

Death of a Salesman

[Light has risen on the boys' room. Biff gets out of bed, comes downstage a bit, and stands attentively. Biff is two years older than his brother Happy, but 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. 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:

15 I tell ya, Hap, I don't know what the future is. I don't know—what I'm supposed to want.

Happy:

What do you mean?

Biff:

20 Well, I spent six or seven years after high school trying to work myself up. Shipping clerk, salesman, business of one kind or another. And it's a measly existence. To get on that subway on the hot mornings in summer. To devote your whole life to keeping stock, or selling or buying. To suffer fifty weeks for the sake of a two-week vacation, when all you really desire is to be outdoors. And still—that's how you build a future.

Happy:

Well, you really enjoy it on a farm?

Biff:

35 (*with rising agitation*) Hap, I've had twenty or thirty different jobs since I left home, and it always turns out the same. This farm I work on, it's spring there now, see? And they've got about fifteen new colts. There's nothing more inspiring or—beautiful than the sight of a mare and a new colt. And whenever spring comes to where I am, I suddenly get the feeling, my God, I'm not gettin' anywhere! What the heck am I doing, playing around with horses, twenty-eight dollars a week! That's when I come running home. And now, I get here, and I don't know what to do with myself.

Happy:

50 You're a poet, you know that, Biff! You're a—you're an idealist!

Biff:

55 No, I'm mixed up very bad. Maybe I oughta get stuck into something. I'm like a boy. I'm not married, I'm not in business, I just—I'm like a boy. You're a success, aren't you? Are you content?

Happy:

60 Heck, no!

Biff:

Why? You're making money, aren't you?

Happy:

(*moving about with energy, expressiveness*) All I can do now is wait for the merchandise manager to leave. And suppose I get to be merchandise manager? He just built a terrific estate on Long Island. And he lived there about two months and sold it, and now he's building another one. He can't enjoy it once it's finished. I don't know what I'm workin' for. Sometimes I sit in my apartment—all alone. And I think of the rent I'm paying. But then, it's what I always wanted. My own apartment, a car, and plenty of money. And still, I'm lonely.

Biff:

80 (*with enthusiasm*) Listen, why don't you come out West with me?

Happy:
You and I, heh?

85 **Biff:**
Sure, maybe we could buy a ranch.
Raise cattle, use our muscles. Men built
like we are should be working out in the
open.

90 **Happy:**
(*avidly*) The Loman Brothers, heh?

Biff:
(*with vast affection*) Sure, we'd be known
all over the counties!

95 **Happy:**
(*enthralled*) That's what I dream about,
Biff. I mean I can outbox, outrun, and
outlift anybody in that store, and I have
to take orders from those common, petty
so-and-so's till I can't stand it any more.

100 **Biff:**
I'm tellin' you, kid, if you were with me I'd
be happy out there.

Happy:
If I were around you...

105 **Biff:**
Hap, the trouble is we weren't brought up
to grub for money. I don't know how to do
it.

Happy:
110 Neither can I!

Biff:
Then let's go!

Happy:
115 The only thing is—what can you make
out there?

Biff:
But look at your manager. Builds an
estate and then hasn't the peace of mind
to live in it.

120 **Happy:**
Yeah, but then he walks into the store
the waves part in front of him. That's
fifty-two thousand dollars a year coming
through the revolving door.

125 **Biff:**
Yeah, but you just said...

Happy:
I gotta show some of those pompous,
self-important executives over there that
130 Hap Loman can make the grade. I want
to walk into the store the way he walks
in. Then I'll go with you, Biff. We'll be
together yet, I swear.

Adapted from Arthur Miller, *Death of a
Salesman*. © renewed 1977 by Arthur Miller.