

GEORGE (*calling offstage*). Sorry, Mr. Carter. Had something I had to take care of.

CARTER (*offstage*). Is that woman still on the phone, long distance collect?

GEORGE. Um ... yes.

CARTER (*offstage*). I trust that will be taken out of her paycheck.

(*GEORGE exchanges looks with TILLY.*)

GEORGE. Yes ... of course it will. (*And he exits into the office, downstage of the tormentor.*)

TILLY (*to HARRY on the phone*). Oh, that was Mr. Carter, the bank examiner. Yeah, he's a real ...

(*UNCLE BILLY enters quickly, leaving the door open. On his way to his office.*)

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TILLY (*cont'd*). Oh, here's your Uncle Billy. Billy ... long distance from Washington.

UNCLE BILLY (*completely distracted*). Yes we are.

TILLY. No ... it's Harry on the phone.

UNCLE BILLY (*near panic*). Who?

TILLY. Harry, your nephew. Remember him? Here. He wants to talk to you.

UNCLE BILLY (*taking the telephone*). Hello, hello? Yes, Harry. Yes ... everything ... everything's ... fine.

Perfectly fine. Goodbye. (*Hangs up the phone.*)

TILLY. Hey! That was ...

UNCLE BILLY. Should have my head examined. Gotta be here somewhere. I'll be in my office. (*He exits off L, upstage of the tormentor.*)

TILLY. What in the world ... ?

(*GEORGE enters. TILLY takes off the headset apparatus.*)

GEORGE. You just make yourself comfortable, Mr. Carter; I'll get those books for you. Hey, Tilly! You hung up the phone! I toldja I wanted to talk to Harry!

TILLY. No, I didn't ... your Uncle B ...

GEORGE. Uncle Billy in yet?

TILLY. That's what I started to tell you. He's in his office, but ...

GEORGE. OK, thanks. (*He crosses to upstage of tormentor.*) Uncle Billy? Uncle Billy, c'n' I come in? The bank examiner's ... (*He exits.*)

TILLY (*crosses out from behind switchboard desk and moves L*). Anything I can get for you, Mr. Carter?

CARTER (*offstage*). No. Where's Mr. Bailey?

TILLY. He went to get something for you, I ...

CARTER (*offstage*). Well he'd better hurry if I'm going to have Christmas Eve with my family.

TILLY (*crossing back to her desk*). And I'll bet *that's* a joyous little group.

GEORGE (*exploding out of UNCLE BILLY's office*). Tilly! I need the key to the cash drawer.

TILLY. Sure, George, here ...

GEORGE. Thanks. (*He moves to the counter and unlocks a drawer. Takes out a tin box, unlocks it and paws through it.*) You looked in the safe this morning?

TILLY. About ten minutes ago. Mr. Carter needed a copy of ...

GEORGE. Nothing there?

TILLY. No. Well, papers, but ... What are you ...

GEORGE (*puts the box back. Locks the drawer and moves to another drawer*). Did you see Uncle Billy with the cash last night?

TILLY. He had it on his desk counting it before we closed up. (*A moment, then realization.*) He can't find it?

GEORGE. No. *(Slams the drawer.)*

TILLY. How much?

GEORGE. Eight thousand dollars.

TILLY. Eight thous ... omigosh. You could buy a whole house with that!

GEORGE. Yeah.

TILLY. With four bedrooms and a cellar!

(UNCLE BILLY comes into view, crossing to L of C.)

GEORGE *(throws papers out of the drawer)*. I could never pay it back. Never. It's got to be here someplace! It's got to be! Think, Uncle Billy, think! What did you do with that envelope?

UNCLE BILLY *(miserable)*. I don't know, I don't know ...

GEORGE. We've got to find that money! Eight thousand dollars! It doesn't belong to us! It belongs to the depositors ... they ... they trusted us!

UNCLE BILLY. I'm no good to you, George, I ...

GEORGE *(whirls, moves quickly downstage, grabs UNCLE BILLY and, with a glance over his shoulder at his own office, moves DC)*. There's no time for that! Listen to me, do you have any secret hiding places? Someplace you could've put it?

UNCLE BILLY *(sobbing hysterically, trying to catch his breath)*. I can't ... I don't ...

GEORGE. Think! Think!

UNCLE BILLY. I can't think any more, George ... I can't think ... I've tried ... I don't know ...

GEORGE *(grabbing UNCLE BILLY by the lapels and shaking him. An intense whisper)*. Where's that money, you stupid, silly, old fool? Where's that money! Do you realize what this means? It means bankruptcy and scandal and prison, that's what it means! One of us is going to jail ... and it's not gonna be me! I gotta ... I gotta get outta here ... gotta get outta here!

(He drops UNCLE BILLY like a rag doll and storms out of the office. TILLY crosses down to UNCLE BILLY.)

UNCLE BILLY *(sobbing)*. I'm so sorry, George ... I'm so sorry ... I don't know what happened ...

(The lights begin a slow fade, leaving UNCLE BILLY and TILLY in a spot. She reaches down to help him up.)

UNCLE BILLY *(cont'd)*. I'm no good to you. I'm sorry ... I'm so sorry ... I'm no good ... I didn't mean to ... I'm so sorry, George ... I'm so sorry ...

(Spot fades to black.)

END OF ACT I