

MAN. Ahh.

WILLIE. Wider.

MAN. Ahh.

WILLIE. A little wider.

MAN. Ahhh!

WILLIE. Your throat is alright but you're gonna have some trouble with your stomach.

MAN. How come?

WILLIE. You just swallowed the stick. (*The curtain rises.*)

ACT TWO

SCENE 2

WILLIE'S hotel room. Two weeks later.

It is late afternoon. WILLIE is in his favorite pajamas in bed propped up on the pillows, his head hanging down, asleep. The television is droning away, another daytime serial. A Registered NURSE in uniform, a sweater draped over her shoulders and glasses hanging on a chain is sitting in chair watching the television. She is eating from a big box of chocolates. Two very large vases of flowers are on the bureau. WILLIE's head bobs a few times, then opens his eyes.

START - WILLIE. . . . What time is it?

NURSE. (*Turns off T.V., glances at watch.*) Ten to one.

WILLIE. Ten to one? . . . Who are you?

NURSE. Don't give me that. You know who I am.

WILLIE. You're the same nurse from yesterday?

NURSE. I'm the same nurse from everyday for two weeks now. Don't play your games with me.

WILLIE. I can't even chew a piece of bread, who's gonna play games? . . . Why'd you turn off the television?

WILLY
REGISTERED
NURSE

NURSE. It's either watching that or watching you sleep, either one ain't too interesting.

WILLIE. I'm sorry. I'll try to sleep more entertaining . . . What's today, Tuesday?

NURSE. Wednesday. (*She bites into a piece.*)

WILLIE. How could this be Wednesday? I went to sleep on Monday.

NURSE. Haven't we already seen Mike Douglas twice this week?

WILLIE. Once.

NURSE. Twice.

WILLIE. (*Reluctantly.*) Awright, twice . . . I don't even remember. I was alright yesterday?

NURSE. We are doing very well.

WILLIE. We are? When did *you* get sick?

NURSE. (*Deadly serious, no smile.*) That's funny. That is really funny, Mr. Clark. Soon as I get home tonight I'm gonna bust out laughing.

WILLIE. You keep eating my candy like that you're gonna bust out a lot sooner.

NURSE. Well, *you* can't eat it and there's no sense throwing it out. I'm just storing up energy for the winter.

WILLIE. Maybe you'll find time in between the nougat and the peppermint to take my pulse.

NURSE. I took it. It's a little better today.

WILLIE. When did you take my pulse?

NURSE. When you were sleeping.

WILLIE. *Everybody's* pulse is good when they're sleeping. You take a pulse when a person is up. Thirty dollars a day, she takes a sleeping pulse . . . I'll tell you the truth, I don't think you know what you're doing . . . and I'm not a prejudiced person.

NURSE. Well, I am. I don't like sick people who tell registered nurses how to do their job. You want your tea now?

WILLIE. I don't want to interrupt your candy.

NURSE. And don't get fresh with me. You can get fresh