

## Sidney - Clifford

*Clifford whips the finished page from the typewriter, scans it, puts it down on the folder beside him and begins penning revisions. Sidney watches him, picks up the beer glass, sips.*

START

So you've lost your interest in thrillers, eh?

CLIFFORD. Mm.

SIDNEY. *(Another sip.)* No taste for the intricate plotting and the glib superficial characters...

CLIFFORD. Mm-mmn.

SIDNEY. Want to do something real and meaningful, socially relevant.

CLIFFORD. *(Turning, smiling understandingly.)* Hey, cut it out, will you? *Your* idea'll start coming.

SIDNEY. Possibly...

CLIFFORD. Just relax, and don't try to bug *me*. It'll come.

*He returns to his revising. Sidney puts the glass down and picks up the folder, puts it on his lap, opens it, reads.*

SIDNEY. "Deathtrap, A Thriller in Two Acts."

*Clifford looks up, wide-eyed. He turns; Sidney smiles at him and turns to the next page.*

"Characters. Julian Crane. Doris Crane. Willard Peterson. Inga Van Bronk."

*Clifford whips his folder open; and closes it.*

"The action takes place in Julian Crane's study, in the Crane home in Westport, Connecticut." *(Turns the page.)*

CLIFFORD. You have one hell of a nerve stealing—

SIDNEY. *(Cutting him off fortissimo.)* "SETTING! Julian Crane's study is a handsomely converted stable grafted onto an authentic Colonial house! Sliding doors upstage center *(Pointing at them.)* open on a foyer in which are the house's front door, entrances to the living room and kitchen, and the stairway to the second floor! French doors upstage right *(Pointing.)* open out to a shrubbery-flanked patio! Downstage left, *(And pointing again.)* is a fieldstone fireplace, *practical to the extent that PAPER CAN BE BURNED IN IT!*"

*He rises. Clifford is resignedly riding out the storm. Sidney*

*gives a guided tour of the room, folder in hand.*

"The room's furnishings are tastefully chosen antiques: a few chairs and occasional pieces, a buffet downstage right, with liquor decanters, and—the focus of the room—Julian's desk." You remember Julian's desk, don't you? *The one he worked at before he took Crazy Willard Peterson into his home?* "Patterned draperies hang at the French doors. The room is decorated with framed theatrical posters"—unlike these, which are *window cards*, not *posters*!—"and a collection of guns, handcuffs, maces, broadswords, and battle-axes"—several of which I'm going to make use of any minute now.

*Closes the folder, stands glaring at Clifford.*

CLIFFORD. That's it? You're not going to act out the eleven pages? Would you like me to explain?

SIDNEY. What's to explain? You're a lunatic with a death wish; Freud covered it thoroughly.

CLIFFORD. I have exactly the same wish you have: a success wish.

SIDNEY. *This*—is going to bring you success?

CLIFFORD. It hit me that night. Remember, I put in that extra speech when you were looking for the key? It can be a terrific thriller.

SIDNEY. In which someone like me and someone like you give someone like Myra a fatal heart attack?

CLIFFORD. Yes. At the end of Act One.

SIDNEY. What, pray tell, is your *definition* of success? Being gang-banged in the shower room at the state penitentiary?

CLIFFORD. I knew you would have reservations about it; that's why my first instinct was to say it wasn't even a thriller. I haven't enjoyed putting you on, Sidney. I'm glad it's out in the open.

SIDNEY. You knew I would have reservations...

CLIFFORD. Well you do, don't you?

SIDNEY. The house madman is writing a play that'll send both of us to prison—

CLIFFORD. It won't! **STOP**

SIDNEY. I'm standing here terrified, petrified, horrified, stupefied, *crapping my pants*—and he calls that "having reservations." I'm not