

BEN. C.B.S. is doing a big special next month. An hour and a half variety show. They're going to have some of the biggest names in the history of show business. They're trying to get Flip Wilson to host the show.

WILLIE. Him I like. He gives me a laugh. With the dress and the little giggle and the red wig... That's a funny boy... What's the boy's name again?

BEN. Flip Wilson. And it doesn't have a K.

WILLIE. But he's *black*, with a K. You see what I mean?

BEN. (*Looks to heaven for help. It doesn't come.*) ...I do. I do... The theme of this variety show –

WILLIE. What's the theme of the show?

BEN. *The theme of the show* is the history of comedy dating from the early Greek times, through the days of vaudeville right up to today's stars.

WILLIE. Why couldn't you get me on this show?

BEN. I got you on the show.

WILLIE. Alone?

BEN. With Lewis.

WILLIE. (*Turns away.*) You ain't got me on the show.

BEN. Let me finish.

WILLIE. You're finished. It's no.

BEN. Can't you wait until I'm through before you say "No"? Can't we discuss it for a minute?

WILLIE. I'm busy.

BEN. Doing what?

WILLIE. Saying "no."

BEN. You can have the courtesy of hearing me out. They begged me at C.B.S. *Begged* me.

WILLIE. Talk faster because you're coming up to another "No."

BEN. They said to me the history of comedy in the United States would not be complete unless they included one of the greatest teams ever to come out of vaudeville, Lewis and Clark, the Sunshine Boys. The Vice-President of C.B.S. said this to me on the phone.

WILLIE. The Vice-President said this?

BEN. Yes. He is the greatest Lewis and Clark fan in this country. He knows by heart every one of your old routines.

WILLIE. Then let *him* go on with that bastard.

BEN. It's one shot. You would just have to do it one night, one of the old sketches. They'll pay ten thousand dollars for the team. That's top money for these shows, I promise you. Five thousand apiece. And that's more money than you've earned in two years.

WILLIE. I don't need money. I live alone. I got two nice suits, I don't have a pussycat, I'm very happy.

BEN. You're *not* happy. You're miserable.

WILLIE. *I'm happy!* I just *look* miserable!

BEN. You're dying to go to work again. You call me six times a day in the office. I can't see over my desk for all your messages.

WILLIE. Call me back sometime, you won't get so many messages.

BEN. I call you every day of the week. I'm up here every Wednesday, rain or shine, winter or summer, flu or diphtheria.

WILLIE. What are you, a mailman? You're a nephew. I don't ask you to come. You're my brother's son, you've been very nice to me, I appreciate it but I've never asked you for anything... Except for a job. You're a good boy but a stinking agent.

BEN. I'M A GOOD AGENT! ...Damn it, don't say that to me, Uncle Willie, I'm a *Goddamn good agent!*

WILLIE. What are you screaming for? What is it, such a wonderful thing to be a good agent?

BEN. (*Holds chest.*) I'm getting chest pains... You give me chest pains, Uncle Willie.

WILLIE. It's *my* fault you get excited.

BEN. Yes, it's *your* fault! I only get chest pains on Wednesdays.

WILLIE. So come on Tuesdays.

BEN. (*Starts for door.*) I'm going... I don't even want to discuss this with you anymore. You're impossible to talk to. FORGET THE VARIETY SHOW! (*He starts for door.*)

WILLIE. I forgot it.

BEN. (*Stops.*) I'm not coming back anymore... I'm not bringing you your *Variety* or your cigars or your low-sodium soups, do you understand, Uncle Willie? ...I'm not bringing you anything anymore.

WILLIE. Good. Take care of yourself. Say hello to Millie and Phyllis.

BEN. (*Breathing heavily.*) Why won't you do this for me? I'm not asking you to be partners again. If you two don't get along, alright. But this is just for one night. One last show. Once you get an exposure like that, Alka-Seltzer will come begging to *me* to sign you up... Jesus, how is it going to look if I go back to the office and tell them I couldn't make a deal with my own uncle?

WILLIE. My personal opinion? Lousy!

BEN. (*Falls into chair, exhausted.*) ...Do you really hate Al Lewis that much?

WILLIE. (*Looks away.*) I don't discuss Al Lewis anymore.

BEN. (*Gets up.*) We *have* to discuss him because C.B.S. is waiting for an answer today and if we turn them down, I want to have a pretty good reason why... You haven't seen him in, what, ten years now.

WILLIE. (*Takes a long time before answering.*) ...Eleven years!

BEN. (*Amazed.*) You mean to tell me you haven't spoken to him in eleven years?

WILLIE. I haven't *seen* him in eleven years. I haven't *spoken* to him in twelve years.

BEN. You mean you saw him for a whole year that you didn't speak to him?