

MURRAY ROY SPEED VINNIE

ACT I

(TIME: A warm summer night.)

(SCENE: The apartment of OSCAR MADISON's. This is one of those large eight-room affairs on Riverside Drive in the upper eighties. The building is about 35 years old and still has vestiges of its glorious past. High ceilings, walk-in closets and thick walls. We are in the living room with doors leading off to kitchen, bedrooms, and a bathroom, and a hallway to other bedrooms. Although the furnishings have been chosen with extreme good taste, the room itself, without the touch and care of a woman these past few months, is now a study in slovenliness. Dirty dishes, discarded clothes, old newspapers, empty bottles, glasses filled and unfilled, opened and unopened laundry packages, mail and disarrayed furniture abound. The only cheerful note left in this room is the lovely view of the New Jersey Palisades through its twelfth floor window. Three months ago, this was a lovely apartment.)

(AT RISE: The room is filled with smoke. A poker game is in progress. There are six chairs around the table but only four men are sitting. They are simply, MURRAY, ROY, SPEED and VINNIE. VINNIE, with the largest stack of chips in front of him, is nervously tapping his foot and keeps checking his watch. ROY is watching SPEED and SPEED is glaring at MURRAY with incredulity and utter fascination. MURRAY is the dealer. He slowly and methodically tries to shuffle. It is a ponderous

and painful business. SPEED shakes his head in disbelief. This is all done wordlessly.)

SPEED. *(Cups his chin in his hand and looks at MURRAY.)*
...Tell me, Mr. Maverick, is this your first time on the riverboat?

MURRAY. *(With utter disregard.)* You don't like it, get a machine. *(He continues to deal slowly.)*

ROY. Geez, it stinks in here.

VINNIE. *(Looks at his watch.)* What time is it?

SPEED. Again what time is it?

VINNIE. *(Whiny.)* My watch is slow. I'd like to know what time it is.

SPEED. *(Glares at him.)* You're winning ninety-five dollars, that's what time it is... Where the hell are you running?

VINNIE. I'm not running anywhere. I just asked what time it was. Who said anything about running?

ROY. *(Looks at his watch.)* It's ten-thirty.

(Pause. MURRAY continues to shuffle.)

VINNIE. *(Pause.)* I got to leave by twelve.

SPEED. *(Looks up in despair.)* Oh, Christ!

VINNIE. I told you that when I sat down. I got to leave by twelve. Murray, didn't I say that when I sat down? I said I got to leave by twelve.

SPEED. All right, don't talk to him. He's dealing.
(To MURRAY.) Murray, you wanna rest for a while? Go lie down, sweetheart.

MURRAY. You want speed or accuracy, make up your mind.
(He begins to deal slowly.)

(SPEED puffs on his cigar angrily.)

ROY. Hey, you want to do me a really big favor? Smoke towards New Jersey.

(SPEED blows smoke at ROY.)

MURRAY. No kidding, I'm really worried about Felix. *(Points to empty chair.)* He's never been this late before. Maybe

- somebody should call. (*Yells offstage.*) Hey, Oscar, why don't you call Felix?
- ROY. (*Waves hand through smoke.*) Listen, why don't we chip in three dollars apiece and buy another window. How the hell can you breathe in here?
- MURRAY. How many cards you got, four?
- SPEED. Yes, Murray, we all have four cards. When you give us one more, we'll all have five. If you were to give us two more, we'd have six. Understand how it works now?
- ROY. (*Yells offstage.*) Hey, Oscar, what do you say? In or out?
(*From offstage we hear OSCAR's voice.*)
- OSCAR. (*Offstage.*) Out, pussycat, out!
(*SPEED opens, and the others bet.*)
- VINNIE. I told my wife I'd be home by one the latest. We're making an eight o'clock plane to Florida. I told you that when I sat down.
- SPEED. Don't cry, Vinnie. You're forty-two years old. It's embarrassing. Give me two... (*Discards.*)
- ROY. Why doesn't he fix the air-conditioner? It's ninety-eight degrees and it sits there sweating like everyone else. I'm out. (*Goes to window and looks out.*)
- MURRAY. Who goes to Florida in July?
- VINNIE. It's off season. There's no crowds and you get the best room for one-tenth the price. No cards...
- SPEED. Some vacation. Six cheap people in an empty hotel.
- MURRAY. Dealer takes four... Hey, you think maybe Felix is sick? (*He points to empty chair.*) I mean he's never been this late before.
- ROY. (*Takes laundry bag from armchair and sits.*) You know it's the same garbage from last week's game. I'm beginning to recognize things.
- MURRAY. (*Throwing cards down.*) I'm out...
- SPEED. (*Showing hand.*) Two kings...
- VINNIE. Straight... (*Shows hand and takes in pot.*)

MURRAY. Hey, maybe he's in his office locked in the john again. Did you know Felix was once locked in the john overnight? He wrote out his entire will on a half a roll of toilet paper! ...Heee, what a nut!

(VINNIE is playing with his chips.)

SPEED. (*Glares at him as he shuffles cards.*) Don't play with your chips. I'm asking you nice, don't play with your chips.

VINNIE. (*To SPEED.*) I'm not playing. I'm counting. Leave me alone. What are you picking on me for? How much do you think I'm winning? Fifteen dollars!

SPEED. *Fifteen dollars?* You dropped more than that in your cuffs! (*SPEED deals a game of draw poker.*)

MURRAY. (*Yells offstage.*) Hey, Oscar, what do you say?

STOP

OSCAR. (*Enters carrying a tray with beer, sandwiches, can of peanuts, and opened bags of pretzels and Fritos.*) I'm in! I'm in! Go ahead. Deal!

(OSCAR MADISON is 43. He is a pleasant, appealing man. He seems to enjoy life to the fullest. He enjoys his weekly poker game, his friends, his excessive drinking and his cigars. He is also one of those lucky creatures in life who even enjoys his work, a sportswriter for the New York Post. His carefree attitude is evident in the sloppiness of his household but it seems to bother others more than it does OSCAR. This is all not to say that OSCAR is without cares or worries. He just doesn't seem to have any.)

VINNIE. Aren't you going to look at your cards?

OSCAR. (*Sets tray on side chair.*) What for? I'm gonna bluff anyway. (*Opens bottle of Coke.*) Who gets the Coke?

MURRAY. I get a Coke.

OSCAR. My friend Murray, the policeman, gets a warm Coke. (*He gives him the bottle.*)

ROY. (*Opens the betting.*) You still didn't fix the refrigerator? It's been two weeks now. No wonder it stinks in here.