

ACT II

Scene One

(TIME: Two weeks later. About 11:00 p.m.)

(AT RISE: It is late in the evening and the poker game is in session again. VINNIE, ROY, SPEED, MURRAY and OSCAR are all seated at the table. FELIX's chair is empty. There is one major difference between this scene and the opening poker game scene. It is the appearance of the room. It is immaculately clean. No, not clean. Sterile! Spotless! Not a speck of dirt can be seen under the ten coats of Johnson's Glo-Coat that have been applied in the last two weeks. No laundry bags, no dirty dishes, no half-filled glasses. Suddenly FELIX appears from the kitchen. He carries a tray with glasses and food and napkins. After putting the tray down, he takes the napkins one at a time, flicks them out to full length and hands one to every player. They take them with grumbling and put them on their laps. FELIX picks up a can of beer and very carefully pours it into a tall glass, measuring it perfectly so that not a drop spills or overflows. With a flourish he puts can down.)

FELIX. *(Moves to MURRAY.)* ...An ice-cold glass of beer for Murray.

MURRAY. *(He reaches up for it.)* Thank you, Felix.

FELIX. *(Holds glass back.)* Where's your coaster?

MURRAY. My what?

FELIX. Your coaster. The little round thing that goes under the glass.

MURRAY. (*Looks around on the table.*) I think I bet it.

OSCAR. (*Picks it up and hands it to MURRAY.*) I knew I was winning too much. Here!

FELIX. Always try to use your coasters, fellows. (*He picks up another drink from tray.*) Scotch and a little bit of water?

SPEED. (*Raises hand.*) Scotch and a little bit of water. (*Proudly.*) And I have my coaster. (*He holds it up for inspection.*)

FELIX. (*Hands him drink.*) I hate to be a pest, but you know what wet glasses do? (*Goes back to the tray and picks up and wipes a clean ashtray.*)

OSCAR. (*Coldly and deliberately.*) They-leave-little-rings-on-the-table.

FELIX. (*Nods.*) Ruins the finish. Eats right through the polish.

OSCAR. (*To others.*) So let's watch those little rings, huh?

FELIX. (*Takes ashtray and plate with a sandwich from tray and crosses to table.*) And we have a clean ashtray for Roy... (*Handing ROY ashtray.*) Aaaaand...a sandwich for Vinnie. (*Like a doting headwaitery he skillfully places the sandwich in front of VINNIE.*)

VINNIE. (*Looks at FELIX, then at sandwich.*) Gee, it smells good. What is it?

FELIX. Bacon, lettuce and tomato with mayonnaise on pumpernickel toast.

VINNIE. (*Unbelievably.*) Where'd you get it?

FELIX. (*Puzzled.*) I made it. In the kitchen.

VINNIE. You mean you put in toast and cooked bacon? Just for me?

OSCAR. If you don't like it, he'll make you a meatloaf. Takes him five minutes.

FELIX. It's no trouble. Honest. I love to cook... Try to eat over the dish. I just vacuumed the rug. (*Goes back to tray, stops.*) Oscar!

OSCAR. (*Quickly.*) Yes, sir?

FELIX. I forgot what you wanted. What did you ask me for?

OSCAR. Two three-and-a-half-minute eggs and some petit fours.

FELIX. (*Points to him.*) A double gin and tonic. I'll be right back... (*FELIX starts out, then stops at a little box on the bar.*) Who turned off the Pure-A-Tron?

MURRAY. The what?

FELIX. The Pure-A-Tron! (*He snaps it back on.*) Don't play with this, fellows. I'm trying to get some of the grime out of the air.

(He looks at them and shakes his head disapprovingly, and exits. They all sit in silence a few seconds.)

OSCAR. Murray—I'll give you two hundred dollars for your gun.

SPEED. (*Throws his cards on table and gets up angrily.*) I can't take it anymore. (*Hand on neck.*) I've had it up to here. In the last three hours we played four minutes of poker. I'm not giving up my Friday nights to watch cooking and housekeeping.

ROY. (*Slumped in his chair, head hanging down.*) I can't breathe. (*Points to Pure-A-Tron.*) That lousy machine is sucking everything out of the air.

VINNIE. (*Chewing.*) Gee, this is delicious. Who wants a bite?

MURRAY. Is the toast warm?

VINNIE. Perfect. And not too much mayonnaise. It's really a well-made sandwich.

MURRAY. Cut me off a little piece.

VINNIE. Give me your napkin. I don't want to drop any crumbs.

SPEED. (*Watches them, horrified, as VINNIE carefully breaks sandwich over MURRAY's napkin. Then turns to OSCAR.*) Are you listening to this? Martha and Gertrude at the Automat. (*Almost crying in despair.*) What the hell happened to our poker game?

ROY. (*Still choking.*) I'm telling you that thing could kill us. They'll find us here in the morning with our tongues on the floor.

SPEED. (*Yells at OSCAR.*) Do something! Get him back in the game.

OSCAR. (*Rises, containing his anger.*) Don't bother me with your petty little problems. You get this one stinkin' night a week. I'm cooped up here with Mary Poppins twenty-four hours a day. (*Moves to window.*)

ROY. It was better before. With the garbage and the smoke, it was better before.

VINNIE. (*To MURRAY.*) Did you notice what he does with the bread?

MURRAY. What?

VINNIE. He cuts off the crusts. That's why the sandwich is so light.

MURRAY. And then he only uses the soft, green part of the lettuce. (*Chewing.*) It's really delicious.

SPEED. (*Reacts in amazement and disgust.*) I'm going out of my mind.

OSCAR. (*Yells towards kitchen.*) Felix! ...Damn it, *FELIX!*

SPEED. (*Takes kitty box from bookcase, puts it on table, and puts money in.*) Forget it. I'm going home.

OSCAR. Sit down!

SPEED. I'll buy a book and I'll start to read again.

OSCAR. Siddown! Will you siddown! (*Yells.*) Felix!

SPEED. Oscar, it's all over. The day his marriage busted up was the end of our poker game. (*Takes his jacket from back of chair and crosses to door.*) If you find some real players next week, call me.

OSCAR. (*Following him.*) You can't run out now. I'm a big loser.

SPEED. (*With door open.*) You got no one to blame but yourself. It's all your fault. You're the one who stopped him from killing himself. (*He exits and slams door.*)

OSCAR. (*Stares at door.*) He's right! ...The man is absolutely right. (*Moves to table.*)

MURRAY. (*To VINNIE.*) Are you going to eat that pickle?

VINNIE. I wasn't thinking of it. Why? Do you want it?

MURRAY. Unless you want it. It's your pickle.

VINNIE. No, no. Take it. I don't usually eat pickle.

(*VINNIE holds plate with pickle out to MURRAY.
OSCAR slaps the plate which sends the pickle flying
through the air.*)

OSCAR. Deal the cards!

MURRAY. What did you do that for?

OSCAR. Just deal the cards. You want to play poker, deal the cards. You want to eat, go to Schrafft's. (*To VINNIE.*) Keep your sandwich and your pickles to yourself... I'm losing ninety-two dollars and everybody's getting fat! (*He screams.*) *Felix...*

(*FELIX appears in the kitchen doorway.*)

FELIX. What?

OSCAR. Close the kitchen and sit down. It's a quarter to twelve. I still got an hour and a half to win this month's alimony.

ROY. (*Sniffs.*) What is that smell? Disinfectant! (*He smells cards.*) It's the cards. *He washed the cards!* (*Throws down cards, takes jacket from chair and moves above table. Puts money into kitty box.*)

FELIX. (*Comes to table with OSCAR's drink, which he puts down, and then sits in his own seat.*) Okay... What's the bet?

OSCAR. (*Hurrying to his seat.*) I can't believe it. We're gonna play cards again. (*He sits.*) It's up to Roy... Roy, baby, what are you gonna do?

ROY. I'm going to get in a cab and go to Central Park. If I don't get some fresh air, you got yourself a dead accountant. (*Moves towards door.*)

OSCAR. (*Follows him.*) What do you mean? It's not even twelve o'clock.