

Evening Proposition

(5th Draft - February 26, 2006)

A short one-act play by:

Mark Pracht

c. 2005
Mark Pracht
4919 North Damen Ave. #3W
Chicago, IL 60625
(773) 728-3089

(Lights up on a diner counter.
EDDIE, 30's, well-dressed, sits, an
empty plate and a cup of coffee in
front of him. LOIS, a waitress,
enters.)

LOIS
You need anything else?

EDDIE
Any Bailey's back there?

LOIS
Come again?

EDDIE
For the coffee.

(Beat)

EDDIE (Continued)
Irish coffee?

(Lois laughs)

LOIS
Yeah, right. We're both not that lucky. Besides, a few drinks
in me, and I might get frisky with the customers.

EDDIE
(smiles)
Well, we wouldn't want that.

LOIS
You done with this?

EDDIE
I'd have to say yes.

LOIS
Well, you'd better be sure. If I take it in back, it's open
season. George likes to pick over the scraps.

EDDIE
I didn't realize I'd stumbled into a five-star establishment.

LOIS
Only the best here.

EDDIE
Tell George to feast on me.

LOIS
You want some more java?

(Eddie smiles)

LOIS (Continued)
Without the booze, no matter how cute you are.

EDDIE
Hm. I could stand a warm up.

LOIS
Be right back.

(She exits. Eddie sips his coffee.
PETE enters, 20's, on the ragged
edge, but presentable. He takes the
seat next to Eddie. The two men
exchange a look.)

PETE
'Sup.

EDDIE
Evening.

(Lois re-enters with the coffee pot)

LOIS
How you doing tonight, kiddo?

PETE
Hangin' in.

LOIS
Best we can hope for, night like this. Coffee?

PETE
Hit me.

(She pours)

LOIS
What're you in the mood for?

PETE
Give me a minute, huh? I just sat down.

LOIS
Burgers are top notch.

PETE
Great.

LOIS
That's what it says in the menu, anyway.

EDDIE
You know you can always trust a menu.

LOIS
You getting lippy with me, handsome.

EDDIE
Who, me? I'm just flirting with the prettiest lady in the room.

(Lois fills Eddie's cup)

LOIS
You want any pie or anything?

EDDIE
Pie?

LOIS
Come on, everybody loves pie.

EDDIE
Depends.

(He smiles)

LOIS
That kind ain't on the menu, killer.

EDDIE
Fine, fine. How about rhubarb?

LOIS
Not tonight. Key Lime?

EDDIE
Eh. I'll stick with the coffee.

LOIS
Tsk tsk. Doesn't like lime. Here I thought you were the perfect man.

EDDIE
You're out of luck, no one here but me. Me and the kid.

PETE
Give me one of the burgers.

LOIS
Cheese?

Swiss? PETE

Are you kidding? Velveeta. LOIS

Fine. PETE

Anything else? LOIS

You do medium rare? PETE

Sure. You get sick, it's your problem. LOIS

I'll take my chances. PETE

Coming up. LOIS

(Lois exits. The men sip coffee.)

You like it bloody? EDDIE

What? PETE

Your burger.
(beat)
Bloody. EDDIE

Yeah, I guess. PETE

Yeah I bet.
(chuckles)
All you kids do. EDDIE

What's that supposed to mean? PETE

Haven't seen you around the neighborhood. EDDIE

Passing through. PETE

EDDIE
Isn't everybody.

PETE
You got something to say to me, mister?

EDDIE
Just making small talk.

PETE
Don't care much for small talk.

EDDIE
No kidding.

PETE
I just want to eat my burger, drink my coffee. In peace.

EDDIE
Really?

(Their eyes meet)

EDDIE (Continued)
Yeah, I didn't think so.

PETE
What about you?

EDDIE
Me? I like the night life, I like to boogie.

PETE
What's that supposed to mean?

EDDIE
Kids. No sense of history. Or humor.

(Lois enters)

LOIS
George'll have that burger up in a couple minutes. More coffee?

EDDIE
Top it off.

(She pours)

LOIS
You're going to be up all night, hon.

EDDIE
You wish.

LOIS
Be back in a minute.

(She exits)

PETE
Jesus, doesn't she have any other customers?

EDDIE
It's her job, bucking for tips.

PETE
Huh?

EDDIE
She's a waitress. She wants a big tip.

PETE
It makes me nervous.

EDDIE
Of course it does.

(Beat)

EDDIE (Continued)
So, what brings you to the big city?

PETE
Nothin'.

EDDIE
(laughs)
What's your name?

PETE
Pete.

EDDIE
Lovely. How long have you been in town?

PETE
Listen, man...

EDDIE
Just answer the question, Peter.

(beat)

PETE
A few weeks.

EDDIE
Hard to find work?

(no answer)

EDDIE (Continued)
Well, let me tell you, it only gets worse.

PETE
Yeah, you look like you've had a hard time.

EDDIE
We've all had hard times.

PETE
Oh yeah? How?

EDDIE
You really don't want to know.

PETE
Can't get much worse than it is now.

EDDIE
Hungry?

PETE
Sure. Why do you think I ordered a burger?

EDDIE
A burger you can't pay for.

(beat)

PETE
Shut up.

EDDIE
This really isn't the best place for a dine and dash, my friend. You need more people to cover your exit. Not busy enough.

PETE
Look, do you want me to move down to the other end of the counter?

EDDIE
Not at all. I like you, Peter.

PETE
Really.

EDDIE
You'e got spirit.
(beat)
I like spirit.
(beat)

PETE
What are you after, mister?

EDDIE
I think you and I could do busniess, Peter.

PETE
What makes you think that?

EDDIE
Your eyes.

PETE
My eyes?

EDDIE
It's not often I see eyes like yours. Hunger, desperation,
the need to pull your ass out of the hole it's in. I can help
you.

(no answer)

EDDIE (Continued)
Would you like my help, Peter?

PETE
What do you want me to do?

EDDIE
I can see what you've got down there in your pants.

(beat)

EDDIE (Continued)
Don't worry, it's not obvious. I've just got an eye for these
things. The real question is, do you know how to handle it?

PETE
Maybe.

EDDIE
What?

(beat)

PETE

Yeah.

EDDIE

Good. Then you're useful to me.

PETE

How much?

EDDIE

Depends on how smoothly things go.

(beat)

The sky's the limit.

PETE

I've never...

EDDIE

Don't worry, it's a lot easier than you'd imagine.

PETE

That's what they say.

EDDIE

Who? Your friends? Oh, they may have had done some fumbling around, jerked off, made themselves feel like the cock of the walk. This isn't going to be like that.

PETE

It's not?

EDDIE

I'm an old hand at this, Peter. I have ways to make it as painless as it possibly can be.

PETE

Promise? Painless?

(beat)

EDDIE

I'm not going to lie to you, promise you'll forget this tomorrow. You won't. You will think of this night for the rest of your life.

PETE

I don't know.

(Eddie's hand snaps forward, pinning Pete's arm against the countertop, holding him fast.)

EDDIE

But that cold, hard cash is going to help you put it right out of your head.

PETE

Look I don't even know...

EDDIE

...My name? It doesn't really matter now. You're in. You and me, Peter, we're going to be fast friends.

PETE

Let go.

EDDIE

You're in now, Peter. You're in, or there's nothing left to talk about. If I stop talking, bad things happen. So, you just get ready to pull it out of your jeans, and do exactly what I tell you.

(Lois enters)

LOIS

Got some ketchup and mustard, your burger'll be...

(Eddie stands up, a pistol in his hand. He levels it at Lois and shoots her.)

EDDIE

Get up.

(Pete is on his feet, pulling a revolver from his jeans.)

EDDIE (Continued)

(to offstage patrons)

Ok folks, everybody be calm! Everybody be cool. Put your cash and wallets on the tables.

(to Pete)

Open the register.

(Pete exits)

EDDIE (Continued)

Now, as long as you all play nice and don't act like fucking idiots, you won't end up like this bitch here! That's the deal I'm offering, and, trust me, you all want to take it.