

Male Monologue - SIDNEY

4

DEATHTRAP

MYRA Why, that's *wonderful*, darling! I'm so happy for you! For both of us!

SIDNEY Happy? Why on earth happy?

MYRA But—it's yours, isn't it? The idea you had in August?

START

SIDNEY The idea I had in August has gone the way of the idea I had in June, and the idea I had in whenever it was before then: in 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 twerps at the seminar. (*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 *first-born 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. (*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.

STOP

Male Monologue - CLIFFORD

START

ACT TWO

67

CLIFFORD A sure-fire smash-hit symphony? No. And would a novelist or a composer know where to get a garrotte that squirts blood, and how to stage a convincing murder? And it has to be a playwright *who writes thrillers*, because Arthur Miller probably has old sample cases hanging on his wall . . . I *suppose* I could make it Wilton instead of Westport . . .

SIDNEY Why make it *anywhere*? *Why make it*?

CLIFFORD It's *there*, Sidney!

SIDNEY That's mountains, not plays! Plays aren't there till some asshole writes them!

CLIFFORD Stop and think for a minute, will you? Think. About that night. Try to see it all from an audience's viewpoint. *Everything we did to convince Myra that she was seeing a real murder would have exactly the same effect on them.* Weren't we giving a play? Didn't we write it, rehearse it? Wasn't *she* our audience? (*He rises. SIDNEY is listening as one fascinated by a lunatic's raving*) Scene One: Julian tells Doris about this terrific play that's come in the mail. He jokes about killing for it, then calls Willard and invites him over, getting him to bring the original copy. Audience thinks exactly what Doris thinks: Julian might kill Willard. Scene Two: *everything that happened from the moment we came through that door.* All the little ups and downs we put in to make it ring true: the I'm-expecting-a-phone-call bit, everything. Tightened up a little, naturally. And then the strangling, which scares the audience as much as it does Doris.

STOP

SIDNEY No wonder you didn't need an outline.

CLIFFORD (*Tapping his temple*) It's all up here, every bit of it. Scene Three: "Inga van Bronk." A few laughs, right? Can't hurt. Then Julian and Doris get ready to go upstairs—it looks as if the act is drawing to a kind of so-so close—and pow, in comes Willard, out of the grave and seeking vengeance. Shock? Surprise? Doris has her

Female Monologue - MYRA

22

DEATHTRAP

that are ready for production supposedly—from his agent, from producers, from aspiring playwrights; and usually he just laughs and sneers and says the most disparaging things you could possibly imagine! I know he could improve your play tremendously! He could turn it into a hit that would run for years and years and make more than enough money for everyone concerned!

(She stops. CLIFFORD stares. SIDNEY studies her)

START

SIDNEY Is that what you meant by "I'll be quiet"?

MYRA *(Putting her needlework aside)* I won't be quiet. I'm going to say something that's been on my mind ever since your phone conversation. *(Rising, advancing on CLIFFORD)* It's very wrong of you to expect Sidney to give you the fruit of his years of experience, his hard-won knowledge, without any quid pro quo, as if the seminar were still in session!

CLIFFORD He *offered* to give me—

MYRA *(Turning on SIDNEY)* And it's very wrong of you to have offered to give it to him! I am the one in this household whose feet are on the ground, and whose eye is on the checkbook! Now, I'm going to make a suggestion to you, Sidney. It's going to come as a shock to you, but I want you to give it your grave and thoughtful and earnest consideration. Will you do that? Will you promise to do that for me? *(SIDNEY, staring, nods)* Put aside the play you're working on. Yes, put aside the play about Helga ten Dorp and how she *finds murderers*, and keys under clothes dryers; put it aside, Sidney, and help Mr. Anderson with *his* play. Collaborate with him. *That's* what I'm suggesting. *That's* what I think is the fair and sensible and *rational* thing to do in this situation. *Death-trap*, by Clifford Anderson and Sidney Bruhl. Unless Mr. Anderson feels that, in deference to your age and reputation, it should be the other way around.

STOP

Female Monologue - HELGA

38

DEATHTRAP

SIDNEY Yes, he did. In fact, we were going to ask—

HELGA (*Interrupting him*) For hours now I feel the pain from here. And more than pain. Since eight-thirty, when begins *The Merv Griffin Show*. I am on it next week; you will watch?

SIDNEY Yes, yes, certainly. Make a note of that, Myra.

START

HELGA Thursday night. Peter Hurkos also. What they want *him* for, I do not know. I call the Information but the lady will tell me not your number. I call Paul but he is not at home; he is in place with red walls, eating with chopsticks. I call the Information again. I say, "Is urgent, you *must* tell me number; I am Helga ten Dorp. I am psychic." She say, "*Guess* number." I try, but only I see the two-two-six, which is everybody, *ja*? So I come here now. (*Looking sympathetically at MYRA*) Because pain gets worse. And more than pain . . .

(*She moves away and wanders the room, a hand to her forehead: SIDNEY and MYRA look anxiously at each other*)

MYRA More than pain?

HELGA *Ja*, is something else here, something frightening. No, it will interfere.

SIDNEY What will?

HELGA The drink you would give me. Must keep unclouded the head. Never drink. Only when images become too many. Then I get drunk. (*She goes close to the weapons, one hand to her forehead, the other hand passing back and forth. SIDNEY and MYRA stand motionless as HELGA's hand passes over the garrotte. She takes up the dagger, turns with it, closes her eyes*) Was used many times by beautiful dark-haired woman. But only pretending—

SIDNEY That's amazing! It's from my play *The Murder*

STOP