

*THE SIGNATURE ARTIST*

INTERIOR, RICHARD DECKER'S STUDIO IN MANHATTAN.

DECKER glares, angered by the comments of his long-time FRIEND.

**DECKER**

*Signature artist!* Who the hell do you think *you* are, calling *me* a 'signature artist'?

**FRIEND**

You know who I am! The only friend you have who always levels with you *so listen to me!* I'm trying to tell how terribly disappointing it is to watch an artist with your talent turn into just one more SOHO production machine cranking out an endless stream of 'Richard Decker's'!

**DECKER**

So! Be disappointed! You've got no kids! When I think about endless streams I think about bills! Doctors! Dentists! Hey! Braces, clothes, lessons, uniforms, tuition — *Wait!* I'm not finished! You've always been jealous of my having six assistants! Well, aside from their costing a bundle, I actually hate seeing them every day knowing that they're really using me, picking up my tricks while waiting to hit it big! And, on top of everything, my mortgage—

**FRIEND**

(Raising his hands in surrender)

— Please!

**DECKER**

Okay! I'll stop if you stop beating on my 'Richard Decker's'! Call it all a machine if you like but it works, and as they say, if it works don't fix it!

**FRIEND**

The *Napoleon Artist* wouldn't have agreed with you!

**DECKER**

Who?

**FRIEND**

One of those 19<sup>th</sup> Century Academics who could make portraits of Napoleon without ever having seen him. This guy had his formula down pat, and his 'Napoleon's' sold like hot-cakes. He was making money hand over fist until the day came when he realized that he was boring himself stupid! So, he tried to interest the public in different themes but he was known for his Napoleon's and that's all anyone wanted from him. Defeated and depressed he had to continue doing the only thing he'd ever been able to sell. He began to hate his life more and more and finally became so completely depressed that he killed himself. My point is...

**DECKER**

(Impatiently cutting him off)

—Hey! I already got your point, but you sure didn't get mine! I *said* a guy's gotta live! Okay!