

Deathtrap Audition Pieces

Sidney and Myra – From pg. 6 “Is it really that good? His first play?” to pg. 8 “Not quite that long ago.”

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.

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.

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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.

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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.

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.

You don't like the mace...

MYRA. No, definitely not. Blood on the carpet. And the next day Helga ten Dorp would be picking up the psychic vibrations.

SIDNEY. In Holland? I doubt it very much.

MYRA. Sidney, what were you smoking Friday night when the rest of us were smoking grass? She's taken the McBain cottage for six months. Paul Wyman is doing a book with her. He was impersonating her for fifteen minutes.

SIDNEY. Oh. I thought he was finally coming out of the closet.

MYRA. You see what a fine murderer you'd be? Helga ten Dorp moves in practically on your doorstep, and you manage not to hear about it.

SIDNEY. That *does* give one pause.

MYRA. It certainly should. Nan and Tom Wesson had her to dinner last week and she told Tom about his backaches, and the money he put into silver, and his father's thing for tall women. She warned Nan that their *au pair* girl was going to leave, which she did two days later, and she found a set of keys Nan lost in 1969; they were under the clothes dryer.

SIDNEY. Hm. She's in the McBain cottage?

MYRA. (*Pointing v. r.*) Right over yonder. Picking up our blips on her radar this minute, most likely.

SIDNEY. Well! It seems that Mr. Anderson has himself a collaborator. Not that I really believe in ESP...

MYRA. The police in Europe seem to. That's half of why she's here; she's supposed to be resting. From pointing at murderers.

SIDNEY. Wait a minute now, the fat one didn't stay the full week, and his name was—Quinn or Quincy. Anderson. Anderson. I wonder if he's the one with the awful stammer...

MYRA. (*Indicating the phone.*) Easy way to find out.

SIDNEY. Yes. Hm.

Sidney studies the letter for another moment, then puts it down, and, referring to it, dials the phone.

This may be a three-hour conversation.

Sidney, Helga, Myra – From pg. 35 “Who is it?” to pg. 36 “Then I get drunk.”

Myra rises, goes to the buffet, puts her glass down and turns.

MYRA. In a month or so, if we haven't been arrested, I want you to leave. We'll have a few arguments in people's living rooms—you can write them for us, little tiffs about money or something—and then you'll move out. I wish you could take the vegetable patch with you, but since you can't, you'll buy it from me, as soon as the money starts rolling in. Before the Rolls-Royce and before you go to the Riviera!

Sidney, concerned, rises and starts toward her; she's growing more distraught.

You'll buy the vegetable patch, and the house, and the whole nine-point-three acres! We'll get Buck Raymond or Maury Escher to set a fair price!

She turns and moves away, near tears, as Sidney reaches for her.

SIDNEY. Darling, you've had a shocking and—

MYRA. Get away from me!

SIDNEY. You've had a shocking and painful experience and so have I. I'm terrified that I'll be caught and absolutely guilt-ridden about having been insane enough to do it. I'm going to give half the money to the New Dramatists League, I swear I am! This isn't the time to talk about *anything*. In a few days, when we're both ourselves again, things will look much cheerier.

MYRA. You *are* yourself, right now. And so am I. In a few days—

The doorbell chime stops her. Sidney freezes. Myra points toward the door.

Go ahead. “He wrote me a twerpy letter, Officer.”

SIDNEY. It must be Lottie and Ralph, come to yammer about the movie...

MYRA. *(Wiping her cheeks.)* It's probably Helga ten Dorp.

SIDNEY. Don't be silly.

The doorbell chimes again.

It's Lottie and Ralph, damn them. We've got to let them in; can you face them? Maybe you'd better go upstairs; I'll tell them you—

MYRA. *(Interrupting him.)* No. I'll stay here, and let you worry that I'll fall apart!

Sidney eyes her anxiously. The doorbell chimes a third time.

Sidney starts for the door.

SIDNEY. Coming!

Myra tries to compose herself, moves into view of the door.

Who is it?

HELGA. *(Off.)* I am your neighbor in house of McBains. Please, will you let me come in?

Sidney turns, wide-eyed. Myra too is startled and frightened.

Is most urgent I speak to you. I call the information but the lady will tell me not your number. Please, will you let me come in?

Sidney turns to the door.

I am friend of Paul Wyman. Is most urgent!

SIDNEY. *(Opening the door.)* Come in.

Helga ten Dorp comes into the foyer, a stocky, strong-jawed Teutonic woman in her early fifties, in the throes of considerable distress. She wears slacks and a hastily seized and unfastened jacket.

HELGA. I apologize for so late I come but you will forgive when I make the explaining.

She comes D. into the study. Sidney closes the door.

Ja, ja, is room I see. Beams, and window like so... *(Holds her forehead, wincing.)* And the pain! Such pain!

Helga sees Myra and recognizes her as the source of it; approaches her.

Pain. Pain. Pain. Pain...

She moves her hands about Myra, as if wanting to touch and comfort her but unable to.

Pain. Pain. Pain!

SIDNEY. *(Coming nervously D.)* We're neither of us up to snuff today...

Helga turns, sees the weapons.

HELGA. Ei! Just as I see them! *Uuuch!* Why keep you such pain-covered things?

SIDNEY. They're antiques, and souvenirs from plays. I'm a playwright.

HELGA. Ja, Sidney Bruhl; Paul Wyman tells me. We make together book.

SIDNEY. My wife, Myra...

MYRA. How do you do...

HELGA. What gives you such pain, dear lady?

MYRA. Nothing. I'm—fine, really.

HELGA. No, no; something you see pains you. *(To both of them.)* Paul tells you of *me*? I am Helga ten Dorp. I am psychic.

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.

HELGA. Thursday night. The Amazing Kreskin 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 garrote. 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 Game* and it was used every night by a beautiful dark-haired actress!

HELGA. Will be used again. By another woman. Not in play. But... *because of play...* *(Opens her eyes.)* Because of play, another woman uses this knife.

Sidney and Myra stare at her. She replaces the dagger.

You should put away these things.

SIDNEY. Yes, yes, I think I will. In a month or so I'll sell the whole collection. Tired of them anyway.

HELGA. May be too late. *(Looks gravely at Sidney and Myra.)* I do not enjoy to make-unhappy people, but I must speak when I see something, ja?

SIDNEY. Well I don't know actually; you *could* keep quiet. I mean, you're supposed to be resting, aren't you? Not in your own country...

HELGA. Must speak. Is why God gives gift. Is danger here. Much danger. *(To Sidney.)* To you... *(To Myra.)* And to you. Is death in this room. Is something that—invites death, that carries death... Deathtrap? This is word in English, "deathtrap"?

MYRA. Yes...

SIDNEY. It's the title of a play I've been working on. That's where you've got it from. There's a death in the play; I'm sure that's what you're—responding to. I've been working there at the desk...

HELGA. *(Moving around the desk, touching it.)* Maybe... But feels like *real* death...

SIDNEY. I try to be convincing, act everything out as I write it...

Helga's attention is caught by the chair in which Clifford sat. She goes to it, hesitates, takes hold of its back with both hands, closes her eyes, throws back her head. Myra trembles; Sidney puts a hand to her shoulder.

Porter, Sidney, Clifford – From pg. 48 “Porter! It’s good to see you! Come on in.” to pg 51 “I’m sure we’ll be seeing each other again.”

SIDNEY. Slightly. Let me see a few pages.

CLIFFORD. Sure, if you’d like to. But I’d really rather wait till the draft is done, give you the whole thing in one glorious bundle. Would you mind?

SIDNEY. Of course not. What’s another hour or so?

CLIFFORD. *(Putting a fresh sheet of paper into his typewriter.)* It’s going to take three or four weeks, I think.

SIDNEY. At the rate you’re going you’ll have a trilogy by then.

CLIFFORD. *(Looks sympathetically at him.)* Nothing doing?

SIDNEY. I’m thinking...

CLIFFORD. Why don’t you invite her over? Ten Dorp. Talking with her might spark something.

SIDNEY. Do you think we should risk having her on the premises?

CLIFFORD. Maybe not when the moon is full, but any other time, why not? Look at the egg she laid on the *Griffin Show*.

SIDNEY. Well, she got rattled by the Amazing Kreskin when he described all her husbands in such detail.

CLIFFORD. Oh, Belle Forrester called before you came down. *(Resumes typing.)* Wanted to know if she could bring over a cassette or come sew a button. I told her we were managing just fine.

The doorbell chimes. Clifford starts to rise but Sidney puts up a hand.

SIDNEY. Don’t. We don’t want to break the flow, do we?

He heads for the foyer. Clifford resumes typing. Sidney opens the front door. Porter Milgrim is there, a man of substance in his mid-fifties; in hat, topcoat, and business suit, carrying a briefcase.

Porter! It’s good to see you! Come on in.

They shake hands.

PORTER. How are you, Sidney?

SIDNEY. Doing fairly well, thanks.

PORTER. *(Entering the foyer.)* There are a couple of things I want to talk to you about. Am I disturbing you?

SIDNEY. *(Closing the door.)* Not at all. Glad of the chance to take a break.

Porter has put his briefcase down and is taking his hat and coat off.

How come you’re not in the city?

PORTER. I have to be in New Haven this afternoon. The secretary?

SIDNEY. *(Taking the hat and coat.)* Yes.

PORTER. My, what a fast typist...

He picks up his briefcase while Sidney hangs the hat and coat on a wall rack.

SIDNEY. He is, isn’t he. Come meet him. Clifford?

Clifford stops typing; turns and rises as Porter and Sidney come into the study.

This is Clifford Anderson. And this is my friend Porter Milgrim.

PORTER. *(Shaking hands with Clifford.)* How do you do.

CLIFFORD. How do you do, sir.

SIDNEY. I would say “my attorney,” but then he would bill me.

PORTER. I’m going to anyway; this is a business call. Partly, at least.

SIDNEY. Clifford was at the seminar I conducted last July. He asked me then about a secretarial position, and—when Myra passed on—I realized I would need someone to lend a hand, so I called him. The next day, here he was.

CLIFFORD. Have typewriter, will travel.

PORTER. That was very good of you.

CLIFFORD. It’s a privilege to be of help to someone like Mr. Bruhl.

PORTER. *(Noticing the desk.)* Oh, look at that... Isn’t this a beauty!

SIDNEY. Partners’ desk.

PORTER. Mmmm! Where did you find it?

SIDNEY. In Wilton. Just happened on it last week. Makes more sense than cluttering the room with two single ones.

PORTER. Cost a pretty penny, I’ll bet.

SIDNEY. Well, it’s deductible.

PORTER. Yes, they can't very well quibble about a writer's desk, can they? Wait till Elizabeth sees this...

SIDNEY. How is she?

PORTER. Fine.

SIDNEY. And the girls?

PORTER. Couldn't be better. Cathy loves Vassar.

SIDNEY. And Vassar versa, I'm sure. Sit down.

CLIFFORD. Shall I go get the groceries now? Then you and Mr. Milgrim can talk in private.

Sidney looks to Porter, who nods infinitesimally.

SIDNEY. Would you mind?

CLIFFORD. I have to do it sometime before dinner; might as well.

SIDNEY. All right. *(Heading for the foyer.)* Be with you in a second, Porter.

PORTER. Take your time. I haven't started the clock yet!

Sidney is out and on his way upstairs. Clifford smiles as he rolls the paper from his typewriter. Porter sits D. R. and puts his briefcase down.

I love this room.

CLIFFORD. Isn't it nice? It's a pleasure working here.

Clifford puts the paper and the page he finished earlier into the folder, behind other sheets in it.

PORTER. He's looking well...

CLIFFORD. Yes, he's picked up quite a bit in the past few days. *(Putting the folder into the desk.)* It was pretty bad the first week. He cried every night; I could hear him plainly. And he was drinking heavily.

PORTER. Ah...

CLIFFORD. *(Standing against the desk.)* But he'll pull through. His work is a great solace to him.

PORTER. I'm sure it must be. I've always envied my writer clients on that account. *I tried a play once.*

CLIFFORD. Oh?

PORTER. About the Supreme Court justice I most admire. But even the title was a problem. *Frankfurter...*

He shakes his head ruefully. Clifford moves toward the doorway as Sidney comes in, wallet in hand.

SIDNEY. Twenty enough?

CLIFFORD. Too much; we only need salad things and milk. I'm going to Gibson's. *(Goes into the foyer.)*

SIDNEY. *(Pocketing his wallet.)* Pick up some yogurt too. Anything but prune.

CLIFFORD. *(Taking a jacket from the rack.)* Okay. *(Getting into it; to Porter.)* You aren't in the driveway, are you?

PORTER. No, I pulled over on the side.

CLIFFORD. See you later or nice meeting you, whichever it turns out to be. *(Takes car keys from his pocket.)*

PORTER. I'm sure we'll be seeing each other again.

Clifford nods to Sidney and goes out, closing the door behind him.

Pleasant young fellow... Good-looking too.

SIDNEY. Yes...

Turns to Porter.

Do you think he's gay? Homosexual...

PORTER. I know what "gay" means, Sidney. Elizabeth told me long ago. No, he didn't strike me that way.

SIDNEY. I have a sneaking suspicion he might be... But, as long as he does his job well I suppose it's none of my business, is it?

PORTER. Well, in essence he's a domestic employee, and I think that in such circumstances his sexual preference could be a legitimate matter of concern.

SIDNEY. I wasn't asking for a legal opinion; I was just saying that it's really not my business...

PORTER. Oh. In that case, no, it isn't.

SIDNEY. *(Turning his desk chair to face Porter and sitting.)* Besides, people would talk if I took in a female secretary, wouldn't they?

Sidney, Myra, Clifford – From pg. 24 “Sit down, Myra, you’re making me nervous, standing there hyperventilating.” to pg. 28 “Won’t take what, dear? My finding the key?”

Myra. Don't beg him. He'll think he has the wealth of the Indies here, and we're Mr. and Mrs. Jean Lafitte.

CLIFFORD. I'd never think anything like that, Mr. Bruhl. I'm grateful that you're willing to go out of your way to help me.

SIDNEY. But I'm not, really. Now that I've had a moment to consider the matter, I would never put aside a play as timely and inventive as *The Drowning Wife* to do wet-nurse work on one as speculative as *Deathtrap*.

He hands the manuscripts over.

Sit down, Myra. You're making me nervous, standing there hyperventilating.

Myra withdraws a bit, warily.

Do as you said; show it to a few agents. And if you decide that major rewrites *are* in order, get in touch. Who knows, I might hit a snag; it's happened once or twice.

CLIFFORD. (*Fitting the two manuscripts into the envelope.*) Thank you, I will.

Myra withdraws farther.

SIDNEY. Though I doubt I shall; I have it completely outlined and I'm more than halfway done. And I have another play ready to go next, based on the life of Harry Houdini.

CLIFFORD. Oh?

SIDNEY. (*Rising.*) Yes, magic is very in now. Look at the success of *The Magic Show*. Houdini's always been an idol of mine. (*Taking them from the wall.*) These are a pair of his handcuffs...

MYRA. (*On edge again.*) Sidney...

SIDNEY. Relax; darling; Clifford isn't the type of person who would steal someone else's idea. (*To Clifford.*) You wouldn't do that, would you?

CLIFFORD. Of course not.

SIDNEY. See? No cause for alarm. "His heart as far from fraud as heaven from earth." A remarkable man, Houdini. Made all his own magical apparatus, did you know that?

CLIFFORD. No, I didn't.

SIDNEY. Magnificent craftsmanship. Have a look.

Sidney tosses the open handcuffs to Clifford.

MYRA. Sidney, please!

SIDNEY. Sit down, Myra.

MYRA. Don't! I beg you! For God's sake, *think!*

SIDNEY. He's an *honest young man!* Now will you sit down and stop being so all-fired suspicious of everyone who comes through that door? (*To Clifford.*) We had a very nasty experience a few years back involving a plagiaristic playwright whose name I won't mention, since he's gone to his maker, recalled for repairs. Ever since, Myra has gotten alarmed if I so much as tell a fellow writer the language I'm working in. Don't take it personally. Have a good look at those; they're quite remarkable.

Myra has turned away and moved L. in fearful anxiety. Sidney glances uneasily at her while Clifford, who has rested his envelope and bound manuscript against the leg of his chair, examines the antique handcuffs. Myra sits facing L.

CLIFFORD. They look so old...

SIDNEY. They were made to. And apparently solid and escape-proof.

CLIFFORD. They certainly seem that way.

SIDNEY. Be my guest.

CLIFFORD. You mean put them on?

SIDNEY. Yes. That's what I mean when you're holding my prize pair of twelve-hundred-dollar Houdini handcuffs and I say "Be my guest": "Put them on."

CLIFFORD. Twelve hundred dollars... Whew!

Impressed, he locks the handcuffs onto his wrists. Myra sits wincing.

SIDNEY. Now turn your wrists like this, press, and pull.

Clifford follows the directions and is still handcuffed.

You didn't do it right; it's got to be a single quick motion. Try again.

Clifford does; no dice.

Turn, press, pull; all in one.

Clifford makes several more tries.

CLIFFORD. No, they're not opening.

SIDNEY. Hm. They did for me yesterday morning; it's not a question of their not being oiled.

CLIFFORD. *(Still trying.)* I guess I'm just not Houdini...

SIDNEY. It's all right, I've got the key here. Somewhere.

He begins rummaging nervously about the desktop.

Don't go on fussing with them; you're liable to ruin them.

CLIFFORD. Sorry.

He sits still. Myra turns around, slowly, fearfully. Clifford smiles sheepishly at her; she tries to smile back. Sidney goes on searching.

SIDNEY. Key, key, key, key. Where are you, little brass key?

He begins looking in drawers. Clifford looks at his handcuffed wrists, and at Myra, and at Sidney, and gets an idea.

CLIFFORD. Do you know, this could be a good thriller!

Sidney looks at him.

It could! I mean it!

SIDNEY. How so?

CLIFFORD. Well...a young playwright sends his first play to an older playwright who conducted a seminar that the young playwright attended. Nobody else has read it, and then he comes to visit the older playwright, to get some ideas for rewrites, and he brings along the original and all his notes and everything. Of course you'd have to have the Xerox breaking down, to explain why there are only the two copies, and the play would have to be a very good one—the one the young playwright wrote, I mean—and the older playwright would have to have nothing much going for him at the time...

SIDNEY. An enormous concatenation of unlikely circumstances, don't you think?

CLIFFORD. Yes, maybe... But we've almost got it here, haven't we? The only difference is that you've got *The Drowning Wife* and the Houdini play, and *Deathtrap* probably isn't worth killing for. I'll bet nobody even saw me getting into your car...

SIDNEY. Well there you are: You've licked the second-play problem.

Sidney resumes searching.

CLIFFORD. I think it could be turned into something fairly interesting. What do you think, Mrs. Bruhl?

MYRA. I—don't like it. It frightens me.

SIDNEY. *(Turning to the weapons on the wall.)* I wonder if I could have put it up here somewhere...

Clifford looks curiously at Myra, and at Sidney nervously touching the various weapons, and at his handcuffed wrists.

He thinks a bit. And a bit more. And a lot more. He thinks very hard.

CLIFFORD. Oh, I forgot to mention, I should be getting a phone call any minute now.

Sidney turns and looks at him.

There's a girl who's coming to see me at eight-thirty—that's around what it is now, isn't it?—and I couldn't reach her before I left, so I left a note on the hall mirror telling her where I am and giving the number, *(Rising and heading D. L.)* so she can call and find out what train I'll be taking back. So she can pick me up at the station. One two-hour walk per day is just about enough for me. *(Turns and smiles.)* So I hope you find the key soon or else you're going to have to hold the phone for me.

Sidney stands looking at him for a moment.

SIDNEY. How is she going to get in to read the note?

CLIFFORD. She has a key.

SIDNEY. You're not a very conscientious house-sitter.

CLIFFORD. She's honest.

SIDNEY. You said in the car that you don't know anyone in Milford except a few tradespeople.

CLIFFORD. She's from Hartford. Her name is Marietta Klenofski and she teaches at Quirk Middle School. Phys Ed.

SIDNEY. Where did you get the number? It's not listed.

CLIFFORD. They gave it to me at the university, along with your address. I'm friendly with Mrs. Beecham there.

SIDNEY. Beecham?
CLIFFORD. The short red-haired lady. With the eyeshade.
SIDNEY. I hope she gave you the right number. I had it changed a few weeks ago—an obscene caller was boring us—and I didn't notify old U. of Conn. What number did you leave for Ms. Klenofski?
CLIFFORD. I don't remember it.
SIDNEY. Two-two-six, three-oh-four-nine? Or two-two-six, five-four-five-seven?
CLIFFORD. The first one. Three-oh-four-nine.
SIDNEY. The new number. Hm. I must have notified the university and clean forgot about it. How strange, and how untypical of me.
CLIFFORD. Would you go on looking for the key, please?
SIDNEY. Certainly.
Sidney turns, considers, reaches to the wall.
MYRA. *My heart won't take it!*
SIDNEY. *(Plucking something from a ledge.)* Won't take what, dear? *(Turning, showing it.)* My finding the key?
He looks at Myra, and at Clifford.
I do believe the two of you thought I was going to grab the mace and do a Dr. Mannheim... Clifford? Is that why you've withdrawn so far upstage?
CLIFFORD. *(Shrugs uncomfortably, points toward his chair.)* You can't write a play like that and not have a mind that—envisions possibilities...
SIDNEY. True, very true. I'm slightly paranoid myself. *(Coming R. around the desk.)* What's your excuse, oh loyal and trusting wife?
Myra looks at him—as he puts the key on a table by Clifford's chair—and turns away.
Eleven years of marriage and she thinks I'm capable of a flesh-and-blood murder. There's a lesson for you in that, Clifford. Come uncuff yourself. *Deathtrap* is promising, but it's not *that* promising.
He moves back around the desk.
CLIFFORD. *(Going toward the chair.)* I'm glad it isn't.

SIDNEY. No, I think your best invention so far is the name "Marietta Klenofski." That's lovely. I congratulate you.
CLIFFORD. Thanks.
Sitting in the chair, Clifford picks up the key and leans his hands into the lamplight.
SIDNEY. I can see the sweat on her forearms after the basketball game... Mrs. Beecham's eyeshade, I thought, was a bit much.
CLIFFORD. I thought it was the kind of convincing detail you told us to try for. Are you sure this is the right key?
SIDNEY. *(Coming around to him.)* Ye gods, Houdini opened them inside a milk can under ten feet of water; do you mean to say you can't do it in—
He whips a garrote around Clifford's throat, and, pulling at its two handles, hauls him upward from the chair.
Clifford, choking, tries to get his fingers under the wire but can't. Myra whirls, screaming.
MYRA. *My God, Sidney! Stop! Stop it!*
SIDNEY. *Stay back! Stay away!*
MYRA. *Oh my God! My God!*
Clifford has thrust his manacled hands back over his head, trying to find Sidney's head, while Sidney, grimly determined, strains at the garrote handles. The chair tumbles. Myra turns away, her hands over her face, moaning and crying.
Sidney hauls Clifford about by the garrote, evading his groping hands, his kicking legs. A lamp falls. Clifford catches one of Sidney's hands and wrenches at it. Blood trickles down Clifford's wire-bound throat.
Myra turns and looks and turns away again, never stopping her moaning and lamentation.
Clifford, pop-eyed and hawking, falls forward before the fireplace, his shackled arms outflung; Sidney goes down with him and kneels astride him, keeping his fierce hold on the handles.
When Clifford is finally and surely dead, Sidney relaxes his grip, lets go, sits for a moment on Clifford's back, then reaches