

## DEATH OF A SALESMAN BERNARD

BERNARD

Oh, the hell with the advice, Willy. I couldn't advise you. There's just one thing I've always wanted to ask you. When he was supposed to graduate, and the math teacher flunked him...

WILLY

Oh, that son-of-a-bitch ruined his life.

BERNARD

Yeah, but, Willy, all he had to do was go to summer school and make up that subject.

WILLY

That's right, that's right.

BERNARD

Did you tell him not to go to summer school?

WILLY

Me? I begged him to go. I ordered him to go!

BERNARD

Then why wouldn't he go?

WILLY

Why? Why! Bernard, that question has been trailing me like a ghost for the last fifteen years. He flunked the subject, and laid down and died like a hammer hit him!

BERNARD

Take it easy, kid.

WILLY

Let me talk to you — I got nobody to talk to. Bernard, Bernard, was it my fault? Y'see? It keeps going around in my mind, maybe I did something to him. I got nothing to give him.

BERNARD

Don't take it so hard.

WILLY

Why did he lay down? What is the story there? You were his friend!

BERNARD

Willy, I remember, it was June, and our grades came out. And he'd flunked math.

WILLY

That son-of-a-bitch!

BERNARD

No, it wasn't right then. Biff just got very angry, I remember, and he was ready to enroll in summer school.

WILLY

(Surprised)

He was?

BERNARD

He wasn't beaten by it at all. But then, Willy, he disappeared from the block for almost a month. 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 — I'll never forget this, it always mystifies me. Because I'd thought so well of Biff, even though he'd always taken advantage of me. I loved him, Willy, y'know? And he came back after that month and took his sneakers — remember those sneakers with "University of Virginia" printed on them? He was so proud of those, wore them every day. And he took them down in the cellar, and burned them up in the furnace. We had a fist fight. It lasted at least half an hour. Just the two of us, punching each other down the cellar, and crying right through it. I've often thought of how strange it was that I knew he'd given up his life. What happened in Boston, Willy?