

HOWARD/WILLY

(Howard picks up cigar from ashtray, gets lighter from pocket.)

WILLY. That really is...

HOWARD. Wait a minute! The next is my wife. (Lights cigar. They wait.)

HOWARD'S VOICE. "Go on, say something." (Pause.) "Well, you gonna talk?"

VOICE OF WIFE. "I can't think of anything."

HOWARD'S VOICE. "Well, talk—it's turning."

HOWARD. (Snaps it off.) That was my wife.

WILLY. That is a wonderful machine...

HOWARD. (With a challenging tone.) I tell ya, Willy—I'm gonna take my camera, and my handsaw, and all my hobbies and out they go. This is the most fascinating relaxation I ever found.

WILLY. I think I'll get one myself.

HOWARD. Sure, they're only a hundred and a half. You can't do without it. Supposing you want to hear Jack Benny, see? But you can't be home at that hour. So you tell the maid to turn the radio on when Jack Benny comes on, and this automatically goes on with the radio! (Continues without interruption.)

WILLY. And when you come home you...?

HOWARD. You can come home twelve o'clock, one o'clock, any time you like, and you get yourself a Coke and sit yourself down, throw the switch, and there's Jack Benny's program in the middle of the night!

WILLY. I'm definitely going to get one. Because lots of time I'm on the road and I think to myself, what I must be missing on the radio!

HOWARD. Don't you have a radio in the car?

WILLY. Well, yeah, but whoever thinks of turning it on?

HOWARD. Say, aren't you supposed to be in Boston?

WILLY. (Gets chair off L., puts it L. end of table.) That's what I want to talk to you about, Howard. You got a minute?

HOWARD. (Crosses to above table.) What happened? What're you doing here?

WILLY. Well...

START →

HOWARD. *(Not concerned with Willy's well-being.)* You didn't crack up again, did you?

WILLY. Oh, no, no...

HOWARD. Geez, you had me worried there for a minute. What's the trouble?

WILLY. *(Sits on chair, puts hat under it.)* Well...tell you the truth, Howard... I've come to the decision that I'd rather not travel any more.

HOWARD. Not travel! Well, what'll you do?

WILLY. *(Definite.)* Remember, Christmas time—when you had the party here? You said you'd try to think of some spot for me here in town.

HOWARD. *(Incredulous.)* With us?

WILLY. Well, sure.

HOWARD. *(Businesslike—drops head.)* Oh, yeah, yeah... I remember. Well... I couldn't think of anything for you, Willy.

WILLY. I tell ya, Howard...the kids are all grown up, y'know... I don't need much any more. If I could take home...well, sixty-five dollars a week, I could swing it.

HOWARD. *(Crosses R. few steps.)* Yeah, but, Willy, see I...

WILLY. I tell ya why, Howard...speaking frankly and between the two of us, y'know?—I'm just a little tired. *(Starting to resent having to grovel.)*

HOWARD. *(Crosses to R. of table.)* Oh, I could understand that, Willy. *(Businesslike.)* But you're a road man, Willy, and we do a road business. *(Willy rises.)* We've only got a half dozen salesmen on the floor here.

WILLY. *(Crosses to above table.)* God knows, Howard, I never asked a favor of any man. But I was with the firm when your father used to carry you in here on his arms...

HOWARD. *(Embarrassed and irritated.)* I know that, Willy, but...

WILLY. Your father came to me the day you were born and asked me what I thought of the name of Howard, may he rest in peace! *(Crosses to L. end of table.)*

HOWARD. I appreciate that, Willy, if I had a spot I'd slam you

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 put 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.

END

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

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

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