

SHELDRAKE: Baxter?

BUD: Yes, sir.

SHELDRAKE: I was sort of wondering what you looked like. Sit down.

BUD: Yes, Mr. Sheldrake. (*Sits*)

SHELDRAKE: Been hearing some very nice things about you -- here's a report from Mr. Dobisch -- loyal, cooperative, resourceful --

BUD: Mr. Dobisch said that?

SHELDRAKE: And Mr. Kirkeby tells me that several nights a week you work late at the office -- without overtime.

BUD: Well, you know how it is -- things pile up.

SHELDRAKE: Mr. Vanderhof, in Public Relations, and Mr. Eichelberger, in Mortgage and Loan -- they'd both like to have you transferred to their Departments.

BUD: That's very flattering.

SHELDRAKE: Tell me, Baxter -- just what is it that makes you so popular?

BUD: I don't know.

SHELDRAKE: Think.

BUD: Would you mind repeating the question?

SHELDRAKE: Look, Baxter, I'm not stupid. I know everything that goes on in this building -- in every department -- on every floor -- every day of the year.

BUD: You do?

SHELDRAKE: In 1957, we had an employee here, name of Fowler. He was very popular, too. Turned out he was running a bookie joint right in the Actuarial Department tying up the switchboard, figuring the odds on our I.B.M. machines -- so the day before the Kentucky Derby, I called in the Vice Squad and we raided the thirteenth floor.

BUD: The Vice Squad?

SHELDRAKE: That's right, Baxter.

BUD: What -- what's that got to do with me? I'm not running any bookie joint.

SHELDRAKE: What kind of joint are you running?

BUD: Sir?

SHELDRAKE: There's a certain key floating around the office -- from Kirkeby to Vanderhof to Eichelberger to Dobisch --

it's the key to a certain apartment -- and you know who that apartment belongs to?

BUD: Who?

SHELDRAKE: Loyal, cooperative, resourceful C.C. Baxter.

BUD: Oh.

SHELDRAKE: Are you going to deny it?

BUD: No, sir. I'm not going to deny it. But if you'd just let me explain --

SHELDRAKE: You better.

BUD: Well, about six months ago -- I was going to night school, taking this course in Advanced Accounting -- and one of the guys in our department -- he lives in Jersey -- he was going to a banquet at the Biltmore -- his wife was meeting him in town, and he needed someplace to change into a tuxedo -- so I gave him the key, and word must have gotten around -- because the next thing I knew, all sorts of guys were suddenly going to banquets -- and when you give the key to one guy, you can't say no to another and the whole thing got out of hand -- pardon me.

(whips out the nasal-spray, administers a couple of quick squirts up each nostril.)

SHELDRAKE: Baxter, an insurance company is founded on public trust. Any employee who conducts himself in a manner unbecoming -- How many charter members are there in this little club of yours?

BUD: Just those four -- out of a total of 31,259 -- so actually, we can be very proud of our personnel --percentage-wise.

SHELDRAKE: That's not the point. Four rotten apples in a barrel -- no matter how large the barrel -- you realize that if this ever leaked out --

BUD: Oh, it won't. Believe me. And it's not going to happen again. From now on, nobody is going to use my apartment --

SHELDRAKE: Where is your apartment?

BUD: West 67th Street. You have no idea what I've been going through --with the neighbors and the landlady and the liquor and the key --

SHELDRAKE: How do you work it with the key?

BUD: Well, usually I slip it to them in the office and they leave it under the mat -- but never again -- I can promise you that.

(The phone rings.)

SHELDRAKE: Hello? Yes, dear -- I called you earlier -- where were you? Oh, you took Tommy to the dentist --

(Bud has risen from his chair, started inching toward the door.)

SHELDRAKE: Where are you going, Baxter?

BUD: Well, I don't want to intrude -- and I thought -- since it's all straightened out anyway --

SHELDRAKE: I'm not through with you yet.

BUD: Yes, sir.

SHELDRAKE:*(into phone)* The reason I called is -- I won't be home for dinner tonight. The branch manager from Kansas City is in town -- I'm taking him to the theatre. Music Man, what else? No, don't wait up for me -- 'bye, darling. *(hangs up)*
Tell me something, Baxter -- have you seen Music Man?

BUD: Not yet. But I hear it's one swell show.

SHELDRAKE: How would you like to go tonight?

BUD: You mean -- you and me? I thought you were taking the branch manager from Kansas City --

SHELDRAKE: I made other plans. You can have both tickets.

BUD: Well, that's very kind of you -- only I'm not feeling well -- you see, I have this cold -- and I thought I'd go straight home.

SHELDRAKE: Baxter, you're not reading me. I told you I have plans.

BUD: So do I -- I'm going to take four aspirins and get into bed -- so you better give the tickets to somebody else --

SHELDRAKE: I'm not just giving you those tickets, Baxter -- I want to swap them.

BUD: Swap them? For what?

(Sheldrake picks up papers.)

SHELDRAKE: It also says here -- that you are alert, astute, and quite imaginative --

BUD: Oh? *(Pause.)* Oh!

(He takes the key from his pocket.)

BUD: This?

SHELDRAKE: That's good thinking, Baxter. Next month there's going to be a shift in personnel around here -- and as far as I'm concerned, you're executive material.

BUD: I am?

SHELDRAKE: Now put down the key -- *(pushing a pad toward him)* -- and put down the address.

(Bud lays the key on the desk, unclips what he thinks is his fountain pen, uncaps it, starts writing on the pad.)

BUD: It's on the second floor - my name is not on the door -- it just says 2A --

(Suddenly he realizes that he has been trying to write the address with the thermometer.)

BUD: Oh -- terribly sorry. It's that cold --

SHELDRAKE: Relax, Baxter.

BUD: Thank you, sir.

(He has replaced the thermometer with the fountain pen, and is scribbling the address.)

BUD: You'll be careful with the record player, won't you? And about the liquor -- I ordered some this morning -- but I'm not sure when they'll deliver it --

SHELDRAKE: Now remember, Baxter -- this is going to be our little secret.

BUD: Yes, of course.

SHELDRAKE: You know how people talk.

BUD: Oh, you don't have to worry --

SHELDRAKE: Not that I have anything to hide.

BUD: Oh, no sir. Certainly not. Anyway, it's none of my business -- four apples, five apples -- what's the difference -- percentage-wise?

SHELDRAKE:(*holding out the tickets.*) Here you are, Baxter. Have a nice time.

BUD: You too, sir.

(*he exits.*)