

MYRA. Or better yet, why don't you produce it yourself? You've been involved in enough productions to know how to do it. And it might be a beneficial change of pace.

SIDNEY. Darling, I may be devious and underhanded enough to be a successful murderer, but not, I think, a Broadway producer. One mustn't overestimate one's talents.

MYRA. Collaborate with him. Isn't there room for improvement in the play, good as it is? The professional touch, a little reshaping and sharpening?

SIDNEY. *That's a possibility...*

MYRA. I'm sure he'd be thrilled at the chance to work with you.

SIDNEY. We'd split fifty-fifty...

MYRA. And you'd get top billing.

SIDNEY. Naturally. "Reverse alphabetical order, dear boy; it's done all the time."

MYRA. On the basis of *who you are*.

SIDNEY. Sidney Four-Flops Bruhl.

MYRA. Sidney Author-of-*The Murder Game* Bruhl.

SIDNEY. (*A doddering ancient.*) "Oh yes, *The Murder Game*! I remember that one. Back in the time of King Arthur, wasn't it?"

MYRA. Not quite that long ago.

SIDNEY. Eighteen years, love. Eighteen years, each, one flying faster than the one before. Nothing recedes like success. Mmm, that is a good one, isn't it. (*Taking up a memo pad and pen.*) Maybe I can work it in someplace. There's a has-been actor who could say it. "Recedes" is E-D-E, right?

MYRA. Yes. You see, you *would* improve it.

END

SIDNEY. Give it the inimitable Sidney Bruhl flavor. Close in Boston.

He puts the pad and pen down, picks up the letter.

MYRA. Call him now. Where does he live?

SIDNEY. Up in Milford.

He moves around nearer the phone. Studies the letter awhile, looks at Myra.