

AXEL. (*Taking him by the shoulders.*) Willum, face it. This is a desperate situation. It calls for something infantile. (*Willum sighs.*) Kemp—that's who I bet could help us. Kemp would know some strange customs. He lives in a transient hotel in Indianapolis.

WILLUM. Ax—

AXEL. (*Getting more excited.*) Oh, let me work on this; it could be—it could be that favor Tansy's always bugging me about.

WILLUM. What?

AXEL. Tansy's always saying, "Do somebody an anonymous favor, will you?" Well—this could be it. Of course, there's no way for it to be anonymous, but—

TANSY. (*Astonished.*) Well, Axel—

AXEL. What?

TANSY. Just—surprised you remembered that.

AXEL. So would this count with you? I mean, if Rick were to leave—?

TANSY. Well—it's not for me to say—

AXEL. But?

TANSY. But—yes, all right; if you really somehow got Rick to leave Willum in peace, with no hard feelings—yes, in my book, that would count.

WILLUM. (*Setting up his drawing materials.*) Look—far be it from me to be a godless party-pooper, but you're going to have to forget this.

AXEL. Leave it for now. Call me if you change your mind. (*At the door.*) "Mister Microphone," huh? Wonder what he'll ask you for next Christmas? (*He leaves.*)

WILLUM. Oh, me.

TANSY. I'll go down, too. I've got phoning to do. (*She starts out with her paper.*)

WILLUM. What's that? Washington paper?

TANSY. The *Post*, yes. (*Willum smiles briefly, starts taping a piece of sketch paper to his drawing board.*) I—listen, for what it's worth—since this Rick thing started, I feel like a real traitor—

WILLUM. No, pooh.

TANSY. I do. Leaving here Friday? Leaving you here, with him?

WILLUM. No, listen, I'm gonna say something to him. I will.

TANSY. Good.

WILLUM. I don't know what.

TANSY. (*At the window.*) Here he comes, he's walking down the road. You want me to stay?

WILLUM. I'll be fine. I'm doing my work.

TANSY. All right. (*She leaves. Willum starts to set up his drawing materials, then starts pacing back and forth in front of the couch, speaking*

 *objectively, maturely, to an imaginary Rick.*) WILLUM. Now, Rick. Rick, sit down. (*Pause.*) Put down your tambourine. Now, as you know, there's a kind of—chemistry between any two people, which can affect both people in very different ways. Now, just as there's some chemistry in you which allows you to like my company—there's some chemistry in me that just always makes me want to scratch your face off. (*Abandoning that.*) No, um—(*Trying again—the no-nonsense approach.*) Rick, I'm not going to mince words. It's time for you to leave. We needn't go into all the reasons; let's just say it's something I've thought about and have decided on. Now, I realize that you saved my life. I owe you my life. I acknowledge that. And I realize that I promised—promised in writing—that as long as I was alive, you could come to me for anything, and that you would always have a place that you could—. (*Breaking off again.*) Oh, God. (*He picks up a large T-square.*) Rick, do you know what this is? This is a crossbow. (*Dispatching the imaginary Rick with an arrow.*) Thhhkkk! (*Turning the T-square on himself.*) Thhhkkk! (*He drops, slain, to the sofa. Presently he opens his eyes again.*) Oh, me. Oh, well. (*Getting back to work.*) Okay. Concentrate. If I just—concentrate. (*Willum works, clenching a pencil far back in his teeth like a bit. Momentarily, in comes Rick, hands in pockets, head to one side—in a word, depressed. He sighs. Willum works. He sighs again, more loudly. Willum looks up grimly, the pencil still clenched in his teeth.*)

 RICK. What are you smileen' about? (*Willum takes the pencil from his mouth, goes back to work.*) I'm not smileen'. 'Cause you wanta know *why*? (*No answer.*) Huh? (*No answer.*) You wanta know *why* I'm not smileen'? (*No answer.*) Huh?

WILLUM. (*Stopping work.*) All right. What's the problem?

RICK. You really want to know?

WILLUM. Sure.

RICK. Really?

WILLUM. Rick.

RICK. (*Sighs.*) Well—you know my brother Bob?
WILLUM. Brother Bob, yes.
RICK. I called him up this morneen', and you know what?
WILLUM. What?
RICK. He moved.
WILLUM. He—he *moved*?
RICK. Yep.
WILLUM. Moved where?
RICK. That was the thing. He didn't leave any forwardeen' address. It was so strange.
WILLUM. (*Hoping he is right.*) Well, surely—if he really has moved, surely he'll get in touch.
RICK. I don't know. I hope he at least sends my things.
WILLUM. Your things? What things?
RICK. My clothes? My chemistry set?
WILLUM. Uh—
RICK. My chihuahua?
WILLUM. Your chihuahua?
RICK. Yeah. Oh, you should see him. He's really lifelike.
WILLUM. Rick, wait. Where—where would Bob send your things?
RICK. (*Shrugs.*) Here, right?
WILLUM. Uh—here?
RICK. This is where I am, right?
WILLUM. Rick—? (*He tries to go on, but can only manage to repeat.*) Rick—?
RICK. (*Giving him his full attention.*) What?
WILLUM. Rick—there's something I have to say. (*Rick watches him with his all-purpose expression.*) All right. Here goes. Now—you're here. And I'm here. (*Stalling to think.*) Um . . . okay. Are you with me so far?
RICK. I'm a little bit lost.
WILLUM. Rick, all I said was, "You're here and I'm here."
RICK. Oh.
WILLUM. (*Exhales audibly.*) All right. Now—when—when two people are together a lot of the time, they can't help influencing each other, and influencing each other's ability to function. You—are you still with me?
RICK. (*Nods.*) You're here and I'm here.
WILLUM. (*Uncertainly.*) Rrrright. (*Should he go back? He decides*

to press on.) So. What we're talking about, really, is personality, isn't it? Uh—(*Telling a joke on himself.*) I mean, I know there are qualities in me that make it hard for some people to have me around—I'm sloppy, I lose things, I'm always getting lost. Some people aren't able to deal with that; it's not their fault, it's not my fault, it's just—personality. You see what I'm driving at? (*Rick gives a more-or-less affirmative shrug.*) Okay . . . So, we all have these character traits. So, what if, just out of curiosity—(*Trying to sound hypothetical.*) what if somebody were to say to you—oh—"Get out of here and don't ever come back"—something like that. I mean, I know it's hard, but if you stood back, do you think you could see what might lead a person to say that to you?
RICK. Oh, sure.
WILLUM. Really?
RICK. Oh, sure.
WILLUM. Oh, Rick. That's great.
RICK. Sure. Like if he hated me because I believed in God?
WILLUM. Oh, Rick.
RICK. Or believed in God, or—(*Getting into it like a game.*) or maybe he hates people 'cause they work in a factory?
WILLUM. (*A quiet moan.*) Ahhhhh. . . .
RICK. And he hates me because my hands are all rough, and stained with honest chalk? Y'know?
WILLUM. Rick. No. No decent person would hate you for—
RICK. Or, what else? Oh! (*The best yet.*) How 'bout because I was in the war? And this guy hates people with purple hearts?
WILLUM. Oh, God.
RICK. What?
WILLUM. Nothing. Nothing. All right, just—let me ask you this. What would you say are the main differences between you—and me?
RICK. (*Shrugs.*) None.
WILLUM. None? You mean you and I are—are—?
RICK. The same. Sure. (*Willum looks at him a long moment, then picks up his T-square.*)
WILLUM. Rick, do you know what this is? (*Rick shrugs. Willum gives up both his campaign and his fantasy.*) It's a T-square. I've got to get back to work.
RICK. 'Kay. That was fun.

WILLUM. (*Shakily lighting a cigarette.*) Great.

RICK. You smoke cigarettes?

WILLUM. Yeah.

RICK. Since when?

WILLUM. Since the airport. (*He is searching for something.*)

RICK. Oh, that reminds me, hey. I bet you don't think I don't know what you're looken' for, right?

WILLUM. What?

RICK. Right?

WILLUM. What?

RICK. (*Who suddenly is in high spirits.*) Wait, don't even answer that.

WILLUM. Answer what?

RICK. Or—you wanna guess?

WILLUM. Guess *what*?

RICK. Huh?

WILLUM. Guess *what*?

RICK. I give up. (*Rick waits expectantly. Willum slumps into a chair. It would not surprise us to see him crumble into dust.*) What? Anything? Okay. I got one for *you*. You know your picture of that hotel?

WILLUM. (*Suddenly alert.*) That's what I was *looking* for.

RICK. I know, 'cause you said you were afraid it was like *mis-seen*' somethen', right?

WILLUM. I may have; Rick, if you've seen that—that's my final color rendering—

RICK. No, I know, so this mornen' I to-o-ook it out, and I he-e-eld it up to the light—

WILLUM. (*Barely audible.*) Rick—

RICK. And I loo-o-oked at it this way awhile, then I looked at it that way, then this way again—

WILLUM. Rick, don't tell me you—

RICK. No, wait. So guess what? You know what I finally realized it needed? So simple. (*He pulls the rendering from beneath the couch.*) A chimney! (*Imposed on the roof of a careful watercolor of the Regency is an immense, hideous, black square, boldly executed in some less refined medium—Crayola, perhaps, or laundry-marker. A second square, on the opposite side of the roof, has been begun, then cancelled with a large "X." Rick points to the crossed-out mistake.*) Not this one. That was just a goof. (*He puts his hand over it.*) But see?

WILLUM. Uh . . . Rick. . . ?

RICK. I don't know where I got the idea.

WILLUM. Rick—

RICK. God, I guess.

WILLUM. (*Looking closer, hoping that the drawing can somehow be saved.*) Rick, you—did you put a hole in this?

RICK. Oh, right, that's why I remembered. Here, look. (*He takes Willum's burning cigarette from the ashtray, gets a mouthful of smoke, and blows it slowly through the chimney-hole from behind. The effect is made a little surreal by the presence of Rick's eyes, which peer expectantly over the top of the drawing during the demonstration.*) See? (*He snorts happily.*) Y'know, I thought I was a lot of things, but I sure never knew I was an architect!

WILLUM. (*Who really doesn't.*) Rick—I—I don't know what to say—

RICK. That's okay. But, so—what would I do next, if I were—me?

WILLUM. (*Clutching a pencil-box.*) What?

RICK. I mean, you know, in the architect business. Could you like show me the ropes, and introduce me around, and that?

WILLUM. Uh—

RICK. Or, wait a minute! *Hey!* We could be *partners!* (*The box in Willum's hand suddenly shatters, crushed by his clenched fist. He grabs his wrist, pained.*)

WILLUM. Aah!

RICK. (*Running to him.*) What happened?

WILLUM. (*Nursing his hand.*) Nothing, it's—

RICK. Hey, you're *bleedeen'!* (*Grabbing the wounded hand.*) Lemme look at that.

WILLUM. Ow!

RICK. You sit there, I know just the thing for that.

WILLUM. I'll take care of it.

RICK. Sit *there*. This is my mom's kitchen remedy, you just rub it into the cut.

WILLUM. Rick—I'm—don't.

RICK. Sit *there*, now—and don't *move*. I'll be in here heateen' up the salt! (*He disappears into the kitchen.*)

WILLUM. Heating up—? (*Willum starts for the bedroom, stops, looks back at the phone, then toward the kitchen, then the bedroom, then toward the phone again. Deciding, he rushes to it and furtively and clumsily punches out a number. We hear a ring, then Axel's voice.*)

AXEL'S VOICE. Yeah?