

SCENE 3

The poker night. Music fades off quickly at rise.

Later that night. In living room, table has been pulled to L. C. Stanley, Mitch, Steve, and Pablo are gathered about table, hunched over their cards, smoking, concentrating. Table is covered with a large scrap of green baize. A low exchange of conversation passes between the men. Each has a hand of cards. In bedroom, screen has been opened so that it conceals head of bed. Stanley sits at R. end, slouching in his chair. Steve is above table, wearing his hat, sitting on inverted, empty beer case. Empty beer bottles are strung about, and a couple of liquor bottles, half-empty, are in evidence. One on table. Mitch is at L. of table, seated on L. seat, Pablo is in a chair below table, facing upstage. He is also wearing his hat. Mitch has removed his jacket, which lies on bench beside him, also his shoes.

MITCH. (Yawning.) What time is it?

STANLEY. What the hell difference does it make?

STEVE. He won't quit till he wins a pot. Anything wild in this deal?

PABLO. One-eyed jacks are wild.

Mitch drinks from bottle.

STEVE. (To Pablo.) How many cards did you take?

PABLO. Two.

MITCH. (Rising.) Anyone want a shot?

STANLEY. (Taking bottle from Mitch.) Yeah, me.

Mitch sits on L. end of table, and tucks some winnings into his pocket.

PABLO. Why don't somebody go to the Chinaman's and bring back a load of chop suey?

Cards down. Steve wins.

STANLEY. When I'm losing you want to eat. Get it off the table, Mitch. Nothing belongs on the table but cards, chips, and whiskey.

Mitch gets off table. He takes up cards.

MITCH. Kind of on your high horse, ain't you?

Card business. Mitch looks at his watch. Stanley deals cards. Mitch sits.

Well, I ought to go home pretty soon.

STANLEY. Shut up.

MITCH. I got a sick mother. She don't go to sleep until I get in at night.

STANLEY. Then why don't you stay home with her?

MITCH. She says to go out, so I go, but I don't enjoy it. All the while I keep wondering how she is.

STANLEY. Aw, for the sake of Jesus, will you go home then!

MITCH. *(Tucking away his winnings, rises.)* You all are married. But I'll be alone when she goes. I'm going to the bathroom. *(Starts out L.)*

STANLEY. Hurry back and we'll fix you a sugar-tit.

MITCH. Aw—lay off!

Mitch returns to table, scrapes up some coins he has forgotten, then crosses through bedroom into bathroom, closing door.

PABLO. What've you got?

STEVE. I got a spade flush. All right, boys—this game is seven card stud. Well—*(Tells joke as he shuffles cards.)* This ole farmer is out in back of his house sittin' down throwin' corn to the chickens when all at once he hears a loud cackle and this young hen comes lickety-split around the side of the house with the rooster right behind her and gaining on her fast.

STANLEY. *(Impatiently.)* Deal the cards—

STEVE. *(Resumes story and deals.)* But when the rooster catches sight of the farmer throwin' the corn he puts on the brakes and lets the hen get away and starts pecking corn. And the old farmer says, "Lord God, I hopes I never gits *that* hongry!"

He finishes deal. Pablo and Steve enjoy story. The three men commence playing in earnest.

Stella and Blanche appear from D. R., come onto the porch. Blanche carries a paper lantern in a paper bag.