

CHARLEY/WILLY #1

(Charley appears in door from U. L.)

CHARLEY. Wake, I couldn't get past Yonkers today! Where are you boys, where are you? The woods are burning! I can't drive a car!

(Charley is a large man; slow of speech, laconic, immovable. In all he says, despite what he says, there is pity, and now, translation. He has a robe over pajamas, slippers on his feet.)

CHARLEY. Everything all right?

HAPPY. Yeah, Charley, everything's

WILLY. What's the matter?

CHARLEY. *(Crosses in a step, crosses kitchen door.)* I heard some noise, I thought something happened. Can't we do something about the walls? You stay in here and my house hats blow off.

HAPPY. *(Rises.)* I go to bed, Dad, come on...

(Charley signals Happy to go.)

WILLY. *(Rises, crosses below to R.)* You go ahead, I'm not tired at the moment.

(Charley indicates to Happy that he'll take care of Willy.)

HAPPY. *(To Willy.)* Take it easy, huh?

WILLY. *(To Charley.)*

START →

What're you doin' up?

CHARLEY. *(Crossing to chair L. of table.)* Couldn't sleep good. I had a heartburn.

WILLY. Well, you don't know how to eat.

CHARLEY. I eat with my mouth.

WILLY. No, you're ignorant. You gotta know about vitamins and things like that.

CHARLEY. *(Sits chair L. of table.)* Come on, let's shoot? Tire you out a little.

WILLY. *(Hesitates.)* All right, you got cards? *(Sits R. of table.)*

CHARLEY. *(Taking cards from his pocket.)* Yeah, I got them. Some place. What is it with those vitamins? *(Trying to take Willy's mind off his trouble.)*

WILLY. They build up your bones. Chemistry.

CHARLEY. Yeah, but there's no bones in a heartburn.

(Charley deals cards. Four cards to Willy, four to himself, four face up on table.)

WILLY. What are you talkin' about? Do you know the first thing about it?

CHARLEY. Don't get insulted.

WILLY. Don't talk about something you don't know anything about.
(They are ready to play. Pause.)

CHARLEY. What're you doin' home?

WILLY. A little trouble with the car. *(Throws one card.)*

CHARLEY. Oh. *(Pause.)* I'd like to take a trip to California. *(Takes a trick.)*

WILLY. Don't say. *(Throws one card.)*

CHARLEY. *(Bends forward, fussing with cards on table.)* You want a job? *(Looks up at him.)*

WILLY. I got a job, I told you that. *(Looks suspiciously at Charley. Slight pause.)* What the hell are you offering me a job for?

CHARLEY. Don't get insulted.

WILLY. Don't insult me.

CHARLEY. I don't see no sense in it. *(Throws one card.)* You don't have to go on this way.

WILLY. *(Strong.)* I got a good job. *(Slight pause.)* What do you keep comin' in here for?

CHARLEY. You want me to go? *(Throws cards down—starts up.)*
(Willy leans across table, grabs Charley's arm. Pause.)

WILLY. *(Withering.)* Charley, I can't understand it. He's going back to Texas again. What the hell is that?

CHARLEY. Let him go.

WILLY. I got nothin' to give him, Charley, I'm clean, I'm clean.

CHARLEY. He won't starve. None a them starve. Forget about him.

WILLY. Then what have I got to remember?

CHARLEY. You take it too hard. To hell with it. When a deposit bottle is broken you don't get your nickel back.

WILLY. That's easy enough for you to say.

CHARLEY. That ain't easy for me to say. *(They pick up cards.)*

WILLY. *(Takes three-card trick.)* Did you see the ceiling I put up in the living room?

CHARLEY. Yeah, that's a piece of work. *(Throws one card.)* To put up a ceiling is a mystery to me. How do you do it?

WILLY. What's the difference? *(Takes a trick.)*

CHARLEY. Well, talk about it.

WILLY. *(Irritated.)* You gonna put up a ceiling?

CHARLEY. How could I put up a ceiling? *(Throws last card, deals: four to Willy, four to himself.)*

WILLY. *(Shouting.)* Then what the hell are you bothering me for?

CHARLEY. You're insulted again.

WILLY. A man who can't handle tools is not a man. You're disgusting.

CHARLEY. *(Hurt.)* Don't call me disgusting, Willy. *(Picks up cards.)*

END

CHARLEY. *(Picks up cards.)* Good, keep playing; you'll sleep better... Did you call me Ben?

(Uncle Ben enters, a stolid man, in his sixties, with a moustache and an authoritative air. He is utterly certain of his destiny, and there is the aura of far places about him. He enters carrying umbrella and valise and smoking cigarette in holder, and looks around at the place like a stranger. Ben puts valise by the door, crosses D. looking at balcony, at imaginary clock, then at his watch.)

WILLY. That's funny. For a second there you reminded me of my brother Ben.

BEN. I only have a few minutes.

(Ben strolls D. R., inspecting the place. Charley and Willy continue playing.)

CHARLEY. You never heard from him again, heh? Since that time?