

Death of a Salesman

By Arthur Miller

Then make Charley your father, Biff. You can't do that, can you? 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 finally be paid to such a person. You called him crazy, no, a lot of people think he's lost his balance. But you don't have to be very smart to know what his trouble is. The man is exhausted. A small man can be just as exhausted as a great man.

He works for a company thirty six years this March, opens up unheard-of territories to their trademark, and now in his old age they take his salary away. Are they any worse than his sons? When he brought them business, when he was young, they were glad to see him. But now his old friends, the old buyers that loved him so and always found some order to hand him in a pinch, they're all dead, retired.

He used to be able to make six, seven calls a day in Boston. Now he takes his valises out of the car and puts them back and takes them out again and he's exhausted. Instead of walking he talks now. He drives seven hundred miles, and when he gets there no one knows him anymore, no one welcomes him. And what goes through a man's mind, driving seven hundred miles home without having earned a cent?

Why shouldn't he talk to himself? Why? When he has to go to Charley and borrow fifty dollars a week and pretend to me that it's his pay? How long can that go on? How long? You see what I'm sitting here and waiting for? And you tell me he has no character? The man who never worked a day but for your benefit? When does he get the medal for that?