



- Willy Loman's sales career is coming to an end.
- Willy is exhausted, and wants his son Biff to be successful.
- We question whether Willy is going mad, or is he merely very tired?

Willy returns to the family home in Brooklyn showing signs of great weariness, and his wife's greeting indicates that she is worried about him. Willy's reply, ***'It's all right. I came back'*** tells us immediately that the possibility of a dangerous accident has been playing on both their minds. It also suggests that Willy might have been contemplating not returning. The music of the flute which is heard during this scene adds a note of sadness. Willy has been driving home from Yonkers to Brooklyn, where he lives, at the rate of ten miles an hour because he is unable to concentrate on driving safely. He has been asked to sell goods in distant parts of America, instead of New York, and he is deeply exhausted by the travelling ***'I'm tired to the death'***. Willy believes that if the original boss of his company were still alive, he would be in charge of the New York area by now. This is the first of many speculations by Willy about what might have been in different circumstances. He blames his boss's son, Howard Wagner, for his lack of career success. Willy proclaims that he ***'vital in New England.'*** We learn from the stage directions that Linda loves Willy for the big dreams he has and endures all his petty cruelties. Willy tells his wife that she is ***'my support and my foundation'***.

Biff and Happy, Willy's two sons, have been out on a date together with two women, and Linda tells Willy how much she enjoys the atmosphere in the house. Willy, however, is depressed at the thought that although he will soon own his house, there will be no one to live in it as his two sons are grown men. There is a difference between Linda's acceptance of loss such as children growing up, and Willy's feelings of dissatisfaction. He feels that some people ***'accomplish something'*** in life.

Willy is unhappy that Biff appears not to have accomplished anything because he is not earning very much money by working on a farm. Willy contradicts himself when he calls Biff a ***'lazy bum'*** and then ***'there's one thing about Biff – he's not lazy.'*** Willy is angry because ***'In the greatest country in the world a young man with such – personal attractiveness gets lost.'*** This relates to the notion of the American dream and also Willy's belief that popularity equals success. Biff has been very upset by Willy's attitude towards him. Willy reflects on Biff's popularity and attractiveness as a young man with obvious pleasure. Willy is determined to seek fulfilment by getting Biff a profitable job. Linda says that ***'life is a casting off'***, but Willy is unable to let go of the past. Linda remarks that Willy makes ***'mountains out of molehills'***, meaning that Willy makes small problems seem much greater than they are. This makes the audience question whether Willy is a victim of fate, or if he is inventing his own difficulties. Willy's sense of claustrophobia and longing for a simpler time comes across in the line ***'The grass don't grow anymore, you can't raise a carrot in the backyard.'***

Glossary

Loman – family name reflects Willy’s status as an ordinary citizen (low-man)

Studebaker – an American make of car

Wire - telegram

Thomas Edison – (1847-1931) US inventor who developed the light bulb.

B.F. Goodrich – US businessman involved in rubber manufacturing

Chevy – ‘Chevrolet’, a famous American car

Simonize – to polish with wax