

## **A Tough Nut to Crack**

by Ira Bryck © 2001 -2008

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*Inside Rosenbloom's Department Store, the only set is a screen depicting the interior of a childrenswear store; actors will also change costumes behind it. BUD starts play dressed somewhat sloppily but neaten up over time; WILL starts in ties and jackets, and begins dressing down. Three costumes denote the fashions of the 70s, 80s and 90s. Occasional changes of s on a flipchart also set a mood. WILL and BUD ROSENBLOOM, father and son, talk to each other, to imagined characters on and off stage, and asides to the audience.*

### **SCENE 1 1975 Generations of Our Family Serving Generations of Yours**

BUD (*muttering while whisking dust off suit shoulders, sizing items on rack*)

Oh, man! Another fine mess! (*mimicking himself*) Maybe I'll just work the summer (*quotation marks in air*) a "trial run". Ugh- how shortsighted could I be?!

WILL (*Aside, to salesperson*)

So after you straighten the boys' pajamas, you'll go to lunch. And listen- a lunch hour is 45 minutes... (*to himself, mocking saleswoman*) "an hour is 60 minutes, Mr. Rosenbloom." How long can it take to eat a sandwich?! (*wolfs down a sandwich*)

BUD

It's not like I didn't know what I was getting myself into. My earliest memories are from right here! Sweeping... endless sweeping, making boxes, arranging training bras (*indicates that it was awkward but provocative*)

WILL

Cash!! Bud! Cash!

BUD

And taking cash- since five years old, taking cash for grown women who my father didn't think were sharp enough to handle the money. How awkward was that!? (*walks over to imaginary customer*) And five makes twenty! And remember- (*slightly bored, feigning enthusiasm*) for every day or that special day- one store fits all- Rosenblooms!

WILL (*aside*)

A born merchant! There are storekeepers and there are merchants- I'm a merchant...my son (*proudly*) also a merchant!

BUD

The merchant class (*mimes moneygrubbing*)- midway between the priestly class (*mimes piousness*) and the slave class! (*mimes groveling*) My sisters were smart- they made their mark- as mere storekeepers! What they lacked – or chose to ignore- in mercantile prowess, they gained - in freedom to choose! I am of the chosen people- chosen to take cash. And make boxes. And apprentice to the Master Merchant!

WILL

(*to customer*) A tie, you want? Of course I have. Oh, to match this suit? (*pulls competitor's suit out of bag*) You got it where? Macy's? They're still in business? Wow, I don't know how they do it, selling suits that feel this stiff!

BUD

We do it, so why not them?

WILL (*takes tie to show*)

It's a tall order, to match such a nice tie to go with a suit made of (*looks at label- shows to customer*) Yikes- isn't that carcinogenic?

BUD

It's just shameless- the problem is, he's the only one here that can sell anything...and I mean anything, to anybody.

WILL (*motions to BUD "big deal", continues to customer*)

Listen, your son should look his very best...after all, he's a reflection on you...let's try one of these suits with the tie- (*shows 2*) which one? Good choice. You'll see it goes better (*pause*) Sure, they'll take it back, they have to...didn't you read about them and that consumer protection ruling?

BUD

I think the ruling to which he refers covered car batteries.

WILL

Believe me you, we take care of you here- we'll wrap it up nice. You're paying cash? You're smart to not build up a big credit card balance- listen, here's a gift, for my favorite customers: a pair of nice Ban-Lons. Raise your right hand- "no more schmatahs from Macy's - only Rosenblooms." (*pause*) No, thank you!

BUD

Why does he do that? (*pause*) And how does he do that? (*walks behind rack*)

WILL (*to audience*)

Ah, to own your own business! A machiah! A joy! (*pause*) My whole life I've had partners. Growing up above my family's general store, everyone was partners - my four sisters, mama, papa...One big happy family business. Much better than all those years with my father-in-law . Now those were tough times, but I took it- never whining how stifling it was, how much better I could have done.

BUD

How do you keep a good man down? Make him work for his wife's father.

WILL

Thank God, I thought, when my cousin died, I bought in with his widow. How much better it would be to work with someone with a brain, with business sense. (*pause*) I should have believed my cousin, his wife was ...(*finger around ear, crazy style*) ibbeoodle! I still remember our first fight – how can I forget? - it was on our first day together. She was a tough nut. It was almost a blessing when- after 17 years- she smacked me (*pause*). Maybe I shouldn't have smacked back. Well, let's just say what was left unsaid was the nicest part of that discussion.

BUD

Somehow, the idea of "left unsaid" doesn't quite go with our family.

WILL

Boy, buying her out was a monkey off my back. Worth every penny, 3 times more pennies than the business was worth!

BUD

I remember those days. I thought he was gonna plotz ... it was so odd to see him – my rock steady father- that undone.

WILL

So I guess you could say I'm not lucky with partners... so thank God no more partners! Just me and Bud.

BUD

So I'm an un-partner? Is that better or worse than chopped liver?

WILL (*to customer*)

Thank you so much. To be your favorite store means so much to me. It satisfies me to satisfy you.

BUD

And he means that. (*pause*) He means well. (*pause*) Anyway, it's just the summer.

WILL (*to customer*)

Yes, indeed. He's the fourth generation. The legacy lives on, and on, and on. No end in sight!!

**SCENE 2 1976 All We Are Saying Is Give Rosenbloom's a Chance**

*WILL is demonstrating the proper way to give a business card, and doing various card tricks with them.*

BUD

So, dad, I appreciate you ordering me calling cards, but I'm not sure this whole thing is *(pause)* my calling. I'm somewhat here on the rebound... teaching not really being as rewarding as I hoped...

WILL

That's why I always say, "when all else fails, there's always the family business."

BUD

But I'm too young to make long-term commitments. I thought the summer was pretty long, but *(pause)* it's gone, and I'm still here.

WILL

Well, where else you gonna go? There's no gold in them hills.

BUD

That's pretty much why I keep showing up...but still, not making promises I can't keep. So let's please put the order on hold for a year or two- see how it's going- no offense.

WILL

Come on, they're on special- 10,000 for \$19.95. At that rate each one is *(pause)* free! You're going to say no to free business cards? At that rate you can't afford to not say "my card" *(proudly hands Bud a card)*

BUD

Dad, maybe this might work out, but I can't see how. You're really good at this, and you like it, and why not? *(pause)* I'd sort of like to help out...you know I've been working here for 18 years, and I'm only 23- that has to be a record, or at least violate some child labor law. And as far as "if all else fails", I'm not ready to admit that that's the case.

WILL

That's not at all what I meant. I meant you're lucky to have options. And that I'd always be proud to have you here.

BUD

Well, let's just say I'm giving it a shot- so my official position is "wait and see."

WILL

I knew you'd use some common sense, so here's your cards- the special ended Tuesday. I had no choice!

**SCENE 3 1978 We Fight the Good Fight, to Dress You Up Right!**

WILL

*(on phone)* Are you calling me a thief? Just because I'm 60 days late? I know for a fact Gimbel's goes 120 days, and still deducts freight and 8%!! The nerve of you- I pay top dollar *(pause)* and fill churches and temples with youngsters wearing your suits- and this is the thanks I get!

BUD

Don't you feel the slightest bit nervy, yelling at them when you owe them the money for 2 months?

WILL

Who's yelling? *(to phone)* By next week- even if I have to put some money in. *(slams phone)*

BUD

They're going to think you're a real jerk, and not sell us anymore.

WILL

If they cut out all the jerks, that wouldn't exactly be good for their business.

BUD

I just read where all these guys have breakfast together, and if you annoy one of them, you're cut off from every supplier there is by lunch.

WILL

Oh, bull. They deserve it- and respect it- I'd like to see those guys sell something. They're nothing but a bunch of order takers.

BUD

Just the same, what do you think of me handling those sorts of conversations? I'd like to give it a try, handling it less...more ...my way.

WILL

Be my guest- just don't be a doormat. You have to keep them at bay, or they'll be kvetching after 30 days!!

*(BUD and WILL exit behind clothes rack; re-enter, BUD answers phone, WILL eavesdrops)*

BUD *(on phone)*

"Hello, Rosenblooms. Our prices won't hold you hostage" *(pause)* Well, yes, I know it's 60 days. *(pause)* Certainly, I realize we're a bit overdue. It's like that stamp you use "Please pay us so we can pay them so they can pay you." When they pay us, we will certainly pay you...within a very few days.

WILL *(over Bud's shoulder)*

Tell them to stick it- 60 days is nothing!

BUD

Yes, we value our relationship. *(pause)* Did I not just say we'd pay in a few days? Sir, with all due respect *(pause)* are you saying I'm lying to you? *(pause)* Because I see no need for you to be so belligerent.

WILL

See- what did I tell you? Good for nothing! Tell them to go...

BUD

The bottom line is- you're getting your money within the week. I'm sorry for the lateness. *(pause)* You may not have realized that you do have about ten serious competitors- so please apologize for your negative attitude, or our check will be our final communication with you, ever.

WILL

Nice.

BUD

Thank you, I accept your apology. You'll have your check in a few days, and we'll make every effort to be more timely. *(slams phone)* What an ass!

WILL

That's my boy!

BUD

I can see where your way is more fun.

WILL

Not as much fun as watching you do it your way.

BUD

We'll see who gets ulcers first...probably me.

WILL (*NOTICES BROWN SUIT ON RACK, PICKS IT UP*)

God- I can't remember the last time someone asked for a brown suit. I'm going to sell this today or toss it in the dumpster.

BUD

Some 36 Husky will look OK in it- but who knows when he'll walk in? Let's give it to Goodwill.

WILL

Why wait for Mr. Right? Clothes make the man. Like this little man. (*to customer*) Good day, Madam. Can you help my son and I with a little demonstration? We're discussing how this suit would look it's best on a really handsome young guy.

BUD (*aside*)

We were just discussing how only intelligent customers would buy the Emperor's brown suit.

WILL (*puts suit on imaginary boy*)

This proves it- Simplicity is Rich! Or would you rather try on this style with the Pierre Cardin lining and buttons? It's for you, if you're the type who'd shell out \$40 extra for that designer (*quoting with fingers*) "cachet" (*secretly pulls off 1/2 price hangtag off brown suit*)

BUD (*shocked, to audience*)

Did you see that? What he did there? How does he sleep at night? (*pause*) Better than me, actually.

WILL

Not worth it, I agree- Pierre Cardin doesn't even know that suit exists- why help buy him another yacht? I love a knowledgeable customer- will that be cash? Francis, you'll take cash, and then wrap this suit for Mrs. Billups.

BUD

Dad, I know it's good to sell that suit, but what's the price of our dignity? You were ready to throw it in the dumpster, and now you can't even give the sale price!

WILL

Do you think I was able to put 3 square meals on our table by giving away merchandise? That was a happy customer- that kid will look great in church.

BUD

Yeah, if he gains 40 pounds by Sunday.

WILL

I know we discussed the facts of life some time ago; but here's one thing we might have skipped over. You don't sell, you can't pay the bills. No pay bills, no get goods. No goods, no good.

BUD

But you do want to deliver the goods in a way you're not doing bad, right? (*to new customer*) Greetings! In what manner may I serve you? A Christening dress? Well, we have many styles: We have budget- from about \$30, up to over \$100 for really fancy. What price would you like to see?

WILL (*aside, coaching*)

Just show the nicest- they'll tell you if it's too much.

BUD

I'd rather start by knowing what they want to spend.

WILL

They don't know what they want- and if they do, they won't tell you. Rule number one is "Buyers are Liars."

BUD (to customer)

Which do I like? I guess the simple one- the other one is a tad gaudy?

WILL

Some people like gaudy. If you ask me, I like what they like, and what they buy.

BUD (to customer)

Well, I didn't mean gaudy. I meant fancy. So you do like that expensive one? No, it's fine with me. Let me start over (*pause*) your daughter will look very pretty...no...stunning... in it.

WILL (*aside*)

Just cause there's talent, doesn't mean there's skill. But Rome wasn't built in a day.

BUD

Too bad she'll only wear it once. But it's not a waste of money, exactly, because you can take pictures. (*has brainstorm*) Can you do me a favor? I'd love to get a copy of one of the photos to put on our "Wall of Fame" over there. I'd be proud to have your daughter showcasing a Christening dress from Rosenblooms.

WILL (to BUD)

Better..better...Show them shoes, sox, blanket, hat, silver carriage clips, picture frame- we got a big nut to crack- remember, every morning you put the key in the door and turn on the lights, you get on that treadmill.

BUD& WILL (*together*)

And if you're not going forwards, your going backwards.

BUD

They can hardly afford the dress- they want the most expensive one!

WILL

Our best seller- on their princess- it's a special day for them.

BUD

So let's let them off easy here- we're already making \$50 profit. This family isn't wealthy.

WILL

If we wait for wealthy people to descend upon us, we'll be here till doomsday.

BUD

And when they do, he'll sell them suit, jacket, slacks, shirts, ties, briefs, sox, hankies, trench coat. When he finished with that family yesterday, they had to cancel the bar and just have the mitzvah!

WILL

As my first boss, Mr. Bunderoff used to say:

WILL& BUD (*together*)

"if they came in for a white shirt, and bought only a white shirt, then who needs you?"

WILL

And if you don't sell them everything else they're even remotely open to buy, they'll head off to Chwatsky's before you even make payroll.

BUD

You have a tougher skin than me, or something.

WILL

Tough skin or not- just do your best.

BUD  
My best isn't working.

WILL  
Give it time. In your own, inimitable way, sell them shoes, sox, blanket, hat, silver carriage clips, picture frame. They'll love you for it, if you can accept that you're doing them a big favor.

*(as Bud ponders, Will takes over sale, miming)*

BUD  
He's so confident...and feels entitled to whatever he wants. And he gets it! Maybe it's from growing up in the depression- no, that's not entitled, that's hunger... Maybe it's from being the only son, with four older sisters- except that he's always giving, not taking...or maybe it's that he's been selling since he learned to walk- who knows- *(pause)* I'd like to have his superpowers in business *(pause)* but don't want to look like him-

WILL *(to customer)*  
Yes, We're delighted to be working together, father and son. I could see from when he was a little boy he had what it takes to do well in business. It's a gift...a retailer has to be like a good bartender- know all about psychology.

BUD  
There's a certain logic to that mixology.

WILL  
Not every family has what it takes. You need more than business smarts. You also need "mazel" *(pause)* luck, to get along.

BUD  
And the luck of liking what you do...and the luck of pleasing your parents...and the luck of making a living. Lots of luck. Lots and lots of luck. Meanwhile, another "t.o." – Dad takes over my sale!!

WILL  
OK- so I think you have everything: a beautiful dress- you picked my favorite- shoes, sox, blanket, hat, silver carriage clips, picture frame- I appreciate a customer who knows what they're looking for.

BUD  
Thanks for choosing Rosenblooms- as if you had any choice.

#### **SCENE 4 1979 Our Focus is to Make You Look Sharp**

WILL  
Well, I think you're doing great- believe me, just the fact that you're not Sheila – that moms- is a perpetual honeymoon as far as I'm concerned. A monkey off my back!

BUD  
How lucky for me that she lowered the bar so much. But I'm not talking about just making it nice for you. I'm thinking: is this the job I'm meant to do?

WILL  
You think too much- there's no "meant to do."

BUD  
I thought you're the one so big on "beshahrt".

WILL  
Well, yeah, but destiny doesn't apply to everything.

BUD  
Just what you want it to?

WILL  
What I say is "the best job stinks." And believe me, the best boss stinks. At least you're your own boss. If you stink, at least it's your own stink- it's the American Dream!

BUD  
I'm not my own boss-I'm working for you!

WILL  
No, you're working with me. We're in this together.

BUD  
That's not how it feels! When I talk to my friends about my job, I feel like I still do chores around here like when I was a kid. I feel like my salary is still my allowance.

WILL (*proud*)  
Not bad, for an allowance.

BUD  
I hate to tell you, I made more waiting on tables in high school.

WILL  
Yeah, but you didn't own the restaurant.

BUD  
Great- my very own albatross.

WILL  
What can I tell you? Nothing's perfect, but when you own your own business, you'll never get rich, but you'll never starve.

BUD  
I seriously doubt either of those will happen. But that's not what I mean. I'm talking about what's the purpose of selling children's clothing? The higher meaning. Would children go naked, if not for me?

WILL  
In my many years of selling clothing, I've never thought anything even vaguely similar to that. (*pause*) but since you asked: no, I can't say that anyone would go naked. It's just a job.

BUD  
I don't want "just a job." I want my life to have some purpose.

WILL  
Who do you think you're talking to? A hobo? An anarchist? I have purpose- this didn't happen by accident!

BUD  
When you do it, it does seem to have purpose. When I do it, I can't help thinking "I wonder what I'd rather do."

WILL  
In Masons they say, 8 hours work, 8 hours rest, 8 hours sleep. I think that's a pretty good recipe. Just the 8 hours work- I don't think that does it all by itself.

BUD  
Teaching- that was noble. I want to be noble.

WILL

My son, the nobleman? What's this- the middle ages? It's the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with bills to pay, and recessions, but also some "good old days." Didn't you ever hear the song "Leave Your Troubles on the Doorstep"?

BUD

Didn't you ever hear the song "Is That All There Is?"

WILL

What do you want out of me? I'm a simple man- you have more complicated stuff on your mind. I made a living that put food on the table- sent you to college- gave you the chance to have all these "deep thoughts."

BUD

You make it sound so frivolous.

WILL

Then we're even.

*(Bud tries to rebut, but Will notices customer, and Bud leaves, slightly annoyed)*

***(costume changes to 80's garb happens during next 2 monologues)***

WILL *( on phone)* Rosenbloom's, no "voodoo economics!" in our Discounts!" *(realizes it's his wife)* Yes, dear, I was just talking to him about that. Of course we both want what's best for him. But how are we supposed to know what that is, if he doesn't? *(pause)* Yes, he did want to be a dentist, but that was in fourth grade- he hasn't mentioned it in some time. If he said he wanted to be a dentist, I certainly wouldn't make him sell schmatahs all day! Nobody forced him into this, it was his choice. *(pause)* Yes, we agree: if he's happy, we're happy. But what if he's not happy? Then we can't be happy? I gotta go.

*(to customer)* Well, hello! How did that white suit work out for your young man's communion? It wouldn't have looked better if was custom made. Spilled wine on it? That's a shame. Before or after the pictures? Well, that's lucky. *(pause)* You must be kidding. *(pause)* I like to say yes to people, but I have to say no- white suits and dresses are final sale, especially with that big purple stain. I don't know what you can do with it, but what would I do with it? Well, yes, I do value your business, but do you value my business? I'll tell you what- I'll go halfies with you on dyeing it purple. Believe it or not, it's what they're all wearing. So glad we settled that! Now...can I show you a black shirt and silver tie that goes great with a Cabernet? Walk this way.

## **SCENE 5 1980 It's Our Pleasure to Please You**

BUD *(on phone to mother)*

Oh, Stop! *(pause)* Mom, look. *(pause)* Would you please listen? I do love her. Exactly why I don't want to work with her. *(pause)* No...mom and pop store does NOT mean one must bring in one's wife. *(pause)* I couldn't have my wife in here, trying to "co-operate" the place. Not able to agree on such crucial matters as whether or not to go storewide discount, or even whether we should continue in our time honored tradition of turning white suits into wine! *(pause)* But ME work with HER? I had a hard enough time getting the left side of the bed. *(pause)* Yes, I know you're trying to be helpful. But is it helpful? That is the question! *(pause)* I gotta go.

*(Bud turns to imaginary salesman from Newsday)* Where was I? *(pause)* Right, why I'm never going to advertise in Newsday, even if it hurts me more than it hurts you. *(opens paper)* This headline: "Freeport Man Stabbed in Pizza Parlor". You know I had 3 calls from customers today, asking if it was safe to shop in Freeport. The ironic thing is 2 of those calls were people from Valley Stream! Why ironic? Because it happened in Valley Stream. Look here *(reads)* the Freeport man had just won \$5000 at the track, and was celebrating in a pizza parlor in Valley Stream. He stood up and announced he had five grand, cash, in his pocket. The people at the next table robbed him with forks, and fled. *(pause)* Because it should have said man stabbed in Valley Stream. Your paper has it out for Freeport. *(pause)* I don't know why, maybe because you have more advertisers from Valley Stream than from Freeport. *(pause)* You must be kidding, "people don't read headlines," that's all they read. That's dumber than this guy that got robbed. *(pause)* So when will I advertise? This Sunday... in Pennysaver. Good day!

WILL (*enters*)  
Bud, after lunch you'll ...

BUD (*exasperated*)  
Ugh!

WILL  
Now what?

BUD  
Could you not say that like that?

WILL  
What like what?

BUD  
"After lunch you'll!"

WILL  
I just thought you might be hungry, so eat lunch before you go in the back and make out the checks for the 10<sup>th</sup>. We have a big nut this month. Even if we do 20% over last year for the next 2 weeks, I'll still have to put money in.

BUD  
OK, wait. Before we get into our business sucks discussion, might we finish up the "you'll do this, you'll do that" topic?

WILL  
What!? Do I always have to walk on eggshells around my own place? It's just how I talk. At least I talk- my father was much worse, sometimes all he'd say was... nothing, he'd just raise an eyebrow. But you always knew what he meant.

BUD  
Look. Why can't you say "what do you think about doing the bills after lunch?" or "I would appreciate you straightening the girl's underwear" or "it would be very helpful for you to vacuum." The way you say it is so bossy.

WILL  
I'm the boss- so I sound bossy. I'm almost 60- how many new tricks do you expect me to learn?

BUD  
It's not such a big trick. It's just there's more than one way to say anything. It says in this book (*pulls out of back pocket "I'm OK You're OK"*) people always speak as either an adult, a child, or a parent. It doesn't matter which one you actually are.

WILL  
So complicated- be yourself, I say.

BUD  
It said that adult can speak childishly, a child can speak like an adult. I'm saying you need to speak to people like an adult instead of a parent. And stop treating everyone- me, the salesgirls, like children.

WILL  
You're nitpicking. I don't do that at all.

BUD  
You do. And it makes it hard for me to be "the other boss." If I don't talk like you, they look at me like I'm speaking Greek.

BUD (*offstage, to salesperson*)

Mabel, the girls pajama case is in need of some organizing. (*pause*) I'm glad you agree (*pause*) Could you please look into it? (*pause*) No- ugh- not literally look into it, I mean please remedy the situation. (*pause*) Mabel, would you please straighten the pajamas? (*pause*) Well, they need it again today. (*pause*) When I say "please straighten the pajamas" it's just like when my father says "you'll straighten the pajamas." (*pause*) Either now or after lunch, whichever you feel will be more effective. (*pause*) Which means "please do it if you want to get paid on Friday." (*rubs temples to ease headache*)

WILL (*also rubbing temples*)

It ain't easy. For minimum wage, you get minimum brainwaves.

BUD

So you hire the impaired, who only respond to your style of bossing, and feel justified because treating them like adults confuses them?

WILL

I don't think I'm so bad. Why do they all stay 10, 20 years if I'm such a Hitler?

BUD

Who's talking Hitler? I'm just saying it's like students- in grade school- you treat them like they have a brain, they think better.

WILL

Now who's treating them like children?

BUD

You know what I'm saying. Or we could really break precedent, and hire smarter people.

WILL

Who'll open across the street before you know what hit you.

BUD

I just can't see spending every single day surrounded by such denseness.

WILL

It's not heaven, but it's a living.

BUD

There must be a better way.

WILL

When you find it, let me know.

BUD

Yes, Mabel, very nice. (*aside*) Good girl. (*to Will*) You know, we criticize Manny in Buster Brown for calling his help "scarecrows," but how are we any better?

WILL

Ours are better at scaring crows?

BUD

Ugh!

## **SCENE 6 1983 It's Store Bought, But With That Down Home Feel**

WILL (*on phone*)

Hello, Howard? Will Rosenbloom. Haven't seen you since your hole in one on the black course; that was really something. (*pause*) Listen, Howard, I want to ask you some advice. What would you do if you were working 50 hours a week to feed your family, attempting to improve profits by deducting 8% terms and 2% anticipation

even though you were 5 days late; treating the customer right by giving good quality at the right price, and then saw the very same Quilt and Pillow sets you sell for \$54 at the flea market going for \$30? *(pause)* What's my point? You really don't understand my point?

BUD *(on phone)*

Yes, this is Bud Rosenbloom, calling for Calvin Livingston. Leave him a message? Let me think- where would you leave that, exactly? Would it be on the same pile as the 18 other messages I've left him over the last month? Because I'm beginning to suspect he's not checking that pile.

WILL

The point is when you stab me in the back like that, it really hurts my feelings. *(pause)* If it's not your goods, why is it in your box? *(pause)* Yes, same exact patterns. And it was your brother in law manning the booth. How can you deny it? *(pause)* Yes, I heard they're closing the flea market- well, you don't pay your sales tax, that's what happens. *(pause)* You're offering me the same closeout as you gave your brother in law? Gee, you make me feel like a part of your family. But I have my own family. *(hangs up)*

BUD

Because if he was checking the pile, he'd have maybe called me back, received my order for many many designer boy's suits, and then I'd have some designer boy's suits to sell. *(pause)* And he'd have such a nice commission check, he could *(pause)* afford to take some courses to learn how to service a customer.

WILL *(puts feet up)*

You know, a lot of people don't get the opportunity to express themselves so fully on their job.

BUD *(puts feet up)*

Very satisfying.

WILL

Indeed. *(pause)* So you'll *(pause)* Do you happen to be in the mood for a couple of nice pastrami sandwiches?

BUD

Why, yes. Resolving business challenges works up quite an appetite.

WILL

So you'll go to the deli and *(pause)* I'll call and have them deliver

BUD

Hits the spot, exactly.

## **SCENE 7    1987    It's Nice to Be Important, But It's Important to be Nice**

BUD *(to salesperson)*

Donna, I want to thank you for the very motivating sign you put up by the register. What could it possibly mean *(reads)* "It's nice to be important, but it's important to be nice"? *(pause)* I do agree with it, but am wondering if you have some particular agenda...some message. Are you saying this is not a nice place to work? With nice people and such? *(pause)* Well, I think he does think of himself as nice. No, I think he thinks you're important. I just think it's going to hurt his feelings, if he gets the same "vibes" from it as I'm getting. Ironically, I think it's not a nice sign. Well, keep it up. I'm putting you in charge of noticing when people are offended. It's a very important job.

WILL *(enters)*

Donna, you'll get started on the Holiday windows. *(straining to be nice)* Would you kindly undress the mannequins, and if I may request, please don't leave them naked with the arms off, right in front? That really does unnerve passing children. Thanks.

BUD

How are you?

WILL

Not so good. I'm hoping it's a bit of indigestion, and not a heart attack.

BUD

Oh my God! I'm taking you to the emergency room.

WILL

I think it's actually a bagel just went down the wrong pipe. I'll be OK.

BUD

You know that, but I don't. I just read about the first symptom of a heart attack, and you've got it.

WILL

Gas?

BUD

No...denial. Stop thinking only of yourself, you have people who love you. Get in the car.

WILL

What a good son. *(they get in car. Will gets behind wheel; Bud nudges him over into passenger seat)* What I think is I'm heartsick about something.

BUD

What?

WILL

This article in the local paper. Says here: "Bud Rosenbloom, 4<sup>th</sup> generation heir of the retail institution of the same name, says: "I think the area is already overcrowded with stores- this development should not be allowed. People should walk more, spend time with their families. Not so much shopping."

BUD

Wow, that's a great quote.

WILL

"I think"?

BUD

What?

WILL

Since when do you think? *(pause)* It's "we think." We are the corporate "we." The royal "we."

BUD

You can't control what they put in the paper. That's the first time I even remember saying what they said I said.

WILL

Nonetheless, we are "we." Partners who say "I" think they are "The Great I Am." Sheila always said "I think," never "we think."

BUD

When did you and she agree on anything? Would you have liked it better if she said "We think you are an ass!"

WILL

Could you please humor an old man with chest pain?

BUD

We guess so.

*(Chinese fire drill, Will now driving, indicating they are coming back from emergency room)*

WILL

Well, that's a relief. But I can't believe someone went to medical school so they could tell me to chew my food more before I swallow.

BUD

Those doctors think they're so important.

WILL

But that guy was very nice. It's like that sign Donna put up today. *(pause)* Glad she's finally seeing the importance of improving her personality.

### **SCENE 8 1989 : Our Styles Won't Look Silly in the Family Album**

WILL

Bud, I'm about to reveal to you a precious heirloom- that certain people would like to get their hands on and destroy. I've had it my entire working life. There's much to be learned from what's in here, and how it should be used.

BUD

This is so exciting- like Jor El revealing some Kryptonian secrets to Superboy. Or looking into James Bond's little black book. What is it?

WILL

It's where I jot down my open to buy figures for the store. Someday it *(holds up book)* will all be yours!

BUD

Whoa! I'm *(pause)* strangely disappointed.

WILL

Now we'll see it in action. *(pause)* Remember this day- your first buying trip.

*(dialogue continues with phantom salesperson showing a line)*

BUD

Well, a lot of these are pretty cute. I can see a lot of my friends with kids going for them.

WILL

We have to buy what Mrs. Liadakis is going to put on layaway, not what your friends want at cost. A friend in need never pays retail.

BUD

Aside from that, though, if we upgrade our fashion sense a bit, we'd attract a better customer.

WILL

No better customer than Mrs. Liakakis, except maybe her sister, Mrs. Skiriotis. Fifty dollars on layaway every Saturday. Those yuppies would never do that- this week's style would be old by the time they picked it up. Believe me, after a while, you'll love what sells; not what's beautiful.

BUD *(to salesman)*

OK, so we'll take this one

WILL

Just notice it has no snap crotch- kids that age need diaper changes every 3 minutes

BUD

Good point, so we'll take that one over there, and the one below it.

WILL

Yellow is bad luck to Greek customers; black customers don't buy brown.

BUD

Oy! So we'll take that sailor suit-

WILL (*showing figures in book*)

We still have 17 from last season.

BUD

Dad, how about you do this and I'll observe?

WILL

No, no - you're doing great.

BUD

So let me pick what I want and don't say anything. I'll never learn if not from my own mistakes.

WILL

You're right- just be careful, because we eat what we don't sell.

BUD

I'll take this one, that one, that over there, and this one here. A dozen per style per size range; in both that Picasso green and Cosmos purple.

WILL

Admirable- I would just suggest a few changes in the phraseology.

BUD

There's phraseology?

WILL (*pointing out all the other styles not picked*)

Whew! That one is exorbitant. This one is so out it's almost in. What does this one have- five stitches per inch? You can get your thumb in through the seam! This one we'll all get sued for copying Givenchy. What's left? Only those four schmatah styles? (*looks at book*) Well, that's what we need. I guess we have to take them.

BUD (*to salesman*)

So you'll have a tylenol and then show us 4-6x girls.

## **SCENE 9 1991 Look Bigger Than Life at Down to Earth Prices**

BUD

Last night I did one of the strangest, weirdest, most insightful things I've ever done.

WILL

I'll bite.

BUD

It's a bit too odd to talk about.

WILL

You shouldn't be ashamed to tell me anything! How bad of a thing could it possibly be?

BUD

It's not bad at all. I didn't say bad. (*long pause*) I met with a psychic. (*long pause*) Hello?

WILL

Hello... it'll take more than that to kill me!

BUD

Good to know. So, what happened was...this guy I know- who you don't know- he's sort of down and out; or was...now he's doing quite well.

WILL

I thought you said he was psycho.

BUD

Psychic... can see things about you beyond what you can see yourself.

WILL

Who can't?

BUD

Anyway, this guy- Paul- used to sell stuffed animals at the gas station for Christmas. All day long, outside, freezing, hawking those giant pink dogs, green giraffes... Anyway, gets pneumonia, gets really sick, lapses into a coma, and in his coma, starts hearing voices of all sorts of spirits, plus (*pause*) supposedly (*pause*) Jesus, Krishna, Buddha... you know the type.

WILL

I wouldn't know them from Adam. I might recognize Moses. (*pause*) So now he's bosom buddies with all these big hitters?

BUD

And gets \$20 a head on Friday nights to give advice from the "other side."

WILL

When are you getting to the weird part?

BUD

So I spoke to my Indian guide, Big Horn, who told me I have a special talent to do some sort of teaching.

WILL

So instead of looking into your future, he tells you what you were doing 15 years ago? Doesn't seem worth the price of admission.

BUD

And also spoke with a saint from France, who told me I'm doing a righteous act by supporting the family business.

WILL

I'd go with that guy.

BUD

But that as noble as it is, there's better things ahead.

WILL

Maybe your friend was doing better selling those green giraffes.

BUD

Fifty people in the room, most of them as dazed and confused as one can be, all hearing there's a better life awaiting!

WILL

That's \$1000, with no inventory! And you say all you have to do is go into a coma?

BUD  
And, I guess, be chosen.

WILL  
Well, if they chose Shirley McClaine and the stuffed animal guy. We're in the wrong business!

BUD  
I do have a point to make.

WILL  
Don't let me stop you.

BUD  
Fifty people- all there to check whether they were on their right path...All wondering- a lot like me- if I was in the right place at the right time.

WILL  
Sure you are!

BUD  
Well, I think you may be right, and Buddha agrees with you.

WILL  
Well, there you go!

BUD  
What Buddha said- via my psychic friend- is "If it's the right path" (*pause*)

WILL  
"you're on it."

BUD  
What?! How did? How would?

WILL  
(*pause*) So that was your "sign from above"?

BUD  
The sign was there might not be "a sign." It's a path, with no signs. Just free will!

WILL  
How come "Will" is free...and Paul gets twenty bucks? Boy, we are in the wrong business! (*pause*) I'm famished- want a sandwich? (*exits*)

**(costume changes to 90's garb in next 2 monologues)**

BUD (*on phone with friend*)  
Hi, Mitch. Just getting back to you- so you were saying that you might switch law firms (*pause*) So you'd make twice the money, and only have to work twice the hours? Isn't that just a nice way of saying you're working two jobs? (*pause*) Of course it's nice to afford a nice house, but what do you care?, you'll never see it! (*pause*) Well, you asked, so I'm being honest. (*pause*) I don't know what I'd do, I don't even know what I'm doing with my own situation. Do you even like law? Well, that's good- so do it 16 hours! Do it 24 hours, then you'll really be living high on the hog! (*pause*) Sorry, it must be that time of the month. I'm happy for you. Take the job, you earned it.

(*friend of Bud's enters, to shop*) Hey, how are you!? (*mimes hug*) What brings you to this neck of the woods? Really, shop here? Nothing, I just always thought of you as one of those people who'd only let their child wear all natural fabrics. No, that's not an insult. I think it's a good thing. It's just not what could ever sell around here.

Well, you have to buy what sells. A lot of things I bought started looking damn ugly on the clearance rack, and so some of those putrid polyester stretch suits started looking a lot better, getting 4 turns per year at a full keystone markup (*seems shocked to hear himself talk in retail lingo*) Well, anyway, let me just say that whatever you want, you get the “friends and relatives” price- 1/3 off. Yes, it’s not “I can get it for you wholesale” but if you want wholesale, let’s go over here to the 50% off rack- all natural, to boot!

## **SCENE 10 1990 There’s No Business Like Your Business**

WILL (*on phone to friend*)

I’m so sorry to hear that, Stan. You just can’t catch a break. I don’t get it, anybody would be nuts to not appreciate you as an employee. Don’t be mad, but I have to ask- would you consider apologizing to your brother and going back in with him? (*long pause*) Sorry. Would you consider apologizing to this last boss and seeing if you could work it out there? I know, all idiots. So why don’t you start up something yourself? I know it’s scary- don’t you think I know it’s scary? Listen, let’s have a sandwich sometime soon. Bye.

(*Will observes shoplifter*) Welcome to Rosenblooms! I can’t help notice what good taste in clothing you have. No, I’m not talking about your down jacket, I’m talking about the triple stitched Swedish Knit boys slacks, available in forest green and cranberry, that you just stuffed up inside the aforementioned down jacket. (*pause*) Am I calling you a thief? (*getting angrier*) Why I guess I am! Do you know how hard I have to work to earn the money to buy those pants, hoping to sell them for a few bucks profit before some *gonif* like you comes in here to rip me off!? How am I supposed to pay all these people if you just come in here and steal?! Why don’t you just kill us all?!? (*pause*) Well, you should be sorry! I remember you when your mother bought you your first underpants! (*mimes pulling pants away*) Yes, we can make this right—will that be cash or charge? (*pause*) Donna,. Please take cash for this fine gentleman. (*to customer*) and remember.. “for every day or that special day, one store fits all... Rosenblooms!”

WILL (*TO BUD, WHO JUST ENTERED*)

Boy, I’ve been up since 3am; just thinking, thinking...do you know how much we owe for the 10<sup>th</sup>?

BUD

It’ll work out. It always is the same, month after month. You not sleeping, getting the checks out little by little,

WILL

Angry bookkeepers calling.

BUD

...me making peace with bookkeepers...eventually they get paid.

WILL

And me putting money in.

BUD

And taking money out.

WILL

And putting it back in. I hate to tell you, but howzabout going halfies on what the business needs right now? It’s painful, I know, but “no pain, no gain.”

BUD

Just curious- what’s the gain?

WILL

You’ll gain some respect for the risk involved in owning your own business.

BUD

I like to think of it as Monopoly.

WILL

When it’s your money, it won’t feel like a board game.

BUD

I know. I put my heart and soul into this.

WILL

At 3am , it's more than heart and soul. It's your throat and stomach.

BUD

Well, it's not like I've been shirking my part. It's just I don't really have money to spare. Do you think I'll ever own a house at this rate? *(pause)* How did you do so much better than me working in this very same store? *(pulls magazine out of back pocket and points to cover story, dummy cover of thumbs down)* I'm downwardly mobile. That's a polite way of saying I'm going down the toilet.

WILL

It's tough for us both. It's not easy doing business in a recession, in a bad town, with fancy boutiques and category killers pummeling you from both sides.

BUD

We're not long for this world.

WILL

Damned Two Guys.

BUD

And after all the damage they inflicted, they go Chapter 11.

WILL

The big fish eats the little fish, and then dies.

BUD

And then what you have is...

WILL

2 dead fish.

BUD

You are what you eat.

WILL

And nasty customers. I'd like to see you happy, and in a nice house, but I can't snap my fingers and make it happen. All I can tell you is someday this will all be yours.

BUD

I know you're offering me a great deal, despite everything. It cost you a lot to get where you are. And all I need to do is put in my time, and poof, it's mine.

WILL

A great deal.

BUD

But a mixed blessing- and so confusing. At the same time as I think this is beneath me- I just don't feel proud of working in my family's store; it's also beyond me. I can't imagine ever being able to do it as well as you. *(pause)* I know I'd be so pleased with myself if I ever thought I could run this place in the style of a Will Rosenbloom.

WILL

That's the nicest thing you've ever said to me.

BUD

Which part? That I hate the business or I'm not as good as you?

WILL

Do you know how much pleasure a parent gets seeing that his child is a mensch?

BUD

I'd rather be content.

WILL

Oh, come on! The only contented thing is a contented cow. It's not a bad thing that you're not content. It makes you work harder to have a more meaningful life. That's part of what makes you a mensch.

BUD

You have a certain knack for making bad things sound good and vice versa.

WILL

I make good things sound bad? *(pause)* Sorry to hear that, because I do have something good. Come with me. *(takes Bud to safe. Takes out bound stock certificates)*. It gives me great satisfaction to give you 50 shares of Rosenbloom Department Store stock. This makes us equal partners.

BUD

Wow! It's too much! I can't afford this.

WILL

Let's just say you've already afforded it. In blood, sweat and tears equity.

BUD

It doesn't seem like quite enough blood to own half a company.

WILL

So how can I make this good thing sound good? *(pause)* Put in \$20k *(non verbal communication, where WILL waits for BUD to agree, and he shakes head in agreement)* take two aspirin, and call me at 3 in the morning. We can talk to ourselves together. *(exits)*

BUD *(aside)*

Another mixture of good and bad- Boardwalk and Jail. How is someone supposed to feel good about owning something important if they go in the hole to do it? Name: Donald Trump Address: Debtors Prison. *(pause)* At least I have my stock to keep me warm.

## **SCENE 11 1992 : Relax! We've Got You Covered!**

BUD *(on phone to mother)*

Mom, I'm absolutely not being silly. I just don't see myself owning a business. Well, I guess that the "heir apparent is not all that apparent." I doesn't mean I don't love you and dad, it means I don't love retail. *(pause)* I'm not being silly. I gotta go.

*(WILL enters)*

BUD

Good morning. Did you enjoy your day off?

WILL

Not bad at all- the back nine at Eisenhower, fixed my hook, but replaced it with a nasty slice; then saw a matinee and caught the early bird at Sparta Family Diner. All in all, a very invigorating 16 hours.

BUD

That's a pretty full day, even without finding the time to check up on me 3 times.

WILL

Checking up? No, just saying hello, I like hearing your voice. Hearing that everything is under control helps me relax.

BUD

You'd think it would be more relaxing if you trusted your son as a competent managing partner.

WILL

You call me on your day off, too!

BUD

Because you insist! But no more, from now on my day off is a Day of Rest, like God intended. If this fourth generation business fails because I was enjoying a brief respite from children's apparel, it couldn't have been such a great business to start.

WILL

Be that way. I'm sorry you feel this is so terrible you need to escape.

BUD

All I'm saying is I'd like to stop proving myself- to you, to me. I don't have to be some obsessed -executive - workaholic who defines himself by endless running after some elusive golden carrot.

WILL

I can't believe that's what you think I think is good.

BUD

*(rubs temples)* You're just calling to say hello- I know. *(pause)* But anyway, I really do need a break from this constant nose to the grindstone. *(pause)* One day you graduate from college, and you're expected to just be this adult that never stops working. *(pause)* You're saying hello, but it's oppressive, so please stop it!

WILL

If you're happy, I'm happy. *(pause)* So how was the final figure yesterday?

BUD

A little better than last year- we had a couple of really good sales. You know that woman Cherry, who went to jail for selling nickel bags out of her corner store? She got out, and picked up a huge layaway.

WILL

It's about time!

BUD

But then, that pest Lydia tried to steal 3 girls communion dresses- I snuck up on her while she was sticking them up her blouse, trying to look pregnant, and shamed her into buying them.

WILL

Good going!

BUD

But her credit card was refused.

WILL

Damn!

BUD

But I clipped it, and we get \$50. *(gives him \$25)*

WILL

Nice. But I'd rather have the sale.

BUD  
So she paid cash.

WILL  
I'll never understand why anyone would steal from us if they have cash?

BUD  
Then she came back to return them for a refund an hour later.

WILL  
What chutzpah!

BUD  
I reminded her that all white dresses are final sale.

WILL  
What a nice policy!

BUD  
But she cried, and said she really didn't need white dresses, since she only has boys. She was going to sell them on the street for \$10 each, but now couldn't, since she had to pay retail.

WILL  
Boy, what a story!

BUD  
So I gave her a store credit, and she was very grateful.

WILL  
All's well that ends well! (*pause*) Why didn't you tell me all this yesterday?

BUD  
Like I said, I don't want to talk business on days off.

WILL  
That stuff is really the beauty part of this business. I couldn't have done it better myself.

BUD  
It's funny, but while it was happening I kept thinking- in the back of my mind, "what would dad do?"

WILL  
So you did what you thought I'd do? I'm so proud.

BUD  
No, I'm so proud- because I think I did it my way. Not the opposite of your way, but in my own personal style.

WILL  
Your inimitable style!

BUD  
And taking nothing away from you, I was really pleased to have a personal style. It took awhile to realize, working for my father as I do.

WILL  
Working with! With! Not for!

BUD  
It's easy to say that from where you're standing. From where I'm standing, I'm still this obedient little kid.

WILL

Yeah, what about all those hippie days, the demonstrations, the anti- establishment?

BUD

But even when I rebelled, it was in a well- behaved way. I still came heading back to the stable like some homesick pony.

WILL

What, you're kicking yourself for not being some obnoxious rebel without a cause?

BUD

Trotting home because I was too scared to face the big bad world. I couldn't stick it out in teaching, cause it was just too hard.

WILL

Whadya talking about? It was a dead end. You never would have earned enough to support a family. What kind of job was that for a bright young man with a good business head?

BUD

Maybe I wasn't big and strong enough to make it on the outside. So I came home to work for my big strong dad.

WILL

Yeah, I'm a regular Superman.

BUD

When I was a kid, that's what I felt. Your secret identity wasn't exactly Bizarro, but boy, there were times when I thought you were a real jerk.

WILL

And still do.

BUD

Actually, I don't. But my friends with jerky dads didn't give a damn about pleasing their fathers. They just did what they wanted to do.

WILL

And broke their fathers hearts?

BUD

Who knows? But they made up heir own minds, even if their decisions were stupid and selfish.

WILL

I'm not grasping the benefit of stupid and selfish.

BUD

At least they did it on their own. I'd think- this guy's going nowhere in life, but he was going to make it- or crash and burn- on his own.

WILL

So you have to be a jerk to have a happy son? My dad wasn't a jerk- I think I'm happy.

BUD

When do I get to feel like a grown up? You're Mr. Rosenbloom, I'm only Bud.

WILL

Stop it. You're a good person, so stop kicking yourself. You can do what you want and be what you want, but you can't have it both ways.

BUD  
What both ways?

WILL  
You can't stay a lost boy, only Woodstock, not Neverland, and still be a man the way you're thinking of grown up. You'll be grown up when you feel OK the way you are.

BUD  
But there are things I have to do- or have to know I could do- I could never feel right until then.

WILL  
What things? Business things, or running with bulls, jumping from planes things? You want to be like Ernest Hemingway? I'm not sure he was so grown up.

BUD  
Business things.

WILL  
You do most of it already. The buying, alterations, making ads, dressing windows... you deal with tenants like a man's man! So, what? You want my two last jobs?- buying gift paper and boxes? I only like those cause I like to schmooze it up with Mr. Hurwitz, and get him down a few bucks.

BUD  
I want to know I can run the whole business, not just do a bunch of jobs.

WILL  
Running the business is a bunch of jobs. It's not as glamorous as people think.

BUD  
I don't know. When I see you, I see the boss. When I see me, I see the boss's son. *(pause)* One of my earliest memories is of you presiding over the Rosenbloom universe - behind the register, tie loosened, sleeves rolled up, cigarette dangling,.

WILL  
You're watching some old movie in your head! I quit smoking. I haven't worn a tie here since 1982. And again, you know more about what's going on in this place than I do.

BUD  
But you're still here, and it's keeping me down. You'll never retire, and I'll never get ahead. It just feels like, with you around, I can't be who I need to be.

WILL  
So I'm in your way? I'm just living my life, day to day. I thank God I can get out of bed every day, and happy to go to sleep every night, and generally pleased with myself about what happened in between.

BUD  
But you can do that no matter what. I'm afraid to grow up; but you're afraid to let go. There's life after work, too- so can I have a turn in your shoes?

WILL  
So that's really the bottom line. You want me out.

BUD  
You make it sound so hostile.

WILL  
Oh, sorry! Let me beautify it for you. You're putting me out to pasture, out to stud. Sounds like fun.

BUD

Dad, I'd never want to hurt you.

WILL

Don't feel bad. I'll just be like those "retirees" that come in here, old and beaten, captains of industry, reduced to schlepping on errands with their wives. You might as well just slip me a pill.

*(long pause)*

BUD

We're both nuts.

WILL

Have a little understanding. The nut doesn't fall far from the tree.

## **SCENE 12 1993 Oh, Grow Up ! With a Little Help From Your Friends at Rosenbloom's**

BUD *(on phone to mother)*

Mom, please! Is that supposed to be a compliment, that you think I could do better at Bloomingdales? What happened to dad's "if you're your own boss, at least it's your stink?" *(pause)* If it's so great, howzabout you go work there? I don't think it would be more satisfying. *(pause)* I do so enjoy working with dad, I think I'd have this stuff in a lot of job situations. It's not about dad, it's about me. *(pause)* I don't think I'd do better there until I could do better here. I gotta go.

WILL *(enters and sits)*

Never in my worst dreams was there a day before Christmas where I'd have a chance to sit down for 5 minutes.

BUD

Sorry to say, I'm getting used to it. After Dollar Days. *(pause)* Those lines around the block, petered out to just Mrs. Liadakis and Mrs. Skiriotis. I thought I was dreaming when we pulled up that day.

WILL

But that was a happy day compared to when poor Nat was murdered right behind his store.

BUD

At least it would be better if he was the only dead merchant. Don't forget Warren...

WILL

Well, Warren was 89.

BUD *(long pause)*

Dad, we have to talk.

WILL *(stands up)*

I was thinking I'd go across to Woolworth's and see if any of our customers are in there. Maybe someone with a big layaway pickup. Want a chocolate bar?

BUD

Boy, there should be a way to bottle your nerve. *(pause)* Don't go... I need to say something.

WILL

I think I know what you're going to say.

BUD

I think not. Take a load off.

WILL *(doesn't sit down)*

You think we should open up in a better town.

BUD

You would do that? What happened to “with one ass you can’t be in two places?”

WILL

But you can move your ass to a different place. I agree with you that this burg has gone down the tubes.

BUD

Moving would have been good a few years ago, but now I’m talking about moving on. Doing something completely different, as scary and crazy as that sounds.

WILL (*finally sits*)

I’m sorry it’s come to that.

BUD

I’m not. I’m feeling pretty brave, though it took this lousy Christmas to make me see there’s really no choice. It’s terminal.

WILL

I’d hate to think you were not here by your own choice. You don’t think I pressured you to be here, do you?

BUD

No. There were years where I did feel pressured, but it was my pressure. I do have a bit too much stick-to-it-iveness for my own good. But life is short. I don’t want to look back and regret that I was such a good son I never did was was good for me.

WILL

So what is it that’s good for you?

BUD

Not sure- it’s a big world. Like I was thinking of moving out of New York, to somewhere better to raise a family. A big change. A new life. I’d open a children’s shop there. But different than this.

WILL

Different in that it’s not a family business?

BUD

And that it’s my own thing. It’s not about getting out of working with you; and not about escaping from my home. It’s where I’m going to, not from.

WILL

Nothing you couldn’t accomplish if I retired.

BUD

This is not about that. Not that I haven’t looked forward to some good aspect of that, but I also want to start something. Maybe it won’t be a children’s shop at all. Maybe it will be just boyswear, or menswear.

WILL

You could do many things.

BUD

And would like to try.

WILL

Maybe not even a store.

BUD

One step at a time. (*long pause*) Dad, you’ve been the best teacher, and best friend I’ve every had. I’m a totally different person than I thought I was. And I like what we’ve done here. But I’m finished.

WILL

You're finished... at 39? *(pause)* Listen, I know there's something that needs to be said, but you can't...so I will. I'm fired. It's been great. You're totally capable, so knock yourself out. Don't feel bad, either. Buy the gift paper, do it all!!

BUD

I've wanted to hear you say that for so long, but I really think this business has seen all it's better days.

*(long pause)*

WILL

I'll miss it.

BUD

I'll miss Mr. Hurwitz whining that you're so cheap you're driving him out of business.

WILL

I'll miss doing a "T.O." with you. You taking over some whiny princess...me taking over some undecided milquetoast.

BUD

The customers you love to hate. I'll miss your confidence with a customer. "Do I tell you how to fill teeth? So don't tell me how to fit a suit!"

WILL

I'll miss how people would tell me they shop here cause their kids like talking with you. And I LOVE when people would tell us "I want to give YOU my money."

BUD

I'll miss that I really got to know you...not only as the father I always knew, but as the brother I never had.

WILL

Same with me...but son, not father.

WILL

Mabel, would you please straighten the infant department? *(pause)* Francis, would you please help Mrs. Carter with something nice for her grandchildren.

BUD

And then you'll all take a 60 minute lunch- make it a 90 minute lunch hour. I'm treating everyone to big fat pastrami sandwiches for Christmas- and then... I have something to say.

**The End**