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opening extract from

A View from the Bridge

written by

Arthur Miller

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ACT ONE

The street and house-front of a tenement building. The front is skeletal entirely. The main acting area is the living-room-dining-room of Eddie's apartment. It is a worker's flat, clean, sparse, homely. There is a rocker down front; a round dining-table at centre, with chairs; and a portable phonograph.

At back are a bedroom door and an opening to the kitchen; none of these interiors is seen.

At the right, forestage, a desk. This is Mr Alfieri's law office.

There is also a telephone booth. This is not used until the last scenes, so it may be covered or left in view.

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Ramps, representing the street, run upstage and off to right and left.

As the curtain rises, LOUIS and MIKE, longshoremen, are pitching coins against the building at left.

A distant foghorn blows.

[Enter ALFIERI, a lawyer in his fifties turning grey; he is portly, good-humoured, and thoughtful. The two pitchers nod to him as he passes. He crosses the stage to his desk, removes his hat, runs his fingers through his hair, and grinning, speaks to the audience.]

ALFIERI: You wouldn't have known it, but something amusing has just happened. You see how uneasily they nod to me? That's because I am a lawyer. In this neighbourhood to meet a lawyer or a priest on the street is unlucky. We're only thought of in connexion with disasters, and they'd rather not get too close.

I often think that behind that suspicious little nod of theirs

crazy to start work. It's not a little shop, it's a big company. Some day she could be a secretary. They picked her out of the whole class. [*He is silent, staring down at the tablecloth fingering the pattern.*] What are you worried about? She could take care of herself. She'll get out of the subway and be in the office in two minutes.

EDDIE [*somehow sickened*]: I know that neighbourhood, B., I don't like it.

BEATRICE: Listen, if nothin' happened to her in this neighbourhood it ain't gonna happen noplacelse. [*She turns his face to her.*] Look, you gotta get used to it, she's no baby no more. Tell her to take it. [*He turns his head away.*] You hear me? [*She is angering.*] I don't understand you; she's seventeen years old, you gonna keep her in the house all her life?

EDDIE [*insulted*]: What kinda remark is that?

BEATRICE [*with sympathy but insistent force*]: Well, I don't understand when it ends. First it was gonna be when she graduated high-school, so she graduated high-school. Then it was gonna be when she learned stenographer, so she learned stenographer. So what're we gonna wait for now? I mean it, Eddie, sometimes I don't understand you; they picked her out of the whole class, it's an honour for her.

[*CATHERINE enters with food, which she silently sets on the table. After a moment of watching her face, EDDIE breaks into a smile, but it almost seems that tears will form in his eyes.*]

EDDIE: With your hair that way you look like a madonna, you know that? You're the madonna type. [*She doesn't look at him, but continues ladling out food on to the plates.*] You wanna go to work, heh, Madonna?

CATHERINE [*softly*]: Yeah.

EDDIE [*with a sense of her childhood, her babyhood, and the years*]: All right, go to work. [*She looks at him, then rushes and hugs him.*] Hey, hey! Take it easy! [*He holds her face away from*

him to look at her.] What're you cryin' about? [*He is affected by her, but smiles his emotion away.*]

CATHERINE [*sitting at her place*]: I just - [*Bursting out*] I'm gonna buy all new dishes with my first pay! [*They laugh warmly.*] I mean it. I'll fix up the whole house! I'll buy a rug!

EDDIE: And then you'll move away.

CATHERINE: No, Eddie!

EDDIE [*grinning*]: Why not? That's life. And you'll come visit on Sundays, then once a month, then Christmas and New Years, finally.

CATHERINE [*grasping his arm to reassure him and to erase the accusation*]: No, please!

EDDIE [*smiling but hurt*]: I only ask you one thing - don't trust nobody. You got a good aunt but she's got too big a heart, you learned bad from her. Believe me.

BEATRICE: Be the way you are, Katie, don't listen to him.

EDDIE [*to BEATRICE - strangely and quickly resentful*]: You lived in a house all your life, what do you know about it? You never worked in your life.

BEATRICE: She likes people. What's wrong with that?

EDDIE: Because most people ain't people. She's goin' to work; plumbers; they'll chew her to pieces if she don't watch out. [*To CATHERINE*] Believe me, Katie, the less you trust, the less you be sorry.

[*EDDIE crosses himself and the women do the same, and they eat.*]

CATHERINE: First thing I'll buy is a rug, heh, B.?

BEATRICE: I don't mind. [*To EDDIE*] I smelled coffee all day today. You unloadin' coffee today?

EDDIE: Yeah, a Brazil ship.

CATHERINE: I smelled it too. It smelled all over the neighbourhood.

EDDIE: That's one time, boy, to be a longshoreman is a pleasure. I could work coffee ships twenty hours a day. You

go down in the hold, y'know? It's like flowers, that smell.
We'll bust a bag tomorrow, I'll bring you some.

BEATRICE: Just be sure there's no spiders in it, will ya? I mean it. [*She directs this to CATHERINE, rolling her eyes upward.*]
I still remember that spider coming out of that bag he brung home. I nearly died.

EDDIE: You call that a spider? You oughta see what comes outa the bananas sometimes.

BEATRICE: Don't talk about it!

EDDIE: I seen spiders could stop a Buick.

BEATRICE [*clapping her hands over her ears*]: All right, shut up!

EDDIE [*laughing and taking a watch out of his pocket*]: Well, who started with spiders?

BEATRICE: All right, I'm sorry, I didn't mean it. Just don't bring none home again. What time is it?

EDDIE: Quarter nine. [*Puts watch back in his pocket.*]

[*They continue eating in silence.*]

CATHERINE: He's bringin' them ten o'clock, Tony?

EDDIE: Around, yeah. [*He eats.*]

CATHERINE: Eddie, suppose somebody asks if they're livin' here. [*He looks at her as though already she had divulged something publicly. Defensively*] I mean if they ask.

EDDIE: Now look, Baby, I can see we're gettin' mixed up again here.

CATHERINE: No, I just mean . . . people'll see them goin' in and out.

EDDIE: I don't care who sees them goin' in and out as long as you don't see them goin' in and out. And this goes for you too, B. You don't see nothin' and you don't know nothin'.

BEATRICE: What do you mean? I understand.

EDDIE: You don't understand; you still think you can talk about this to somebody just a little bit. Now lemme say it once and for all, because you're makin' me nervous again, both of you. I don't care if somebody comes in the house

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I often think that behind that suspicious little nod of theirs

lie three thousand years of distrust. A lawyer means the law, and in Sicily, from where their fathers came, the law has not been a friendly idea since the Greeks were beaten.

I am inclined to notice the ruins in things, perhaps because I was born in Italy. ... I only came here when I was twenty-five. In those days, Al Capone, the greatest Carthaginian of all, was learning his trade on these pavements, and Frankie Yale himself was cut precisely in half by a machine-gun on the corner of Union Street, two blocks away. Oh, there were many here who were justly shot by unjust men. Justice is very important here.

But this is Red Hook, not Sicily. This is the slum that faces the bay on the seaward side of Brooklyn Bridge. This is the gullet of New York swallowing the tonnage of the world. And now we are quite civilized, quite American. Now we settle for half, and I like it better. I no longer keep a pistol in my filing cabinet.

And my practice is entirely unromantic.

My wife has warned me, so have my friends; they tell me the people in this neighbourhood lack elegance, glamour. After all, who have I dealt with in my life? Longshoremen and their wives, and fathers, and grandfathers, compensation cases, evictions, family squabbles – the petty troubles of the poor – and yet . . . every few years there is still a case, and as the parties tell me what the trouble is, the flat air in my office suddenly washes in with the green scent of the sea, the dust in this air is blown away and the thought comes that in some Caesar's year, in Calabria perhaps or on the cliff at Syracuse, another lawyer, quite differently dressed, heard the same complaint and sat there as powerless as I, and watched it run its bloody course.

[EDDIE has appeared and has been pitching coins with the men and is highlighted among them. He is forty – a husky, slightly overweight longshoreman.]

This one's name was Eddie Carbone, a longshoreman working the docks from Brooklyn Bridge to the breakwater where the open sea begins.

[ALFIERI walks into darkness.]

EDDIE [*moving up steps into doorway*]: Well, I'll see ya, fellas.

[CATHERINE enters from kitchen, crosses down to window, looks out.]

LOUIS: You workin' tomorrow?

EDDIE: Yeah, there's another day yet on that ship. See ya, Louis.

[EDDIE goes into the house, as light rises in the apartment.

CATHERINE is waving to LOUIS from the window and turns to him.]

CATHERINE: Hi, Eddie!

[EDDIE is pleased and therefore shy about it; he hangs up his cap and jacket.]

EDDIE: Where you goin' all dressed up?

CATHERINE [*running her hands over her skirt*]: I just got it. You like it?

EDDIE: Yeah, it's nice. And what happened to your hair?

CATHERINE: You like it? I fixed it different. [*Calling to kitchen*] He's here, B.!

EDDIE: Beautiful. Turn around, lemme see in the back. [*She turns for him.*] Oh, if your mother was alive to see you now! She wouldn't believe it.

CATHERINE: You like it, huh?

EDDIE: You look like one of them girls that went to college. Where you goin'?

CATHERINE [*taking his arm*]: Wait'll B. comes in, I'll tell you something. Here, sit down. [*She is walking him to the arm-chair. Calling offstage*] Hurry up, will you, B.?

EDDIE [*sitting*]: What's goin' on?

CATHERINE: I'll get you a beer, all right?

EDDIE: Well, tell me what happened. Come over here, talk to me.

CATHERINE: I want to wait till B. comes in. [*She sits on her heels beside him.*] Guess how much we paid for the skirt.

EDDIE: I think it's too short, ain't it?

CATHERINE [*standing*]: No! not when I stand up.

EDDIE: Yeah, but you gotta sit down sometimes.

CATHERINE: Eddie, it's the style now. [*She walks to show him.*]

I mean, if you see me walkin' down the street -

EDDIE: Listen, you been givin' me the willies the way you walk down the street, I mean it.

CATHERINE: Why?

EDDIE: Catherine, I don't want to be a pest, but I'm tellin' you you're walkin' wavy.

CATHERINE: I'm walkin' wavy?

EDDIE: Now don't aggravate me, Katie, you are walkin' wavy! I don't like the looks they're givin' you in the candy store. And with them new high heels on the sidewalk - clack, clack, clack. The heads are turnin' like windmills.

CATHERINE: But those guys look at all the girls, you know that.

EDDIE: You ain't 'all the girls'.

CATHERINE [*almost in tears because he disapproves*]: What do you want me to do? You want me to -

EDDIE: Now don't get mad, kid.

CATHERINE: Well, I don't know what you want from me.

EDDIE: Katie, I promised your mother on her deathbed. I'm responsible for you. You're a baby, you don't understand these things. I mean like when you stand here by the window, wavin' outside.

CATHERINE: I was wavin' to Louis!

EDDIE: Listen, I could tell you things about Louis which you wouldn't wave to him no more.

CATHERINE [*trying to joke him out of his warning*]: Eddie, I wish there was one guy you couldn't tell me things about!

EDDIE: Catherine, do me a favour, will you? You're getting

to be a big girl now, you gotta keep yourself more, you can't be so friendly, kid. [Calls] Hey, B., what're you doin' in there? [To CATHERINE] Get her in here, will you? I got news for her.

CATHERINE [*starting out*]: What?

EDDIE: Her cousins landed.

CATHERINE [*clapping her hands together*]: No! [*She turns instantly and starts for the kitchen.*] B.! Your cousins!

[BEATRICE enters, wiping her hands with a towel.]

BEATRICE [*in the face of CATHERINE's shout*]: What?

CATHERINE: Your cousins got in!

BEATRICE [*astounded, turns to EDDIE*]: What are you talkin' about? Where?

EDDIE: I was just knockin' off work before and Tony Bereli come over to me; he says the ship is in the North River.

BEATRICE [*- her hands are clasped at her breast; she seems half in fear, half in unutterable joy*]: They're all right?

EDDIE: He didn't see them yet, they're still on board. But as soon as they get off he'll meet them. He figures about ten o'clock they'll be here.

BEATRICE [*sits, almost weak from tension*]: And they'll let them off the ship all right? That's fixed, heh?

EDDIE: Sure, they give them regular seamen papers and they walk off with the crew. Don't worry about it, B., there's nothin' to it. Couple of hours they'll be here.

BEATRICE: What happened? They wasn't supposed to be till next Thursday.

EDDIE: I don't know; they put them on any ship they can get them on. Maybe the other ship they was supposed to take there was some danger - What you cryin' about?

BEATRICE [*astounded and afraid*]: I'm - I just - I can't believe it! I didn't even buy a new tablecloth; I was gonna wash the walls -

EDDIE: Listen, they'll think it's a millionaire's house compared

to the way they live. Don't worry about the walls. They'll be thankful. [*To CATHERINE*] Whyn't you run down buy a tablecloth. Go ahead, here. [*He is reaching into his pocket.*]

CATHERINE: There's no stores open now.

EDDIE [*to BEATRICE*]: You was gonna put a new cover on the chair.

BEATRICE: I know - well, I thought it was gonna be next week! I was gonna clean the walls, I was gonna wax the floors. [*She stands disturbed.*]

CATHERINE [*pointing upward*]: Maybe Mrs Dondero upstairs -

BEATRICE [*of the tablecloth*]: No, hers is worse than this one.

[*Suddenly*] My God, I don't even have nothin' to eat for them! [*She starts for the kitchen.*]

EDDIE [*reaching out and grabbing her arm*]: Hey, hey! Take it easy.

BEATRICE: No, I'm just nervous, that's all. [*To CATHERINE*] I'll make the fish.

EDDIE: You're savin' their lives, what're you worryin' about the tablecloth? They probably didn't see a tablecloth in their whole life where they come from.

BEATRICE [*looking into his eyes*]: I'm just worried about you, that's all I'm worried.

EDDIE: Listen, as long as they know where they're gonna sleep.

BEATRICE: I told them in the letters. They're sleepin' on the floor.

EDDIE: Beatrice, all I'm worried about is you got such a heart that I'll end up on the floor with you, and they'll be in our bed.

BEATRICE: All right, stop it.

EDDIE: Because as soon as you see a tired relative, I end up on the floor.

BEATRICE: When did you end up on the floor?

EDDIE: When your father's house burned down I didn't end up on the floor?

BEATRICE: Well, their house burned down!

EDDIE: Yeah, but it didn't keep burnin' for two weeks!

BEATRICE: All right, look, I'll tell them to go someplace else.

[*She starts into the kitchen.*]

EDDIE: Now wait a minute. Beatrice! [*She halts. He goes to her.*] I just don't want you bein' pushed around, that's all.

You got too big a heart. [*He touches her hand.*] What're you so touchy?

BEATRICE: I'm just afraid if it don't turn out good you'll be mad at me.

EDDIE: Listen, if everybody keeps his mouth shut, nothin' can happen. They'll pay for their board.

BEATRICE: Oh, I told them.

EDDIE: Then what the hell. [*Pause. He moves.*] It's an honour, B. I mean it. I was just thinkin' before, comin' home, suppose my father didn't come to this country, and I was starvin' like them over there . . . and I had people in America could keep me a couple of months? The man would be honoured to lend me a place to sleep.

BEATRICE [- *there are tears in her eyes. She turns to CATHERINE*]: You see what he is? [*She turns and grabs EDDIE'S face in her hands.*] Mmm! You're an angel! God'll bless you. [*He is gratefully smiling.*] You'll see, you'll get a blessing for this!

EDDIE [*laughing*]: I'll settle for my own bed.

BEATRICE: Go, Baby, set the table.

CATHERINE: We didn't tell him about me yet.

BEATRICE: Let him eat first, then we'll tell him. Bring everything in. [*She hurries CATHERINE out.*]

EDDIE [*sitting at the table*]: What's all that about? Where's she goin'?

BEATRICE: Noplace. It's very good news, Eddie. I want you to be happy.

EDDIE: What's goin' on?

[CATHERINE enters with plates, forks.]

BEATRICE: She's got a job.

[Pause. EDDIE looks at CATHERINE, then back to BEATRICE.]

EDDIE: What job? She's gonna finish school.

CATHERINE: Eddie, you won't believe it -

EDDIE: No - no, you gonna finish school. What kinda job, what do you mean? All of a sudden you -

CATHERINE: Listen a minute, it's wonderful.

EDDIE: It's not wonderful. You'll never get nowheres unless you finish school. You can't take no job. Why didn't you ask me before you take a job?

BEATRICE: She's askin' you now, she didn't take nothin' yet.

CATHERINE: Listen a minute! I came to school this morning and the principal called me out of the class, see? To go to his office.

EDDIE: Yeah?

CATHERINE: So I went in and he says to me he's got my records, y'know? And there's a company wants a girl right away. It ain't exactly a secretary, it's a stenographer first, but pretty soon you get to be secretary. And he says to me that I'm the best student in the whole class -

BEATRICE: You hear that?

EDDIE: Well, why not? Sure she's the best.

CATHERINE: I'm the best student, he says, and if I want, I should take the job and the end of the year he'll let me take the examination and he'll give me the certificate. So I'll save practically a year!

EDDIE [*strangely nervous*]: Where's the job? What company?

CATHERINE: It's a big plumbing company over Nostrand Avenue.

EDDIE: Nostrand Avenue and where?

CATHERINE: It's someplace by the Navy Yard.

BEATRICE: Fifty dollars a week, Eddie.

EDDIE [*to CATHERINE, surprised*]: Fifty?

CATHERINE: I swear.

[*Pause.*]

EDDIE: What about all the stuff you wouldn't learn this year, though?

CATHERINE: There's nothin' more to learn, Eddie, I just gotta practise from now on. I know all the symbols and I know the keyboard. I'll just get faster, that's all. And when I'm workin' I'll keep gettin' better and better, you see?

BEATRICE: Work is the best practice anyway.

EDDIE: That ain't what I wanted, though.

CATHERINE: Why! It's a great big company -

EDDIE: I don't like that neighbourhood over there.

CATHERINE: It's a block and half from the subway, he says.

EDDIE: Near the Navy Yard plenty can happen in a block and a half. And a plumbin' company! That's one step over the waterfront. They're practically longshoremen.

BEATRICE: Yeah, but she'll be in the office, Eddie.

EDDIE: I know she'll be in the office, but that ain't what I had in mind.

BEATRICE: Listen, she's gotta go to work sometime.

EDDIE: Listen, B., she'll be with a lotta plumbers? And sailors up and down the street? So what did she go to school for?

CATHERINE: But it's fifty a week, Eddie.

EDDIE: Look, did I ask you for money? I supported you this long, I support you a little more. Please, do me a favour, will ya? I want you to be with different kind of people. I want you to be in a nice office. Maybe a lawyer's office someplace in New York in one of them nice buildings. I mean if you're gonna get outa here then get out; don't go practically in the same kind of neighbourhood.

[*Pause. CATHERINE lowers her eyes.*]

BEATRICE: Go, Baby, bring in the supper. [CATHERINE goes out.] Think about it a little bit, Eddie. Please. She's

crazy to start work. It's not a little shop, it's a big company. Some day she could be a secretary. They picked her out of the whole class. [*He is silent, staring down at the tablecloth fingering the pattern.*] What are you worried about? She could take care of herself. She'll get out of the subway and be in the office in two minutes.

EDDIE [*somehow sickened*]: I know that neighbourhood, B., I don't like it.

BEATRICE: Listen, if nothin' happened to her in this neighbourhood it ain't gonna happen noplacē else. [*She turns his face to her.*] Look, you gotta get used to it, she's no baby no more. Tell her to take it. [*He turns his head away.*] You hear me? [*She is angering.*] I don't understand you; she's seventeen years old, you gonna keep her in the house all her life?

EDDIE [*insulted*]: What kinda remark is that?

BEATRICE [*with sympathy but insistent force*]: Well, I don't understand when it ends. First it was gonna be when she graduated high-school, so she graduated high-school. Then it was gonna be when she learned stenographer, so she learned stenographer. So what're we gonna wait for now? I mean it, Eddie, sometimes I don't understand you; they picked her out of the whole class, it's an honour for her.

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EDDIE: With your hair that way you look like a madonna, you know that? You're the madonna type. [*She doesn't look at him, but continues ladling out food on to the plates.*] You wanna go to work, heh, Madonna?

CATHERINE [*softly*]: Yeah.

EDDIE [*with a sense of her childhood, her babyhood, and the years*]: All right, go to work. [*She looks at him, then rushes and hugs him.*] Hey, hey! Take it easy! [*He holds her face away from*

him to look at her.] What're you cryin' about? [*He is affected by her, but smiles his emotion away.*]

CATHERINE [*sitting at her place*]: I just - [*Bursting out*] I'm gonna buy all new dishes with my first pay! [*They laugh warmly.*] I mean it. I'll fix up the whole house! I'll buy a rug!

EDDIE: And then you'll move away.

CATHERINE: No, Eddie!

EDDIE [*grinning*]: Why not? That's life. And you'll come visit on Sundays, then once a month, then Christmas and New Years, finally.

CATHERINE [*grasping his arm to reassure him and to erase the accusation*]: No, please!

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EDDIE [*to BEATRICE - strangely and quickly resentful*]: You lived in a house all your life, what do you know about it? You never worked in your life.

BEATRICE: She likes people. What's wrong with that?

EDDIE: Because most people ain't people. She's goin' to work; plumbers; they'll chew her to pieces if she don't watch out. [*To CATHERINE*] Believe me, Katie, the less you trust, the less you be sorry.

[*EDDIE crosses himself and the women do the same, and they eat.*]

CATHERINE: First thing I'll buy is a rug, heh, B.?

BEATRICE: I don't mind. [*To EDDIE*] I smelled coffee all day today. You unloadin' coffee today?

EDDIE: Yeah, a Brazil ship.

CATHERINE: I smelled it too. It smelled all over the neighbourhood.

EDDIE: That's one time, boy, to be a longshoreman is a pleasure. I could work coffee ships twenty hours a day. You

go down in the hold, y'know? It's like flowers, that smell. We'll bust a bag tomorrow, I'll bring you some.

BEATRICE: Just be sure there's no spiders in it, will ya? I mean it. [*She directs this to CATHERINE, rolling her eyes upward.*] I still remember that spider coming out of that bag he brung home. I nearly died.

EDDIE: You call that a spider? You oughta see what comes outa the bananas sometimes.

BEATRICE: Don't talk about it!

EDDIE: I seen spiders could stop a Buick.

BEATRICE [*clapping her hands over her ears*]: All right, shut up!

EDDIE [*laughing and taking a watch out of his pocket*]: Well, who started with spiders?

BEATRICE: All right, I'm sorry, I didn't mean it. Just don't bring none home again. What time is it?

EDDIE: Quarter nine. [*Puts watch back in his pocket.*]

[*They continue eating in silence.*]

CATHERINE: He's bringin' them ten o'clock, Tony?

EDDIE: Around, yeah. [*He eats.*]

CATHERINE: Eddie, suppose somebody asks if they're livin' here. [*He looks at her as though already she had divulged something publicly. Defensively*] I mean if they ask.

EDDIE: Now look, Baby, I can see we're gettin' mixed up again here.

CATHERINE: No, I just mean . . . people'll see them goin' in and out.

EDDIE: I don't care who sees them goin' in and out as long as you don't see them goin' in and out. And this goes for you too, B. You don't see nothin' and you don't know nothin'.

BEATRICE: What do you mean? I understand.

EDDIE: You don't understand; you still think you can talk about this to somebody just a little bit. Now lemme say it once and for all, because you're makin' me nervous again, both of you. I don't care if somebody comes in the house

and sees them sleepin' on the floor, it never comes out of your mouth who they are or what they're doin' here.

BEATRICE: Yeah, but my mother'll know -

EDDIE: Sure she'll know, but just don't you be the one who told her, that's all. This is the United States government you're playin' with now, this is the Immigration Bureau. If you said it you knew it, if you didn't say it you didn't know it.

CATHERINE: Yeah, but Eddie, suppose somebody -

EDDIE: I don't care what question it is. You - don't - know - nothin'. They got stool pigeons all over this neighbourhood, they're payin' them every week for information, and you don't know who they are. It could be your best friend. You hear? [To BEATRICE] Like Vinny Bolzano, remember Vinny?

BEATRICE: Oh, yeah. God forbid.

EDDIE: Tell her about Vinny. [To CATHERINE] You think I'm blowin' steam here? [To BEATRICE] Go ahead, tell her. [To CATHERINE] You was a baby then. There was a family lived next door to her mother, he was about sixteen -

BEATRICE: No, he was no more than fourteen, 'cause I was to his confirmation in Saint Agnes. But the family had an uncle that they were hidin' in the house, and he snitched to the Immigration.

CATHERINE: The kid snitched?

EDDIE: On his own uncle!

CATHERINE: What, was he crazy?

EDDIE: He was crazy after, I tell you that, boy.

BEATRICE: Oh, it was terrible. He had five brothers and the old father. And they grabbed him in the kitchen and pulled him down the stairs - three flights his head was bouncin' like a coconut. And they spit on him in the street, his own father and his brothers. The whole neighbourhood was cryin'.

CATHERINE: Ts! So what happened to him?

BEATRICE: I think he went away. [To EDDIE] I never seen him again, did you?

EDDIE [*rises during this, taking out his watch*]: Him? You'll never see him no more, a guy do a thing like that? How's he gonna show his face? [To CATHERINE, *as he gets up uneasily*] Just remember, kid, you can quicker get back a million dollars that was stole than a word that you gave away. [*He is standing now, stretching his back.*]

CATHERINE: Okay, I won't say a word to nobody, I swear.

EDDIE: Gonna rain tomorrow. We'll be slidin' all over the decks. Maybe you oughta put something on for them, they be here soon.

BEATRICE: I only got fish, I hate to spoil it if they ate already. I'll wait, it only takes a few minutes; I could broil it.

CATHERINE: What happens, Eddie, when that ship pulls out and they ain't on it, though? Don't the captain say nothin'?

EDDIE [*slicing an apple with his pocket-knife*]: Captain's pieced off, what do you mean?

CATHERINE: Even the captain?

EDDIE: What's the matter, the captain don't have to live? Captain gets a piece, maybe one of the mates, piece for the guy in Italy who fixed the papers for them, Tony here'll get a little bite. ...

BEATRICE: I just hope they get work here, that's all I hope.

EDDIE: Oh, the syndicate'll fix jobs for them; till they pay 'em off they'll get them work every day. It's after the pay-off, then they'll have to scramble like the rest of us.

BEATRICE: Well, it be better than they got there.

EDDIE: Oh sure, well, listen. So you gonna start Monday, heh, Madonna?

CATHERINE [*embarrassed*]: I'm supposed to, yeah.

[EDDIE is standing facing the two seated women. First BEATRICE smiles, then CATHERINE, for a powerful emotion]

is on him, a childish one and a knowing fear, and the tears show in his eyes – and they are shy before the avowal.]

EDDIE [*sadly smiling, yet somehow proud of her*]: Well ... I hope you have good luck. I wish you the best. You know that, kid.

CATHERINE [*rising, trying to laugh*]: You sound like I'm goin' a million miles!

EDDIE: I know. I guess I just never figured on one thing.

CATHERINE [*smiling*]: What?

EDDIE: That you would ever grow up. [*He utters a soundless laugh at himself, feeling the breast pocket of his shirt.*] I left a cigar in my other coat, I think. [*He starts for the bedroom.*]

CATHERINE: Stay there! I'll get it for you.

[She hurries out. There is a slight pause, and EDDIE turns to BEATRICE, who has been avoiding his gaze.]

EDDIE: What are you mad at me lately?

BEATRICE: Who's mad? [*She gets up, clearing the dishes.*] I'm not mad. [*She picks up the dishes and turns to him.*] You're the one is mad. [*She turns and goes into the kitchen as CATHERINE enters from the bedroom with a cigar and a pack of matches.*]

CATHERINE: Here! I'll light it for you! [*She strikes a match and holds it to his cigar. He puffs. Quietly*] Don't worry about me, Eddie, heh?

EDDIE: Don't burn yourself. [*Just in time she blows out the match.*] You better go in help her with the dishes.

CATHERINE [*turns quickly to the table, and, seeing the table cleared, she says, almost guiltily*]: Oh! [*She hurries into the kitchen, and as she exits there*] I'll do the dishes, B.!

[Alone, EDDIE stands looking towards the kitchen for a moment. Then he takes out his watch, glances at it, replaces it in his pocket, sits in the armchair, and stares at the smoke flowing out of his mouth.]

The lights go down, then come up on ALFIERI, who has moved on to the forestage.]