

The Gin Game

A Tragi-Comedy in Two Acts

by D.L. Coburn

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



New York Hollywood London Toronto

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*To my son, Donn Christopher,
whose urging led me to return
to and complete this play.
And to my sweet daughter,
Kimberly.*

As Leaden as the Aftermath of Wine

As leaden as the aftermath of wine
Is the dead mirth of my delirious days;
And as wine waxes strong with age, so weighs
More heavily the past on my decline.
My path is dim. The future's troubled sea
Foretokens only toil and grief to me.
But oh! my friends, I do not ask to die!
I crave more life, more dreams, more agony!
Midmost the care, the panic, the distress,
I know that I shall taste of happiness.
Once more I shall be drunk on strains divine,
Be moved to tears by musings that are mine;
And haply when the last sad hour draws nigh,
Love with a farewell smile may gild the sky.

—ALEXANDER SERGHEEVICH PUSHKIN

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

FONSIA DORSEY *Jessica Tandy*

WELLER MARTIN *Hume Cronyn*

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: Sunday afternoon, Visitors' Day.

SCENE 2: Sunday afternoon, one week later.

ACT TWO

SCENE 1: The following evening, shortly after dinner.

SCENE 2: The following Sunday afternoon.

The Gin Game

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

The scene is the unused sunporch of a home for the aged. Through French doors Up Center, we see a few figures watching a television. Large screened windows with rattan shades frame the stage. To the Right is a porch glider. Up Stage Left is a tall bookcase, filled with seldom-read books, discarded newspapers, etc. The porch is cluttered with items no longer needed in the house—old sinks, broken wheelchairs and walkers, a shabby sofa, a broken piano. There are planters filled with now-dead flowers. Broken flower pots lie on the floor Down Stage Right. It is early afternoon of a brilliantly sunny day. The season is spring . . . the day, Sunday, Visitors' Day at the home.

As the Curtain rises, WELLER is seated at a card table Down Stage Left. He wears terry-cloth slippers, khaki pants, a pajama top and an old brown wool bathrobe. In his mouth is an unlit cigar stub. On the table is a pad and a pencil. A lid from a biscuit tin serves as an ashtray. Before him is an incomplete and unsuccessful game of solitaire. He sits, staring into space and muttering to himself. Eventually, he resumes the game. Finding himself deadlocked, he begins to clear the cards, stops, then looks through the last stack of cards finding an ace and a two. He plays these and returns to the game.

A screen door closes Up Right and FONZIA enters, crying. She wears faded pink slippers, an old housecoat, and a cardigan sweater. She stops for a moment, surprised to find someone else on the porch.

FONZIA. I'm sorry, I didn't think anybody was out here.

WELLER. I'm sorry.

FONZIA. Oh, it wasn't you . . . it was just . . . *(Looking for an escape, FONZIA crosses to the Up Center door—is stopped by the sight of the TV and the group watching it. She crosses to the Stage Left door, but finds it locked. Defeated, she stands facing the bookcase, crying softly. After a moment, WELLER turns to see what she is doing. He turns back to the table and resumes the game.)*

WELLER. You're rather new here, aren't you?

FONZIA. Three weeks.

WELLER. It takes some adjustment. *(FONZIA slowly begins to move closer, stopping Down Stage of the sofa.)*

FONZIA. How long have you been here?

WELLER. Couple of months.

FONZIA. Well, you're kinda new here, too.

WELLER. In a way. Of course, it's not the first time I've lived in. They're all pretty much alike.

FONZIA. *(Crossing toward Center.)* I came here to Bentley because they're supposed to have constant care.

WELLER. What's wrong with you—if you don't mind my asking.

FONZIA. Oh, my . . . lord, no, I don't mind. I've got chronic diabetes.

WELLER. Diabetes Mellitus.

FONZIA. Is there something wrong with you? . . . I mean, are you sick?

WELLER. Oh my, I should say so. I have one of the most advanced cases of old age in the history of Medical Science. The mortality rate's incredible.

FONZIA. *(Crossing in a bit more.)* I just thought there might be something you were getting treatment for.

WELLER. No. You don't need anything special to qualify for Bentley. Old age is sufficient. *(Pause. FONZIA moves farther down, trying to get a better look at WELLER.)*

FONZIA. Have you ever lived at the Presbyterian Home?

WELLER. No.

FONZIA. *(Crossing to the screen Stage Right.)* That's the place I really wanted to go to.

WELLER. Why didn't you?

FONZIA. Well, they have a rather unusual financial set-up.

WELLER. What's that?

FONZIA. You have to give them all your money.

WELLER. *(Rises and crosses Center.)* That's the place. That's the goddamn place. That's the place where you have to give them all your money. The Presbyterian Home . . . Christ, what a racket. Think of all the poor bastards out there right now, thinking they're working for themselves, when really they're working for the Presbyterian Home.

FONZIA. They don't have to go there.

WELLER. Oh. Hell no. They don't have to go there. They don't have to go anywhere if they don't want to . . . *(WELLER sits at the table.)* That's a damn lie. You do have to go somewhere. If you live long enough,

sooner or later you end up in one of these places.

(WELLER resumes his game of solitaire.)

FONSIA. I guess you're right. (She sits on the glider.)
Course, if you were rich enough. . . .

WELLER. Don't be deluded by money, either. I've seen some very wealthy people in old age homes. Loneliness—it's as simple as that.

FONSIA. That's why I wanted to go to the Presbyterian Home. I have friends over there I've known all my life.

WELLER. Then why didn't you give them your money?

FONSIA. I couldn't bring myself to do that. (FONSIA picks up a magazine from the glider and begins to thumb through it.)

WELLER. Who the hell could? It's unreasonable to expect a person to turn over everything they have. I don't care how nice the place is. You're entitled to some personal property. Even the Welfare Department lets you keep twenty-five hundred dollars.

FONSIA. You might be right. I'm sure they have their side of it, too. It's just a matter of opinion, I guess.

WELLER. It's not a matter of opinion. A fact is a fact. (WELLER looks over at FONSIA, then back to his game.) Do you play cards?

FONSIA. (Closing the magazine.) Oh, it's been years since I've played cards. I used to love to play . . . I could sit up playing Rummy or Pinochle 'til two o'clock in the morning. If my mother'd ever known I was doing that, she'd a killed me. We were raised old time Methodists, you know. And we considered card playing a sin.

WELLER. The only sin in card playing is drawing to an inside straight. And even that's not a sin if you fill it. (He laughs to himself.)

FONSIA. That's Poker you're talking about, isn't it?

WELLER. What? Oh, the inside straight. Yes, that's Poker. (He has lost his game of solitaire and gathers up the cards.)

FONSIA. I never did see much sense to that. For one thing, I could never keep straight what beats what.

WELLER. (Shuffling the cards.) Did you ever play Gin?

FONSIA. Is Gin and Rummy the same? Seems to me they called it Gin Rummy.

WELLER. It's the same principle. I keep score on what's known as the Hollywood basis. Here, sit down. I'll show you. (WELLER rises and "tosses" his chair to the Stage Right side of the table. He crosses Up Left and gets another chair which he places Up Stage of the table. FONSIA has risen and crossed to the Stage Right chair.) By the way, I'm Weller Martin.

FONSIA. (Sitting in Stage Right chair.) I'm Fonsia Dorsey.

WELLER. (Sitting in chair he has placed Up Stage of table.) Pleased to meet you, Fonsia. Now, the first thing we do . . . I think you're going to enjoy this . . . is deal the cards . . . ten for me and eleven for you. (He deals.) One, one. Two, two. Three, three. Four, four. Five, five. Six, six. Seven, seven. Eight, eight. Nine, nine. Ten, ten. And eleven for you. Now, the reason I'm giving you eleven, is because you have to discard one to start the game. (They pick up their cards.)

FONSIA. All the same kind go together . . . like Kings and Eights?

WELLER. That's right—or a sequence in the same suit . . . like the eight, nine, ten of Diamonds, or the Ace, King, Queen of Hearts. But it has to be at least three in a row.

FONSIA. Do I lay them down as soon as I get them?

WELLER. No . . . uh-uh. Hold on until everything you have in your hand goes together, except one card. Then you discard that card and say "Gin."

FONSIA. Oh. Well, that's a little different. We used to play that you laid them down as soon as you got them. You know, three of a kind or whatever.

WELLER. Well, this is the accepted way. You go anywhere in the world and this is the way that Gin will be played.

FONSIA. Oh, I accept it.

WELLER. Good.

FONSIA. I mean, I like the idea. You kind of surprise the other person when you get Gin.

WELLER. That's right. Oh . . . and there's another way of going out. That's by knocking.

FONSIA. Knocking?

WELLER. Now, all that means is, if all the cards you have in your hand that don't match up; add up to less than ten points, you can knock.

FONSIA. (*She doesn't understand.*) Uh-huh.

WELLER. Did I say that right? Here, I'll show you. (*He turns her cards toward him. As he looks at her cards, she looks at him.*) Well, your cards are all matched up, except this six and this two. You can knock, if you want to. You'd say, "I knock with eight points." Now, if I have more than eight points, you win. If I have less than eight points . . . I win. Do you understand that?

FONSIA. I think so . . . but I think I'll stick to the Gin part of the game at first.

WELLER. That's alright. You think you've got it now?

FONSIA. I think so.

WELLER. Good. Then, let's play. (*WELLER picks up*

the pad and pencil from the table and marks out a score sheet. FONSIA *watches, puzzled.*) FONSIA . . . Weller. FONSIA . . . Weller. FONSIA . . . Weller. (*He looks up at FONSIA.*) Oh, don't worry. I'll keep score all the time. Some people play to 150 points, but we'll just play to 100. Still bonafide, only faster. (*WELLER looks at his cards. A brief pause. He takes FONSIA's cards from her.*) Here, give me those to shuffle up and we'll start all over again.

FONSIA. (*As WELLER shuffles the cards.*) This is exciting! I'm actually enjoying myself. If you'd told me 15 minutes ago that . . .

WELLER. (*Dealing.*) One, one. Two, two. Three, three. Four, four. Five, five. Six, six. Seven, seven. Eight, eight. Nine, nine. Ten, ten. And eleven for you.

FONSIA. . . 15 minutes ago that I'd be sitting here playing Gin Rummy with someone. (*They pick up their cards and begin to arrange them. FONSIA, having difficulty holding them, spreads them on the table, face up. She begins to put them into order.*)

WELLER. (*As he rises.*) No, no, no. I can see all your cards. (*He pulls his chair to the Stage Left side of the table and sits. FONSIA quickly picks up her cards and begins again to arrange them. WELLER picks up his "ashtray" and brushes ashes from the table. Finally, FONSIA chooses a card to discard and the game begins.*)

FONSIA. I thought this was going to be an awful day.

WELLER. Visitors' Day.

FONSIA. Um-hum.

WELLER. Do you have any family?

FONSIA. Oh my, yes. Of course. I have a son almost forty-five years old . . . Larry.

WELLER. Mr. . . . Dorsey passed on?

FONSIA. We were only married four years. We were divorced when Larry was two.

WELLER. Oh, I see.

FONSIA. Actually, Walter did pass on not too long ago. Then I have a sister Hattie. She lives in Ottawa. I haven't seen her in fifteen years.

WELLER. Your son live here in town?

FONSIA. No. Ah . . . he and his wife make their home in Denver.

WELLER. Denver! Well, I guess you don't see much of him, either.

FONSIA. No. It's been more than a year since he's been home. And then I have two lovely grandchildren, both boys. Steven's twelve . . . and Larry Junior . . . Oh my Lord, Larry must be sixteen. Almost a man.

WELLER. They grow up quickly.

FONSIA. Do you have any children?

WELLER. Yes, I have . . .

FONSIA. (*Looking at her cards.*) Wait a minute. Oh, I am sorry, Weller. I think I'm sitting here with Gin in my hand already. Let's see, there's four of the Kings, three nines, and the five, six, seven of Spades. I've got the eight, too. I guess I just discard that. (*FONSIA discards the eight and lays her cards out on the table.*)

WELLER. (*Looking at her cards.*) That's right. Very good. Very good. Now, you get twenty-five for Gin. I'm stuck with the eight and nine of Hearts, so that's seventeen more. So you're forty-two points to the good. (*WELLER marks down the score.*) Fonsia, forty-two points in the first game.

FONSIA. Oh, I am sorry. I get to talking and I forget what I'm doing.

WELLER. You played that hand very well. (*WELLER gathers the cards and begins to shuffle them.*)

FONSIA. Beginner's luck, I guess.

WELLER. No, really. A lot of people would have discarded those two Kings right away. But you held onto them and filled them out.

FONSIA. I didn't realize there was that much strategy to it.

WELLER. There most certainly is. Anyone who tells you that Gin is nothing but luck, doesn't know what the game is all about.

FONSIA. Oh, I was just about to ask you . . .

WELLER. (*Dealing.*) One, one. Two, two. Three, three. Four, four. Five, five. Six, six. Seven, seven. Eight, eight. Nine, nine. Ten, ten. Eleven for you.

FONSIA. (*Continuing.*) . . . to ask you about your children. (*They sort their cards and begin to play.*)

WELLER. I have three children . . . all grown, of course. Two sons and a daughter.

FONSIA. (*Looking up at WELLER.*) Do you hear from them much?

WELLER. No. Actually, we've lost touch over the years.

FONSIA. That's awful . . . I mean, to lose touch that way.

WELLER. That happened many years ago. I'm also divorced. Their Mother didn't exactly encourage a close relationship between us. She moved—she and the children—to another city. I had a business established so I couldn't follow them. Eventually, she remarried, and that was more or less the end of that.

FONSIA. How dreadful.

WELLER. Well, in those days the courts gave the woman a great deal of power in a divorce settlement. There was very little I could do about it.

FONSIA. Well, I'm sorry that happened to you, Weller. Now, that's exactly what some men deserve. Seems like there's no justice. Now that would have suited the one I had just right.

WELLER. It doesn't suit anyone just right.

FONSIA. Oh, I don't mean you, Weller. Lord no. I'm talking about the man I married.

WELLER. I know. And I'm saying I wouldn't wish it on him, either. (WELLER discards and FONSIA picks it up.)

FONSIA. Well, if you knew the hell I'd been through, you'd change your tune mighty fast on that. Gin! (She lays her cards down on the table.)

WELLER. So it is. So it is. I'm stuck with . . . twenty-three. No more lessons for you.

FONSIA. That was lucky. I got everything I needed right away.

WELLER. You certainly did. (FONSIA looks in her robe pocket for her handkerchief. Not finding it, she looks behind her and sees that she has left it on the glider. She rises, crosses and picks it up. WELLER has figured out the score and he writes it down. He begins to shuffle the cards.)

FONSIA. (Looking around the porch.) It's pleasant out here . . . in a way. The rooms are small, though. Trying to get all your worldly possessions in a little ten-foot-square box . . . makes you realize. (As WELLER begins to deal, FONSIA hurries back to her chair.)

WELLER. (Dealing.) One, one. Two, two. Three, three. Four, four. Five, five. Six, six. Seven, seven. Eight, eight. Nine, nine. Ten, ten. And eleven for you. Makes you realize what?

FONSIA. Just makes you realize. (As FONSIA picks up her cards, one falls in her lap. She sticks it in her

mouth as she arranges the others. She is ready to play, but realizes that she is short a card. She counts the cards in her hand and finds ten. She checks the table, looks under the table and on the floor beside her. Finally, she finds the card and puts it in her hand. WELLER, having finished arranging his cards, has looked up and sees FONSIA's search. He puts his cards down and watches her. He turns away to hide his amusement. Finally, she discards and the game begins.) What'd you do with all the things you had? You must have had a lot of things.

WELLER. I sold them.

FONSIA. It's hard to part with things you've had so many years. (A pause—as they play.)

WELLER. Does the food around here give you diarrhea?

FONSIA. Weller!

WELLER. That's a legitimate question.

FONSIA. Not that I've noticed.

WELLER. You'd notice.

FONSIA. (Looking at her cards.) This is a mess.

WELLER. It must be better than this.

FONSIA. What kind of business were you in?

WELLER. I had a Marketing and Research firm.

FONSIA. I mean, what kind of work did you do?

WELLER. Basically, I told people how to run their business. If a company had a product it wanted to sell—I'd tell them who to sell it to—where to sell it—how much to charge for it.

FONSIA. That's something I could never figure out.

WELLER. What's that?

FONSIA. How much to charge for something.

WELLER. What were you selling?

FONSIA. Nothing. But I'd see something I liked . . . like a lamp. And I'd look at the price tag and it would

cost ten dollars. And then I'd see another lamp just like it and it'd cost over a hundred. There was just no way of telling.

WELLER. Well, that'll happen sometimes. I remember when I was just getting started in business. I wanted a job from this particular company. I was sitting in a room with a group of their executives, and finally the President turned to me and said, "How much is this going to cost us?" Well, I was afraid to ask for much money in those days. I thought the job was worth about five hundred—but I cut it back to four. I was so nervous, I just said the word, "Four." Then the President turned to one of the other men in the room and he said, "Does four thousand sound in line to you, Harry?" And he said, "Yeah. That sounds about right to me."

FONZIA. Weller, you're making that up.

WELLER. As God is my judge, he said, "Yeah. That sounds about right to me."

FONZIA. Did you tell him you meant four hundred?

WELLER. What?

FONZIA. Well, if it was only worth five hundred.

WELLER. It was worth whatever he was willing to pay. *(He discards and she picks it up.)*

FONZIA. Finally! Gin. *(She discards and lays her cards out.)*

WELLER. Goddamnit. I knew you were keeping Jacks. Now what'd I do that for? I gave it right to you. Talking too damn much. *(WELLER writes down the score.)*

FONZIA. You know, I never heard my father say a curse word in his life.

WELLER. Obviously, you never played Gin with him.

FONZIA. I should hope not. Papa would never have

played cards. He didn't smoke, drink or run around either.

WELLER. Admirable. Minor virtues, but admirable nevertheless. *(He rises, lays his cane on the table, picks up his "ashtray," crosses and puts it on the sink Up Left.)* You know, I've been thinking more and more lately about my father. Now there was a man who never settled for checker-playing in the park. After he retired, he still went to the office every morning until the day he died at the age of eighty-three. Of course, he owned his own company so he could do that. Thank God he had better luck with his business partners than I did. *(WELLER has returned to his chair and is shuffling the cards.)*

FONZIA. Did you have bad luck?

WELLER. *(Dealing.)* One, one. Two, two. Three, three. Four, four. Five, five. Six, six. Seven, seven. Eight, eight. Nine, nine. Ten, ten. Eleven. *(During the deal, a choir has begun singing Off Up Left.)* What the hell are they doing in there now? *(They pick up their cards.)*

FONZIA. Oh, that's probably the Song-Fest.

WELLER. I don't understand all this "entertainment."

FONZIA. That's a group of singers from the Grace Avenue Methodist Church Choir . . . *(They begin to play.)* Some of them sang professionally.

WELLER. I don't mean who is singing. I'm talking about this constant need to entertain us. Sometimes I get the idea that they feel like if they don't have a choir up there, or if they don't have a goddamn Magician up there doing tricks or something, then we're all going to drop dead right in front of their eyes. En masse. Then they're going to feel guilty as all hell, because deep down, they know that the Grace

Avenue Methodist Church Choir could've kept us alive—at least for another night.

FONSIA. I thought the Magician was pretty good.

WELLER. He poured milked all over the floor.

FONSIA. He made it disappear. I know it was a trick. He poured it in the newspaper and it did disappear.

WELLER. It went all over the floor. I was in the front row, I saw it.

FONSIA. Well . . . you couldn't see it from three or four rows back.

WELLER. That's why Magicians like to play old age homes. Half the audience is shaking so goddamn bad they can't focus, and the other half's asleep. (*He looks at his cards.*) Now, what are you looking for?

FONSIA. Well, I'll tell you.

WELLER. Don't tell me!

FONSIA. I wasn't going to tell you.

WELLER. It's one of these two cards. I know that much. And I have a feeling the one I discard is going to be the one you want. (*FONSIA leans forward waiting for his discard.*) Well . . . here goes nothing. (*WELLER discards and FONSIA picks it up.*)

FONSIA. You were right, Weller. Gin. (*FONSIA lays her cards out.*)

WELLER. Good God, Fonsia. (*WELLER throws his cards down on the table. BLACKOUT.*)

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE 2

It is one week later—again, Sunday—Visitors' Day. The scene is the same except the rattan shade on the Stage Right screen has been lowered. The

table is in the same position. A deck of cards, a pencil and a clean pad of paper lie on it.

As the curtain rises, WELLER is standing with one foot up on the glider, polishing his shoe with his handkerchief. His appearance has drastically changed. His hair is combed. He wears a jacket and tie, khaki pants and loafers. WELLER finishes with his shoe, puts his handkerchief in his pocket, straightens tie and crosses Up Right Center, smoothing down his hair as he goes. He glances toward the Stage Right door, then crosses toward the bookcase Up Left. At Center, he is distracted by the sound of an evangelist droning from the TV. He pauses for a moment to listen. Disgusted, he "gives the finger" to the TV and continues on to the bookcase. Kneeling to take a book from the bottom shelf, his view of the Up Right door is obstructed by the sofa.

FONSIA enters Up Right and crosses to Up Right Center. She looks like a different woman. Her hair is set and she has put on make-up. She wears a print dress, a rose-colored cardigan, and open-toed sandals.

FONSIA. Weller? . . . (*She doesn't see him. Disappointed, she turns and begins to leave.*)

WELLER. (*From behind the sofa.*) Ally, ally, in free. . .

FONSIA. (*Startled, she turns.*) What?

WELLER. (*He rises, holding a paperback.*) You didn't find me.

FONSIA. Weller, have you gone crazy?

WELLER. (*Crossing Down Stage of the sofa.*) I must admit that's a very appealing thought at times. Un-

fortunately, this time I've done nothing more bizarre than select a book . . . from the bottom shelf. (*He tosses the book into a carton on the floor by the bookcase.*)

FONSIA. (*Crossing Center.*) For a minute there, I thought you'd lost your mind.

WELLER. No. Although this place inspires a certain looniness. (*They meet at Center and shake hands. FONZIA breaks away and crosses toward the glider.*)

FONSIA. This is practically the first time I've seen you to talk to all week.

WELLER. (*Crossing toward the glider.*) Since I met my Waterloo at Gin.

FONSIA. (*Sitting Center on the glider.*) That was fun.

WELLER. Perhaps you'll grant me a rematch this afternoon. (*A family singing "Happy Birthday" is heard Off Up Right.*)

FONSIA. I'd love to.

WELLER. Listen to them in there. Every Visitors' Day it's bedlam around here.

FONSIA. Thank God they don't come out here.

WELLER. (*Crosses to the glider, picks up the magazine and sits Left of FONZIA. She holds the glider steady for him.*) Oh. A couple of them stumble out here every now and then. A few weeks ago, Gladys Mayes' daughter and son-in-law brought her out here on the porch.

FONSIA. Isn't that a tribe.

WELLER. They didn't have the children with them. But they talk so loud. Like the old lady's deaf. Hell, there's nothing wrong with her hearing. When she's out here alone, she tells me not to make so much noise shuffling the cards.

FONSIA. She's thin as a rail.

WELLER. They brought a sandwich out here to her . . . tried to get her to eat it.

FONSIA. She won't eat a bite. I don't know what keeps her alive.

WELLER. They had a Coloring Book, too. They wanted her to occupy herself coloring.

FONSIA. Poor soul. She sits to the window all day. Coloring would be something for her to do.

WELLER. Oh, she'd have no part of it. Then they started talking about me . . . as though I wasn't even there! Like I was a piece of furniture or something. At one point the daughter said, "See, that nice man amuses himself playing cards." I couldn't believe it! I looked at her . . . then in that loud voice she said, "Don't we, sir."

FONSIA. What did you say?

WELLER. I didn't answer. I was dumfounded. Here this woman is defining my life . . . in one sentence! Or at least she thinks she is . . . and I'm supposed to agree with her. That nice man amuses himself playing cards.

FONSIA. Oh no, Weller. I don't think she meant it that way. She probably just wanted to show Gladys that there are things to do other than stare out of the window.

WELLER. Why use me as a model retiree, for Christ-sake?

FONSIA. Weller, she wasn't talking about your life. My Lord, look at all the things you've done.

WELLER. (*Rising with the magazine and crossing Center.*) No . . . but she was talking about my life the way it is now. (*He stops and turns toward FONZIA.*) I'm still alive, damnit.

FONSIA. Well, I should hope to tell you.

WELLER. (*Crossing Up Left, he throws the magazine*

onto the sofa.) Still, I don't know. Maybe I am a little jumpy. *(He crosses back toward the glider.)* I just don't know how to act with people anymore. I'm unsure of myself . . . rusty. There's nobody to have a decent conversation with around here anyway. You're the only one I talk to. *(He sits on the glider.)*

FONSIA. I know. It's awful. You'd think there'd be somebody you'd like to talk to in a place that has as many people as they have here.

WELLER. Half of them are catatonic, for Christ's sake. And sometimes the ones who do talk, make you appreciate the ones who don't.

FONSIA. The complaining?

WELLER. Yes.

FONSIA. Did you ever hear so many aches and pains in your life? "My Lord child, my back is killing me."

WELLER. I know her. Or, "I can't see as far as from here to that door." What are you going to do? It's either that or listen to the help talk to you like a child.

FONSIA. Isn't it the truth. You know, I never take my medicine. Oh no, I take "our" medicine.

WELLER. I say to hell with them. To hell with all of them.

FONSIA. That's what I say, too.

WELLER. Fonsia Dorsey! Your father would roll over in his grave.

FONSIA. I didn't say it . . . You said it.

WELLER. Do you know what, Mrs. Dorsey? It's almost three o'clock and we haven't amused ourselves yet.

FONSIA. Oh my goodness . . . I think I'm feeling faint.

WELLER. I will amuse you immediately. *(He rises and crosses toward the cardtable—to Up Stage of the*

Stage Right chair.) At our age that could only mean one thing—I'll get the cards.

FONSIA. *(Rising and crossing to the Stage Right chair.)* Oh, Weller.

WELLER. A couple of hands of Gin, Mrs. Dorsey, and you'll feel as good as new. *(Pointing at Stage Left chair.)* Why don't you try that chair this time.

FONSIA. Oh, alright. *(She crosses and sits in the Stage Left chair. She takes out her glasses and puts them on.)* Now, I hope I remember how this goes.

WELLER. *(Has sat in the Stage Right chair and is beginning to mark out the lines on the scorepad. He looks up.)* From the way you played last time, I don't think you're going to have any trouble whatsoever. *(He fills in the names on the pad.)* Fonsia, Weller . . . Fonsia, Weller . . . Fonsia, Weller.

FONSIA. *(Before he finishes the last "Fonsia, Weller.")* You know, my family's never called me anything but Fonsie.

WELLER. Fonsie?

FONSIA. Yes.

WELLER. Why would they change Fonsia to Fonsie?

FONSIA. Beats me.

WELLER. *(Showing her the pad.)* F-O-N-S-I-A . . . right?

FONSIA. *(Taking the pad.)* Yes . . . you spelled it right. *(She puts the pad back beside him.)*

WELLER. Fonsia, Fonsie. That's an unusual name.

FONSIA. I know. I don't have an idea where they got it.

WELLER. *(Shuffling the cards.)* Which do you prefer?

FONSIA. It don't make any difference to me.

WELLER. Alright . . . I'll just call you whichever comes to mind first. How's that?

FONSIA. That'll be fine.

WELLER. (*Dealing.*) One, one. Two, two. Three, three. Four, four. Five, five. Six, six. Seven, seven. Eight, eight. Nine, nine. Ten, ten. And Eleven for you.

FONSIA. Now why do I get eleven and you only get ten? I swear I've forgotten.

WELLER. That's because I dealt and you'll make the first play . . . which will be a discard. Get your cards organized. (*FONSIA hums as she slowly and deliberately sorts her cards.*) Alright, now go ahead and discard. (*FONSIA discards.*) O.K., now the game is underway. You have ten cards and I have ten cards.

FONSIA. I swear this game relaxes me.

WELLER. Gin's a very relaxing game. I used to play for hours on business trips. I had it all figured out—San Francisco to Chicago . . . two Hollywoods. (*He picks up the pad as an explanation of "Hollywoods."*) Los Angeles to New York . . . four Hollywoods. New York to Los Angeles . . . five Hollywoods! Headwinds. You always get headwinds flying West.

FONSIA. Well, now. All that time you were playing Gin then didn't seem like you were frittering your life away. Why should it be any different now?

WELLER. Well, now. That's a good question. I don't know.

FONSIA. We don't want to talk about that now, anyway. (*Pause. WELLER starts to play, then looks up.*)

WELLER. Have you played?

FONSIA. No. I'm just trying to figure this out.

WELLER. Well, come on. Play a card.

FONSIA. Alright. (*She discards. WELLER begins to draw but is stopped by FONSIA knocking twice on the table.*) I'll knock with three. (*She lays her cards out.*)

WELLER. You told me you'd never played this game before.

FONSIA. You explained the part about knocking last week.

WELLER. Yes, and if I remember correctly, you were rather hazy about it.

FONSIA. No, I understood it. I just said I'd stick to the Gin part of the game at first.

WELLER. Well, I don't think we have to worry about your memory anymore.

FONSIA. That was right, wasn't it?

WELLER. Exceedingly. (*He counts up his cards.*) Ten . . . twenty . . . thirty, forty, forty-three, forty-six . . . forty-eight! Minus your three . . . gives you forty-five. (*He writes down her score.*)

FONSIA. (*Rises and crosses Up Right.*) This chair is killing my back. Oh, I sound like Mrs. Leala in there now.

WELLER. It doesn't seem to be hurting your Gin game any.

FONSIA. (*Taking a pillow from the top of the piano.*) I'm going to put this pillow behind my back. (*As she crosses back to her chair, WELLER is shuffling the cards.*) My soul. Would you look at that. I can't get over how you shuffle those cards.

WELLER. It's not that difficult.

FONSIA. (*Leans the cushion against the back of the chair and sits.*) Oh my soul— If I tried to do that, the cards would be flying everywhich way.

WELLER. (*Dealing.*) One, one. Two, two. Three, three. Four, four. Five, five. Six, six. Seven, seven. Eight, eight. Nine, nine. Ten, ten. Eleven. (*They pick up their cards and arrange them.*) What a mess. (*They begin to play.*)

FONSIA. Do you like stewed tomatoes?

WELLER. No.

FONSIA. I have never talked to anyone who did.

WELLER. They serve them often enough around here.

FONSIA. I can't understand that. With all the wonderful vegetables there are in this world.

WELLER. Dieticians are not noted for their imaginations.

FONSIA. Honestly, I think I could do better than that Mrs. Gib . . . Gibren, Jibran . . . what is her name?

WELLER. Gibran. *(He discards and she picks it up.)*

FONSIA. Gibran. Gin! *(She lays out her cards.)*

WELLER. For God's sake, Fonsia, I just dealt the cards.

FONSIA. I know. I got everything I needed right away.

WELLER. That seems to happen quite a lot to you. *(He counts up his cards.)* Twenty, forty, forty-two . . . plus twenty-five for Gin . . . gives you sixty-seven. *(He marks down the score.)* That puts you out in the first game and gives you a sixty-seven leg on the second. Goddamn! *(WELLER begins to gather the cards. FONSIA turns the scorepad toward her to examine it.)*

FONSIA. You didn't get any points at all in that game, did you?

WELLER. *(Shuffling the cards.)* No. No, Fonsia. I didn't get any points at all in that game.

FONSIA. *(Putting the pad back.)* That's too bad.

WELLER. It's been two weeks now that I haven't won a game.

FONSIA. Well, I'm sure you'll win one soon.

WELLER. I'd say the percentages are definitely starting to favor me. *(Dealing.)* One, one. Two, two. Three, three. Four, four. Five, five. Six, six. Seven, seven. Eight, eight. Nine, nine. Ten, ten. Eleven. *(During the deal, FONSIA, feeling faint, turns Down Stage, leans over and puts her head on her knees.)*

FONSIA. *(Straightening up.)* Goodness. I just had the dizziest feeling in my head.

WELLER. *(Rising.)* Are you all right?

FONSIA. Yeah. It's gone now. *(WELLER sits.)* I think it's those pills they're giving me. I don't think they hit me right. *(They pick up their cards and begin to arrange them.)*

WELLER. Do you know what they're giving you?

FONSIA. I'm not real sure. Seems like it's a different prescription.

WELLER. You'd better have your Doctor check it. I mean your own Doctor—not one of these Welfare quacks.

FONSIA. I'm not here on Welfare.

WELLER. I didn't say that you were. I just said you better have somebody check that medicine . . . that's all. *(PAUSE, as they play.)*

FONSIA. *(Draws a card, then looks up at WELLER.)* I didn't mean to jump at you.

WELLER. Play a card. *(She discards and he draws.)* When you got dizzy just now . . . did everything seem kind of unreal . . . distorted?

FONSIA. No. Just a dizziness, like I was going to fall off the chair there for a minute.

WELLER. Sometimes I'll be sitting in my room . . . or even out here . . . and everything will take on a dreamlike quality; people, the room, everything . . . like it wasn't really happening. At first I could snap out of it almost immediately. But then, a couple of times, it hit me and I couldn't shake it. This feeling of sheer terror came over me. God, I didn't know what to do. I'd sit there panic stricken, for no reason at all. People around me would go about their business. I don't think they even knew I was having a problem. And then it would pass.

FONSIA. That isn't a thing in this world but nerves. (Pause. WELLER looks into space. After a moment, he looks at his cards, then at FONSIA.)

WELLER. Whose discard? . . . Is it mine?

FONSIA. I believe so.

WELLER. (Discards.) I tell you, it was one of the worst feelings I've ever had in my life.

FONSIA. I went through something like that years ago with my divorce.

WELLER. How'd you get over it?

FONSIA. Time.

WELLER. Just time?

FONSIA. Just time.

WELLER. Play a card. (FONSIA deliberates.) Well, are you going to play one?

FONSIA. Alright. (She discards.)

WELLER. (Draws a card.) I should knock while I've got the chance. You're probably sitting over there with Gin already.

FONSIA. Not quite.

WELLER. (His full attention now on the game, he comments on each of his cards as he discards it.)

Nothing. (FONSIA plays. WELLER draws and discards.)

Nothing. (FONSIA plays. WELLER draws and discards.)

Nothing! (WELLER discards and FONSIA picks it up.)

FONSIA. There it is. Gin! (She lays out her cards.)

WELLER. Goddamnit! I just don't know what to say. I'm stuck with one. You're the luckiest person I've ever seen play Gin in my life. (He picks up the pad and pencil and writes down the score.)

FONSIA. You should've knocked.

WELLER. Hindsight's twenty-twenty.

FONSIA. You would've really gotten me. I was waiting for that Queen. I thought I'd never get it.

WELLER. (Looking up.) What?

FONSIA. I said I thought I'd never get that Queen.

WELLER. Do you mean to tell me that you held Queens throughout that entire hand?

FONSIA. That's what I'm saying. (She picks up her cards to illustrate.) I had these two Queens, so if you had knocked, you would have beaten me. Now do you see?

WELLER. (Grabbing her cards from her.) Fonsia—that is dumb! That is just dumb Gin. Holding a face card that long. I just can't believe it. (Dealing.) One, one. Two, two. Three, three. Four, four. Five, five. Six, six. Seven, seven. Eight, eight. Nine, nine. Ten, ten. Eleven. (They pick up their cards and begin to arrange them.)

FONSIA. I won the game, didn't I?

WELLER. Oh, for God's sake, don't try to relate how you play Gin to the fact that you've won a few games.

FONSIA. What do you relate it to?

WELLER. To one of the most incredible runs of luck that I've ever seen in my life.

FONSIA. Lord, Weller. I can't help it. Don't shout at me for mercy sake.

WELLER. I'm sorry I raised my voice. It's frustration . . . nothing more. Just frustration. (They begin to play.)

FONSIA. Have you had any of your things turn up missing since you've been here?

WELLER. You mean stolen? Damn right I have. A three hundred dollar watch. (He pulls a watchless chain out of his breast pocket.)

FONSIA. My Lord! I never heard that! Did you call the police?

WELLER. Sure I called the police. They came out here, took my name and address, and said, "Oh, it happens all the time."

FONSIA. That's awful. You'd think they could do more than that.

WELLER. Well, it'd be pretty naive to expect them to come out here and "solve the case." What are they going to do? Run around fingerprinting everybody?

FONSIA. I guess you're right. They've stolen just about everything they can lay their hands on . . . but you can't prove a thing.

WELLER. Of course not. If they paid anything, they might get some decent help around here. But no . . . they're too cheap for that. *(He discards and she picks it up.)*

FONSIA. Now, Weller. Don't get mad at me . . . all I've done is sit here and play the cards the same as you.

WELLER. Have you got Gin again?

FONSIA. Yeah. *(She lays her cards down.)*

WELLER. Jesus Christ! *(Throwing his cards down, he rises and crosses Up Stage of the table.)* Do you have to win all the Goddamn time? I mean it! Can't you lose just once?

FONSIA. Honestly—I'm not trying to do this.

WELLER. *(He has started back to his chair. He stops.)* Oh, you're not even trying. How reassuring. *(He sits and begins to gather the cards. He stops.)* Oh hell, now I've forgotten what I was stuck with. It was a bundle. I'll just call it fifty. Whatever it was, puts you out in the second game. Let's see . . . fifty would make it seventy-six . . . plus twenty-five for Gin . . . Seventy-six and twenty-five . . . *(He begins to write down score.)* Goddamn, it couldn't have been fifty. Musta been forty. Gives you . . . ninety-one. *(He writes the score.)* Christ, I've never seen anything like it. You're incredible.

FONSIA. Weller. I don't want to go through this everytime I win. I'd sooner not play.

WELLER. *(Picking up the pad and tossing it to her.)*

But look at that. Go to hell. *(He begins to shuffle the cards.)*

FONSIA. *(Putting the pad back by WELLER.)* I can't help it.

WELLER. Oh, I get it. You can't help it if I don't know how to play Gin . . . is that it? Well, let me tell you . . .

FONSIA. Weller, I'm going to quit if you keep it up.

WELLER. Awh no! You're not going to quit on me now.

FONSIA. Would you like to play cards if someone were shouting at you all the time?

WELLER. Alright. I'll try to watch my temper. *(As he deals, FONSIA takes a piece of hard candy out of her pocket. She unwraps it and puts it in her mouth.)* One, one. Two, two. Three, three. Four, four. Five, five. Six, six. Seven, seven. Eight, eight. Nine, nine. Ten, ten. Eleven. But I'll tell you something, Fonsia. It's not just me. This is enough to drive anybody up the wall. *(They pick up their cards and arrange them.)* Finally, a decent hand.

FONSIA. I've got a good one, too.

WELLER. You've always got a good one.

FONSIA. You take it too seriously, Weller. Lord, it's only a game. *(FONSIA pats WELLER's arm. He shakes her away. As they play, FONSIA crunches on her candy, hums a Sousa march and taps her foot. WELLER's face gets redder and redder, the angrier he gets.)* Oh Lord, Weller. You're getting so red in the face, I'm afraid something's going to happen to you.

WELLER. I get that way sometimes. Look, you've got diabetes—I've got something else—play a card. *(She discards.)* That won't help.

FONSIA. I don't want you to have a stroke right in front of me.

WELLER. I'll worry about the stroke. You just worry about your cards. *(She discards.)* No help. *(WELLER holds his hand over the draw pile.)* Any five, any six or the seven of Clubs. *(He draws.)* Shit!

FONSIA. *(WELLER discards and FONSI picks it up. She discards. As WELLER starts to draw, FONSI realizes that she has Gin.)* I've got Gin!

WELLER. I don't believe it! Let me see that. *(WELLER looks at her cards, throws his down on the table and rises, crossing Down Right of the table.)* Aw, Bullshit! Bullshit! Jesus Christ. Look at that shit!

FONSIA. Weller! *(She rises and moves away from WELLER and the table.)*

WELLER. Jesus Christ Almighty! *(WELLER grabs the Down Stage edge of the table and flips it over as the CURTAIN comes in.)*

It is the following evening, shortly after dinner. The curtain rises on an empty stage. From Up Right, we hear kitchen noises—dishes being washed, etc. Crickets are heard from the front. The Stage Right shade has been pulled up. The broken shards around the flower pots have been cleared away. The cardtable is Down Left against the screen with the chairs Up Stage. After a moment, the Stage Right door opens and we hear WELLER talking to someone in the house.

WELLER. Never mind. She's probably out here. *(WELLER enters. He is wearing dark grey pants, a washed out green shirt and a light grey jacket. He crosses Center.)* Fonsia. Fonsie. She might be out in the garden. *(He crosses Down Right, looking out into the theatre.)* Fonsie. Fonsie, is that you out there?

FONSIA. *(She is in the House Left Aisle.)* What is it, Weller?

WELLER. *(Having crossed onto the flagstone apron.)* I wanted to talk to you. It's getting pretty dark out there. You'd better come in.

FONSIA. I'll be in, in a little while. *(WELLER sits Stage Right on the step.)* Why don't you just go on.

WELLER. I'll just sit here until you're ready to come in.

FONSIA. Weller, I want to be alone for awhile—out here . . . not in my room.

WELLER. I didn't mean to disturb you, Fonsia. Honestly, I don't mind sitting here . . . waiting.

FONSIA. (*Beginning to cross toward the stage.*) No. You're right. It is dark out there now. It was so pretty before, with all the spring flowers.

WELLER. (*Rises and crosses to FONZIA who now stands Stage Right on the apron. FONZIA is wearing a navy blue dress with white polka-dots, the same rose-colored sweater and the same sandals.*) Fonsia, I'll get right to the point. I owe you an apology.

FONSIA. Yes, you do.

WELLER. Alright. Fonsia, I am embarrassed by my own behavior yesterday and I sincerely apologize. (*WELLER bows to FONZIA.*)

FONSIA. (*Passing WELLER and crossing up the step.*) I can't tell whether you're joking or whether you really mean it.

WELLER. Of course I mean it. What do you want me to say? That I behaved like a complete ass? I'm sorry that I upset you, and . . . I'm just sorry, that's all.

FONSIA. You frightened me. I don't think you realize how much your temper affects people.

WELLER. (*Crossing Center on the step.*) I'm sure it can be rather awesome at times—but, it's nothing to be afraid of.

FONSIA. (*Crossing Right of Center.*) I don't think I'm so much afraid of what you're going to do to me. I just don't know what's going to happen next. When you threw that table . . .

WELLER. (*Crossing Center, onto the stage.*) Oh, that was nothing. It wasn't directed at you, anyway.

FONSIA. (*Sitting Stage Right on the glider.*) It still frightened me.

WELLER. (*Crosses and sits Stage Left on the glider.*) Fonsie, let's be realistic about this. Except for the couple of times that I lost my temper, I think we've thoroughly enjoyed each other's company.

FONSIA. I enjoy your company, Weller . . . but you can't play Gin.

WELLER. What? What do you mean I can't play Gin. Lord, woman, I was playing Gin. . .

FONSIA. No, no. No, Weller. I didn't mean you can't play Gin. I mean you can't play without losing your temper.

WELLER. Jesus. Next thing you know, you'll be thinking you're some sort of expert, for Christ's sake.

FONSIA. My lands, no. Lord knows I'm no expert. I just play like an expert.

WELLER. (*Rising and crossing to the bookcase.*) Oh God. Now she's done it.

FONSIA. Oh, Weller. I was only teasing.

WELLER. (*At the bookcase.*) Goddamnit, where are those cards. (*He finds a deck of cards and crosses to the cardtable.*)

FONSIA. As the Lord is my savior, Weller, I was only teasing you.

WELLER. Lots of people tease like that. They say exactly what the hell they mean—then they say, "I was only kidding." (*WELLER pulls the table to Center—under the light fixture.*) Where's my scorepad? You can't keep anything around this place. (*WELLER puts the cards on the table and crosses Stage Left to get a chair.*)

FONSIA. Now, Weller. I'm not going to play any Gin with you.

WELLER. (*Crossing with a chair and placing it Stage Left at the table.*) Oh, come on, Fonsie, for God's sake.

FONSIA. I mean it.

WELLER. (*Crossing Stage Left to get the second chair.*) Alright, don't play. Go back in there with all those glassy-eyed old bastards. (*He places this chair Stage Right of the table.*)

FONSIA. You shouldn't talk about them that way. You're part of this thing here too, you know.

WELLER. Yeah, well in that case, I'm the part of it that's breathing. (*He crosses to the light switch on the Stage Right wall.*) Don't kid yourself that this is anything more than a warehouse for the intellectually and emotionally dead. (*He switches on the light and crosses to Stage Right of the table.*) Nothing more than a place to store them until their bodies quit.

FONSIA. God, you're cynical.

WELLER. (*Sitting in the Stage Right chair.*) It isn't cynical. It's a fact, that's all.

FONSIA. Well, I'm sure glad I don't look at life that way. It's just the mercy of God that we're able to get around a little better than they are. They're just sick, that's all.

WELLER. (*Shuffling the cards.*) They're not half as sick as the ones who put them here. And they're not a third as sick as this bunch that's supposed to be taking care of them.

FONSIA. Which side of this thing are you on, anyway? Sometimes I think you're just looking for a fight.

WELLER. (*Dealing out a game of solitaire.*) I'm just looking to mind my own business.

FONSIA. And you've got a horrible temper . . . and a sarcastic streak.

WELLER. (*Turning to look at FONSIA.*) So what. If I were you, I wouldn't be talking about anybody else's shortcomings. (*He turns back to the table.*)

FONSIA. What's that supposed to mean?

WELLER. Well, neither one of us is winning any popularity contest out here on Visitors' Day.

FONSIA. Oh, I see. No one visits me, so I'm an evil person.

WELLER. (*Turns toward FONSIA.*) Did you ever hear of Ty Cobb?

FONSIA. He played baseball.

WELLER. (*Returning to game.*) That's right. Ty Cobb played baseball. He played baseball for 24 years. You know how many of his team-mates showed up for his funeral? Three! Kinda makes you think that Ty Cobb may have been something less than a warm, loving human being, doesn't it.

FONSIA. Maybe.

WELLER. Well, sir. He's three ahead of us on visitors.

FONSIA. Just what are you driving at, Weller?

WELLER. (*Turning to FONSIA.*) Why doesn't your son come to visit you?

FONSIA. I told you. He lives in Denver. I thought you understood that.

WELLER. Then why aren't you in an old age home in Denver? Or you'd think at least he'd come to see that you're comfortable and that it's a decent place . . .

FONSIA. I don't want to talk about this anymore. (*WELLER turns back to the table.*) The Sunshine Ladies are going to be here tonight. I think I'll go in and talk to them for awhile.

WELLER. Help yourself.

FONSIA. I suppose you think they're just so many jerks, too.

WELLER. Now, I never said anything like that. They're a damn sight more sincere than some that come out here. Like that group that came looking for substitute Grandparents. What was that called?

FONSIA. . . . Extension Family.

WELLER. That's it, Extension Family. No, it wasn't extension . . .

FONSIA. Extended!

WELLER. Extended! That's it! Unitarians. Wanted to psychoanalyze everything for Christ's sake.

FONSIA. Weller, I wish you wouldn't take the Lord's name so much.

WELLER. What's it going to be? Gin or the Sunshine Ladies.

FONSIA. Oh, I think I should go in.

WELLER. Hell, they're not going to be here for an hour or more.

FONSIA. Still . . . I think I'd better. *(She rises and slowly starts to cross to the Stage Right door.)*

WELLER. Alright, Goddamnit! Go ahead. I don't see how you can stand it in there. The same damn empty look on face after face. You ought to see them the day they change the bed linens. Maybe you have. All lined up in their wheelchairs, all up and down the hall . . . like rows of wrinkled pumpkin heads.

FONSIA. *(At the Stage Right door, she turns and crosses back to Center.)* Maybe we could play a few hands. You're just going to pester me 'til I play anyway. *(She crosses to the piano to get her pillow.)*

WELLER. Well, what the hell else is there to do?

FONSIA. *(Crossing to the table.)* Not much, I guess.

WELLER. Would you see if you can find my score-pad? Thank you.

FONSIA. *(Leaves the pillow on the chair and crosses to the bookcase to get the pad and pencil.)* I'm so tired of the TV. And all Mrs. Leala wants to talk about is her funeral arrangements. *(She crosses to the table and puts the pad and pencil down.)*

WELLER. You won't find a hotter topic of conversation—I don't care who you talk to. Not around here. *(He marks the lines on the pad.)*

FONSIA. *(Sitting in the Stage Left chair.)* My

mother was that way. As far as I can remember, funerals were the only social life she had. Well, if this isn't the pot calling the kettle black. Here I sit talking about the same thing they are. *(She puts on her glasses.)*

WELLER. That's what happens when you get too far away from playing Gin. Atrophy. Next thing you know, you'll be staring out of the window all day long.

FONSIA. Weller, you're impos . . .

WELLER. *(Dealing.)* One, one. Two, two. Three, three. Four, four. Five, five. Six, six. Seven, seven. Eight, eight. Nine, nine. Ten, ten. And eleven for you. *(They pick up their cards.)*

FONSIA. Now, if I win, don't you shout at me.

WELLER. Fonsia, I fully expect you to win, and I promise to do my level best not to rant and rave about it.

FONSIA. Well, now. I'm going to hold you to that.

WELLER. I swear, Fonsie, you get yourself upset about the silliest things.

FONSIA. Well . . .

WELLER. Well, you do.

FONSIA. Sometimes, I guess. *(They begin to play.)* You know, something used to worry me sick when I was working.

WELLER. What's that?

FONSIA. Now, this really is silly. I was always afraid I was going to misspell a word.

WELLER. Now there's a novel fear for you.

FONSIA. It's the truth. I had to work after I divorced Walter. I worked as an Apartment Manager. Course, I didn't have any education to speak of.

WELLER. Well, you've got a good mind.

FONSIA. Still, I was always afraid they'd find out.

WELLER. Find out what?

FONSIA. Well, I put down that I had graduated High School.

WELLER. For the Lord's sake. Who cares whether you graduated High School or not. My God. How old are you, anyway?

FONSIA. Seventy-one.

WELLER. Seventy-one. And you're afraid that someone's going to find out that fifty years ago you didn't graduate with the class. My God, Fonsia. *(He discards and she picks it up. She looks at her hand and then at WELLER.)*

FONSIA. Weller.

WELLER. You've got Gin.

FONSIA. Yes. *(FONSIA lays her cards down.)*

WELLER. I knew it. I knew it. I'm stuck with . . . eight. *(He marks the scorepad with 'F's and 'W's.)* You know, when you get Gin, you're supposed to put the discard face down.

FONSIA. *(Turning the card over.)* Oh, I'm sorry.

WELLER. It's no big deal. It's just the way the game is played, that's all. Let's see, eight plus twenty-five gives you thirty-three. And, of course, I get my customary goose-egg. *(He marks down the score.)*

FONSIA. Weller, I can't help it. I'm sorry.

WELLER. Don't be sorry for me, for Christ's sake.

FONSIA. I wish you could win one.

WELLER. You play your best, damnit. I'm not going to have you trying to lose just to appease poor Weller. I'm one of the best damn Gin players you'll ever see. . . . *(He deals.)* One, one. Two, two. Three, three. Four, four. Five, five. Six, six. Seven, seven. Eight, eight. Nine, nine. Ten, ten. Eleven . . . and I sure as hell don't need any help from you. *(They pick up their cards.)*

FONSIA. Alright, Weller. *(They arrange their cards and FONSIA discards.)* Transferred.

WELLER. What?

FONSIA. Transferred!

WELLER. What the hell are you talking about?

FONSIA. How many "r's" are there in the word "Transferred?"

WELLER. Transferred . . . two.

FONSIA. Hah!

WELLER. Three? What the hell.

FONSIA. Three!

WELLER. Three.

FONSIA. There are three "r's" in the word "Transferred." I had to look that word up everytime I spelled it for twenty-five years. Course, you get a lot of people transferred in the apartment business. *(She discards.)*

WELLER. You're not paying any mind to what you're doing.

FONSIA. Yes, I am too.

WELLER. You just gave me the Jack of Hearts.

FONSIA. Well, I can't use it.

WELLER. I know. But I picked up a Jack not more than thirty seconds ago. You knew I was keeping Jacks. Now, why'd you give me another one?

FONSIA. Because I'm not keeping Jacks!

WELLER. Well, I got the Gin. *(He lays his cards out.)* So you'll be pleased to know that your little plan worked. *(He rises and crosses Down Right.)*

FONSIA. What plan? In the name of the Lord.

WELLER. *(Crossing back to the table.)* I told you not to lose on purpose, by God, and I meant it. I don't need you to let me win.

FONSIA. I am not letting you win. Ch, I wish you could see yourself right now, Weller. *(She rises and turns Up Stage.)*

WELLER. Where are you going?

FONSIA. (*Turns back to WELLER.*) If you could see yourself, you wouldn't act this way.

WELLER. I said, where do you think you're going?

FONSIA. It's late, Weller. I think we should go in. (*She starts to cross Up Stage.*)

WELLER. (*Coming around the Down Stage side of the table and Up Left to FONSIA, he grabs her arm and swings her Down Stage.*) You sit right back down over there, Fonsia. We're nowhere near quitting. In fact, we're just getting started. (*He crosses to the Stage Right side of the table.*)

FONSIA. (*Crossing back to the table.*) Besides, you said you wouldn't get this way.

WELLER. I'm not getting any way. All I'm asking you to do is play the cards the way you normally would and try to win. (*He sits and gathers the cards.*)

FONSIA. (*Crossing Down Stage of the Stage Left chair.*) Weller, I don't like this. I think you should try to see one of the doctors when they come by.

WELLER. Hand me those cards over there.

FONSIA. (*She gives him the cards that she has left on the Up Left corner of the table and sits.*) Maybe the doctor could give you some pills.

WELLER. I'll worry about the doctors. You just play your cards and play them right. (*He puts the cards down and looks up at FONSIA.*) Fonsia, I'm going to get to the bottom of this. No. We're going to get to the bottom of this because you're going to help me. What we're going to do is . . . we're going to find out exactly what force is at work here. There's a reason that you constantly draw precisely the card you need—and you do, come hell or high water—and I'm going to find out what that force is. (*He deals.*) One, one. Two, two. Three, three. Four, four. Five, five. Six,

six. Seven, seven. Eight, eight. Nine, nine. Ten, ten. Eleven. (*They pick up their cards. FONSIA looks at her hand, closes it, and puts it down on the table.*)

FONSIA. Weller, I'm not feeling well.

WELLER. Play your cards, damnit! (*FONSIA glares at him.*) I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Please play your cards.

FONSIA. (*Picks up her hand.*) This is ridiculous.

WELLER. I don't care if it's ridiculous or not. Discard. (*She does.*) Alright. Now I'll discard and Fonsia'll pick it up, won't you. (*FONSIA picks up WELLER's discard.*) She did. I told you she would. Didn't I tell you she would.

FONSIA. Weller, who are you talking to?

WELLER. To myself. To me and my little man. (*FONSIA looks up.*) You see, there's a little man sitting right there. (*He points to his Down Stage shoulder.*) Now, I'll discard and it's going to be the exact card that Fonsia wants. (*He discards. FONSIA hesitates, then finally takes his discard.*) What did I tell you! Christ! She controls my mind.

FONSIA. Oh Lord.

WELLER. This time I'll trick her. I'm going to discard this card . . . and, no. At the last moment I change my mind and discard this card. (*FONSIA draws from the deck.*) And she doesn't take it. By God, I think I've found the answer. You've been reading my mind, haven't you, Fonsia? What are you? Some sort of witch? No, that's not it. I know what it is. Divine Intervention. That's what it is. Divine Intervention.

FONSIA. Weller, stop it.

WELLER. Well, it is, isn't it?

FONSIA. (*She puts her cards face down on the table and turns Up Stage, ready to stand.*) It's late. I think we should go in.

WELLER. You've got it, haven't you. You've got Gin.

FONSIA. No, Weller. I don't have Gin.

WELLER. You've got to say so when you get it, now. I'll be damned if I want you sitting over there with Gin in your hand just waiting for me to go out.

FONSIA. *(She picks up her cards.)* Believe me, I'll tell you. I need one more card. And when I get it, I'll tell you.

WELLER. Well, sir. You won't be getting anymore help from me. *(He discards and she picks it up.)*

FONSIA. Well, I got it. There it is—Gin. *(She lays her cards down on the table.)* Now can we quit?

WELLER. Who gave you that card? I want to know who gave you that card! *(He rises and leans in toward FONSIA. She pulls back.)* God gave you that card, didn't he? Didn't God give you that card?

FONSIA. Yes, Weller. God gave me that card.

WELLER. Don't you patronize me, you bitch.

FONSIA. *(Rises and slaps WELLER.)* Just who do you think you're talking to, MAN.

WELLER. *(Slowly sinks back down onto his chair.)* Alright, alright. I shouldn't have called you that.

FONSIA. *(Beginning to cross Up Right.)* I'll not sit here and have you call me names.

WELLER. No. No. Don't go. I said I was sorry. Now that ought to be enough.

FONSIA. *(On her way to the Stage Right door.)* I've had enough of this whole thing.

WELLER. I said, don't go.

FONSIA. I'm going to call one of the nurses.

WELLER. *(Rises and crosses Up Center.)* No! No! Wait a minute. What would you want to do that for? Call one of the nurses. What are you going to tell the Nurse? . . . "I'm being held hostage by a maniac who's forcing me to play Gin?"

FONSIA. Well, I ought to tell her something.

WELLER. *(Crosses to his chair and sits.)* One more hand. I promise. Just one more hand. *(He tries to gather up the cards.)*

FONSIA. *(Crossing toward the sofa where she sits.)* This is so upsetting.

WELLER. If I can just get these damned cards straightened up. *(Reaching for the scorepad.)* What the hell's the score? Fonsia—a thousand . . . ten thousand. Oh, screw it. *(He throws the pad and pencil on the floor. FONSIA rises and starts to cross to the Stage Right door.)* Look. We'll play this one more hand. Just this one, and then we'll quit. Come on, Fonsie. I promise. This will be the last hand. *(As he deals, FONSIA crosses to her chair and sits.)* One, one. Two, two. Three, three. Four, four. Five, five. Six, six. Seven, seven. Eight, eight. Nine, nine. Ten, ten. Eleven. *(They pick up their cards.)*

FONSIA. I hope this is quick.

WELLER. You mean I didn't deal you a perfect hand? I must be slipping.

FONSIA. Just play your cards, Weller.

WELLER. Just play your cards, Weller. My, aren't we getting tough.

FONSIA. Not tough. Just tired. Very tired.

WELLER. Well, all you have to do . . . *(He draws and looks at the card.)* Goddamnit. All you have to do is win this one real quick and we can go in. *(He discards and FONSIA picks it up.)* Son-of-a-bitch. *(FONSIA glares at him.)* I'm talking about the cards.

FONSIA. No, you're not. *(She looks at her cards, trying to decide what to discard.)*

WELLER. Aw, for Christ's sake, come on. *(She discards. He draws.)* Goddamnit. *(He discards.)*

FONSIA. *(She draws.)* Every second breath you draw

has to be a curse word, doesn't it. (*She discards. He draws.*)

WELLER. Shit! (*He discards. She picks up his discard, then slowly, without a word, she lays down her winning hand.*) Say it! You've got it, Goddamnit. Say it! (*He rises and leans in toward FONZIA.*) SAY IT!

FONZIA. (*Very quietly.*) Gin.

WELLER. Oh, for Christ's sake, you can say it louder than that. I can hardly even hear you.

FONZIA. GIN, GODDAMNIT! GIN!

WELLER. (*He throws his cards down.*) Alright! We can go in. (*He begins to cross Up Stage as the curtain comes in.*)

ACT TWO

SCENE 2

It is the following Sunday afternoon. The table and the chairs are still Center Stage. There is a deck of cards on the table. As the curtain rises, WELLER is crossing Down Stage, looking back at the Up Right door, a newspaper in his hand. In place of the jacket, he now wears a dark blue-grey cardigan sweater. Instead of loafers, black sandals. He sits on the step Left of Center and pretends to read the paper. FONZIA enters Up Right. She is dressed as in the previous scene, but has removed the sweater. She crosses and sits Stage Left on the glider.

FONZIA. Mrs. Mayes just told me my sister Hattie was out here on the porch—came to see me.

WELLER. I thought you said she lived in Ottawa.

FONZIA. I did.

WELLER. Well sir, no one's been out here.

FONZIA. I didn't expect there would be.

WELLER. How've you been?

FONZIA. Mrs. Mayes isn't all that clever, you know.

WELLER. Oh, you can't pay any attention to anything she says. She doesn't even know what's going on half the time.

FONZIA. Oh, she got the message straight alright.

WELLER. (*Closes the paper and turns to FONZIA.*) What am I supposed to say?

FONZIA. She said, "Mr. Martin told me to tell you that your sister's waiting on the porch."

WELLER. (*Rises and crosses onto the porch, tossing the paper Down Stage Left.*) Oh, I didn't tell her any such thing.

FONZIA. Who the Harry do you think you're kidding, Weller? Do you suppose I'd believe that? A sister I haven't seen for fifteen years—I would come out here looking for her?

WELLER. Well, you didn't believe it—so what the hell are you complaining about?

FONZIA. It's disgusting that you would go that far just to get me out here.

WELLER. I don't give a damn if you never come out here. (*He crosses Stage Left of the table to Up Left.*)

FONZIA. Oh, yes you do. I know why you want me out here. It's that blasted card game—you just can't get that off your mind.

WELLER. I haven't asked you to play all week, have I?

FONZIA. I haven't talked to you all week.

WELLER. So what! I could've asked you to play—if I was so all fired hot about it.

FONZIA. It's been on your mind . . . I can tell that.

WELLER. What's so strange about that? Does that make me some sort of nut?

FONSIA. You just can't drop it. It was a game, Weller. You lost. It's over. So forget it.

WELLER. Well . . . suppose I do want to play you again.

FONSIA. Nothing doing. The minute you lost, it'd be the same thing all over again. I may be old, but I'm not crazy.

WELLER. I'm not crazy, either.

FONSIA. I've never seen a man get so wild over a game of cards in my life. It's not natural, Weller. There's something wrong.

WELLER. (*Crossing to Up Right of the table.*) Oh, I know all about how you think there's something wrong with me. They called me down to the office last Tuesday to tell me they were thinking of having a psychiatrist come out here and talk to me. Do you know what they could do if he says there's something wrong with my mind? They could have me committed to the State Mental Hospital. The very fact that you complained makes me a trouble-maker.

FONSIA. You could need help and not know it. There's such a thing as that, you know. All I was trying to do was help you.

WELLER. Goddamnit, I don't need your help. And don't you go judging me. (*He crosses Down Left to his newspaper.*)

FONSIA. Alright . . . suit yourself. I just felt as long as you've got some money, it wouldn't hurt to have you talk to someone who might be able. . .

WELLER. (*Stopping and turning to FONSIA.*) Got some money? Who told you I had money?

FONSIA. Well, you did. You had your own business . . . and you did well, I thought. Flying around the country, I just assumed. . .

WELLER. (*Crosses and sits in the Stage Left chair.*)

Oh hell, I did do well. You're right. I built that Goddamn business. And if I'd had a little better luck with my business partners, I'd probably still have it. Christ, I was literally thrown out of my own business.

FONSIA. How could they do that? Didn't you get anything?

WELLER. It's too complicated. Yes, I had some money. I had over forty-seven thousand dollars. But I made the mistake of getting sick. Then I made the mistake of getting well. I stayed at Belair Convalescent two and a half years after my heart attack. Then I had a relapse—had to go to the hospital for four days—and those bastards at Belair wouldn't hold my bed. I didn't have any money left so they didn't have to take me back. I was placed here. Placed! By some lowly, brainless bastard at the Welfare Department. (*There is a flash of lightning followed by thunder.*) And now you're trying to have me declared some sort of personality problem around here.

FONSIA. Maybe I shouldn't have said anything. No, if I didn't say something, the next thing you know they'd find one of us out here on the floor.

WELLER. Oh, Fonsia, don't be ridiculous.

FONSIA. You may think it's ridiculous—but I'm the one that's getting shouted at and pushed around. And the way you look at me when you get like that. I don't know what you might do.

WELLER. What do you think I'm going to do? Hit you over the head?

FONSIA. I just don't know.

WELLER. You just don't know. Good God, you make harsh judgments, Fonsia. I'm a potential murderer. I'm crazy, I'm vulgar. According to you I'm a hopeless sinner for taking the Lord's name all the time. I'm dis-

honest in business. . . *(As he speaks, there is a flash of lightning and a rumble of thunder.)*

FONSIA. I never said that.

WELLER. What?

FONSIA. That you were dishonest in business.

WELLER. The hell you didn't. Remember the guy who paid me four thousand . . .

FONSIA. No, you said yourself it was only worth five hundred.

WELLER. I said it was worth whatever he was willing to pay.

FONSIA. Well, you're the one who has to live with it. *(Pause.)*

WELLER. You know what's wrong with most of the people in the world today? They have a mother who's just like you.

FONSIA. That is the most insulting remark I have ever heard in my life.

WELLER. God. I'll bet your son has had a hard time of it.

FONSIA. Weller, that's personal and it's none of your business.

WELLER. I know why Larry doesn't visit you. I know why now . . .

FONSIA. Weller. . .

WELLER. It doesn't have a damn thing to do with Denver, or distance, or job or anything else like that. I know what it is now. You've made him feel like the lowest piece of crap on earth for so long he can't stand the sight of you. He hates you.

FONSIA. That's not true! And I won't have you talk to me like that!

WELLER. He's never done anything right, has he? He's never done a thing in this world to please you, has he?

FONSIA. *(Rising and turning to face WELLER.)* Stop it, Weller. I'm warning you.

WELLER. *(Rising.)* He doesn't even live in Denver, does he? *(A flash of lightning and thunder is heard.)*

FONSIA. Well, that is the craziest thing I have ever heard in my life.

WELLER. *(He crosses Down Left of the glider. FONSIA backs away.)* You are guilty of lying. FONSIA is a liar, because your son lives right here in town . . . and you know it.

FONSIA. He does not hate me. He doesn't hate me.

WELLER. Then why doesn't he visit you? Why does he totally ignore his own mother?

FONSIA. He . . . he just doesn't bother, I guess. He just doesn't bother. *(WELLER turns away and crosses Center. He turns back to face FONSIA.)* How did you know he lives here?

WELLER. I didn't. I was guessing.

FONSIA. Guessing?

WELLER. Yes. Guessing.

FONSIA. Guessing! *(She runs at WELLER and begins to beat at him.)* You bastard! You bastard! I hate you. . . *(WELLER drops his cane and holds up his arms to ward off her blows. He grabs her arms to restrain her. Finally, she subsides into sobs.)*

WELLER. Fonsie. Fonsie. Fonsie. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. *(WELLER begins to put his arms around FONSIA. She breaks away and sits Stage Left on the glider, sobbing. WELLER picks up his cane and crosses a few steps Up Stage. He turns. After a moment, he shivers.)* Lord, it's getting cold out here. It's getting darker, too. That storm's coming closer. *(WELLER crosses Up Stage of FONSIA, taking off his sweater. He tosses it over her shoulders, then pats her left shoulder. She puts her hand over his.)*

FONSIA. Weller. . . I did lie to you. I'm on Weller fare, too.

WELLER. (*Crossing Stage Right of the glider.*) Well, I guess we just lived too long, Fonsia. (*He sits at the Stage Right end of the glider.*)

FONSIA. I had a little money. But with the hospital bills and trying to look after myself . . . plus I still had that little house on Ash Street I was trying to run. Of course, you can't expect your children to give up their lives. But I fixed his wagon on that house, by God. That went straight to the presbytery.

WELLER. Oh. Well, I didn't mean all that I said before. (*It begins to rain.*)

FONSIA. They can do whatever they want with it. But it's one thing he won't get.

WELLER. Here comes the rain.

FONSIA. I know who he takes after. His father was as rotten as they come. I did hope that Larry'd be different. And after all I did for him, what's he up and do about five years ago but try and look up his father! "Over my dead body," I told him. "You do that and you've seen the last of me!" Sometimes I think he does hate me. I don't know.

WELLER. You're just getting yourself all upset, Fonsia. There isn't a thing in the world you can do.

FONSIA. I know. I shouldn't get this way.

WELLER. Try to relax yourself. You're only doing yourself harm. What you need is to get your mind off him. (*There is a loud clap of thunder accompanied by a brilliant flash of lightning. The lights in the house go out. FONZIA and WELLER cringe. When the thunder dies away, WELLER rises and crosses Up Center, looking into house.*) I hope that didn't hit the home! (*The lights in the house come on.*) No. I guess it just hit a power line or something. (*WELLER starts back towards*

FONSIA. *He is stopped by the sound of water hitting the porch. He turns and sees a heavy stream of water coming from the porch roof.* What the hell is that? The roof's leaking again! They were supposed to have renovated this place five years ago, and look at that! The Goddamn roof leaks. (*He crosses Stage Left looking for something to put under the leak. He decides on the tin liner from a planter. He places this under the leak and begins crossing Stage Right.*) The walls are so damn thin you can punch your finger right through them. The heat doesn't work. This is a goddamn slum. That's what it is. A goddamn slum. It's falling apart. (*Pointing to the light switch on the Stage Right wall.*) Look at that! There's a perfect example of exactly what I'm talking about. That switch is on there at damned near a forty-five degree angle. (*He switches on the light.*) I don't know how drunk a man would have to be to think that's straight up and down.

FONSIA. (*Laughing.*) I know it's so.

WELLER. (*Has crossed Stage Left to look at the leak.*) I guess it's going to rain all afternoon.

FONSIA. I think so . . .

WELLER. (*As he turns and crosses to the cardtable.*) Well, come on. I'll play you a hand of Gin. (*He sits in the Stage Left chair and begins to shuffle the cards.*)

FONSIA. You know, Weller. You can be such an enjoyable person to be with. You've got a wonderful sense of humor . . . If it wasn't for that damned Gin game.

WELLER. My goodness, Fonsia. Such language.

FONSIA. Weller, I've played all the cards I'm going to play.

WELLER. I'm not going to argue with you, Fonsia. We're playing Gin.

FONZIA. That's it, Weller. You're not going to drop this Gin game business, and I'm not going to play. So there's no reason for us to sit here and argue about it. I'll just go on in. *(She rises and starts crossing toward Up Right.)*

WELLER. You stay right where you are.

FONZIA. It's the only thing I know to do.

WELLER. *(Rises and crosses Up Center.)* What do you mean, it's the only thing you know to do? You came out here, didn't you?

FONZIA. *(Crossing to Stage Right of WELLER.)* Yes, I did. But certainly not to play Gin. All I wanted. . .

WELLER. All you wanted to do was manipulate me. We've been playing your game . . . Now we're going to play mine.

FONZIA. *(Takes off the sweater and puts it over WELLER's arm.)* I'm not even going to get into this with you, Weller. *(FONZIA begins to cross toward the Stage Right door. WELLER crosses in front of her to block her way. FONZIA crosses Stage Left and WELLER follows her to Up Center.)*

WELLER. The hell you're not. You knew your sister Hattie wasn't out here. You saw through my little plan to get you out here and you came out anyway. You can't tell me you didn't enjoy beating me game after game. Watching me get angrier and angrier.

FONZIA. Taking a chance on Lord knows what kind of violence.

WELLER. Don't be ridiculous. *(He begins to put on his sweater.)*

FONZIA. I don't think I am being ridiculous when I say that. When you lose that temper of yours, I think you're capable of anything.

WELLER. *(Crossing to Up Stage of the table.)* Will you get off that, for Christ's sake, and come back over here and sit down.

FONZIA. No, Weller. I'm going in. *(She crosses Up Right.)*

WELLER. I'm not going to let you go in there. You'll tell them I'm crazy. *(WELLER chases her and grabs her by the shoulder.)*

FONZIA. Let me go! Take your hands off me! *(She pulls away and crosses to Center.)*

WELLER. *(Looking toward the door.)* Quiet, for Christ's sake, they'll hear you!

FONZIA. I hope they do.

WELLER. *(Crosses Center. FONZIA backs Stage Left.)* You do, don't you. You'd love to get in there and tell them I've been out here shouting at you again. That'd do the trick. Vindictive! That's what you are. Vindictive! Screwed your own son out of that house just to get even with him—for God knows what reason.

FONZIA. *(Advancing on him.)* That's my business, Goddamnit! And you can just shut up about it. Who do you think you are, anyway. Maybe I had good reason for what I did. You just don't know the situation. All you care about in the world is that damned Gin game. You're the one who's so vindictive. Saying anything to me, just because I won't play. . . *(WELLER has crossed to Up Left of the table. FONZIA counters to Up Right of the table.)*

WELLER. Sit down! Sit down!

FONZIA. Goddamn you! *(She stands glaring at him.)* Alright! Goddamn you. *(She sits in the Stage Right chair.)*

WELLER. *(Sits and picks up the cards.)* We'll play one hand and you play to win, Goddamnit!

FONZIA. Don't you worry about that, Mister!

WELLER. Alright. This is it! This is the game!

FONZIA. *(Hitting the table.)* Deal!

WELLER. *(He deals.)* One. *(He has given FONZIA the first card as usual. He changes it, giving himself the*

first card.) One! One. Two, two. Three, three. Four, four. Five, five. Six, six.

WELLER/FONSIA. . . . Seven, seven. Eight, eight. Nine, nine. Ten, ten. Eleven.

WELLER. I'm going to beat you this hand . . . By God, I'm going to beat you.

FONSIA. I don't know what makes you think it's going to be any different this time.

WELLER. Don't you get smart with me. (*A Choir starts singing Off Up Right.*)

FONSIA. I'm not getting smart. It's the truth. If you played this game so well, you would have beaten me long ago.

WELLER. Shut up, Goddamnit! I'll show you who's going to win. You just concentrate on your cards.

FONSIA. It's your discard.

WELLER. I know it's my discard. (*He discards and the game begins.*)

FONSIA. I hope you do lose. I hope you lose so badly . . . God.

WELLER. Jesus Christ, another choir. That's all we need is another choir. (*FONSIA draws from the deck.*) Why don't you pick up my discard and Gin on me? You can't do it, can you? It's going to take more than luck this time.

FONSIA. You have to be the victim of bad luck, don't you, Weller.

WELLER. Watch your cards.

FONSIA. Because if it wasn't bad luck, it'd have to be something else, wouldn't it?

WELLER. I said, watch your cards.

FONSIA. It'd have to be something like maybe you think you play this game a whole lot better than you really play it. . .

WELLER. Goddamnit, Fonsia. You're asking for it

FONSIA. If it hadn't been bad luck with your business partners, then it would've had to be bad judgment . . . or worse yet, maybe they were simply better businessmen than you were.

WELLER. You shut your fucking mouth! You don't know the first thing about it.

FONSIA. Don't you use that word in my presence!

WELLER. I'll use any fucking word I please.

FONSIA. (*Continuing the game.*) You're just like the one I got. A filthy foulmouth. There I was with a two-year-old baby listening to such filth.

WELLER. I'm sure he had a damned good reason for using it.

FONSIA. I fixed his wagon. He came home one night with half a load on, and I had everything he owned right on the street. I mean, right on the street! And that was the end of that!

WELLER. I would've knocked your damned teeth in.

FONSIA. Yes. And I would have had you in jail so fast it would have made your head spin.

WELLER. Bullshit!

FONSIA. Don't you think I wouldn't. Besides, Walter was too much of a coward to do that anyway.

WELLER. You don't have too many kind things to say about the men in your life, do you?

FONSIA. I'll admit it. When it comes to men, I've been very unlucky.

WELLER. You've been what?

FONSIA. I haven't had much success.

WELLER. You've been unlucky!

FONSIA. Alright!

WELLER. Sounds like you've been having the same kind of bad luck you've been telling me about. It had to be bad luck, because if it wasn't bad luck, it would've had to be the fact that maybe it was you!

That maybe you're a rigid, self-righteous, vicious. . .

FONSIA. Alright! You made your point. Just be quiet and play the cards.

WELLER. (*Holding a card he has drawn.*) You want this one. This is the one you want. And I'm going to have to give it to you, too. Damn it! (*He discards and she picks it up.*)

FONSIA. Well, that was stupid. You gave me a (Queen) three plays ago. I'll take it.

WELLER. I didn't have any choice, idiot!

FONSIA. (*Enraged.*) Don't you call me an idiot. Don't you ever call me an idiot, you. . . . Fuck! (*She sinks back in her chair. WELLER shakes his head.*) I have never said that word in my life.

WELLER. Play a card.

FONSIA. Alright! God Damn you. (*She discards.*)

WELLER. (*He draws a card from the deck.*) Now! Now, we'll see who's stupid. One card. One card. Now, we'll see who's an idiot. (*He discards.*)

FONSIA. Shut your mouth. (*She draws and discards.*)

WELLER. (*Holding his hand over the deck.*) Be it. Be it. Be it. (*He draws.*) Goddamn. So close. (*WELLER discards and FONSIA picks it up. She puts the card in her hand and chooses her discard. She holds it up for WELLER to see. It's the one he needs. As he reaches for it, she flips it over, face down, on the discard pile.*)

FONSIA. Gin.

WELLER. Gin?

FONSIA. (*Pushing her chair away from the table.*)
Gin!

WELLER. (*Letting his cards fall out of his hand.*)
Gin. (*He rises.*) Gin. (*He crosses Up Stage of the table and raises his cane in the air. She rises and crosses Up Right of the glider just as WELLER slams his cane down on her chair.*) GIN!

FONSIA. Don't hit me, Weller! For God's sake! (*Calling to the Stage Right door.*) Nurse! Nurse! (*WELLER begins to hit the table violently with his cane. FONSIA stands Up Right helplessly watching.*)

WELLER. (*As he beats on the table*) Gin! Gin! Gin! Gin! Gin! Gin! Gin! (*He subsides, clutching his right arm. He leans with his full weight on the table, quietly sobbing. After a few moments, he pulls himself up and turns. Seeing FONSIA, he turns back to the table, forces himself to stand erect, then turns again and begins to cross Up Right.*)

FONSIA. (*As WELLER passes her.*) Weller. . . (*WELLER hurries by her. She stands motionless, facing Stage Left. WELLER crosses to the door. Upon reaching the door, he stops. There is a pause, then WELLER opens the door and exits. FONSIA hears the door close and knows he is gone. Slowly she crosses to the glider. She sits.*) Oh, no. (*She rocks silently in the glider. The lights slowly begin to fade, finally leaving FONSIA, then the table in darkness.*)

CURTAIN

PROPERTY LIST

Furniture and Dressing—

- 2 Cardtables
- Straight-back chair
- Straight-back chair with padded seat
- Glider with unmatched cushion
- Upright piano shell
- Bookcase with glass doors
- Sofa
- Television (Practical)
- Table for television
- Oval rug
- 2 Wicker planters
 - a. Green with pan for "Leak" effect
 - b. White with weeds and dead plants
- Lamp (Practical)
- Table (For Lamp)
- 2 Wheelchairs—children's size
- 2 Mannequins with costumes and wigs in small wheelchairs
- 2 Wheelchairs—adult size
- 2 Doors
- 2 Shutters
- Screen door
- 6 Wooden folding chairs
- 2 Oars
- Walker
- Broken wicker chair
- Standing sink with one spigot
- Sink basin with mismatched spigots
- Ceramic pot
- Garden hose with ground pipe and spigot

PROPERTY LIST

Small Dressing—

- Wicker suitcase
- Afghan
- 2 Cushions
- Car seat cushion
- Books—hardcover and paperback
- Newspapers—tied and loose
- 2 Cardboard boxes
 - a. With books
 - b. With newspapers
- 2 #10 Tin cans
- Flower pot with dead plant
- 3 Flower pots
- Broken pot shards

Set—

- Ceiling light fixture (Practical)
- Double light fixture with conduit
- Switch box and plate with conduit
- 4 Bamboo shades
- Bird's nest
- Cobwebs
- Sand, gravel, weeds and dead grass
- Sprinkler pipes

Hand Props—

- Large can lid (Ashtray)
- Deck of cards
- Pads of paper—yellow, 4x6, glued tops
- Pencils with pocket clips
- Christian Science Monitors
- Magazine (Saturday Evening Post)
- Pillow
- Cigar

Personal Props—

- FONSLA:
- Eye glasses

Eye glass case
 Handkerchiefs
 Large men's white
 Flowered ladies'
 Wristwatch
 Hospital I.D. bracelet
 Cellophane-wrapped hard candy

WELLER:

Black metal cane
 Eye glasses with shoe lace "holder"
 Handkerchiefs—men's white
 Hospital I.D. bracelet
 Spare pencils
 Spare cigar butts
 Gold watch chain

PROP PRESET—Act One**D.L.C.—**

Cardtable (see attached sheet for set-up)

u.s. of Table—

Unpadded chair

Stage Left—

Chair with padded seat

Leak pan with liners in green wicker planter

Up Right—

Newspaper clipped to u.s. face of piano

Safety newspaper slipped half under keyboard cover

Pillow—s.l. on top of piano

Glider—

Magazine on center cushion—facing s.r.

Down Right—

Broken flower pot and shards—on floor by flower pots

Bookcase—

3 Safety pads

3 Safety pencils

2 Safety decks of cards

Deck of cards, pad and pencil for Scene 3

Paperback—Mickey Spillane Type

See attached sheet for bookcase set-up.

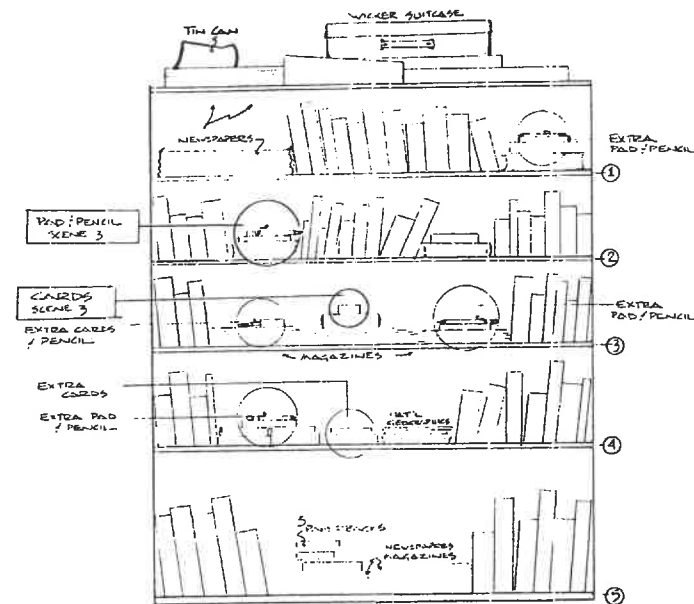
Available onstage for actors—

u.l. standing sink: cup of water covered with tissue

u.l. upright support: cup of water—covered

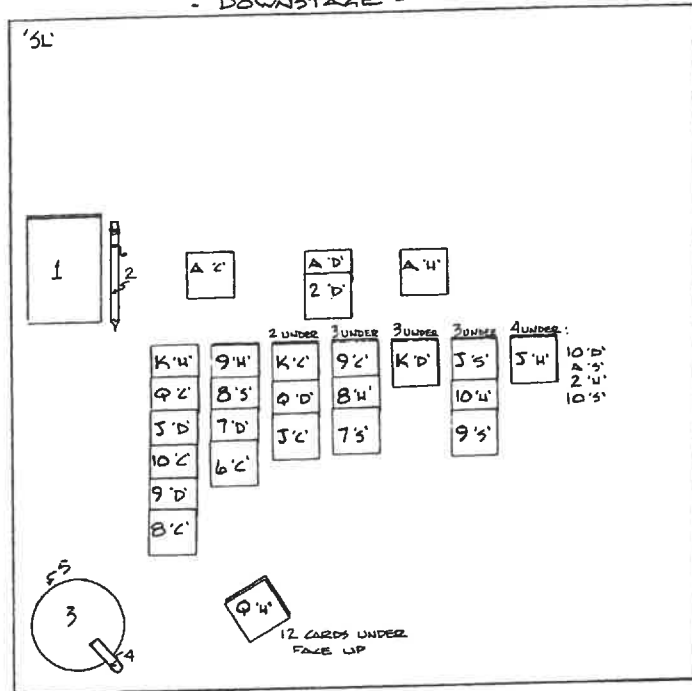
Box of Kleenex

s.r. end piano keyboard: cup of water—covered



BOOKCASE

- DOWNSTAGE -



Solitaire in progress as above.

- 1) 4 x 6 Yellow unlined pad
- 2) Pencil with clip
- 3) Lid—"Ashtray"
- 4) Cigar—cut to $\frac{1}{2}$ length. End charred but not lighted.
- 5) Ashes—on table under lid edge.
None on cigar or in lid.

End Scene One—(Approximate running time: 22 min.)

Enter up left with WELLER'S dresser.

N.B.: WELLER'S costume change takes place Up

Left. FONSIA exits Up Right for her costume change.

Man #1—

Enter with deck of cards, pencil with clip, pad.

Strike—(From cardtable)

All cards (Check on floor)

Pad

Pencil

Set—(On cardtable)

Duplicate deck of cards

Pad

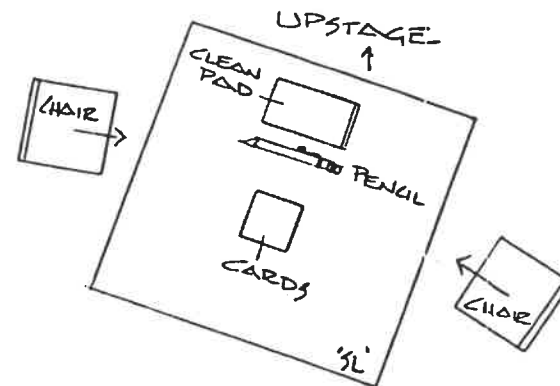
Pencil

Adjust chairs and table if necessary.

Man #2—

Lower Stage Right bamboo shade to above door.

Exit Up Left.



Intermission—(Approximate running time Scene 2: 21 min.)

Strike—

Cards—count 52

PROPERTY LIST

Pad and pencil
Shards and broken pot D.R.

Reset—

Cardtable to D.S. of S.L. screen door.
Check for damage. Clean surface.
Chairs: to U.S. of cardtable.
Padded chair must be farthest U.S.
Pillow: From S.L. chair to S.L. end piano top.
Magazine: into cardboard box on U.S. sofa.
S.R. shade: to original trim.

Prime water for leak.

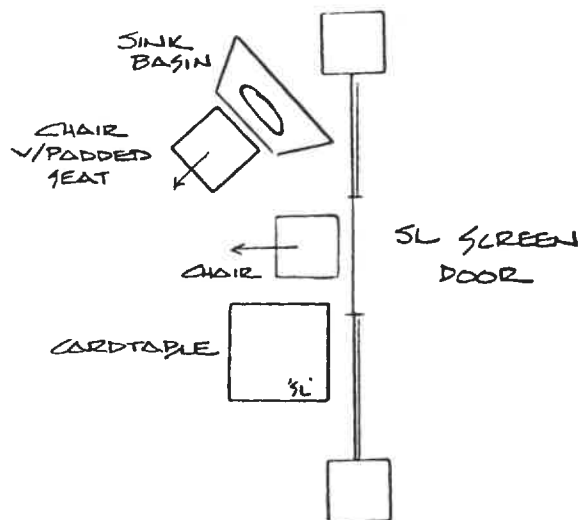
Check—

Bookcase:

2nd shelf: pad and pencil
3rd shelf: deck of cards

Piano: newspapers

Doors: all closed.



PROPERTY LIST

End Scene 3— (Approximate running time: 19 min.)

Enter Up Left.

N.B.: FONSI will exit Up Right.

WELLER'S costume change is onstage U.R.

Man #1—

Enter with deck of cards.

Strike—

All cards on table—check floor.

Set—

Duplicate deck of cards on table.

Push S.L. chair with pillow 1/2 into table.

Square cardtable to curtain line if necessary.

Man #2—

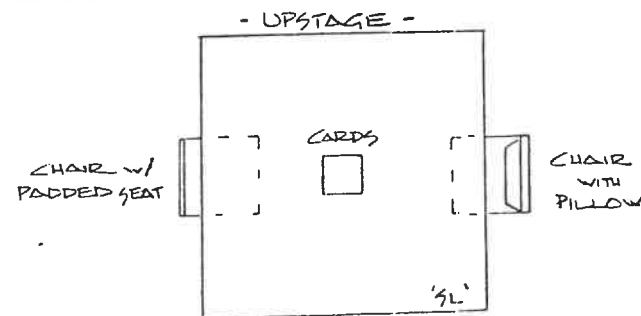
Strike—

Pad and pencil from floor S.R. of table.

Set—

S.R. chair—push into S.R. of table.

Exit Up Left and close door.



Cards—

6 Stacked decks are used each performance
(including safety decks in bookcase)

Each deck must be checked for damaged cards.

New decks must be broken in to prevent stiffness
or slickness.

PROPERTY LIST

Decks are stacked as follows:

- 4 Ace's
- 4 2's
- 2 6's
- 5 7's
- 5 8's
- 6 9's
- 6 10's

20 Face cards

Cardtable—

Top—

Approximate 3½ foot square frame.

Covered with matte beige vinyl stained dark umber.

Padding under vinyl with wooden plates under U.L. and D.R. corners for "Knocking" and "Deal."

Heavily reinforced on underside.

Legs—

Raked for fullest visibility of table top:

Downstage legs: 23½ inches to frame

Upstage legs: 25 inches to frame

Frame: 3 inches high

Cane—

Hollow black metal cane with grey rubber over handle.

Wooden dowel inserted in shaft.

Rubber crutch tip—epoxyed onto cane and screwed into dowel.

Leak pan—

Two used in rotation to insure total dryness.

Welded sheet aluminum.

Loosely fitted into planter to allow for easy removal.

Padding—(To muffle sound of water)

Bottom of pan: sheet of foam rubber.

PROPERTY LIST

Middle layer: brown nylon net bag filled with styrofoam pellets.

Top layer: brown nylon net bag filled with sheep moss.

Sheep moss is placed at each end of pan to disguise bags.

Newspaper—

Christian Science Monitor.

Outside pages should be free of any large headlines.

Bottom right corner of first few pages creased back so paper may be easily opened to center page.

Hospital I.D. Bracelets—

Cut to size and sew on large snaps so may be easily put on and removed.

Perishables—

Cards—

Red Bicycle brand, fan or Rider Back.

4 Decks used each performance.

2 Decks preset as standbys.

Scorepads—

4 x 6 Yellow with glued tops.

3 Used each performance.

3 Preset as standbys.

Pencils—

"Pocket Clips" on each to prevent rolling.

3 Used each performance.

3 Used as standbys.

Hard Candies—

Wrapped in cellophane.

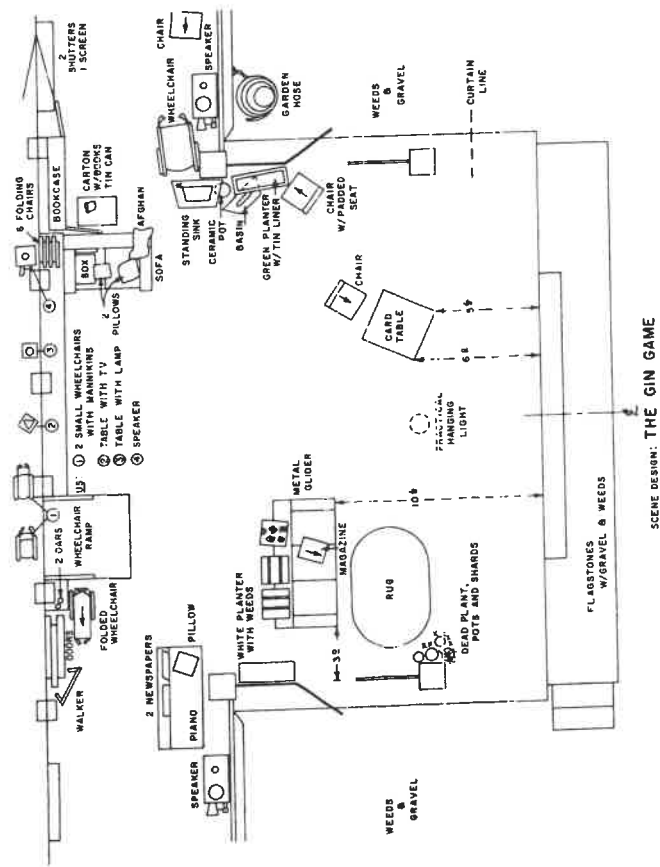
"Crunchy" as possible.

Cigars—

Short, fat, cheap cigars.

Cut to approximate 2½ inch length.

End charred.



BLUE YONDER

Kate Aspengren

Dramatic Comedy / Monologues and scenes
 12f (can be performed with as few as 4 with doubling) / Unit Set

A familiar adage states, "Men may work from sun to sun, but women's work is never done." In *Blue Yonder*, the audience meets twelve mesmerizing and eccentric women including a flight instructor, a firefighter, a stuntwoman, a woman who donates body parts, an employment counselor, a professional softball player, a surgical nurse professional baseball player, and a daredevil who plays with dynamite among others. Through the monologues, each woman examines her life's work and explores the career that she has found. Or that has found her.