

WILLY-MONOLOGUE TO HOWARD

right in, but I just don't have a single solitary spot. (*Turns, crosses few steps R. Pause.*)

WILLY. (*With increasing anger; swallowing his pride.*) Howard, all I need to set my table is fifty dollars a week.

HOWARD. But where am I going to get you, kid?

WILLY. Look, it isn't a question of whether I can sell merchandise, is it?

HOWARD. No, but it's a business, kid, and everybody's gotta pull his own weight.

WILLY. (*Desperately.*) Just let me tell you a story, Howard.

HOWARD. (*Crosses to table.*) 'Cause you gotta admit, business is business.

START →

WILLY. (*Sits chair L. of table.*) Business is definitely business, but just listen for a minute. You don't understand this. When I was a boy...eighteen, nineteen, I was already on the road. And there was a question in my mind as to whether selling had a future for me. Because in those days I had a yearning to go to Alaska. See, there were three gold strikes in one month in Alaska, and I felt like going out; just for the ride, you might say.

HOWARD. (*Barely interested.*) Is that so? (*Sits on table R. of recorder.*)

WILLY. (*The effect of this speech is to put Howard in his place.*) Oh, yeah, my father lived many years in Alaska...he was an adventurous man... We've got quite a little streak of self-reliance in our family. I thought I'd go out with my older brother and try to locate him, and maybe settle in the North with the old man. And I was almost decided to go, when I met a salesman in the Parker House. His name was Dave Singleman. And he was eighty-four years old, and he'd drummed merchandise in thirty-one states. And old Dave...he'd go up to his room, y'understand, put on his green velvet slippers—I'll never forget—and pick up his phone and call the buyers and without ever leaving his room, at the age of eighty-four, he made his living. And when I saw that, I realized that selling was the greatest career a man could want. 'Cause what could be more satisfying than to be able to go, at the age of eighty-four, into twenty or thirty different cities, and pick up a phone, and be remembered and loved and helped, by so many different people? Do you know; when he died—and by the

way he died the *death of a salesman*, in his green velvet slippers in the smoker of the New York, New Haven and Hartford, going into Boston—but when he died, hundreds of salesmen and buyers were at his funeral. Things were sad on a lotta trains for months after that. (*Rises.*) See what I mean? In those days there was personality in it, Howard; there was respect, and comradeship, and gratitude in it. Today, it's all cut and dried, and there's no chance for bringing friendship to bear...or personality. They don't know me any more.

END

HOWARD. (*Angry, rises, moves away R.*) That's just the thing, Willy...

WILLY. (*Pleading; crosses to above R. of table.*) I had forty dollars a week...that's all I need. Forty dollars, Howard.

HOWARD. (*Definite.*) Kid, I can't take blood from a stone, I...

WILLY. (*Cuts in; desperation is on him now.*) Howard, the year Al Smith was nominated your father came to me and...

HOWARD. (*Starts off L. — impatiently.*) I've got to see some people, kid...

WILLY. (*Stops him.*) I'm talking about your father! There were promises made in this office! You mustn't tell me you've got people to see— (*Shouting.*) I put thirty-four years into this firm, Howard, and now I can't pay my insurance! You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away—a man is not a piece of fruit! (*Pause.*) Now pay attention. Your father—in 1928—had a big year. I averaged a hundred and seventy dollars a week in commissions.

HOWARD. (*Snorts, turns away.*) Now, Willy, you never averaged...

WILLY. (*Bangs his hand on desk.*) I averaged a hundred and seventy dollars a week in the year of 1928! And your father came to me...or rather I was in the office here...it was right over this desk...and he put his hand on my shoulder...

HOWARD. Willy, I gotta see some people. Pull yourself together... (*Goes off L.*)

WILLY. (*Facing R.*) Pull myself together! What the hell did I say to him! My God, I was yelling at him! How *could* I!...?

(*On Howard's exit the light on his chair grows very bright and strange. [Music cue no. 10B.] Now Willy breaks off, turns staring at it. Light occupies the chair, animating it. He approaches this chair, standing*