**![C:\Documents and Settings\sk\Local Settings\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\IX93ZXUR\bw-city-skyline[1].png]()Tragic moments in “Death of a Salesman”**

**By Mr Karlsson**

**ACT ONE**

*A melody is heard, played upon a flute.* *It is small and fine, telling of grass and trees and the horizon. …Before us is the Salesman’s house. We are aware of towering, angular shapes behind it,.* ***surrounding it on all sides …*** *An air of the dream clings to the place*

*[Linda] has developed an iron repression of her exceptions to Willy’s behaviour*

WILLY: I got as far as a little above Yonkers.

…These goddam arch supports are killing me.

But it’s so beautiful up there, Linda, the trees are so thick, and the sun is warm. I opened the windshield and just let the warm air bathe over me. And then all of a sudden I’m goin’ off the road! I’m tellin’ya, I absolutely forgot I was driving.

LINDA: Well, dear, life is a casting off. It’s always that way.

WILLY: No, no, some people- some people accomplish something.

WILLY: How can he [Biff] find himself on a farm?

WILLY: The way they boxed us in here. Bricks and windows, windows and bricks.

Willy: How can they whip cheese?

LINDA: He’ll find his way.

WILLY: Sure. Certain men just don’t get started till later in life.

Like Thomas Edison; I think. Or B. F. Goodrich.

Willy: Remarkable. Ts. Remember those days? The way **Biff used to simonize that car?**

LINDA (calling after Willy): Be careful on the stairs, dear! The cheese is on the middle shelf.

*Biff is two years older than his brother Happy, well built, but in these days bears a worn air and seems less self-assured. He has succeeded less, and his dreams are stronger and less acceptable than*

*Happy’s. Happy is tall, powerfully made. Sexuality is like a visible color on him, or a scent that many women have discovered. He, like his brother, is lost, but in a different way, for he has never allowed*

*himself to turn his face toward defeat and is thus more confused and hard-skinned, although seemingly more content.)*

BIFF: Remember that big Betsy something …

HAPPY: Yeah, that was my first time — I think. Boy, there was a pig.

BIFF: Why does Dad mock me all the time?

Biff: …To suffer fifty weeks of the year for the sake of a two week vacation, when all you really desire is to be outdoors, with your shirt off.

Happy: All I can do now is wait for the merchandise manager to die

Biff: Men built like we are should be working out in the open.

HAPPY (avidly): The Loman Brothers, heh?

HAPPY: I get that any time I want, Biff. Whenever I feel disgusted.

The only trouble is, it gets like bowling or something. I

just keep knockin’ them over and it doesn’t mean anything.

HAPPY: I would! Somebody with character, with resistance! Like Mom, y’know? You’re gonna call me a bastard when I tell you this. That girl Charlotte I was with tonight is engaged to be married in five weeks. *(He tries on his new hat.)*

HAPPY: You hear that? (They listen. Willy laughs warmly.)

BIFF (growing angry): Doesn’t he know Mom can hear that?

WILLY: Don’t get your sweater dirty, Biff! (*A look of pain crosses Biff’s face*.)

WILLY: Just wanna be careful with those girls, Biff, that’s all. Don’t make any promises. No promises of any kind.

HAPPY *(offstage)*: It’s a punching bag!

BIFF: Oh, Pop!

WILLY: It’s got Gene Tunney’s signature on it!

WILLY: That so? And he gave you the ball, heh?

BIFF: Well, I borrowed it from the locker room. *(He laughs confidentially.)*

HAPPY: Like Uncle Charley, heh?

WILLY: Bigger than Uncle Charley! Because Charley is not — liked. **He’s liked, but he’s not — well liked.**

Biff: You watch me, Pop, and when I take off my helmet, that means I’m breakin’ out. Then you watch me crash through that line!

BERNARD *(wiping his glasses)*: Just because he printed University of Virginia on his sneakers doesn’t mean they’ve got to graduate him. Uncle Willy!

WILLY *(angrily)*: What’re you talking about? With scholarships to three universities they’re gonna flunk him?

BERNARD: But I heard Mr. Birnbaum say...

WILLY: Don’t be a pest, Bernard! *(To his boys.)* What an anaemic!

Willy: That’s why I thank Almighty God you’re both **built like Adonises***.*

BIFF: Did you knock them dead. Pop?

WILLY: Knocked ‘em cold in Providence, slaughtered ‘em in Boston*.*

HAPPY *(on his back*, *pedaling again)*: I’m losing weight, you notice, Pop?

WILLY: I’m not going to pay that man! **That goddam Chevrolet**, they ought to prohibit the manufacture oft hat car!

LINDA: Well, you owe him three and a half. And odds and ends, comes to around a hundred and twenty dollars by the fifteenth.

WILLY: A hundred and twenty dollars! My God, if business don’t pick up I don’t know what I’m gonna do!

WILLY: I know it when I walk in. They seem to laugh at me.

*(Willy moves to the edge of the stage. Linda goes into the kitchen and starts to dam stockings.)*

WILLY: I’m fat. I’m very — foolish to look at, Linda. … as I was going in to see the buyer I heard him say something about — walrus. And I — I cracked him right across the face. I won’t take that. I simply will not take that. But they do laugh at me. I know that.

WILLY *(with great feeling)*: You’re the best there is, Linda, you’re a pal, you know that?

THE WOMAN *(slaps him gently and laughs)*: You just kill me, Willy. *(*H*e suddenly grabs her and kisses her roughly.)* You kill me. And thanks for the stockings. I love a lot of stockings. Well,

good night.

WILLY *(noticing her mending)*: What’s that?

LINDA: Just mending my stockings. They’re so expensive...

WILLY *(angrily, taking them from her)*: I won’t have you mending stockings in this house!

WILLY: Biff! Where is he? Why is he taking everything?

LINDA: He’s too rough with the girls, Willy. All the mothers are afraid of him!

Bernard: Mr. Birnbaum says he’s stuck up.

WILLY: Get outa here!

BERNARD: If he doesn’t buckle down he’ll flunk math!

Willy: God! Why didn’t I go to Alaska with my brother Ben that time! Ben! That man was a genius, that man was success incarnate! …Walked into a jungle, and comes out, the age of twenty-one, and he’s rich!

 … Christ’s sake, I couldn’t get past Yonkers today! Where are you guys, where are you? **The woods are burning!** I can’t drive a car!

CHARLEY: You want a job?

WILLY: I got a job, I told you that. *(After a slight pause.)* What the hell are you offering me a job for?

CHARLEY: Don’t get insulted.

WILLY: Don’t insult me.

WILLY: I’m getting awfully tired, Ben.

WILLY: No! Boys! Boys! *(Young Biff and Happy appear.)* Listen to this. This is your Uncle Ben, a great man! Tell my boys, Ben!

BEN: Why, boys, **when I was seventeen** **I walked into the jungle, and when I was twenty-one I walked out.** *(He laughs.)* And by God I was rich.

WILLY *(to the boys)*: You see what I been talking about? The greatest things can happen!

BEN *(glancing at his watch)*: I have an appointment...

WILLY: No, Ben! Please tell about Dad. I want my boys to hear. I want them to know the kind of stock they spring from. All I remember is a man with a big beard, and I was in Mamma’s lap, sitting around a fire, and some kind of high music.

BEN: His flute. He played the flute.

BEN: *(Suddenly comes in, trips Biff, and stands over him, the point of his umbrella poised over Biff’s eye.) …*  Never fight fair with a stranger, boy. You’ll never get out of the jungle that way.

Linda: …And then the closer you seem to come, the more shaky he gets, and then, by the time you get here, he’s arguing, and he seems angry at you. I think it’s just that maybe he can’t bring himself to — to open up to you. Why are you so hateful to each other? Why is that?

BIFF *(evasively)*: I’m not hateful, Mom.

LINDA: Biff, a man is not a bird, to come and go with the springtime.

BIFF: Your hair... *(He touches her hair.)* Your hair got so gray.

LINDA: Oh, it’s been gray since you were in high school. I just stopped dyeing it, that’s all.

BIFF: Dye it again, will ya? **I don’t want my pal looking old.** *(He smiles.)*

LINDA: No. You can’t just come to see me, because I love him. *(With a threat, but only a threat, of tears.)* He’s the dearest man in the world to me, and I won’t have anyone making him feel unwanted and low and blue.

BIFF: Stop making excuses for him! He always, always wiped the floor with you. Never had an ounce of respect for you.

Linda: …I don’t say he’s a great man. Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He’s not the finest character that ever lived. But he’s a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He’s not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, **attention must be finally paid to such a person**.

A small man can be just as exhausted as a great man. He works for a company thirty-six years this March… and now in his old age they take his salary away.

… Is this his reward — to turn around at the age of sixty-three and find his sons, who he

loved better than his life, one a philandering bum...

HAPPY: Mom!

LINDA: That’s all you are, my baby! *(To Biff.)* And you! What happened to the love you had for him?

LINDA: He’s been trying to kill himself.

BIFF *(with great horror)*: How?

LINDA: I live from day to day.

BIFF: What’re you talking about?

LINDA: Remember I wrote you that he smashed up the car again? …The insurance inspector came. He said that they have evidence. That all these accidents in the last year — weren’t — weren’t — accidents.

LINDA: It seems there’s a woman... *(She takes a breath as:)*

**BIFF *(sharply but contained)*: What woman?**

LINDA *(simultaneously)*:*...* and this woman...

LINDA: What?

BIFF: Nothing. Go ahead.

LINDA: What did you say?

LINDA: I’m — I’m ashamed to. How can I mention it to him? Every day I go down and take away that little rubber pipe. But, when he comes home, I put it back where it was. How can I insult him that way?

BIFF: I don’t care what they think! They’ve laughed at Dad for years, and you know why? Because **we don’t belong in this nuthouse of a city!** We should be mixing cement on some open plain or — or carpenters. A carpenter is allowed to whistle!

HAPPY: Wait! We form two basketball teams, see? Two waterpolo teams. We play each other. It’s a million dollars’ worth of publicity. Two brothers, see? The Loman Brothers.

Willy: It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it — because personality always wins the day.

LINDA: Oliver always thought the highest of him...

WILLY: Will you let me talk?

BIFF *(unable to bear him)*: Okay. Good night, Mom. *(He starts moving.)*

WILLY: Because you got a greatness in you, Biff, remember that. You got all kinds a greatness... *(He lies back, exhausted. Biff walks out.)*

WILLY: Like a young god. Hercules — something like that. And the sun, the sun all around him. Remember how he waved to me? Right up from the field, with the representatives of three colleges standing by? And the buyers I brought, and the cheers when he came out — **Loman, Loman, Loman! God Almighty, he’ll be great yet**. A star like that, magnificent, can never really fade away! *(The light on Willy is fading. The gas heater begins to glow through the kitchen wall, near the stairs,* ***a blue flame beneath red coils****.)*

WILLY *(staring through the window into the moonlight)*: Gee, look at the moon moving between the buildings!

**Act Two**

*Music is heard, gay and bright.*

WILLY: Whoever heard of a Hastings refrigerator? Once in my life I would like to own something outright before it’s broken! I’m always in a race with the junkyard!

WILLY: *(feels for them, then comes back in)*: Yeah, yeah, got my glasses.

LINDA: *(giving him the handkerchief)*: And a handkerchief.

Linda: [during the telephone chat with Biff]: Did Mr. Oliver see you?... Well, you wait there then. And make a nice impression on him, darling. Just don’t perspire too much before you see him. And have a nice time with Dad. He may have big news too!... That’s right, a New York job. And be sweet to him tonight, dear. Be loving to him. Because **he’s only a little boat looking for a harbor***. (She is trembling with sorrow and joy.)* Oh, that’s wonderful, Biff, you’ll save his life. Thanks, darling*.*

HOWARD: Didn’t you ever see one of these? Wire recorder.

WILLY: Oh. Can we talk a minute?

…I thought of the name of Howard, may he rest in peace.

HOWARD: I appreciate that, Willy, but there just is no spot here for you.

Willy: His name was **Dave Singleman**. And he was eighty-four years old, and he’d drummed merchandise in thirty-one states… at the age of eighty-four, he made his living. And when I saw that, I realized that selling was the greatest career a man could want. ‘Cause what could be more satisfying than to be able to go, at the age of eightyfour, into twenty or thirty different cities, and pick up a phone, and be remembered and loved and helped by so many different people? Do you know? When he died — and by the way he died the death of a salesman…

HOWARD *(starting to go off)*: I’ve got to see some people, kid.

WILLY *(stopping him).* I’m talking about your father! There were promises made across this desk! You mustn’t tell me you’ve got people to see — I put thirty-four years into this firm, Howard, and now I can’t pay my insurance! **You can’t eat the orange and throw the peel away — a man is not a piece of fruit!**

WILLY *(leaping away with fright, shouting)*: Ha, Howard! Howard! Howard!

HOWARD *(rushing in)*: What happened?

WILLY *(pointing at the machine, which continues nasally, childishly,with the capital cities)*: Shut it off! Shut it off!

HOWARD *(pulling the plug out)*: Look, Willy...

Howard: Whenever you can this week, stop by and drop off the samples. You’ll feel better, Willy, and then come back and we’ll talk. Pull yourself together, kid, there’s people outside.

Linda: Why must everybody conquer the world?

[memory of] Biff: And remember, pal, when I take off my helmet, that touchdown is for you.

CHARLEY *(as they go)*: Knock a homer, Biff, knock a homer!

WILLY *(the last to leave, turning to Charley)*: I don’t think that was funny, Charley. This is the greatest day of his life.

BERNARD: What is it, Willy?

WILLY *(small and alone)*: What — **what’s the secret?**

BERNARD: What secret?

WILLY: How — how did you? Why didn’t he ever catch on?

Bernard: …And I got the idea that he’d gone up to New England to see you. Did he have a talk with you then? *(Willy stares in silence.)*

BERNARD: Willy?

WILLY *(with a strong edge of resentment in his voice)*: Yeah, he came to Boston. What about it?

BERNARD: Well, just that when he came back …after that month and took his sneakers — remember those sneakers with “University of Virginia” printed on them…. he took them down in the cellar, and burned them up in the furnace.

CHARLEY *(an arm on Bernard’s shoulder)*: How do you like this kid? Gonna argue a case in front of the Supreme Court.

BERNARD *(protesting)*: Pop!

WILLY *(genuinely shocked, pained, and happy)*: No! The Supreme

Court!

WILLY *(moving to the right)*: Funny, y’know? After all the highways, and the trains, and the appointments, and the years, you end up worth more dead than alive.

CHARLEY: Willy, nobody’s worth nothin’ dead. *(After a slight pause.)* Did you hear what I said? *(Willy stands still, dreaming.)*

…WILLY *(on the verge of tears)*: Charley, you’re the only friend I got. Isn’t that a remarkable thing? *(He goes out.)*

CHARLEY: Jesus!

HAPPY: Why don’t you bring her — excuse me, miss, do you mind? I sell champagne, and I’d like you to try my brand. Bring her a champagne, Stanley.

… GIRL: That’s a charming product to be selling, isn’t it?

HAPPY: Oh, gets to be like everything else. Selling is selling, y’know.

GIRL: I suppose.

HAPPY: You don’t happen to sell, do you?

GIRL: No, I don’t sell.

BIFF: [Bill Oliver] walked away. I saw him for one minute. How the hell did I ever get the idea I was a salesman there? I even believed myself that I’d been a salesman for him! And then he gave me one look and — I realized what a ridiculous lie my whole life has been! We’ve been talking in a dream for fifteen years. I was a shipping clerk.

WILLY: I’m not interested in stories about the past or any crap of that kind because **the woods are burning**, boys, you understand? **There’s a big blaze going on all around.** I was fired today.

BIFF *(shocked)*: How could you be?

WILLY: I was fired, and I’m looking for a little good news to tell your mother, because the woman has waited and the woman has suffered. The gist of it is that I haven’t got a story left in my head, Biff. So don’t give me a lecture about facts and aspects. I am not interested. Now what’ve you got to say to me?

*(Stanley enters with three drinks. They wait until he leaves.)*

WILLY: Did you see Oliver?

BIFF *(to Happy)*: I can’t talk to him!

*A single trumpet note jars the ear.*

WILLY *(seeing the pen for the first time)*: You took Oliver’s pen?

BIFF: I can’t go. I’ve got no appointment!

…

BIFF: Don’t take it that way! Goddammit!

WILLY *(strikes Biff and falters away from the table)*: You rotten little louse! Are you spiting me?

THE WOMAN: Someone’s at the door, Willy!

LETTA: I think it’s sweet you bring your daddy along.

MISS FORSYTHE: Oh, he isn’t really your father!

BIFF *(at left, turning to her resentfully)*: **Miss Forsythe, you’ve just seen a prince walk by.** A fine, troubled prince. A hardworking, unappreciated prince.

THE WOMAN: You know you ruined me, Willy?

THE WOMAN: Gee, you are self-centered! Why so sad? You are the saddest, self-centeredest soul I ever did see-saw. *(She laughs. He kisses her.)* Come on inside, drummer boy.

Willy: …This is Miss Francis, Biff, she’s a buyer. They’re painting her room. Go back, Miss Francis, go back...

THE WOMAN: But my clothes, I can’t go out naked in the hall!

WILLY *(pushing her offstage)*: Get outa here! Go back, go back!

*(Biff slowly sits down on his suitcase as the argument continues offstage.)*

THE WOMAN: Where’s my stockings? You promised me stockings, Willy!

Willy: …I’ll get my valise. *(Biff doesn’t move.)* What’s the matter! *(Biff remains motionless, tears falling.)* She’s a buyer.

BIFF: Dad...

WILLY: She’s nothing to me, Biff. I was lonely, I was terrible lonely.

BIFF: You — **you gave her Mama’s stockings!**

…BIFF: You fake! You phony little fake! You fake! *(Overcome, he turns quickly and weeping fully goes out with his suitcase. Willy is left on the floor on his knees.)*

WILLY: Here — here’s some more, I don’t need it any more. *(After a slight pause.)* Tell me — is there a seed store in the neighborhood?

STANLEY: Seeds? You mean like to plant?

*(As Willy turns, Stanley slips the money back into his jacket pocket.)*

*…The other waiter has been staring at Willy.)*

STANLEY *(to the waiter)*: Well, whatta you looking at?

LINDA *(shouting after Biff)*: You invite him for dinner. He looks forward to it all day — *(Biff appears in his parent’s bedroom, looks around, and exits) —* and then you desert him there. There’s no stranger you’d do that to!

HAPPY: Now look, Mom...

LINDA: Did you have to go to women tonight? You and your lousy rotten whores!

Willy: *(Ben moves toward him as though to interrupt.)* You gotta consider, now. Don’t answer so quick. Remember, it’s a guaranteed twenty-thousand-dollar proposition. Now look, Ben, I want you to go through the ins and outs of this thing with me. I’ve got nobody to talk to, Ben, and the woman has suffered, you hear me?

BEN: It’s called a cowardly thing, William.

WILLY *(suddenly conscious of Biff, turns and looks up at him, then begins picking up the packages of seeds in confusion.)*: Where the hell is that seed? *(Indignantly.)* You can’t see nothing out here! They boxed in the whole goddam neighborhood!

BIFF: All right, phony! Then let’s lay it on the line. *(He whips the rubber tube out of his pocket and puts it on the table.)*

WILLY *(with hatred, threateningly)*: The door of your life is wide open!

BIFF: **Pop! I’m a dime a dozen, and so are you!**

WILLY *(turning on him now in an uncontrolled outburst)*: **I am not a dime a dozen! I am Willy Loman, and you are Biff Loman!** *(Biff starts for Willy, but is blocked by Happy. In his fury, Biff seems on the verge of attacking his father.)*

BIFF: I am not a leader of men, Willy, and neither are you. You were never anything but a hard-working drummer who landed in the ash can like all the rest of them!

BIFF *(crying, broken)*: Will you let me go, for Christ’s sake? Will you take that phony dream and burn it before something happens? *(Struggling to contain himself, he pulls away and moves to the stairs.)* I’ll go in the morning. Put him — put him to bed. *(Exhausted, Biff moves up the stairs to his room.)*

WILLY *(after a long pause, astonished, elevated)*: Isn’t that **— isn’t that remarkable? Biff — he likes me!**

**LINDA: He loves you, Willy!**

HAPPY *(deeply moved)*: Always did, Pop.

WILLY: Oh, Biff! *(Staring wildly.)* He cried! Cried to me. *(He is choking with his love, and now cries out his promise.)* That boy — that boy is going to be magnificent! *(Ben appears in the light just outside the kitchen.)*

BEN: The jungle is dark but full of diamonds, Willy.

BEN: Time, William, time!

WILLY: Oh, Ben, I always knew one way or another we were gonna make it, Biff and I!

LINDA *(with real fear)*: Willy, answer me! Willy! *(There is the sound of a car starting and moving away at full speed.)*

**REQUIEM**

LINDA: Why didn’t anybody come?

LINDA: I can’t understand it. At this time especially. First time in thirty-five years we were just about free and clear. He only needed a little salary. He was even finished with the dentist.

CHARLEY: **No man only needs a little salary*.***

CHARLEY *(stopping Happy’s movement and reply. To Biff)*: **Nobody dast blame this man.**

Happy: He had a good dream. It’s the only dream you can have — to come out number-one man.

Linda: Willy. I made the last payment on the house today. Today, dear. And there’ll be nobody home. *(A sob rises in her throat.)***We’re free and clear.** *(Sobbing more fully, released.)* We’re free. *(Biff comes slowly toward her.)* We’re free... We’re free... *(Biff lifts her to her feet and moves out up right with her in his arms. Linda sobs quietly. Bernard and Charley come together and follow them, followed by Happy. Only* ***the music of the flute is left on the darkening stage*** *as over the house the hard towers of* ***the apartment buildings rise into sharp focus****, and the curtain falls.)*