

BIFF. Why didn't you ever write me about this, Mom?

LINDA. How could I write to you? For over three months you had no address.

BIFF. (*Leaning across table on coat.*) I was on the move... But you know I thought of you all the time. You know that, don't you, pal?

LINDA. (*Takes his hands off coat.*) I know, dear, I know. (*Sews.*) But he likes to have a letter...just to know that there's still a possibility for better things.

BIFF. (*To Happy.*) He's not like this all the time, is he?

(*Happy nods.*)

LINDA. It's when you come home he's always the worst.

BIFF. When I come home?

LINDA. When you write you're coming he's all smiles, and talks about the future, and...he's just wonderful. 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. But you no sooner come in the door than you're fighting!

BIFF. (*Appealing to her.*) I don't know why. I mean to change... I'm tryin', Mom, you understand?

LINDA. (*Stops sewing.*) Are you home to stay now?

BIFF. I don't know. I want to look around, see what's doin'...

LINDA. Biff, you can't look around all your life, can you?

BIFF. (*Leans on table.*) I just can't take hold, Mom. I can't take hold of some kind of a life.

LINDA. Biff, a man is not a bird, to come and go with the spring-time...

BIFF. Your hair... (*Touches her hair.*) Your hair got so gray.

LINDA. (*Pushes his hand away, starts sewing.*) Oh, it's been gray since you were in high school. I just stopped dyeing it, that's all.

BIFF. (*Trying to cheer her up.*) Dye it again, will ya? (*Crossing, sits R. of table.*) I don't want my pal looking old. (*Smiling.*)

LINDA. You're such a boy! You think you can go away for a year and... You've got to get it into your head now that one day you'll knock on this door and there'll be strange people here...

BIFF. What are you talking about? You're not even sixty, Mom.

LINDA. But what about your father?

BIFF. (*Lamely.*) Well, I meant him, too.

HAPPY. He admires Pop...

LINDA. Biff, if you don't have any feeling for him then you can't have any feeling for me.

BIFF. (*Leans forward on coat.*) Sure I can, Mom.

LINDA. (*Rises, picks up finished coat, speaks louder.*) No. You can't just come to see me, because I love him. (*Now 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. (*Crosses slowly to chair R. and tenderly hangs coat over back of it.*) You've got to make up your mind now, there's no leeway any more—either he's your father and you pay him that respect or else you're not to come here. I know he's not easy to get along with—nobody knows that better than me—but —

~~WILLY. (*From up E., with a laugh.*) Hey, hey, Biff!~~

BIFF. (*Starts to go out.*) What the hell is the matter with him!

LINDA. (*Grabs Biff's arm.*) Don't...don't go near him!

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

HAPPY. (*Crossing to Biff.*) He's always had respect for...

BIFF. What the hell do you know about it?

(*Linda crosses R., smooths coat.*)

HAPPY. Just don't call him crazy!

BIFF. He's got no character. (*Breaks off.*) Charley wouldn't do this—spewing out that vomit from his mind.

HAPPY. Charley never had to cope with what he's got to...

BIFF. (*Above table.*) People are worse off than Willy Loman; believe me, I've seen them!

LINDA. (*Crossing to Biff.*) Then make Charley your father, Biff. You

can't do that, can you? (*Biff slowly sits chair L. of table.*) 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. You called him crazy... (*Turns away R., takes off glasses.*)

BIFF. I didn't mean...

LINDA. (*Turns back again, puts glasses in pocket.*) No, a lot of people think he's lost his...balance. (*Pause, then with reproach.*) But you don't have to be very smart to know what his trouble is. The man is exhausted.

HAPPY. Sure! (*Crosses L.*)

LINDA. (*Crossing to R., straightens coat on chair.*) 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...

HAPPY. (*Rises indignantly.*) I didn't know that, Mom!

LINDA. You never asked, my dear! Now that you get your spending money someplace else you don't trouble your mind with him.

HAPPY. But I gave you money last...

LINDA. (*Thrown away.*) Christmas time, fifty dollars! To fix the hot water, it cost ninety-seven fifty! (*Crosses U. to above table.*) For five weeks he's been on *straight commission*, like a beginner, an unknown...

BIFF. Those ungrateful bastards...!

LINDA. 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—(*Crosses R., smooths coat on chair.*) 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 any more, no one welcomes him. (*Crosses to U. R. corner of table.*) 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?

HAPPY. (*Pained.*) God!

LINDA. (*Crosses R., sits chair over R.*) 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? 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, quiet, intense.*) And you! What happened to the love you had for him? (*Leaning forward, grasping back of chair.*) You were such pals. ...How you used to talk to him on the phone every night! How lonely he was till he could come home to you! (*Short pause.*)

BIFF. (*Rises, crosses R. to above Linda; forcing himself.*) All right, Mom. I'll live here in my room, and I'll get a job. ...I'll keep away from him, that's all.

LINDA. No, Biff...you can't stay here and fight all the time.

BIFF. He threw me out of this house, remember that.

LINDA. Why did he do that? I never knew *why*?

BIFF. Because I know he's a fake and he doesn't like anybody around who knows!

LINDA. Why a fake? In what way? What do you mean?

BIFF. (*Holding in his anger.*) Just don't lay it all at my feet. It's between me and him; that's all I have to say. I'll chip in from now on. He'll settle for half my pay check—he'll be all right. I'm going to bed.

(*He starts R. Happy puts cigarette out in ashtray on top of refrigerator.*)

LINDA. (*Quietly.*) He won't be all right.

BIFF. (*Agitated, crosses to L. of table, furious.*) I hate this city and I'll stay here. ...Now what do you want?

LINDA. (*Simply.*) He's dying, Biff.

BIFF. (*Subdued.*) Why is he dying?