

again in less than a year ... Okay? ... So now comes the question, where do you two live while I'm gone?

*(There is a deafening silence as JAY and ARTY turn and look at each other.)*

ARTY. *(Wipes his brow.)* ... God, it's so hot in here.

JAY. Please, Pop, don't make us live here ... That's what you're thinking, isn't it?

EDDIE. I have no choice, Jay. I don't know where else to turn.

JAY. *(To EDDIE.)* Why can't we stay where we are?

EDDIE. I gave the apartment up. I told the landlady yesterday.

ARTY. *(Astonished.)* You gave it up?

EDDIE. She raised the rent. *Everybody's* looking to make money out of this war. And the truth is, by the end of the year, I'll owe eleven thousand. While I'm away, the clock doesn't stop ticking.

JAY. Grandma wouldn't be happy with us. We're slobs. We leave everything on the floor. Arty's always breaking things.

ARTY. *(To EDDIE.)* Remember when I broke the good water pitcher? And the ink stains on the sofa. All mine! ... I'm dangerous, Pop.

EDDIE. Listen to me, both of you. It took me an hour-and-a-half to convince her. It's not that she doesn't like you. But she's old. She's set in her ways. And she's worried about people being around Bella.

ARTY. Me too.

EDDIE. She hasn't even said positively yet. She's thinking about it. She'll come out. She'll talk to you.

She'll see how it goes. It's up to us to convince her that you two won't be any trouble ... That's why I want you both looking so neat. Don't you see how important this is?

JAY. And what if she *did* take us in? Then you'd be obligated, Pop. Don't you think you have enough obligations now?

EDDIE. I'm not asking for myself. I'm asking for my boys. For my boys, I'll be obligated ... There's nothing to discuss anymore ... It's up to Grandma now ... And it's up to you. (*HE crosses to Grandma's bedroom door.*) I'll see if she's ready. (*HE turns back to them.*) If she says no, I can't take this job. I can't pay back the man I gave my promise to ... Just show Grandma what a terrific present she's getting to have you boys live with her ... Fix your tie, Jay. Straighten your collar, Arty ... Stand straight, both of you ...

*(THEY stand straight. HE nods.)*

EDDIE. That's my boys. (*HE goes into Grandma's room.*)

*(The BOYS look at each other.)*

JAY. Oh, my God. What if Grandma says "Yes"?

ARTY. She won't. Because I'm going to break something. What's her favorite thing in this room?

JAY. You're not breaking anything. Because we have to stay here and save Pop's life.

ARTY. And what about *our* lives? We could grow up like Aunt Bella. I could be in the seventh grade for the next twenty years.

JAY. Listen, if you act like this when Grandma comes out, that's like putting a gun to Pop's head and pulling the trigger.

ARTY. Oh. So we stay here and get whacked in the head every time we cry ... or suck candles back on like Aunt Gert. (*HE sucks his breath in and says.*) "Hello, Arty. How are you?"

JAY. (*Grabs ARTY by his shirt collar.*) One more word from you and I'll whack you, I swear to God.

(*ARTY pulls away but JAY holds on ... and Arty's collar gets torn halfway off and dangles there.*)

JAY. Oh, my God. It tore!

ARTY. Well, that's it. The war is over for us ... I hope Pop bought the grave next to Mom.

JAY. (*Looking in a drawer.*) Jesus! It's all your goddamn fault ... (*Starts to cry.*) Dammit! I hate you so much. I hate Mom for dying. I hate Pop for putting us in this spot. I hate Grandma for being such a rotten old lady. I hate everybody in the whole goddamn world.

(*And the bedroom door opens and EDDIE comes out with a smile.*)

EDDIE. You ready, boys? (*And then HE looks at them.*) ... What the hell's going on here? ... What are you crying about? What happened to your collar? (*HE quickly closes the bedroom door.*)

ARTY. Nothing.

EDDIE. Don't tell me nothing. Were you fighting? Of course you were fighting, just look at you. I don't believe it. If I can't trust you for two minutes, how can I trust you for a year? ... And do you think I would do this to my mother? To my sister, Bella? ... I'm ashamed of you. I'm ashamed of you both ... Wait outside for me. Out in the street. I don't want to look at you ... Go on, get out.

ARTY. We weren't fighting. It was an accident. I was trying to straighten my tie and I straightened it too tight.

JAY. I was crying about Mom. She'd be so sad to see you in such trouble ... We really want to stay here. We like Yonkers.

EDDIE. Are you serious? Or are you just trying to lie your way out of this?

JAY. Serious. Very serious.

ARTY. It's the most serious we've been in our lives.

EDDIE. I hope so. For all our sakes ... All right. Fix yourself up. Tuck in your collar. Wipe your eyes ... I'll get Grandma.

*(The door opens and BELLA comes out. SHE rushes to the sofa and throws herself on it, sobbing.)*

EDDIE. Oh, Jesus! Bella? ... What's wrong? ... What is it, Bella?

*(SHE buries her face in a pillow, like a five-year-old child.*

*ARTY and JAY look at each other ...*

*EDDIE sits next to BELLA and puts his arm around her shoulder.)*