

Death of a Salesman

DEARTH OF A SALESMAN

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Play runs about 25 minutes

DEARTH OF A SALESMAN

CAST OF CHARACTERS

HELEN

RALPH

(A living room. HELEN is on the phone)

HELEN: I'm fine...okay, I lied, I'm not fine...well, you try living with *(A loud snore from offstage)*...yep, that's my Rick...I'm open to suggestion, Vivian...I tried that...I tried that...see, the problem is not what to say to him, it's keeping him awake long enough to complete a sentence.

(A door stands to one side, representing the door to her house. A salesman, carrying a bag and a broom, walks up to it. He opens bag and removes from it a manual or pamphlet. He takes a deep breath and knocks)

HELEN: Wait, Viv, there's somebody at the door. I'll call you later. *(To door)* Who is it?

RALPH: *(From behind door, reading from pamphlet)* Good afternoon. I represent CleanSweep, Inc., the contemporary concept in dust relocation.

HELEN: We're not home.

RALPH: *(Still reading)* If I might have just a few moments of your —

HELEN: Thanks anyway.

RALPH: — what I know is valuable time —

HELEN: If I worked at an office I would have given there.

RALPH: — I believe I can show you a household management modality that will change your life.

HELEN: I don't want my life changed. And I like my own modalities, but thank you, anyway. Goodbye, adios, arrivederci, au revoir, sayonara, da svedanya, shalom and aleheim.

(HELEN picks up a book)

RALPH: *(He quickly thumbs through pages of pamphlet and begins reading again)* Although I recognize from the gentle but firm resonance of your voice —

HELEN: *(More to herself)* I can't believe this guy.

RALPH: — that you truly believe what you just said —

HELEN: I'm not home.

RALPH: — I would be doing you a disservice if I didn't, even at the risk of becoming obnoxious —

HELEN: This is a recording.

RALPH: — persist in trying to get you to open the door —

HELEN: We're quarantined. I have a slight touch of the plague.

RALPH: — so that you could experience what I have to believe you will someday regard as the pivotal moment of your life.

HELEN: A vacuum cleaner is going to change my life, right.

RALPH: *(Furiously thumbing through pages again until he finds the right reply)* We don't —

HELEN: Oh, God.

RALPH: — call it a vacuum cleaner at CSI. After all, what could be cleaner than a vacuum to begin with.

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HELEN: You certainly sound like an expert on vacuums.

RALPH: We call it an Environmental Reorganizer.

HELEN: Environmental Reorganizer? What's the number of the language police?

RALPH: (*Thumbing furiously once again. Find place; reads*) Madam, before you close that door, I — no, wait, wrong spot, I — (*more thumbing; reads*) And if you order right now, this complete set of Ginsu knives — wait, not yet — (*more thumbing; reads*) I think I can, I think I can — how did that get in there? (*Fumbles with manual and bag, and knocks himself in head with broom in the process making a loud noise*)

HELEN: (*Getting up quickly*) Are you all right? (*Opens door*)

RALPH: (*As he gets up*) Not to worry, thank you. Happens all the time. (*Standing with broom like American Gothic*) The Environmental Reorganizer —

HELEN: That's an Environmental Reorganizer? It looks like a broom.

RALPH: That's the beauty of it. Modern technology housed in a traditional format. And boy can it sweep up. If you would allow me in, I could give you a demonstration. (*Begins to step inside*)

HELEN: (*Stopping him*) Hold your horses. Look, I just opened the door to see if you were all right. I have zero — count 'em — zero interest in what you're selling and less than zero interest in your spiel.

RALPH: (*Indicating manual which is on floor*) It's not my spiel, actually, it's the company's.

HELEN: Good, then you won't take this personally. (*Closes door and resumes her seat*)

RALPH: (*Long beat*) I'm not.

HELEN: (*Beat*) What?

RALPH: I'm not.

HELEN: Is that like some anti-Existentialist credo? What do you mean you're not?

RALPH: You asked if I was all right. I'm not.

HELEN: Well, too bad. Sue me. I'm covered. I have a special rider for clumsy salesmen. (*Beat*) I'm sorry, I don't mean to be so rude but you came on a bad day.

RALPH: I can come back tomorrow.

HELEN: Tomorrow will also be a bad day. (*Looking off towards bedroom*) I'm on a roll.

RALPH: I'm sorry. I didn't hear that last bit.

HELEN: You weren't supposed to. Goodbye.

RALPH: Oh. (*Long beat*) Which part was I supposed to hear?

HELEN: This. (*Goes to door, opens it*) Go away.

RALPH: I can see you're no novice at haggling, so let me propose a deal.

HELEN: I need a deal even less than I need a broom. Scram.

RALPH: You let me stage a short but remarkable demonstration of CSI's amazing new Environmental Reorganizer —

HELEN: Beat it.

RALPH: — and if you're not completely convinced that this is the greatest innovation in household management since the sponge, I will personally clean — this is a one bedroom, right?

HELEN: Right.

RALPH: — your entire apartment.

HELEN: I have to admit, your perseverance does you credit. One usually only finds this level of desperation in serial killers.

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RALPH: This isn't desperation. This is excitement. After years of selling junk that nobody needed, I finally have a product I'm excited about.

HELEN: A broom?

RALPH: Environmental Reorganizer. And if you could just see how it works, what it's capable of — (*He looks at her hopefully*) And I promise, no more spiel.

HELEN: I already have a broom.

RALPH: Not like this.

HELEN: The one I have works fine.

RALPH: I know you honestly believe that, but that's because when you clean you can't see what you're missing. This is what I suggest, first you let me in, then I create a mess somewhere, you get out your vacuum cleaner, we both go to work and then compare the results.

HELEN: What kind of a mess did you have in mind?

RALPH: (*Looking in bag*) Oh, I have a really fine mess that I brought with me.

HELEN: See, that's exactly what I was afraid of. This is my home. It's taken years to get it the way I like it. I know where everything isn't. If I want, I can sit in the bathroom and enjoy my Billy Joel no matter how loud Tomashevsky downstairs blasts his heavy metal. On Sunday mornings, weather permitting, my breakfast nook is bathed in sunlight as I do the puzzle and eat my Captain Crunch. And when my boyfriend and I are lying in bed and he's regaling me with yet another endless excuse on where the romance has gone, there is a waterstain in the ceiling that I can stare at and think about where I'm going to spend my next vacation and still appear to him to be trying to work with his concepts. And most of all, when I come through the very door you are now trying to come through, I am immersed in the feeling of being home, the familiarity of it, the security of it, the miraculous difference between "in here" and "out there." (*She looks at him*) I'm sorry, I can't see disrupting it just to test out an Environmental Reorganizer. Thanks anyway. (*She closes the door and returns to the couch and her book*)

RALPH: (*After a long while*) Where are you going to spend your next vacation?

HELEN: On this couch reading this book. Go away, please.

RALPH: I promise I won't disrupt anything.

HELEN: I don't believe you.

RALPH: I got to hand it to you, you're sharp. I was lying. How about I promise anything I do disrupt I'll put back the way it was?

HELEN: (*HELEN has gotten up during his last speech and now opens the door*) How about I promise if you don't go away I'll call the police.

RALPH: How about just a foyer, let me clean just one foyer —

HELEN: (*Slamming door shut*) GO AWAY!

(*As she attempts to slam door, he whips out a shoe attached to the end of a plunger and jams it in the door, preventing it from closing*)

HELEN: (*Still pushing door*) Get that out of there and let me close my door.

RALPH: A baseboard cabinet, the area between the refrigerator and the wall, anything.

HELEN: I don't want you cleaning my house, don't you understand?

RALPH: Of course I understand. You think I can't understand a simple concept like that?

HELEN: Then why don't you leave me alone?

RALPH: Wait. Stop pushing the door, you're hurting me.

HELEN: What do you mean hurting you? That's not even your foot.

RALPH: But I'm getting a cramp from holding it. OwOwOwOwOw. (*She stops pushing door, opens it*)

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HELEN: God, are you all right? Here, let me hold that for you. (*Takes stick with shoe from him*)

RALPH: That's much better. Thanks.

HELEN: You're welcome. (*She closes door but continues standing there*)

RALPH: (*After a beat*) That was an abuse of trust.

HELEN: (*Opening door*) You are violating my privacy. I don't owe you anything. Go away. (*Tries to close door, he inserts broom*)

RALPH: But you owe something to yourself.

HELEN: What, having some salesman try to foist a broom on me?

RALPH: Environmental Reorganizer.

HELEN: If I owe that to myself I'll learn to live in debt. I'm good for it.

RALPH: No, what you owe to yourself is to be open to new possibilities.

HELEN: I'm extremely open to the possibility of you leaving.

RALPH: Come on, Mary. Where's your Christmas spirit?

HELEN: It's the middle of August and my name isn't Mary.

RALPH: Sue? Karen? Iphigenia?

HELEN: If I'm not going to let you clean my house, I'm certainly not telling you my name. Would you please go away.

RALPH: (*He stops pushing but she continues to push against broom handle still stuck in door*) I guess. I guess there's nothing left for salesmen like me but to go away, to disappear like we never existed. But I will tell you this, Jane —

HELEN: My name isn't Jane either.

RALPH: — you will never forget me. Sunday mornings, weather permitting, as you sit in your breakfast nook, doing the crossword puzzle and eating your Captain Crunch, you will see in the sunlight, floating gently through the dust, a man and his broom, eternally walking off into the sunset of your memory.

HELEN: How can he be floating and walking through the sunlight and sunset at the same time?

RALPH: (*Back to pushing*) You can't seriously be thinking about denying me entry just because I mixed a few metaphors.

HELEN: Those aren't mixed metaphors and I'm not seriously thinking about you at all. (*With her back against the door, she sinks to the floor*) I just want you to go away. And while you're at it take Tomashevsky and his Twisted Sister with you.

RALPH: How about the area at the foot of the headboard of your platform bed? How much disrupting would that do? If I soil up the sheets I'll wash them myself.

HELEN: (*Looking at bedroom*) That should make quite a load. I wonder if Rick is permanent press.

RALPH: Rick?

HELEN: My boyfriend. If you wash the sheets you'll have to include him.

RALPH: Taking a nap?

HELEN: If it is a nap, somebody should call Guinness.

RALPH: He takes a lot of naps?

HELEN: Just one. From right after he wakes up 'til just before he goes to sleep.

RALPH: Oh. Well, actually this gives me a chance to show you one of the best features of the Environmental Reorganizer, its quiet running. I'm willing to bet I can clean up your entire bedroom and not wake him.

HELEN: I'm willing to bet you could *blow* up my entire bedroom and not wake him.

RALPH: Come on, Millie, give me a chance, just one chance.

HELEN: I'm giving you a chance, a chance to get out of here before I have you arrested.

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RALPH: *(A beat; he is defeated. He speaks now for the first time without a salesman's affect)* Okay. I'm going...somewhere. *(He picks up his bag and broom)*

HELEN: *(Getting up)* Wait, don't forget your foot.

RALPH: Keep it. Souvenir of the end of a career.

HELEN: Oh, don't be so dramatic. *(Pushing foot at him)* Here. You may need it at the next apartment.

RALPH: There won't be any more. I've had it. They told me at the company if I came back today without a sale they'd have to let me go. *(Small beat)* Kind of ironic, too. I love this product. It works magic. Just not for me. *(He sadly turns to go)*

HELEN: *(To herself)* Oh, God, I am so weak. *(Calling to him)* Wait. *(He turns back)* You can come in and do whatever it is you have to do. *(He brightens up and walks in)* But in here, not in the bedroom.

RALPH: Great. You're not going to regret this, I promise you.

HELEN: Don't make promises about what I'm going to feel. You have no control over that.

RALPH: Oh no? Just wait and see. I'll take that. *(Takes back the foot. He begins to go through an on again off again activity of surveying the room, using various piece of equipment, checking the lie of the floor, the wind currents, the light, etc, preparing for his broom demonstration which activity continues under the dialogue)*

HELEN: I can't believe what a wussy you are. You wouldn't even stick your own foot in the door.

RALPH: Well, I used to. *(Pointing to foot)* Three operations and it still isn't right.

HELEN: Sorry. I didn't mean to be insensitive.

RALPH: *(He has taken out a level and is checking out the floor. He periodically makes entries into a notebook and does calculating on his calculator)* That's okay. There's no particular virtue to planned insensitivity.

HELEN: It never occurred to me that selling brooms door to door was such a hazardous occupation.

RALPH: *(Using binoculars and making notations in his book)* Oh, it's fraught with danger. Slamming doors is just the beginning. In fact, many times you wish they would have slammed the door. I've been converted to six different faiths; chomped on by some pseudo-lifeform passing as a pet; ambushed by an enclave of six year old Ninja Turtles; and been pointed out, on various occasions, as an example of, among other things: failure, enterprise, the definition of a putz, the road not taken, emasculation, and what happens when you don't eat your vegetables. But any of that is preferable to the real peril of my profession. You see, every once in a while I walk into a home.

HELEN: A home? What do you mean? Aren't they all homes?

RALPH: Hardly. Some of the places I go to — forget it. But you always know when you're in a home. There's a kid's drawing of God scotch taped to the refrigerator; a black and white movie with Katharine Hepburn on the TV that nobody is watching; something with cumin in it simmering on the stove; somebody is on the telephone, laughing; the cat briefly opens its eyes to look at you, and then goes back to sleep; Dickens is next to John Irving in the bookcase; and the rug is older than you are. And once inside — and this is the danger — you never want to leave. But worse, the last thing you want to be in a place like that is a salesman.

(Beat)

HELEN: Helen.

RALPH: Excuse me?

HELEN: My name is Helen.

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RALPH: Pleased to meet you. Willy, Willy Loman. (*She just stares at him*) Just a joke. Ralph. Ralph Sherman. Here's my card.

HELEN: Thanks.

RALPH: (*Takes out a microscope, licks a slide and rubs it against floor, inserts it in microscope and looks, making more notations*) So, what's the story with Rip Van Winkle?

HELEN: (*Annoyed*) You know, I can understand why you have so little success as a salesman. You make some rather presumptuous remarks.

RALPH: I'm sorry. You're right. Forgive me for being to forward. It's just that I've been there.

(*Beat; she looks at him*)

HELEN: You've been where?

RALPH: Asleep.

HELEN: Oh. Well, of course. Who hasn't?

RALPH: No, I mean asleep like your boyfriend. Hiding.

HELEN: He's not hiding. He's right in there.

RALPH: But he thinks he's hiding. Like when you're a kid and you put your hands in front of your face and you think nobody can see you. Hiding. (*She takes a long look at bedroom*) Well, if you don't want to talk about him, what about you? What do you do?

HELEN: (*Still looking at bedroom*) I'm a teacher.

RALPH: Really? That must be very rewarding work, and tough, I'll bet.

HELEN: It is. Both.

RALPH: Are you any good?

HELEN: (*Turning back to him*) I beg your pardon?

RALPH: Are you any good, as a teacher?

HELEN: Yeah. I think so.

RALPH: Yeah? (*Sitting on couch*) Teach me something.

HELEN: What?

RALPH: Teach me something. I always hated school, never learned anything. I should be a real challenge to you.

HELEN: This is how you sell brooms?

RALPH: Environmental Reorganizers, and I don't have a clue how to sell them, as you can probably tell. They gave a training course — but see, there's my problem. It was just like school so I tuned out. So I'm curious to see if I could learn from you. Teach me something.

HELEN: This is ridiculous. Could you please just do whatever it is you do and get out.

RALPH: (*Beat as he looks at her intently*) Nope. I don't think I learned anything from that.

HELEN: (*After a long beat and a deep sigh and with exaggerated patience*) Look, I don't set impossible goals for myself, just little simple ones. This afternoon my goal was to read this book, finish this glass of wine and have a much needed talk.

RALPH: With your boyfriend?

HELEN: (*Distracted*) Yes.

RALPH: About what?

HELEN: (*Momentarily exploding*) Never mind about what. That's none of your business —

RALPH: So much for the Socratic method.

HELEN: The point is — (*back to patience*) the point is that that was my choice for this afternoon. I had a difficult morning. I will have a difficult evening. This was to be my

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quiet time. And every moment that you spend not doing whatever it is you have to do that will get you finished and out of here is a moment of pleasure that is irrevocably lost to me.

RALPH: (*Beat*) Well, I certainly learned something from that. You're right. You are a good teacher. I can't remember my grade school teachers ever talking about their feelings, although Miss Ruditsky —

HELEN: All right, I've had it. (*Grabbing broom*) I'll try this thing out myself and get it over with.

RALPH: (*Jumping up to stop her and struggling with her for broom*) Wait, wait, you can't do that. You might hurt yourself.

HELEN: What do you mean hurt myself? What am I gonna do, get a splinter?

RALPH: You haven't read the directions yet.

HELEN: What directions? (*He pulls it away from her*) It's a fucking broom.

RALPH: (*Pointing to sofa, sudden intensity*) And that's just a fucking couch. But when they delivered it, did you just plop yourself down on it?

HELEN: Of course I did.

RALPH: (*Immediately backing down*) Really? You do have guts. Foolhardy, in my opinion, but —

HELEN: (*Really pleading*) Please finish your demonstration. Listen carefully to the pathetic tone of my voice. Please — are you listening?

RALPH: To every nuance.

HELEN: Good. Please do your demonstration and get out of here.

RALPH: Whew, lot of nuances there. Okay, let me get to work.

HELEN: Great.

(*He takes out weather vane or some other unlikely piece of equipment*)

HELEN: (*Long beat*) What did you learn?

RALPH: Huh?

HELEN: You said before, after I said what I said before, that you learned something. What did you learn?

RALPH: I learned why you seem so distracted when I talk with you.

HELEN: (*Distracted*) I'm not...

RALPH: Distracted.

HELEN: —distracted. I'm a bit unsettled. I like to be settled. I like to be set in my ways. Or set in ways, they're not always my ways, but they're ways. And they're set.

RALPH: Hmm. (*Handing her a tape measure and extending it*) Okay, if you wouldn't mind holding this. So, how long have you been seeing this guy?

HELEN: (*She lets go of tape which snaps back*) You ask the most forward, impertinent

—
RALPH: I don't understand you. Do you think I'm going to sell this information to Al Qaeda? (*Continues measuring by himself*) I'm just trying to make some conversation. Maybe living with a sleeper this long you forgot what a conversation is.

HELEN: (*Long beat*) Two years.

RALPH: Two years? Two years of just watching him sleep?

HELEN: I don't just watch. I talk to him. Tell him about my day, you know. And he sleeps right through it.

RALPH: Is he listening?

HELEN: Beats me.

RALPH: What's the point of talking to someone who isn't listening?

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HELEN: It's like Zen penance. My last life must have been a kharmic doozy.
(*Watching him calculating*) Let me ask you something. If, for some inexplicable reason, I actually buy one of your brooms, will I have to go through all of what you're going through just to use it?

RALPH: Of course not. We'll print out these dust relocation parameters for you. It's color coded and keyed to furniture pieces and real easy to follow.

HELEN: What do you mean "dust relocation?" I don't want my dust relocated, I want it gotten rid of.

RALPH: A common misconception. You should understand something. You never really get rid of the dirt when you clean your house. You just end up shifting it around. Most of it, I dare say, ends up under the rug.

HELEN: I don't have a rug.

RALPH: The beauty of the ER is that it gives you such finite control over whatever it is you're sweeping that you don't even need a dustpan.

HELEN: Maybe that's my problem, I should buy a rug.

RALPH: And now, I think we're ready to proceed. First, let us create a mess to clean up.

HELEN: A dust colored rug. Then, if I never cleaned, it would go with everything.

RALPH: (*He takes a small vial out of his pocket and with a tweezers removes something invisible from it, gets down on his knees and places it on the floor*) Voila, a mess.

HELEN: That's a mess? I don't see anything.

RALPH: One speck of dust. Look closely. (*He gives her a magnifying glass. She gets down on her knees next to him and bends her head down right next to floor*)

HELEN: Oh, yeah. One speck of dust. Kind of cute there by itself.

RALPH: Notice the articulation of the particle to the grain of the wood, the lattice-like interweaving of the fibers?

HELEN: Uh-huh.

RALPH: (*Getting up*) When we finally get to the point where you will have the instrument in your hand —

HELEN: The Environmental Reorganizer.

RALPH: Right. — you'll need to know the correct vectors in order to determine the flow of the stroke.

HELEN: Which way to sweep.

RALPH: Exactly. With the grain feels good, but against the grain gets the job done best.

HELEN: (*Getting up*) Okay. Let me see if I have this straight. If I buy — and even more stupidly decide to use — one of your ERs, these are my advantages: I have to consult a set of plans and directions; I have to bend down and familiarize myself with my floor's construction; I have to await favorable wind currents; I have to be satisfied with the notion that whatever it is I'm sweeping is more likely to be moved than removed; I have to go through some internal philosophical debate about form over substance — should I be consulting the I Ching for the auspicious hour?

RALPH: That sounds suspiciously like scoffing.

HELEN: Why would anybody want to go through all that when they could just whip out a vacuum cleaner?

RALPH: Good question. (*A smile*) Which I can best answer not with words, but with deeds. A few more calculations and we're ready to start. (*Fiddles with his calculator*)

HELEN: (*Looking at bedroom; long beat*) Hiding from what?

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RALPH: Excuse me.

HELEN: You said before that my boyfriend slept all the time because he was hiding. Hiding from what?

RALPH: I couldn't tell you. For that matter, he probably couldn't either. When you get so good at hiding that what you're hiding from can't find you, you never get to see what it is.

HELEN: (*Looking towards bedroom*) So how am I supposed to know if he's waiting for me to find him, or hoping I never will?

RALPH: He probably asks himself that same question.

HELEN: I don't think so. For someone with all the answers, he asks very few questions. (*Long beat. Looks at bedroom and back at RALPH. HELEN picks up broom, looks at it and hands it to him*) Do it, Ralph. It's cleaning day.

RALPH: Okay. My survey reveals that the dust accumulation in this room, while not extensive, still exhibits a multi-layered and strongly cohered substrata —

HELEN: Is that a high-tech way of telling me I'm a lousy housekeeper?

RALPH: Oh, no. I think you're a wonderful housekeeper. I mean this house is wonderfully kept. I'm just noting the fact that things seem to cling here. All that means is that you need to use a little more elbow grease. Which is why I am recommending using Ungleson's backhand cross-stroke for this floor area. Allow me to demonstrate. (*He does so as he speaks*) Elbows down will maximize surface contact, start your stroke with the ER perfectly perpendicular to the floor, a slight bend of the knee will prevent the bristles from disengaging too early and *voila*. (*RALPH sweeps once with a flourish; as he does so HELEN jumps inadvertently up and slightly backwards. He doesn't see this*)

HELEN: Whoa! What happened?

RALPH: (*Bending down and examining where he just swept*) I don't know. Somehow I completely missed the speck.

HELEN: No, not that. I just — I mean when you did that, I kind of — I'm not sure what happened.

RALPH: (*Still concerned about missing his demonstration particle*) Well, anyway, let me give it a second shot. (*More to himself*) Elbows down, broom straight, bend the knee. (*RALPH sweeps again; HELEN jumps again*)

HELEN: (*Slightly exhilarated*) Whoa, this is incredible.

RALPH: (*Examining spot*) This is embarrassing. I finally get a chance to —

HELEN: Look, each time you swept I think I kind of hopped in the air.

RALPH: Really?

HELEN: Has that ever happened before?

RALPH: Not that I'm aware of. Of course, you are the first person who has actually let me get this far.

HELEN: Try it again, but this time watch me.

RALPH: Okay. Elbows down, broom straight, knee bent and — (*RALPH sweeps; HELEN jumps*) Hey, you did pop in the air. That's pretty interesting. Let me try it again. (*Another sweep, another jump, another sweep, another jump, a final large sweep, a correspondingly large jump back which lands her sitting on the couch. With each jump she makes a noise of surprise*)

HELEN: (*She is out of breath*) Whew, that's a hell of a broom, I'll give you that.

RALPH: (*Examining it*) I'll say. (*Looking down*) Although it never did remove that speck of dust.

HELEN: (*Getting up*) Who cares. Let me try it.

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RALPH: All right. (*Helping her grip and stance*) Now, remember, elbows down, broom straight, bend your knee and watch your follow through.

HELEN: Step back, I want to watch you jump. (*HELEN sweeps, nothing happens. She tries again, still nothing. Looking at broom*) What am I doing wrong?

RALPH: (*Examining ground*) Nothing, really. You have excellent form, and look, you got rid of the speck.

HELEN: But you didn't pop up. You didn't move at all.

RALPH: (*Taking out notebook*) I'll have to make a note to tell Joe at the plant to get me a replacement speck.

HELEN: (*A few more sweeps*) Rats. It didn't do anything. (*Looking at bedroom*) Maybe it will work on him. (*Goes to bedroom; from offstage*) Elbows down, broom straight —

RALPH: (*Realizing what she's doing a little too late*) Wait, don't use it in there — (*He rushes towards door*)

HELEN: (*From in bedroom*) — knee bent and *voila*. (*HELEN utters a loud cry of surprise*)

RALPH: (*Stopping at door to bedroom*) Uh-oh. I hope our premiums are paid.

HELEN: (*Reappearing*) He...I mean he just...he —

RALPH: Disappeared?

HELEN: Disappeared. I swept one time and he was gone.

RALPH: Relocated actually.

HELEN: (*Walking back to look in bedroom*) I can't believe it. One sweep and poof! He's gone. And I never got a chance to talk to him.

RALPH: What did you want to tell him?

(*Long beat as she looks towards bedroom*)

HELEN: (*Caringly*) Goodbye and sweet dreams. (*Beat*) I hope he's all right.

RALPH: I don't know if he's all right, but I'll bet the farm he's wide awake. (*Beat*) Look, I'm sorry that —

HELEN: It's not your fault. I did the sweeping.

RALPH: Still, I should never have let you —

HELEN: It's better this way. Better for me, and definitely better for him. But you see, every time I tried to explain that to him, he talked me out of it. (*Looking at broom*) No arguing with this, is there?

RALPH: I guess not. It has a kind of irrefutable logic.

HELEN: I'll say, (*Looking in the direction of Tomashevsky's apartment*) which should come in very handy the next time he cranks up Metallica. (*Looking at RALPH*) I'll take it.

RALPH: Really? I actually sold one? I can't believe it.

HELEN: Believe it. You're a first rate salesman. (*Looking at his bag*) What else are you selling?

RALPH: I'm glad you asked. (*Back to salesman's spiel*) Have you finally had it with overcrowded closets? Well, we at CSI have the perfect solution: (*Pulling out ordinary wire coat hanger*) The Doppleshanger, the contemporary approach to intrapartmental storage. Don't get hung up. Double your space and come out of the closet at last. (*Lights begin to fade*) Madame, if I could have just a few minutes of your what I know is valuable time, I believe I could show you a household management modality that will change your life...

Death of a Salesman

— end of play —