

weller

(WELLER rises and crosses to center tossing the paper aside.)

WELLER. Oh, I didn't tell her any such thing.

FONSIA. 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?

FONSIA. 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.

START

FONSIA. 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?

FONSIA. 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.

FONSIA. 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. 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.

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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 troublemaker.

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.

FONSIA. All right...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 stops short and turns to FONSIA.)

WELLER. 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.)

WELLER. 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 a hundred 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.

END

FONSIA

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 puts 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 welfare, too.

WELLER. I guess we just lived too long, Fonsia.

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.

START

FONSIA

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. → Next PAGE

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. FONSIA and WELLER cringe. When the thunder dies away, WELLER rises and crosses up center, and tries to peer into the house through a crack in the curtains.)

I hope that didn't hit the home!

(The lights in the house flicker 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.

(We hear a siren faintly in the distance. WELLER 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.

(He points 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

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

WELLER. I guess it's going to rain all afternoon.

FONSIA. I think so...

(WELLER turns and crosses to the card table.)

WELLER. Well, come on. I'll play you a hand of gin.

(*He sits in the stage left card-table 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.

FONSIA. 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.

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

(WELLER rises and crosses up center.)

WELLER. What do you mean, it's the only thing you know to do? You came out here, didn't you?

(FONSIA crosses to stage right of WELLER.)

FONSIA. Yes, I did. But certainly not to play gin. All I wanted -

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

(FONSIA takes off the sweater and puts it over WELLER's arm.)

FONSIA. I'm not even going to get into this with you, Weller.

FONSIA

(FONSIA begins to cross toward the stage right door.

WELLER crosses in front of her to block her way. FONSIA

crosses stage left and WELLER follows her to up center.

WELLER tosses the sweater aside.)

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.

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

WELLER. Don't be ridiculous.

FONSIA. 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 crosses to up stage of the card table.)

WELLER. Will you get off that, for Christsake, and come back over here and sit down.

FONSIA. 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.)

FONSIA. Let me go! Take your hands off me!

(*She pulls away and crosses to center.*)

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

FONSIA. I hope they do.

END

(WELLER crosses center. FONSIA backs stage left.)

WELLER. 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.