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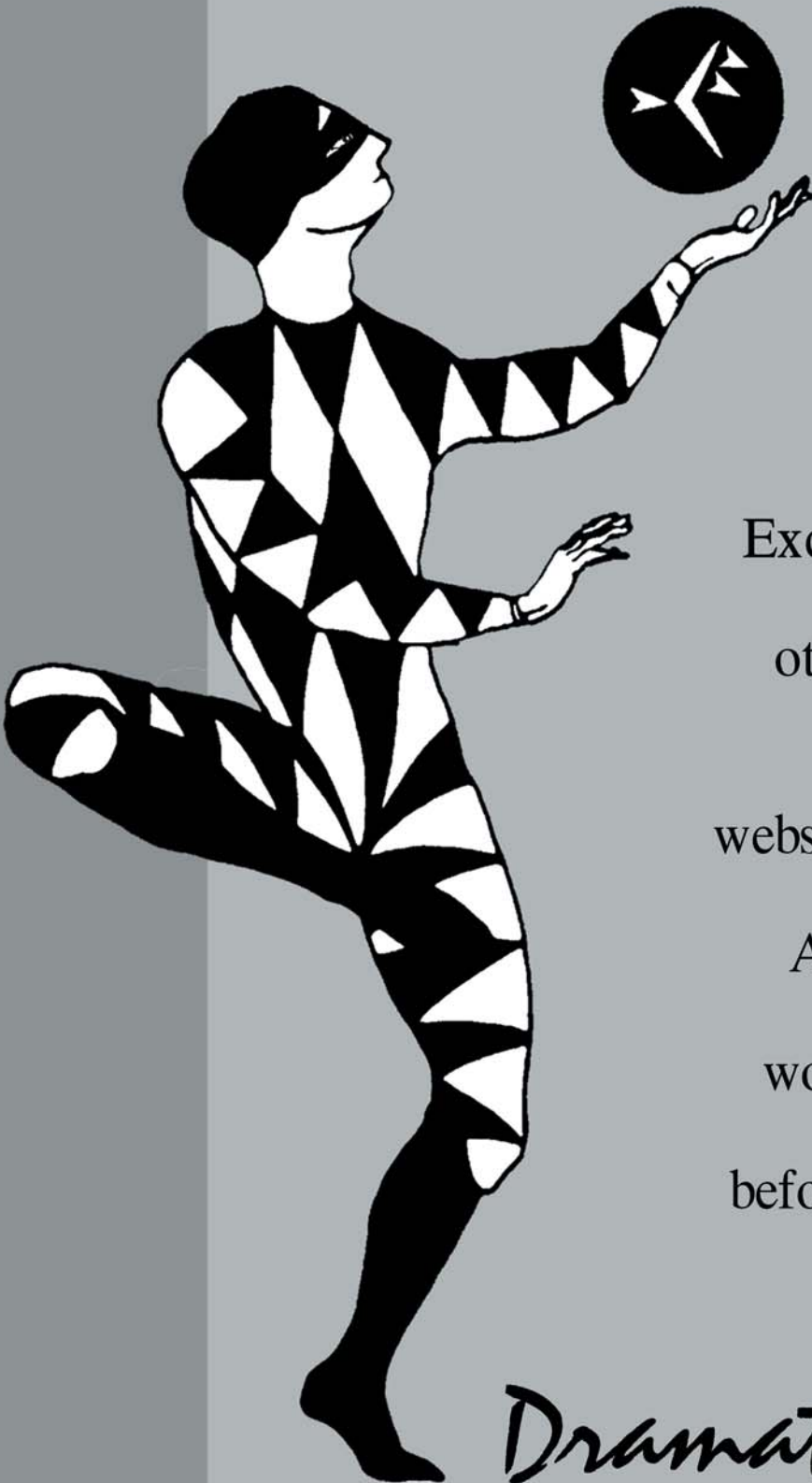
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Dramatic Publishing



A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

The Courtship of Eddie's Father

by

ANNE COULTER MARTENS

from the book by

MARK TOBY



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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Based on the book by MARK TOBY,
THE COURTSHIP OF EDDIE'S FATHER
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(THE COURTSHIP OF EDDIE'S FATHER)

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The Courtship of Eddie's Father

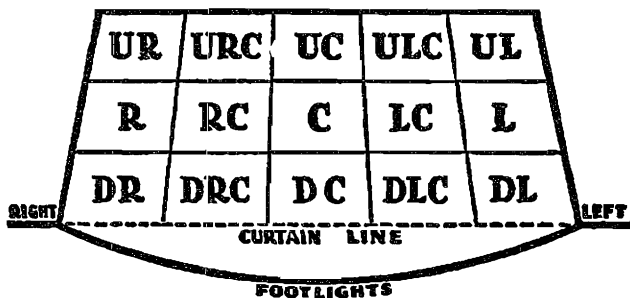
A Play in Two Acts
FOR EIGHT MEN AND NINE WOMEN

CHARACTERS

TOM CORBETT.....	<i>with a problem</i>
EDDIE.....	<i>his young son</i>
MRS. MASTERS.....	<i>their housekeeper</i>
ELIZABETH.....	<i>a nurse</i>
DOLLY.....	<i>a beauty queen</i>
RITA.....	<i>a career girl</i>
MRS. BRIDGES.....	<i>a neighbor</i>
HELEN ANN.....	<i>her young daughter</i>
NORM.....	<i>a gay bachelor</i>
MR. DONNELLY.....	<i>apartment superintendent</i>
MR. SHANE.....	<i>camp director</i>
MIKE.....	<i>Eddie's bunkmate</i>
BECKY.....	<i>a secretary</i>
LORETTA.....	<i>a sensible girl</i>
ALICE.....	<i>a teacher</i>
CAL } HARRY }	<i>at the camp</i>

PLACE: *New York City*
TIME: *The present.*

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS

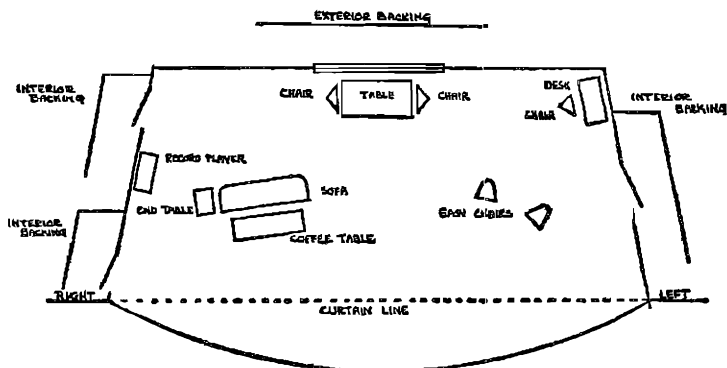


STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

STAGE CHART



PROPERTIES

GENERAL: LIVING ROOM: Draperies at window, drop-leaf table with two straight chairs, sofa, end table, lamp, coffee table, two slim-line easy chairs, desk and chair, telephone, lamp, bookshelves, paintings, record player, records (one of soft music), hassock. Act One, Scene One: Pair of boy's old dungarees on back of sofa, baseball cap on end table, newspapers on coffee table, glass of water off D R. Act One, Scene Five: Shoeshine kit at R, movie magazine on end table. Act Two, Scene Two: Pad and pencil on desk. Act Two, Scene Four: Coffee for two (cups and saucers, spoons, sugar and cream), percolator and tray on drop-leaf table; Elizabeth's sweater on back of chair, bowl of flowers on table. OTHER ITEMS: Act One, Scene Two: Counter of groceries, including cans of tomatoes; display rack of potato chips; grocery sign. Act One, Scene Three: Desk, telephone, chair, intercom on desk, papers and other accessories on desk. Act One, Scene Four: Door (self-service elevator), push button for elevator, indicator lights above door (optional), bench. Act Two, Scene One: Sign, CAMP WANAWOKI; smaller sign, BALL FIELD, with arrow; bench.

TOM: Key for door to apartment, trench coat, suitcase, brief case, wrist watch [Act One, Scene One]; partly filled grocery cart, box of washing powder in cart [Act One, Scene Two]; pen [Act One, Scene Three]; suit coat, topcoat [Act One, Scene Five].

ELIZABETH: Purse, white cap; tray containing slices of bread, butter, peanut butter, jelly, knife, glass of milk [Act One, Scene One]; several unopened letters [Act One, Scene Four]; board game [Act One, Scene Five]; wrist watch [Act Two, Scene One].

EDDIE: Suitcase, baseball bat, stack of comic books, stamp collection album, model plane kit, glass jar containing goldfish, box of fish food in pocket [Act One, Scene One]; hot dog [Act One, Scene Two]; half-empty bag of popcorn [Act One, Scene Four]; notebook and pencil in pocket [Act One, Scene Five]; baseball and mitt [Act Two, Scene One].

MRS. BRIDGES: Facial tissue [Act One, Scene One]; grocery cart, huge box of washing powder [Act One, Scene Two]; model airplane [Act One, Scene Five].

RITA: Zippered folder of papers [Act One, Scene One]; notebook [Act One, Scene Three].

MRS. MASTERS: Suitcase [Act One, Scene One]; purse [Act One, Scene Five].

DOLLY: Grocery cart, handbag, small booklet in handbag, pad and pencil in handbag [Act One, Scene Two].

BECKY: Typed letters for Tom to sign [Act One, Scene Three].

MIKE: Baseball bat [Act Two, Scene One]; flashlight [Act Two, Scene Three].

MR. SHANE: Whistle on string around neck [Act Two, Scene One]; flashlight [Act Two, Scene Three].

CAL: Flashlight [Act Two, Scene Three].

HARRY: Flashlight, electric lantern [Act Two, Scene Three].

LORETTA: Few pieces of material [Act Two, Scene Four].

PRODUCTION NOTES

STAGING: One full-stage setting, Tom's apartment, is the play's only requirement, and it remains standing throughout.

The other scenes are played downstage in front of the curtain with a minimum of props. Brief blackouts are used to set the in-front-of-the-curtain scenes. While these shifts are extremely simple since only a few props are used—their purpose is merely to *suggest* the new locales—still they should be rehearsed carefully in order that they may be handled quickly and quietly. This is a very easy play to produce and any temptation to elaborate the props used for the in-front-of-the-curtain scenes should be avoided. It is much more important to maintain a crisp pace than to take time to bring on additional props.

A SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT "EDDIE": This role is a gem, and it should be portrayed by someone extremely likable. Eddie is frank and yet friendly, innocent and yet oddly precocious, too. His age is not stated, but obviously he should be someone who could appear to be the youngest and, preferably, smallest member of your cast.

ACT ONE

Scene One

SCENE: *The living room of Tom's New York apartment, early evening in the fall. The furnishings are bright and modern, and there are attractive draperies on the large window in the wall U C. Under this window are a drop leaf table and two straight chairs. A sofa with end table, modern lamp and coffee table are R C. A couple of slim-line easy chairs are L C. There is a desk near the wall U L with a telephone, lamp and chair. Low book shelves fill a portion of wall space, and there are colorful modern paintings on the wall. A record player is at R, with a hassock near it. There is a slight look of disorder about the room, as if its occupants left it in rather a hurry. A pair of boy's old dungarees is draped over the back of the sofa, a baseball cap is on the end table, and newspapers are spilling off the coffee table. A door L leads to the outside hall, one D R leads to the kitchen, and one U R leads to bedrooms.]*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *The telephone is ringing as TOM CORBETT puts his key in the lock and comes in from the hall L. He is about thirty, wears a business suit, has a trench coat over his arm and carries a suitcase and a brief case. He looks tired and impatient as he pulls his key out of the lock, and he drops everything on the floor as he hurries to the telephone, stopping first to switch on a lamp.]*

TOM [*as he drops his things*]. Do you have to start ringing just as I'm coming in the door? [*Picks up telephone.*] Hello . . . [*More cheerfully.*] Hi, Norm, you old so-and-so! . . . Just this minute got in—plane delayed. . . . Great assignment in L.A., sure, but six months is just too long. . . . So you fellows managed to keep the radio station going without me, huh? I'll be back on the job tomorrow, and you'd

better start jumping! . . . Young Eddie? No, staying with my sister in Massachusetts since spring, but I'm expecting him home tonight. . . . Of course I'm keeping the apartment! My sister hired a housekeeper for us, and I sure hope she gets here pretty soon to clean this place up! . . . No, keep your gorgeous dolls! I'm expecting the housekeeper, and Eddie's going to call when his train gets in to Grand Central. . . . [*The doorbell rings.*] Doorbell. Could be that estimable lady now. Hold on, Norm, don't hang up. [*Puts down receiver and goes toward door L. As bell rings again, he pauses to pick up his trench coat, throw it over a chair, and put his brief case on top of it. Then he opens door.*]

[ELIZABETH MADDEN stands there. She is a lovely, spirited girl in her twenties, and wears the white uniform of a nurse. A light coat is thrown over her shoulders and she carries her purse and her white cap.]

ELIZABETH. Mr. Corbett . . .

TOM [*surprised*]. You're a housekeeper?

ELIZABETH. I beg your pardon?

TOM. Sorry, but we don't need a nurse.

ELIZABETH. I'm Elizabeth Madden, from the fifth floor. Late getting off duty at the hospital, because we're so short-handed. The Super just told me that your little boy is expected back tonight, and I stopped by to say hello to him. [*Comes in, looks around room.*] He's not here yet?

TOM. He'll call when his train gets in, and I'll grab a cab and meet him. [*Hurriedly.*] Nice of you, Miss . . . [*Hesitates.*] But . . .

ELIZABETH. Madden. I used to see Eddie in the park sometimes. That's how we got to be friends.

TOM. Oh? If you'll excuse me now, I'm in the middle of a phone call.

ELIZABETH. Of course. [*As TOM returns to telephone, she picks up baseball cap.*] It looks as if Eddie had just left here.

TOM [*on telephone*]. Still holding on, Norm? [*To ELIZABETH.*] He's been staying with my sister for six months, ever since

. . . [*Pauses, then goes on.*] I've been on a survey trip for the radio station where I work.

ELIZABETH. I'm sorry about . . . your wife.

TOM. You knew her?

ELIZABETH. No, just Eddie.

TOM [*on telephone*]. Not the housekeeper yet, Norm. Look, this promises to be a hectic evening, so—Sure, stop by. See you, then. [*Hangs up.*]

ELIZABETH. Sorry I intruded, Mr. Corbett. I thought Eddie might be glad to see me. I've missed him.

TOM. I've missed him like the very devil, myself.

ELIZABETH. Maybe I'll see him tomorrow. [*Looks around.*] If there's anything I can do to help . . .

TOM [*rather stiffly*]. Thank you, no. My housekeeper will be here soon. Eddie and I will manage very well.

ELIZABETH [*coolly*]. I'm sure you will. I thought he was here, or I'd never have bothered you.

TOM [*politely*]. No bother at all.

[*The doorbell rings insistently, over and over. TOM opens the door and EDDIE propels himself into the room and into TOM's arms. He is a bundle of energy, curiosity and love, with insight beyond his years. He wears casual clothes and is loaded down with possessions. Besides his suitcase he carries a baseball bat, a stack of comic books, a stamp collection album, a model plane kit, and a glass jar containing goldfish. As he flings himself on his father some of these things drop to the floor.*]

TOM [*surprised*]. Eddie!

EDDIE. Dad! Gee, Dad, it's good to see you. Wait till I show you my stamp collection. And Aunt Judy gave me some goldfish.

TOM [*releasing him*]. How did you get here? You were supposed to call from the station.

EDDIE [*proudly*]. I figured I'm old enough to take care of myself now, so I just took a cab. [*Walks around his father and, as he is dumping his possessions on a chair, sees ELIZABETH. His face lights up.*] Elizabeth! [*Goes to her and gives her a*

hug, but as she seems about to kiss him, he steps back.] I'm too big to kiss.

ELIZABETH. Of course. You're *much* bigger, Eddie.

EDDIE. Sure. Aunt Judy says she bets most of my clothes won't fit.

TOM. Then you'll get new ones. The housekeeper will take care of all that.

EDDIE. Housekeeper?

TOM. Yes—Mrs. Masters.

EDDIE [*looking at ELIZABETH*]. I thought maybe *you* were going to stay with us now.

TOM. Well—

ELIZABETH. I'll say hello sometimes. [*To TOM.*] I'll just help him put away a few of his things? [*Without waiting for an answer she picks up baseball bat, suitcase and old dungarees and starts U R.*] This way?

TOM. Really, Miss Madden, we don't need any help. [*ELIZABETH goes out U R.*]

EDDIE. Elizabeth, Dad. Her name's Elizabeth. Do you think she's pretty?

TOM. I didn't notice. [*Moves his brief case to desk.*] Glad to be back, Eddie?

EDDIE [*stretching out on sofa, feet up on back*]. Sure. This is our home, ain't it? [*Suddenly quiet.*] Even if Mommy . . . [*Determinedly.*] This *is* our home, Dad? Yours and mine?

TOM. You just bet it is.

EDDIE. Aunt Judy wanted me to stay with her. She really likes me, Dad.

TOM. So do I, Eddie.

EDDIE. Very much?

TOM. Very, very much.

EDDIE. Funny, ain't it?

TOM [*automatically*]. Isn't it. What's funny?

EDDIE. There's just you and me, now. But we don't need no silly old housekeeper. [*Pulls up one leg of his pants a little and scratches his ankle.*]

TOM. Your ankle's dirty.

EDDIE. I had a whole bath at Aunt Judy's. From top to bottom.
TOM. Yesterday.

EDDIE. She put something in the water that took off all my tan.

TOM. Dirt, you mean. [*Looks at his watch.*] Getting late, and there's school tomorrow.

EDDIE. Dad, I just thought of something. [*Sits up straight.*]

You're not a husband any more, are you?

TOM. Start unpacking your suitcase and get under the shower.

EDDIE. You didn't answer me.

TOM [*soberly*]. No, I'm not a husband any more.

EDDIE. Will the housekeeper be my stepmother?

TOM [*sharply*]. Certainly not. Now, hop!

EDDIE [*plaintively*]. I can't hop on an empty stomach. Dad, I'm starved!

[*As he says this, ELIZABETH comes in U R.*]

ELIZABETH. I unpacked your pajamas and toothbrush, and put out bath towels.

EDDIE. I thought you were my friend!

ELIZABETH. What was that about being hungry?

EDDIE. All Aunt Judy packed in my lunch was four sandwiches and some cake and stuff. I can't go to bed *empty*!

ELIZABETH [*to TOM*]. I don't suppose you have any food in the kitchen?

TOM. Coffee, maybe.

ELIZABETH. I'll look. [*Goes out D R. The doorbell rings.*]

TOM. This time it's got to be the housekeeper. [*EDDIE dashes ahead of him and opens the door L.*]

EDDIE. Wrong! It's Mrs. Bridges and Helen Ann.

[*MRS. BRIDGES, a bossy woman with a strident voice, comes in with her young daughter HELEN ANN, who is about EDDIE'S age.*]

HELEN ANN. Hi, Eddie.

MRS. BRIDGES. So you're finally home again! [*He evades her encircling arm.*]

TOM [*trying to be cordial*]. Why, hello.

MRS. BRIDGES. We can't stay but a minute. I asked the Super to let me know when you came in. Eddie looks pretty good, considering.

TOM. So does Helen Ann.

EDDIE. She's got lipstick on. [*Accusingly.*] You've got lipstick!

HELEN ANN. I have n—[*Before she can finish her denial, MRS. BRIDGES rubs her lips with facial tissue.*]

MRS. BRIDGES. These young ones! [EDDIE and HELEN ANN drift out D R.] I suppose you'll soon be sending Eddie back to your sister?

TOM. Oh, no, I'm getting a housekeeper.

MRS. BRIDGES. Sleep in?

TOM [*puzzled*]. Pardon?

MRS. BRIDGES. The housekeeper.

TOM. Yes, except on weekends. She has a married daughter in the Bronx.

MRS. BRIDGES [*darkly*]. So she says. [*Goes to table, running her finger over it for dust.*] Lots of work to do here. The kind that sleeps in usually takes more interest.

TOM. Oh?

MRS. BRIDGES. The sleep-outs eat and run. I hope you've got some poor old thing who's grateful for a roof over her head.

TOM. Well . . .

MRS. BRIDGES. Not one who'll run up bills all day and carouse all night. Maybe take her boy friend out on your money.

TOM [*smiling*]. She won't take him far on what I'll pay her.

MRS. BRIDGES. Just one word of warning. Get close enough to her every morning to see if she smells of peppermint. That's the worst, the sneaky kind. [*Pantomimes drinking long and deep from a bottle.*]

TOM. My sister came down to New York and interviewed her.

MRS. BRIDGES. They can fool people. Check your washing machine once in a while. That's where she'll probably keep her bottle.

TOM. Thanks for the advice, Mrs. Bridges.

MRS. BRIDGES. I hope you don't think I'm butting in, Mr. Corbett, but believe me, I have your interests at heart. Best thing

you could do is send poor Eddie back to your sister until you marry again.

TOM [*amazed*]. Huh?

MRS. BRIDGES. If you try to raise him yourself, you'll just have a juvenile delinquent. Same thing if you rush out and marry the first floozie who comes along.

TOM. A which?

MRS. BRIDGES. There are floozies in this world who'd marry a man just for the equipment in this apartment. Nice living room furniture, record player, good drapes . . . they'd jump at the chance. Just watch out a floozie doesn't get hold of you.

[*As she says this, ELIZABETH comes in D R followed by EDDIE and HELEN ANN. Surprised, MRS. BRIDGES gives her a frowning scrutiny.*]

ELIZABETH. May I ask why you're staring at me?

MRS. BRIDGES. Was I? Come, Helen Ann, bedtime.

ELIZABETH. Don't hurry away on my account. [*Goes out L.*]

HELEN ANN. I'm hungry.

EDDIE. I'm hungry, too, Dad. Elizabeth's going down to her apartment to get me something good.

MRS. BRIDGES [*alertly*]. You see? [*Takes HELEN ANN by the arm, preparing to leave.*] I'll keep my eye out for someone suitable.

TOM. Thanks, but I'm not interested. [*MRS. BRIDGES and HELEN ANN go out L.*]

EDDIE. What was she talking about?

TOM. Nothing important. Get going on that shower, Eddie.

EDDIE. You haven't seen me in such a long time, Dad, I should think you'd want to talk to me a while. Find out how things are going. [*Sits on drop-leaf table and, as they talk, takes off his shoes and drops them to floor. Later he peels off one sock and then the other, tossing them into air.*] Sit down and relax, why don't you? You've got kind of a funny look on your face.

TOM [*sitting on sofa, half turning to look toward EDDIE*]. You

should be used to my funny face by now.

EDDIE. I like it funny.

TOM. Glad to oblige. How *have* things been going with you?

EDDIE. All right. [*Carefully.*] I ain't cried . . . about . . . you know. I don't let myself.

TOM. I see.

EDDIE. Aunt Judy said she s'posed you're lonesome. Are you lonesome, Dad?

TOM. Not now.

EDDIE. Because you got me?

TOM. That's right.

EDDIE. Would you like to play with my baseball cards?

TOM. I guess not.

EDDIE. Or look at my stamp collection?

TOM. You look at it, if you like.

EDDIE. You ain't crazy about stamps, are you, Dad?

TOM. Aren't. That's an understatement.

EDDIE. What would make you happy, Dad?

TOM. Make *me* happy? Are you kidding?

EDDIE. No, Dad, I'm serious. Why don't we do something you enjoy?

TOM. Like putting you to bed?

EDDIE. How about my do-it-yourself airplane kit?

TOM. Do it yourself—tomorrow.

EDDIE. I have a great idea, Dad. Let's have a discussion. You like discussions?

TOM. Sometimes.

EDDIE. Do you ever think about getting married again?

TOM [*getting up, half annoyed*]. No.

EDDIE. Could you think about it now, Dad? Out loud?

TOM [*after a pause*]. All right, I'll think about it now.

EDDIE. I'm a growing boy, you know. And I might turn into a jubenile delink.

TOM. A which?

EDDIE. Don't you read the papers, Dad? They're always in trouble.

TOM. *You* won't be. Not *while* I have the strength to paddle you!

EDDIE. Let's get back to the discussion about a wife for you. First you have to find a girl. Right?

TOM [*half amused now*]. Right.

EDDIE. How do you get to meet ladies, Dad?

TOM. The same way you meet girls.

EDDIE. Aw, I meet girls in school. They just hang around and chase me.

TOM. When you grow up, *you* hang around and chase them.

EDDIE. Be serious, Dad. Say you do find a nice girl, what happens?

TOM. If I'm in love with her, then I ask her to marry me.

EDDIE. And after she gives you permission, what next?

TOM. We go to City Hall for a marriage license. Any more questions?

EDDIE. Sure, I got lots more questions. Do you get married the same day?

TOM. No, we'd have to wait three days. There are things to do before a person gets married.

EDDIE. Like buying a cake? And getting a new suit for your son?

TOM. Not everybody has a son before he gets married.

EDDIE. Oh, yeah, I forgot. But you're lucky, huh, Dad?

TOM. I'm lucky.

EDDIE. A chocolate cake would be nice. Boy, I sure wish I had a big piece of it now!

TOM. Slow down, Eddie. You already have me married, and you're gobbling down my cake.

EDDIE. I was just trying to cheer you up, Dad. I don't really need a mother. Because I've got you. [TOM goes to table and lifts

EDDIE down from it.]

TOM. That goes for me, too.

EDDIE. Make sure you don't marry no girl with skinny eyes. They're the bad ones.

TOM. How come you're such an expert?

EDDIE [*getting a comic book*]. In the comic books, all the bad girls got skinny eyes. See? [*Show TOM a page.*] You can tell the good ones right away. Their eyes are round.

TOM. No kidding?

EDDIE. It's a fact, Dad. I thought everybody knew.

TOM. Well, now . . .

EDDIE. Maybe I'll have to look over the girl before you make up your mind. Sort of advise you.

TOM. I appreciate your thoughtfulness, Eddie, but I'll manage by myself.

EDDIE. Elizabeth has round eyes, Dad. Did you notice? [*There is a tap on the door.*] Here she is now. She doesn't want me to starve to death. [*Hurries to door L and opens it.*]

[*ELIZABETH comes in carrying a tray on which are slices of bread, some butter, a jar of peanut butter and one of jelly, a knife, and a glass of milk.*]

ELIZABETH. I hope you like peanut butter and jelly?

EDDIE [*happily*]. I'm craziest about it of anything!

ELIZABETH [*to TOM*]. I knew you wouldn't want him to go to sleep hungry.

TOM. He's not half as hungry as he makes out.

ELIZABETH. Boys are always hungry. Come on, Eddie. [*Goes out U R.*]

EDDIE. Yippee! [*About to follow her out, then pauses.*] Dad, what's a floozie?

TOM [*sternly*]. You were listening to Mrs. Bridges.

EDDIE. Sure. Is Elizabeth a floozie, Dad?

TOM. Go stuff yourself on peanut butter sandwiches! [*EDDIE goes to coffee table, where he has put glass jar with the goldfish.*]

EDDIE. I'd better feed my goldfish first. Aunt Judy gave me a little box of special food. [*Takes a small box from his pocket.*]

TOM. Suppose you take that jar out to the kitchen.

EDDIE [*taking it D R*]. I had to carry it real careful, because we punched some holes in the lid. [*Goes out D R.*]

[*TOM look around, trying to decide what to pick up first. ELIZABETH comes in U R.*]