

DEATH OF A JAZZ MAN

A Radio/Stage Play

By

Eric Coble

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ANNOUNCER

WHILE RESEARCHING THE JAZZ ERA, WE CAME ACROSS A FASCINATING, PREVIOUSLY UNPRODUCED SCRIPT BY AN AMERICAN THEATRE LEGEND AND GOD HELP US IF WE WERE GOING TO KEEP IT TO OURSELVES. SO TONIGHT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE DARE TO PRESENT TO YOU THE WORLD PREMIERE... OF ARTHUR "SAX MAN" MILLER'S... "DEATH OF A JAZZ SALESMAN"!

(SOUND OF A DOOR OPENING, FOOTSTEPS AND A LARGE LOAD OF METAL AND WOOD BEING DROPPED)

LINDA

WILLY?

WILLY

IT'S ALL RIGHT, LINDA. I CAME BACK.

LINDA

YOU BROUGHT ALL YOUR INSTRUMENTS UPSTAIRS?

WILLY

JUST THE SAX, THE TRUMPET, THE BASS, THE DRUM KIT, THE TROMBONE AND THE PIANO. NO WONDER MY BACK'S KILLING ME.

LINDA

I THOUGHT YOU HAD A GIG IN JERSEY.

WILLY

A SIX-YEAR-OLD'S BIRTHDAY PARTY! THEY WANTED THE WILLY LOMAN SEPTET TO PLAY FOR A SIX-YEAR-OLD'S BIRTHDAY!

LINDA

I'M SORRY-

WILLY

-AND WE GOT BUMPED! THE CLOWN RAN LONG. HIS STUPID BALLOON ANIMALS -- AND THAT PUPPET SHOW WAS INTERMINABLE, LINDA, INTERMINABLE!

LINDA

WELL YOU'RE HOME NOW-

WILLY

WE TRIED TO PLAY AS THEY OPENED GIFTS, BUT NOBODY WANTS TO HEAR "I LET A SONG GO OUT OF MY HEART" WHEN THEY CAN WATCH PUPPETS BEAT THE LIVING CRAP OUT OF EACH OTHER-

LINDA

WILLY-

WILLY
IT'S A DISGRACE-

LINDA
WILLY-

WILLY
THERE'S NO CULTURE LEFT-

LINDA
WILLY-

WILLY
KID SHOVED A CUPCAKE IN MY SAXOPHONE

LINDA
WILLY!!

WILLY
WHAT!

LINDA
WHY DON'T YOU ASK YOUR AGENT TO BOOK YOU HERE IN TOWN?

WILLY
THEY GOT NO RESPECT THESE AGENTS THESE DAYS -- IF SID SHOEMEISTER WAS STILL ALIVE I'D BE PLAYING CARNEGIE HALL TONIGHT!

LINDA
SID WAS NEVER YOUR AGENT, WILLY.

WILLY
I KNOW! BUT HE HAD A JANITOR'S KEY TO THE BACK DOOR OF CARNEGIE HALL. SID WOULD'VE LET ME IN ANYTIME -- ANY OFF NIGHT WHEN NO ONE WAS AROUND... DO WE HAVE ANY HEROIN?

LINDA
YOU KNOW WE DON'T KEEP IT IN THE HOUSE ANYMORE, DEAR.

WILLY
ALL THE GOOD JAZZMEN ARE ON IT! A MAN CAN'T EVEN GET A SIMPLE NARCOTIC IN HIS OWN HOUSE ANYMORE! KID SHOVED A CUPCAKE IN MY SAXOPHONE, LINDA, DID I TELL YOU THAT??

LINDA
DEAR, YOU'RE GOING TO WAKE BIFF AND HAPPY.

WILLY
IT'S 2 AM -- WHAT ARE THEY DOING SLEEPING?

LINDA
BIFF JUST GOT IN, WILLY-

WILLY

IN MY DAY WE'D JUST BE STARTING OUR SECOND SET IN THE CLUB AT 2 AM! THESE LAZY KIDS THESE DAYS-

LINDA

BIFF HASN'T PLAYED IN A CLUB IN YEARS, WILLY, YOU KNOW THAT. HE SAYS HIS SPIT VALVE IS STUCK.

WILLY

"SPIT VALVE IS STUCK". GREATEST TRUMPETER THIS FAMILY'S EVER SEEN AND HIS "SPIT VALVE IS STUCK".

LINDA

HAPPENS TO THE BEST, DEAR.

WILLY

HE COULD STILL BE BIG. HE COULD PLAY AT ANY CLUB IN NEW YORK-

LINDA

YES, DEAR.

WILLY

I'M GONNA HAVE A COOKIE. YOU WANT A COOKIE?

(DOOR OPENS)

LINDA

NO THANK YOU. WATCH YOUR INSTRUMENTS AT THE TOP OF THE-

(HUGE CRASH BOOM BOOM BOOM OF A MAN FALLING DOWN A FLIGHT OF STAIRS WITH A BUNCH OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS)

LINDA (CONT'D)

-STAIRS. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, WILLY?

WILLY

(IN THE DISTANCE, SOUNDING NASAL)

FINE. DRUMSTICK... LODGED IN MY NOSE... GO TO BED, LINDA...

LINDA

GOODNIGHT, WILLY.

(DOOR CLOSING)

BIFF

(QUIETLY)

HEY, HAPPY? WAS THAT POP?

HAPPY

FALLING DOWN THE STAIRS?

BIFF

YEAH.

HAPPY

PROBABLY. YOU KNOW, HE DIDN'T HAVE THESE INNER EAR PROBLEMS WHEN YOU WERE PLAYING JAZZ IN THE CITY, BIFF.

BIFF

AW, NO. NOT YOU TOO.

HAPPY

I'M SERIOUS. WHAT'S THERE FOR YOU OUT WEST, BIFF-O? WHAT CAN YOU GET OUT THERE YOU CAN'T GET IN NEW YORK?

(SOUND OF UNPACKING)

BIFF

WELL... IF YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW...

(PAUSE)

HAPPY

WHAT IS THAT?

BIFF

IT'S A GUITAR, HAPPY.

HAPPY

YEAH... BUT IT'S ALL COVERED WITH RHINESTONES AND FRINGE AND CRAP.

BIFF

(STRUMS A CHORD)

THIS IS HOW THEY PLAY IT IN TUCUMCARI.

HAPPY

AW NO... NO.

BIFF

THAT'S RIGHT, HAP.

HAPPY

YOU'RE NOT... YOU CAN'T...

BIFF

I'M SINGING COUNTRY-WESTERN NOW, HAPPY.

HAPPY

NOOOOOO!!

BIFF

(SINGING)

"THE NOOSE AROUND MY NECK DON'T HURT LIKE THE ONE AROUND MY HEART--"

HAPPY

CUT IT OUT!

BIFF

(SINGING)

"AND WHAT I MISS 'BOUT YOUR BEANS IS THE WAY THEY MAKE ME--"

HAPPY

(GRABBING THE GUITAR)

WILL YOU SHUT IT? POP HEARS THAT, HIS INNER EARS WILL EXPLODE.

BIFF

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE OUT WEST, HAP. NONE OF THIS ARTSY-FARTSY MODAL IMPROVISATION ON A 12 CHORD STRUCTURE. OUT THERE THERE'S A WORLD -- A REAL WORLD -- WHERE REAL MEN LOSE REAL BARNES IN TRAGIC FIRES, AND LOSE THEIR WOMEN IN A BAD HAND OF PINOCHLE, AND LOSE THEIR DOGS IN TRAGIC ROTO-TILLER ACCIDENTS JUST AT HARVEST TIME--

HAPPY

THE APPEALING PART'S NOT COMING THROUGH SO FAR.

BIFF

IT'S REAL, HAPPY! REAL PAINFUL!

(SINGING)

"JUST CAUSE I AM BLIND AND DEAF DON'T MEAN THAT I AM DUMB--"

HAPPY

(STOPPING HIS PLAYING)

BIFF. YOU WANT REAL PAIN? YOU WHINE ONE MORE NOTE AND I'M GONNA SMASH THAT GEE-TAR RIGHT OVER YOUR ACHEY-BREAKY HEAD.

(DOOR OPENS)

LINDA

BOYS?

HAPPY AND BIFF

MOM!

LINDA

I COULD'VE SWORN I HEARD A CAT BEING STRANGLER IN HERE.

BIFF

THAT WAS ME, MA. SINGING ABOUT SIMPLE PAIN IN A SIMPLE WAY--

LINDA
HA. WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PAIN?

HAPPY
DON'T, MA. HE'S JUST START SINGING AGAIN.

LINDA
YOU WANT PAIN, YOU LIVE WITH YOUR FATHER.

BIFF
SO HE FALLS DOWN THE STAIRS SOMETIMES...

LINDA
SOMETIMES?? HE LUGS THOSE INSTRUMENTS IN AND OUT OF THE HOUSE EVERY NIGHT -- EVERY NIGHT -- MAN'S SIXTY YEARS OLD AND HE CAN'T AFFORD A ROADIE!

BIFF
I SENT YOU THAT FIFTY DOLLARS LAST ARBOR DAY-

LINDA
HE USED THAT TO BUY COWBELLS TO IMPRESS GENE KRUPA.

BIFF
OH, MAN...

HAPPY
...FIFTY DOLLARS FOR COWBELLS?

LINDA
AND THE DOCTOR SAYS IF HE EVER TRIES TO PLAY A HIGH "G" AGAIN, HE'LL BURST A BLOOD VESSEL IN HIS HEAD AND IT'LL BE CURTAINS...

BIFF
GEE, MOM, I HAD NO IDEA.

LINDA
YOU AND HE USED TO BE SUCH PALS, BIFF. REMEMBER ALL THE JAM SESSIONS YOU USED TO SIT IN ON ?

BIFF
YEAH...

HAPPY
HE PAID FIFTY DOLLARS FOR COWBELLS?

LINDA
WHAT HAPPENED, BIFF? YOU WENT UP TO SEE HIM IN BOSTON ALL THOSE YEARS AGO... AND IT'S NEVER BEEN THE SAME BETWEEN YOU. WHAT HAPPENED UP THERE?

BIFF

I'M SORRY I EVER CAME BACK. HE'S ALWAYS WORSE WHEN I COME BACK.

HAPPY

I CAN NOT BELIEVE POP PAID FIFTY BUCKS FOR COWBELLS.

BIFF AND LINDA

WILL YOU SHUT UP?

BIFF

I'LL LEAVE AGAIN, MOM, YOU'LL SEE -- HE'LL BE FINE-

LINDA

HE WON'T BE FINE.

(PAUSE)

BIFF

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

LINDA

LAST MONTH... THIS IS SO EMBARRASSING... LAST MONTH I WENT DOWNSTAIRS TO THE BASEMENT FOR A CAN OF WIENIES -- NOT REGULAR WIENIES, BUT THOSE LITTLE ONES, THE COCKTAIL WIENIES IN THE LITTLE SARDINE TINS, YOU KNOW, THEY'RE SPICY WIENIES, YOU STICK THEM ON A TOOTHPICK -- TINY SPICY WIENIES-

BIFF

WE KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, MOM.

LINDA

WELL, I HAPPENED TO NOTICE A LUMP BEHIND THE WATER HEATER... I THOUGHT IT WAS A SACK OF SOMETHING... I PICKED IT UP... I KNEW YOUR FATHER MUST HAVE LEFT IT THERE... AND... AND IT WAS...

BIFF

WHAT, MOM?

LINDA

BAGPIPES. YOUR FATHER HAS A SET OF BAGPIPES IN THE BASEMENT.

HAPPY

NO.

BIFF

THAT... JERK!

LINDA

ATTENTION! ATTENTION MUST BE PAID TO A JAZZMAN WHO OWNS BAGPIPES, BIFF! HE'S NOT WELL -- HIS LIFE IS IN YOUR HANDS -- BOTH OF YOU-

BIFF

ALL RIGHT, PAL, ALL RIGHT. I HAD NO IDEA. I'LL STAY. I'LL GET SOME GIGS WITH SOME COMBO. DAD CAN SIT IN WITH US. IT'LL BE OKAY.

HAPPY

SURE IT WILL. I'LL SIT IN WITH YOU TOO. I CAN PLAY COWBELLS LIKE NOBODY' BUSINESS-

(DOOR OPENS)

WILLY

(SOUNDING NASAL)

COWBELLS WENT OUT WITH GENE KRUPA.

BIFF AND HAPPY

POP!

LINDA

WILLY. YOU STILL GOT A DRUMSTICK IN YOUR NOSTRIL.

(POPPING SOUND, LIKE A CORK COMING FREE)

WILLY

THANK YOU, LINDA.

HAPPY

BIFF WAS JUST SAYING HOW HE'S GONNA GET A GIG HERE IN THE CITY-

WILLY

NO KIDDING?

BIFF

I'LL NEED A TRUMPET WITH A GOOD SPIT VALVE.

WILLY

YOU CAN USE MINE -- IT'S A LITTLE BENT UP FROM ALL THE CRASHES -- BELL POINTS STRAIGHT UP AT THE CEILING-

LINDA

LIKE DIZZY GILLESPIE -- YOU'LL LOOK LIKE DIZZY, BIFF.

BIFF

MY CHEEKS DON'T PUFF LIKE THAT-

WILLY

YOU'LL BE BIG IN NO TIME, BOY, REMEMBER WHEN YOU PLAYED IN SCHOOL-

BIFF

IT WAS JUST MARCHING BAND-

WILLY
 "JUST MARCHING--" -- MIDDLE OF THE SCHOOL FIGHT SONG -- WHO
 BURSTS INTO "OOBY-DOBBY-DOOBY-BOOBY-BIBBIDY-BOPPITY-BOOP"!

HAPPY
 BIFF DID!

WILLY
 MY TRUMPET MAN!

HAPPY
 CONFUSED ALL THE CHEERLEADERS -- THEY MISSED THEIR JUMPS AND
 CATCHES -- PEOPLE WERE BEING CARRIED OFF THE FIELD IN
 STRETCHERS-

WILLY
 MY TRUMPET MAN!

HAPPY
 CANCELLED THE REST OF THE SEASON! HATE MAIL AND DEATH
 THREATS FOR MONTHS!!

WILLY
 AND YOU CAN DO IT AGAIN, BIFF!

BIFF
 ...ACTUALLY...

WILLY
 YOU GO SEE BILL OLIVER AT THE LITTER BOX-

BIFF
 LITTER BOX?

HAPPY
 NEW CLUB ON 42nd. BILL OLIVER WILL REMEMBER YOU FROM BAND,
 BIFF-

WILLY
 HE'LL GIVE YOU AN OPENING SLOT TOMORROW NIGHT! THE VERY
 NIGHT! YOU'LL BE HUGE IN NO TIME!

LINDA
 AND WILLY, YOU CAN TALK TO YOUR AGENT HOWARD TOMORROW ABOUT
 GETTING GIGS IN TOWN-

WILLY
 I ABSOLUTELY WILL, LINDA -- I'LL TELL HIM MY SON'S SPIT VALVE
 IS UNSTUCK-

LINDA
 YOU MIGHT FIND ANOTHER WAY TO PHRASE IT-

WILLY

WE'LL BLOW THE SOCKS OFF THIS JOINT -- WE'LL BE AS HAPPY-GO-LUCKY AS CHARLIE PARKER AND BILLIE HOLIDAY!

HAPPY

LET'S CELEBRATE! MA, DO WE STILL HAVE ANY MORPHINE OR HEROIN IN THE HOUSE?

LINDA

NO.

WILLY

AH, BIFF-O, YOU'LL SEE, YOU... AH... WHAT'S THAT?

BIFF

OH. IT'S, UM, A GUITAR.

WILLY

WHAT WITH THE RHINESTONES AND FRINGE AND CRAP?

BIFF

ACTUALLY, DAD-

HAPPY

WHERE'S YOUR TRUMPET, POP? LET'S GET BIFF ON THAT HORN!

LINDA

IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE THE FAMILY JAMMING TOGETHER AGAIN!

WILLY

TOMORROW MORNING I'M MARCHING INTO HOWARD'S OFFICE AND DEMANDING A LOCAL GIG, LINDA, YOU'LL SEE!

BIFF

POP-

HAPPY

LET'S MAKE SOME MUSIC -- I'LL GET WHAT'S LEFT OF THE INSTRUMENTS FROM DOWNSTAIRS-

LINDA

I'LL WASH OFF THIS DRUMSTICK!

BIFF

POP!

WILLY

GET THAT MANGY GUITAR OUT OF THE WAY, BIFF! WE GOT MUSIC TO PLAY -- TOMORROW MORNING THE LOMAN FAMILY'S GONNA MAKE THOSE NOWHERE HUB-CAPS PIN THE OUTEST KATS AND JELLY-TOTS TO EVER DIG A CUBE!!

BIFF
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN??

WILLY
I HAVE NO IDEA! LET'S JAM!

(A JAZZY PIANO RIFF STARTS UP, FADES AWAY, AND WE HEAR A DOOR BUZZER)

HOWARD
WHO IS IT, SUGARLUMPS?

SECRETARY
MR. LOMAN TO SEE YOU, SIR.

HOWARD
OO, SEND HIM IN! RIGHT AWAY!

(A DOOR OPENS)

HOWARD (CONT'D)
WILLY!

WILLY
HOWARD! MY MAIN CAT! HOW'S IT HANGING?

(BEAT)

HOWARD
HOW'S WHAT HANGING? WHAT KIND OF GREETING IS THAT?

WILLY
I WAS... YOU KNOW... TRYING TO BE... HIP.

HOWARD
HIP IS OUT, COOL IS IN, WILLY. LISTEN TO THIS-

(STRUMS OF AN ELECTRIC GUITAR)

WILLY
YE GODS! WHAT'D YOU DO TO THAT GUITAR?

HOWARD
IT'S PLUGGED IN. IT'S ELECTRIC, WILLY.

WILLY
WELL. THAT IS... COOL.

HOWARD
HAVEN'T WORKED OUT ALL THE KINKS YET. IF YOU TOUCH THE STRINGS FOR TOO LONG YOU GET A MASSIVE SHOCK.

WILLY

I CAN SEE YOUR HAIR'S KIND OF ALREADY STANDING UP THERE,
HOWARD...

HOWARD

YEAH, BUT WHAT'S A LITTLE VOLTAGE WHEN YOU'RE ON THE CUSP OF
A NEW ERA!

WILLY

A NEW ERA, THAT'S JUST WHAT I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT,
HOWARD-

HOWARD

LISTEN TO THIS-

(SINGING)

"BABY BABY BABY BABY BABY BAYBEEEEEE-"

WILLY

THAT'S... AH...

HOWARD

IT'S A NEW PIECE. I CALL IT "BABY".

WILLY

WELL, THAT'S REALLY... ACCURATE. LISTEN, MY SONS AND I-

HOWARD

ALL THE SONGS IN THE STYLE ARE GONNA PRETTY MUCH BE
VARIATIONS ON THAT THEME.

(SINGING)

"BABY BABY BABY BABY BAYBEEEEEE-

(BZZZT. A LOUD CHARGE OF ELECTRICITY)

HOWARD (CONT'D)

OUCH. TOUCHED THE STRINGS TOO LONG...

WILLY

HOWARD! ... MY SONS AND I, WE WANT TO PLAY SOME CLUB DATES
HERE IN THE CITY.

HOWARD

HAVEN'T YOU HEARD A WORD I BEEN SINGING, WILLY? THAT OLD
JAZZ STUFF IS OUT, THIS NEW STYLE IS WHAT'S GONNA FILL SEATS.
WE JUST NEED SOME WHITE GUY WHO CAN WIGGLE HIS HIPS, LOOK
GOOD IN LEATHER AND KEEP A BEAT, AND WE'RE SET!

WILLY

I CAN WIGGLE, HOWARD, AND I LOOK DECENT IN LEATHER-

HOWARD

PLEASE, WILLY. I JUST ATE.

WILLY
I DON'T NEED A BIG CLUB-DATE, HOWARD-

HOWARD
WILLY. JAZZ IS OVER. WE'RE IN A NEW AGE NOW. AND I'M GONNA
CALL IT... "SHOCK AND ROLL". ON ACCOUNT OF THE ELECTRICITY --
YOU KNOW.

WILLY
I KNOW, BUT-

HOWARD
NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I GOT AN APPOINTMENT WITH SOME KID
FROM TENNESSEE. PRESLEY SOMETHING.

WILLY
BUT-

HOWARD
I'D SHAKE HANDS GOODBYE, WILLY, BUT WHY RISK YOUR PACEMAKER,
YOU KNOW?

WILLY
BUT-

HOWARD
LATER ALLIGATOR!

(A DOOR SLAMS)

HOWARD (CONT'D)
(STRUMS)
BABY, BABY, BABY-
(BZZZZT!)
OW!

(A PIANO PLAYS A SAD SONG AS WE HEAR
ANOTHER DOOR SLAMMING)

BIFF
HI, MOM. HI, HAPPY. I'M HOME.

LINDA
BIFF, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN -- WE'VE BEEN WORRIED SICK-

HAPPY
YEAH, BIFF-O, HOW'D IT GO WITH BILL OLIVER AT THE LITTER BOX?

BIFF
NOT SO GREAT.

LINDA

NO. THAT'S NOT ACCEPTABLE. YOUR FATHER IS SITTING IN THE BACKYARD WITH A KAZOO, BIFF. A KAZOO. HE HAD ONE OF THE WORST DAYS OF HIS LIFE AND YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN BRING HIM BACK. YOU ARE GOING OUT THERE AND TELL HIM YOU'VE GOT A GIG-

BIFF

BUT I DON'T!

LINDA

THINK HARD, BIFF. DON'T YOU HAVE A GIG? BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T, AND I HAVE TO LISTEN TO "TEA FOR TWO" ON THE KAZOO ONE MORE TIME... I'M GOING TO PUT MY HEAD IN THE BLENDER.

HAPPY

YOU DON'T WANT MOM'S HEAD IN THE BLENDER, DO YOU, BIFF?

BIFF

NO, BUT I DON'T WANT TO HEAR "TEA FOR TWO" ON A KAZOO EITHER.

LINDA

I DON'T CARE! GET OUT THERE AND TELL HIM SOMETHING TO CHEER HIM UP. NOW.

(DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING.)

SOUND OF "TEA FOR TWO" ON A KAZOO)

BIFF

POP.

(WILLY KEEPS PLAYING)

POP!

(WILLY STOPS PLAYING)

WILLY

BIFFOLICIOUS! JUST WARMING UP FOR OUR GIG WITH BILL OLIVER. YOU GOT THE GIG, RIGHT, BIFF? RIGHT?

BIFF

I...

HAPPY

HE SURE DID, POP!

LINDA

WHY DON'T YOU HAND ME THE KAZOO, NICE AND SLOW, WILLY...

WILLY

WHERE'S OUR DATE, BIFF? WHERE ARE WE PLAYING?

(PAUSE)

BIFF
WE DON'T HAVE A GIG, POP.

LINDA AND HAPPY
BIFF!

WILLY
...WHAT?

BIFF
I GOT INTO BILL OLIVER'S CLUB, DAD, I WAS WAITING TO PLAY FOR HIM... AND IN THE CORNER I SAW A GUITAR... AND I... I DON'T KNOW WHAT CAME OVER ME. I GRABBED IT AND JUST STARTED PLAYING.

WILLY
NOTHING WRONG WITH PLAYING GUITAR, BOY, DJANGO RHINEHART PLAYED JAZZ GUITAR-

BIFF
NOT JAZZ GUITAR, POP. COUNTRY-WESTERN.

LINDA
(CRYING)
OH, BIFF...

WILLY
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING??

BIFF
I'M A COUNTRY-WESTERN SINGER, POP! I LIKE SONGS ABOUT LONESOME HIGHWAYS AND CHEATIN' HEARTS AND -- GOD HELP ME -- WOMEN WHO STAND BY THEIR MAN.

WILLY
YOU... UNGRATEFUL LITTLE WHELP! YOU CALL THAT MUSIC? YOU CALL THAT ART??

LINDA
WILLY, DON'T-

HAPPY
POP-

BIFF
YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT MUSIC? YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT ART? ALL RIGHT, YOU PHONEY, LET'S LAY IT ON THE LINE! TELL THEM ABOUT BOSTON!

LINDA
WHAT?

WILLY
BOSTON -- WHAT ARE TALKING ABOUT, BOSTON-

BIFF
MOM, YOU WANTED TO KNOW WHAT CAME BETWEEN DAD AND ME? TELL
HER, WILLY!

WILLY
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT-

BIFF
WELL, MAYBE THIS THEATRICAL FLASHBACK WILL JOG YOUR MEMORY!

(FLASHBACK MUSIC)

BIFF (CONT'D)
IT WAS THE DAY I TRIED OUT FOR BASIE'S BIG BAND AND TOTALLY
BLEW IT. I TRIED TO MAKE AN IMPROV OUT OF "A-TISKET A-
TASKET". WHAT WAS I THINKING? NOBODY COULD EVER MAKE THAT
SONG INTO A JAZZ STANDARD! BUT I WAS FEELING AWFUL, AND WENT
UP TO BOSTON TO SEE POP. HE WAS PLAYING AT CLUB RATATOUILLE,
BUT I FOUND HIM IN HIS HOTEL ROOM...

(KNOCKING ON A DOOR)

WILLY
AAAH! JUST A MINUTE!

(DOOR OPENS)

BIFF
POP?

WILLY
BIFF! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE??

BIFF
I NEED TO TELL YOU... WHAT IS THAT?

WILLY
IT'S NOTHING -- CAN YOU COME BACK IN A MINUTE-

BIFF
IS THAT... A TUBA?

WILLY
NO! NO, JUST A... A VERY LARGE... CORONET. FOR THE BAND.

BIFF
WHEN I CAME TO THE DOOR, I COULD'VE SWORN I HEARD "OOMPAH
OOMPAH" COMING FROM IN HERE...

WILLY
"OOMPAH"? HA-HA! NO. NEXT DOOR, MUST'VE BEEN...

BIFF
POP... WERE YOU PLAYING... POLKA MUSIC?

WILLY
IT'S NOT WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE-

BIFF
MY FATHER... THE JAZZMAN... PLAYING LAWRENCE WELK MUSIC?

WILLY
NO! BIFF, YOU GOTTA UNDERSTAND-

BIFF
(CRYING)
POLKA, DAD! WHAT'S THERE TO UNDERSTAND?! YOU WERE UP HERE
PLAYING POLKA MUSIC!!

WILLY
BIFF... BIFF! COME BACK HERE -- DON'T YOU RUN OUT ON ME...
IT'S GOT A LONG DISTINGUISHED HISTORY IN EASTERN EUROPE...

(FLASHBACK MUSIC PLAYS)

BIFF
THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED ALL THOSE YEARS AGO. I COULD NEVER LOOK
MY FATHER IN THE FACE AGAIN.

LINDA
OH, WILLY.

WILLY
IT WAS... I WAS DOING A RIFF ON "ROLL OUT THE BARREL"...

BIFF
BUT DON'T YOU SEE, POP? IT DOESN'T MATTER NOW. YOU CAN PLAY
POLKA, I CAN PLAY COUNTRY-WESTERN -- IT'S A BIG MUSICAL
WORLD, DAD. WE DON'T HAVE TO BE TRAPPED HERE-

LINDA
COME ON, BIFF. I THINK YOU'VE SAID ENOUGH.

HAPPY
LET'S GO TO BED, POP-

WILLY
IN A MINUTE. IN A MINUTE...

BIFF
POP, IF YOU WANT, I WROTE A BALLAD ABOUT YOU -- I CAN PLAY IT
ON MY GUITAR-

WILLY
NO! THANK YOU. THANK YOU.

BIFF
IT'S TOUGHER THAN YOU THINK FINDING A RHYME FOR "LOMAN"-

WILLY
GO TO BED! YOUR BROTHER'S RIGHT. YOU SHOULD ALL GO TO BED.

LINDA
WILL WE SEE YOU IN THE MORNING, WILLY?

WILLY
OF COURSE. OF COURSE.

(DOOR CLOSSES)

WILLY (CONT'D)
HE COULD STILL BE GREAT. HE COULD BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN
COUNTRY AND JAZZ -- A WHOLE NEW ART FORM... ALL HE NEEDS IS
SOME FUEL... A MAJOR TRAGEDY TO TORMENT HIM THE REST OF HIS
LIFE AND HE'LL HAVE ENOUGH MATERIAL FOR A DOZEN ALBUMS.
HE'LL BE GREAT, YOU'LL SEE, GREAT! A TRAGEDY... A TRAGEDY...
WAIT A MINUTE. THE DOC SAID IF I EVER TRIED TO HIT A HIGH
"G" AGAIN, I'D BUST A BLOOD VESSEL IN MY HEAD! PERFECT! OLD
TRUSTY HORN. LET'S DO IT FOR BIFF... FOR ART!

(HE SLOWLY RUNS UP THE SCALE... FORCING
NOTES HIGHER AND HIGHER...

UNTIL WE HEAR A "POP".

A THUD.

SILENCE)

LINDA
WILLY? WILLY, WAS THAT YOU? BE CAREFUL ON THE STAIRS, DEAR.

(PIANO PLAYS A JAUNTY VERSION OF THE
FUNERAL MARCH)

HAPPY
I CAN'T BELIEVE NO JAZZMEN SHOWED UP AT HIS FUNERAL.

BIFF
WE SHOULD'VE THOUGHT OF THAT BEFORE WE SCHEDULED IT FOR 8
A.M. ON A SUNDAY MORNING.

HAPPY
THAT WAS A BAD CALL, YOU'RE RIGHT. I ALMOST SLEPT THROUGH IT MYSELF.

BIFF
YOU OKAY, MOM?

LINDA
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE HIT A HIGH "G"...

HAPPY
HE WON'T BE THE ONLY ONE. I'M GONNA START UP A COMBO AND PLAY ALL HIS FAVORITE TUNES ON HIS BROKEN INSTRUMENTS EVERY NIGHT WITH TWO SHOWS ON SATURDAYS.

BIFF
WHY DON'T YOU COME OUT WEST AND WRITE SAD SONGS WITH ME, HAPPY? YOU CAN WHINE WITH THE BEST OF THEM.

HAPPY
YOU KIDDING? AND WEAR A COWBOY HAT? I'LL STICK TO MY BERET AND GOATEE, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

BIFF
SUIT YOURSELF. YOU COMING, MA?

LINDA
IN A MINUTE. YOU GO ON WITHOUT ME.

HAPPY
IF I CAN JUST FIND THOSE COWBELLS, I KNOW I'LL BE SET-

BIFF
I CAN PICK YOU UP SOME COWBELLS RIGHT FROM THE SOURCE IN NEBRASKA, MAN...

(PAUSE)

LINDA
THEY'RE GONE, WILLY. I WANTED TO PLAY YOU A SEND OFF... A ROYAL EXIT FOR A ROYAL JAZZMAN... BUT I WASN'T ABOUT TO TOUCH THAT DAMN KAZOO. AND THE ONLY OTHER PIECE OF YOUR INSTRUMENTS I COULD SALVAGE... WAS THIS TRUMPET MOUTHPIECE.

(SHE SQUAWKS THROUGH THE MOUTHPIECE)

SO HERE'S TO YOU, JAZZ SALESMAN. I'LL CATCH YOU IN THAT FINAL CLUB DATE IN THE SKY!

(AND SHE BLOWS A HAPPY IMPROV ON "TAPS")

(A FINAL PIANO FANFARE... AND APPLAUSE.)