

BUFF: What's he doing out there?

LINDA: He's planting the garden!

BUFF, quietly: Now? Oh, my God!

*Biff moves outside, Linda following. The light dies down on them and comes up on the center of the apron as Willy walks into it. He is carrying a flashlight, a hoe, and a handful of seed packets. He raps the top of the hoe sharply to fix it firmly, and then moves to the left, measuring off the distance with his foot. He holds the flashlight to look at the seed packets, reading off the instructions. He is in the blue of night.*

WILLY: Carrots . . . quarter-inch apart. Rows . . . one-foot rows. He measures it off. One foot. He puts down a package and measures off. Beets. He puts down another package and measures again. Lettuce. He reads the package, puts it down. One foot—He breaks off as Ben appears at the right and moves slowly down to him. What a proposition, ts, ts. Terrific, terrific. 'Cause she's suffered, Ben, the woman has suffered. You understand me? A man can't go out the way he came in, Ben, a man has got to add up to something. You can't, you can't—Ben moves toward him as though to interrupt. You gotta consider, now. Don't answer so quick. Remember, it's a guaranteed twenty-thousand-dollar proposition. Now look, Ben, I want you to go through the ins and outs of this thing with me. I've got nobody to talk to, Ben, and the woman has suffered, you hear me?

BEN, standing still, considering: What's the proposition?

WILLY: It's twenty thousand dollars on the barrelhead. Guaranteed, gilt-edged, you understand?

BEN: You don't want to make a fool of yourself. They might not honor the policy.

WILLY: How can they dare refuse? Didn't I work like a coolie to meet every premium on the nose? And now they don't pay off! Impossible!

BEN: It's called a cowardly thing, William.

WILLY: Why? Does it take more guts to stand here the rest of my life ringing up a zero?

BEN, yielding: That's a point, William. He moves, thinking, turns. And twenty thousand—that is something one can feel with the hand, it is there.

WILLY, now assured, with rising power: Oh, Ben, that's the whole

beauty of it! I see it like a diamond, shining in the dark, hard and rough, that I can pick up and touch in my hand. Not like—like an appointment! This would not be another damned-fool appointment, Ben, and it changes all the aspects. Because he thinks I'm nothing, see, and so he spites me. But the funeral—*Straightening up*: Ben, that funeral will be massive! They'll come from Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire! All the old-timers with the strange license plates—that boy will be thunder-struck, Ben, because he never realized—I am known! Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey—I am known, Ben, and he'll see it with his eyes once and for all. He'll see what I am, Ben! He's in for a shock, that boy!

BEN, coming down to the edge of the garden: He'll call you a coward.

WILLY, suddenly fearful: No, that would be terrible.

BEN: Yes. And a damned fool.

WILLY: No, no, he mustn't, I won't have that! *He is broken and desperate.*

BEN: He'll hate you, William.

*The gay music of the Boys is heard.*

WILLY: Oh, Ben, how do we get back to all the great times? Used to be so full of light, and comradeship, the sleigh-riding in winter, and the ruddiness on his cheeks. And always some kind of good news coming up, always something nice coming up ahead. And never even let me carry the valises in the house, and simonizing, simonizing that little red car! Why, why can't I give him something and not have him hate me?

BEN: *Let me think about it.* He glances at his watch. I still have a little time. Remarkable proposition, but you've got to be sure you're not making a fool of yourself.

*Ben drifts off upstage and goes out of sight. Biff comes down from the left.*

WILLY, suddenly conscious of Biff, turns and looks up at him, then begins picking up the packages of seeds in confusion: Where the hell is that seed? *Indignantly*: You can't see nothing out here! They boxed in the whole goddam neighborhood!

BUFF: There are people all around here. Don't you realize that?

WILLY: I'm busy. Don't bother me.

BUFF, taking the hoe from Willy: I'm saying good-by to you, Pop.