

XMAS IN LAS VEGAS

A musical

CAST OF CHARACTERS

EDWARD T. WELLSPOT, early 50s, a professional gambler, who is on a long losing streak, but never gives up on making a better life for his wife and children

ELEANOR WELLSPOT, late 40s, his wife, a pill-popping optimist who wants Edward to give it up, but ultimately she supports her husband through thick and thin and only wants his happiness.

LIONEL WELLSPOT, their 27 year-old mathematician son, a prophet of doom who lives on the dark side of life and believes man's existence is a lesson in futility

EMILY WELLSPOT, their 30 year-old daughter, a narcoleptic five time divorcee whose only hope for happiness lies in dreams

SPIROS OLYMPUS, early 50s, the oily-slick owner of the Olympus Hotel and Casino, a self-assured man who has everything but a suitable wife

MRS. EDNA PERIAPT, 60s, a sweet, slightly dim widow, visiting Las Vegas for the first time, can't lose at the gaming tables, Edward's lucky charm

WILLY, early 20s, the casino's croupier, Olympus' right hand man and protégé, still learning the ropes about the winning side of the gaming tables

PLACE

Las Vegas, Nevada

1961

NOTE

The musical numbers that are performed directly to the audience are meant to reflect iconic Las Vegas acts from the fifties and early sixties.

SONGS
ACT I

EDWARD'S INVOCATION/CHRISTMAS IN LAS VEGAS	EDWARD, ELEANOR, EMILY, LIONEL
CHRISTMAS IN LAS VEGAS - reprise	EDWARD
YOU NEED A NEW PLAN, EDWARD	ELEANOR
ON THE WINNING SIDE	SPIROS
IS THIS ANY WAY TO LIVE?	EDWARD
LET'S PLAY ROULETTE	EDWARD, MRS. PERIAPT
LOVELY LADY	EDWARD, MRS. PERIAPT, ELEANOR, EMILY, LIONEL
LOVELY LADY -reprise	EDWARD, MRS. PERIAPT
BETTER IN BED	EMILY, SPIROS
BELIEVE ME	EDWARD, ELEANOR
BELIEVE ME –reprise	ELEANOR, EDWARD
SANTA BROUGHT US LUCK	EDWARD, MRS. PERIAPT, ELEANOR, EMILY, LIONEL,

ACT II

A SURE THING/ A VIEW FROM THE STARS	ELEANOR, EMILY, MRS. PERIAPT and EDWARD
THE PERFECT GIRL	SPIROS
ROCKIN' LAS VEGAS TONIGHT	LIONEL
SANTA BROUGHT US LUCK -reprise	EDWARD, MRS. PERIAPT, ELEANOR, EMILY, LIONEL
BLACKJACK	EDWARD, SPIROS, MRS. PERIAPT
GUESS WHO?	SPIROS, EMILY
MY YEAR	EDWARD
BELIEVE ME – reprise	ELEANOR, EDWARD

ACT I
Scene 1

In the dark we hear the cacophonous sound of ringing slot machines, whirring roulette wheels, and clicking chips. As this continues, one by one classic 1960 Vegas marquees light: *Sands: The Pack is Back! Frank, Dino and Sammy, Golden Nugget: Final Week: Burns and Allen and The Modernnaires, Aladdin: The McGuire Sisters and the Amazing Magic of Channing Pollock, Sahara: The Louis Prima Band with The Fabulous Keeley Smith, Stardust: Held Over Miss Peggy Lee, and Flamingo: A Rockin' Christmas with Bobby Darin.* Then, one final marquee: *Olympus: Fifteenth Consecutive Year! Edward T. Wellspot.* A tight spot picks up EDWARD T. WELLSPOT on his knees downstage. He is disheveled: his tie pulled down around his neck, he wears a garish sports jacket and his shirt is horribly wrinkled. His hair looks as if his fingers have run through it too many times. Yet, a glimmer of hope sparkles in his eyes.)

“EDWARD’S INVOCATION/ CHRISTMAS IN LAS VEGAS”

OFF STAGE VOICE

Ladies and gentlemen, for your pleasure this evening we welcome back to the Olympus Hotel and Casino Edward T. Wellspot of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who will once again invoke the fates in his attempt to beat the house. Good luck, Mr. Wellspot, and Merry Christmas!

EDWARD

HEY, UP THERE
GODDESSES OF DESTINY
COME ON, YOU GIRLS,
LOOK DOWN AND SMILE ON ME

EDWARD (cont'd)

All right, Fates, get this monkey off my back. I've got a family that's depending on Edward T. Come on, now. This roll's for my Eleanor and Lionel and Emily . . .

VOICE OVER

Snake eyes – craps – a loser

EDWARD
 DEEP DOWN I KNOW
 THIS YEAR I'M GONNA ROAR
 TOP OF THE WORLD
 JUST LIKE I WAS BEFORE - -

(EDWARD kisses a pair of dice and holds them aloft, almost as a sacrifice to the gods, as the colorful marquees black out and one garish sign in the shape of a giant Christmas ball lights up. It reads: *Olympus Casino, Las Vegas, NV~ Merry Xmas 1961*. A spotlight hits ELEANOR, then LIONEL and, finally, EMILY, who are holding well-traveled luggage. THEY are in the casino watching EDWARD, who is rolling dice in the gamblers' pit.)

“CHRISTMAS IN LAS VEGAS”

ELEANOR, LIONEL & EMILY
 HERE WE ARE AT THE OLYMPUS HOTEL
 THE SAME CASINO WE KNOW SO WELL
 THE SAME OLD WISHES UPON A STAR
 THE SAME OLD WAGERS THAT GO TOO FAR
 YOU CAN ALWAYS FIND US HERE
 AT THIS FESTIVE TIME OF THE YEAR

EMILY

(Calling out to EDWARD)
 Good luck, Father!

ELEANOR

Darling, we never disturb your father when he's in the pit.

LIONEL

The fiery pit of hell.

ELEANOR

This is no time for an appropriate metaphor.

ELEANOR, LIONEL, & EMILY
 CHRISTMAS IN LAS VEGAS

ELEANOR

Now, let's try to keep our spirits up.

ELEANOR, LIONEL, & EMILY
 IT'S OUR LITTLE FAMILY OUTING
 AND IT'S ALWAYS LOTS OF FUN
 TO HEAR OUR DADDY SHOUTING:

LIONEL
 “GIMME TEN THE HARD WAY”
 (EDWARD rattles the dice in his hands)

ELEANOR & EMILY
 DADDY SHOOTS
 (EDWARD shoots.)

LIONEL
 AND CRAPS!

EDWARD
 Damn!
 (The dice are pushed back on stage with an extra long croupier’s stick)

ELEANOR, LIONEL, & EMILY
 JOLLY, JOLLY
 JINGLE, JINGLE
 MERRY CHRISTMAS
 MERRY CHRISTMAS

LIONEL
 There goes my grad school tuition. Scooped up by some unscrupulous stickman.

ELEANOR, LIONEL, & EMILY
 CHRISTMAS IN LAS VEGAS

EMILY
 Maybe it’s time for my mid-morning nap.

LIONEL
 OH, IT’S VERY ENTERTAINING
 WATCHING HOLIDAY ON DICE

ELEANOR
 NOW, CHILDREN, NO COMPLAINING
 AFTER ALL, IT’S CHRISTMAS

ELEANOR, LIONEL, & EMILY
 FILL THE WORLD
 WITH LOVE
 JOLLY, JOLLY
 JINGLE, JINGLE
 MERRY CHRISTMAS
 MERRY CHRISTMAS

EMILY

Poor father looks so disappointed.

LIONEL

Don't pity him. He blew your tonsillectomy money on a horse at Belmont Park.

ELEANOR, LIONEL, & EMILY
CHRISTMAS IN LAS VEGAS

LIONEL

Remember that with every sore throat.

ELEANOR
EVERY DAY THE DEBT GETS HIGHER
AND THE CHECKBOOK OVERDRAWN
CAN LIFE GET MUCH MORE DIRE?

LIONEL
BET YOUR BOTTOM DOLLAR

ELEANOR, LIONEL, & EMILY
RAISE A GLASS
OF CHEER!
JOLLY, JOLLY
JINGLE, JINGLE
MERRY CHRISTMAS
MERRY CHRISTMAS

EDWARD

Okay, it's time for peace on earth and good will toward gamblers.
(EDWARD rolls.)

OFF STAGE VOICE

Point is eight.

EDWARD

Sweet Goddess Fortuna, be on my side! Give this gambler an Eighter from Decatur!
(HE rolls again.)

OFF STAGE VOICE

Seven out. We got a loser.

EDWARD

A loser? Oh, no. My vertebrae are still lined up proud and perpendicular. You can't break Edward T.
(HE rolls fiercely.)

OFF STAGE VOICE

Craps. Shooter busted.

EDWARD
 THIS IS WHERE SOME OTHER GUY MIGHT FOLD
 BUT NOT ME
 THIS IS WHERE SOME OTHER BUM MIGHT RUN
 BUT NOT ME
 NOT EDWARD T. WELLSPOT
 I HAVE NO FEAR
 THIS YEAR IN VEGAS IS MY LUCKY YEAR!

IT'S GONNA BE LIKE HAVANA
 WHEN I BROKE THE TROPICANA
 AND THE PRETTY PESOS CAME MY WAY
 I BURNED UP THE ROULETTE TABLE
 BOUGHT MY ELEANOR A SABLE
 THAT WAS NINETEEN FIFTY-FIVE
 MAN, I REALLY FELT ALIVE
 IT'S THAT FEELING THAT I'M FEELING TODAY

EDWARD

Okay, I need one more stake.

ELEANOR, LIONEL, & EMILY

NO!

ELEANOR
 SO GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLE-
 MAN NO REASON FOR DISMAY

LIONEL & EMILY
 OUR DADDY'S GOING MENTAL
 HEADING FOR DISASTER

ELEANOR, LIONEL, & EMILY
 DADDY'S IN
 TOO DEEP
 TIME IS TICKING
 NONE TO BORROW
 NOW WE'RE FACING
 NO TOMORROW

EDWARD
 MERRY CHRISTMAS

ELEANOR, LIONEL, & EMILY
WHAT A CHRISTMAS

EDWARD, ELEANOR, LIONEL, & EMILY
IN LAS VEGAS!

ELEANOR

Children, like it or not, it's time to check in.

(ELEANOR, LIONEL, and EMILY grab their luggage and march off. Simultaneously, a light picks up a craps table. WILLY BOYD, the casino stickman, is standing guard. EDWARD rushes to him.)

EDWARD (cont'd)

Just the man I'm looking for. I need another stake.

WILLY

I'm afraid you're cut off, Sir.

EDWARD

Cut off? Oh, come on. I'm on a little losing streak, that's all, but I'll turn it around. Like I did last year at the Derby when I rode Venetian Way to a small fortune. Okay, it's gone now, but I'll be back.

WILLY

I'm sorry, Sir.

EDWARD

I just lost my last dime. I need one more lousy marker. Your boss and I are old buddies. What do you say?

WILLY

I have my orders.

EDWARD

If he cuts me off, I'm stranded out there with all those ordinary Joes living their ordinary lives. If he wants to kill me, send me back out there. But I don't belong there; I belong here in the game. Give me another shot. *Please*.

(WILLY covers his ear with a cupped hand and we realize that he is listening to someone through a hidden earpiece. HE nods once, then again. An interminable pause – at least to EDWARD. Finally, WILLY drops his hand.)

EDWARD (cont'd)

Well, what does he say?

WILLY

You have one final marker, but Mr. Olympus would like me to remind you that this makes a total of ten grand.

EDWARD

Willy, you can tell Mr. Olympus I know how to add.

WILLY

There is one stipulation.

EDWARD

Stipulation?

(Suddenly, a stack of colorful, glowing chips appears magically on the table. EDWARD'S eyes sparkle like a kid's on Christmas morning.)

WILLY

Take it or leave it.

(WILLY holds up the marker and a pen)

EDWARD

Where do I sign?

(EDWARD signs with a flourish.)

EDWARD (cont'd)

So what's this stipulation?

WILLY

Mr. Olympus said you have forty-eight hours to repay the marker – one way or another.

EDWARD

One way or another. What does that mean?

WILLY

I wouldn't know, Sir. But come Christmas morning, they'll be no more chips and no broke money. You'll have to find your own way back to Pittsburgh.

EDWARD

Pittsburgh? I'd rather shoot myself. He'll get his ten grand, Willy. I just have to establish my pace. That's the key. A gambler's like a prizefighter. He has to find the right time, the right rhythm. And I'm feeling it. I'm feeling it to my bones. Now, you have my John Hancock. You're dismissed.

WILLY

Actually, I've been assigned your personal croupier, stickman, and dealer for the rest of your stay.

EDWARD

Do I sense Mr. Olympus' lack of confidence in this old gambler?

WILLY

I wouldn't say that, Mr. Wellspot.

EDWARD

Good. Because I'll be shooting dice like a god in this maniac's dream of a town. This is going to be one Christmas when I leave Vegas loaded with presents for the entire family.

WILLY

Yes, Sir.

(Lights out on WILLY)

"CHRISTMAS IN LAS VEGAS"- reprise

EDWARD

I'M A WINNER
I'M A SHOO-IN
BACK TO PITTSBURGH
NOTHIN' DOIN'
NOT THIS CHRISTMAS
MY LUCKY CHRISTMAS
IN LAS VEGAS

BLACKOUT

ACT I
Scene 2

Lights up on ELEANOR and LIONEL. The WELLSPOT hotel room.

ELEANOR

He's in there changing his clothes. Now, we are not to gang up on him when he comes out. That doesn't work.

LIONEL

Mother, he can change his outfit a dozen times. But that will not change the facts. Each time he spins or rolls, each day he lives, in the long run of the most compassionate probability theory, he comes closer to being broke and broken. Mathematics, the music of the planets, is a sad song, and in gambling it's an outright dirge.

ELEANOR

I know, I know, dear, and you "will not be conned into life's reckless game of chance."

LIONEL

Exactly. What's the point of living when life's only guarantee is risk? Today, I will follow the path of self-destruction to determine my own fate. I intend to spend my last hours on this earth in the middle of the desert—without sun lotion and without a hat—and bake myself to death.

ELEANOR

Well, don't forget your allergy pills. You know how those cactus flowers make you sneeze.

LIONEL

Why won't you take me seriously!

ELEANOR

Lionel, please. your father is getting ready to return to the casino with a ten thousand dollar marker, and I have to figure out a way to stop him.

LIONEL

You'll never stop him, Mother, because archaeological evidence of dice playing among Neolithic peoples has foolishly led him to believe that gambling has sustained human existence since the Stone Age.

ELEANOR

And it is has sustained your father. But this is his last chance. If he loses this money, how are we going to live? There's not a landlord from Las Vegas to Sarasota who doesn't padlock his rooms when he sees us coming. Lionel, I'm tired of four people living in your father's car. It gets very crowded at night.

LIONEL

Are you saying Emily and I are not welcome to be part of your destitution and abject despair?

ELEANOR

No, of course you are. It was just a little easier when you were away at university and Emily was married; the car was roomier.

LIONEL

Well, it's not easy for me either, Mother, living in a 1956 Rambler. Do you know how embarrassing that is? *A Rambler?*

EDWARD

(off)

Eleanor, where's that Nehru jacket I won in St. Bart's off that maharaja? You know with the gold brocade and red silk trim.

ELEANOR

Don't you remember, Edward? We sold that in Lake Tahoe. To that little pawnbroker with the lazy eye.

EDWARD

(off)

Ahhh, that's right. I still say we could have gotten twice the price. Mark my words, those jackets are going to explode.

(EDWARD enters, wearing a mod-style iridescent blue-gold jacket.)

EDWARD (cont'd)

So, how's this?

ELEANOR

You look very handsome, dear. Iridescent is your color. Now about that new marker -

EDWARD

Not to worry. Change of clothes, change of luck.

LIONEL

That is an absurdity that would even baffle Samuel Beckett.

EDWARD

I thought you said you'd never spend another Christmas here.

LIONEL

Do I have a choice? I've been banished from a dozen university dormitories because the tuition checks you write bounce off the walls of the bursar's office. Without my Master's Degree in Discrete Mathematics and Combinatorics, I am completely unemployable and bound to you.

EDWARD

(To ELEANOR)

What's Combinatorics?

LIONEL

And Emily's rooted to this dismal family because after every failed marriage, when she starts sobbing, you take her in with your pity and open arms. If she and I remain totally dependent on you, there's no one to blame but yourself.

EDWARD

Feel better, Lionel? Good. Now, I'm off. I've got a date with the fates.

LIONEL

Remember - probability and statistics have a stranglehold on you.

ELEANOR

And it's a rather tight grip.

EDWARD

Does no one in this family believe in Edward T.?

ELEANOR

Well, you have been losing for a long time, Darling. The cupboard is bare.

"YOU NEED A NEW PLAN, EDWARD"

ELEANOR

YOU NEED A NEW PLAN, EDWARD
A BRAND NEW STRATEGY
AND WE NEED IT NOW, EDWARD
IT'S AN EMERGENCY

THE PLANE IS IN A TAILSPIN
ONE PROPELLER'S GONE
I CAN HEAR THE ENGINE SPATTER
HOW LONG CAN WE HANG ON?

EDWARD

Eleanor, we've dealt with a little turbulence before. Damn, I forgot my lucky tie.
(HE runs off)

LIONEL

A little turbulence? Mother, he's in a nosedive of catastrophic proportions.

ELEANOR

You're getting hysterical. Stay Calm.

LIONEL

I am not hysterical. I have the enraged control of a man who knows the fate of his species!

ELEANOR

Dear, your father doesn't respond to your belligerent nature. We discuss rationally.

ELEANOR (cont'd)

YOU NEED A NEW PLAN, EDWARD
TOSS THIS ONE IN THE CAN
THE PLAN THAT YOU GOT
WELL, IT AIN'T SO HOT
YOU NEED A NEW PLAN

(EDWARD reenters during her verse. HE now wears a tacky, flashing Santa Claus tie. When ELEANOR sees him, HE boasts a self-satisfied wide smile.)

ELEANOR (cont'd)

I CAN'T LIVE LIKE THIS
ANYMORE
WITH A PACK OF WOLVES
AT THE DOOR
WE'VE BEEN LIVING LIKE LIVING LIKE THIS
FOR GOD KNOWS HOW LONG
IT'S ALWAYS ONE MORE GAME
DAY AND NIGHT
ONE MORE BOOKIE ON THE PHONE
ONE MORE TIME
ONE MORE SHOT
ONE MORE LOAN FROM OLYMPUS

THE TIME MARCHES ON, EDWARD
AND YOU'RE NOT PETER PAN
WE'RE NOT IN OUR PRIME
PLEASE, EDWARD, IT'S TIME
TO GET A NEW PLAN

EDWARD

You sound a little disappointed in me.

ELEANOR

I need a Valium.

(ELEANOR rummages through her purse looking for a pill)

EDWARD

Eleanor, our luck has to change.

LIONEL

That is a gambler's fallacy. No one can assume that a departure from what occurs on average, or in the long term, will be corrected in the short term

(ELEANOR holds up her pillbox and smiles.)

ELEANOR

Ahhh, bella pillola!

(She pops the pill.)

EDWARD

Would you begrudge the lawyer who hovers over a docket or the accountant over his ledgers, so why me? As long as there's still a remote possibility, I can beat this town. Would you have me give up now?

ELEANOR & LIONEL

Yes.

EDWARD

You don't get it. It's nerve and guts and risk that keep us alive, and when that's gone – well, it's time to roll over and play dead. And I'm not ready for that. Not yet.

(HE exits.)

LIONEL

Mother, you know the inevitable as well as I.

(A sleepy EMILY enters wearing a ratty bathrobe and dragging her feet.)

EMILY

Has anyone seen my Holly Golightly sleep mask? I think Father hid it.

LIONEL

If you'll excuse me, I have a date with dehydration.

(LIONEL exits, practically knocking EMILY over as HE rushes out.)

EMILY

Where's he going in such a hurry?

ELEANOR

To kill himself again.

EMILY

He's such a Gloomy Gus. Ah, here it is.

(EMILY grabs the sleep mask, and as SHE puts it on :)

EMILY (cont'd)

Honestly, Mother, between Lionel and Father, I don't know how you stay awake.

(EMILY, now masked, exits.)

BLACKOUT

ACT 1
Scene 3

In the dark we hear:

OFF STAGE VOICE

Ladies and gentlemen, appearing this evening for your pleasure, the owner of the Olympus Hotel and Casino –your gracious host, a true winner, who has never outgrown a personal involvement when it comes to his devoted patrons. A warm welcome for Mr. Spiros Olympus!

SPIROS

Thank you, thank you. And welcome to my life.

“ON THE WINNING SIDE”

SPIROS (con't)

ON THE WINNING SIDE
LIFE'S A BOWL OF PEACHES AND CREAM
ON THE LOSING SIDE
YOU GOT SUCKERS CHASING A DREAM
AND I HAVE TO ADMIT
THAT I LIKE WHERE I SIT TIPPING WHISKEY
WHERE LIFE ISN'T RISKY

ON THE RAINY SIDE
YOU'RE IN MUD RIGHT UP TO YOUR KNEES
ON THE SUNNY SIDE
YOU GO SAILING, CATCHIN' A BREEZE
AND I DON'T EVER FAIL
CAUSE I KNOW HOW TO SAIL WITH THE TIDE
ON THE WINNING SIDE

BUT COULD I EVER WALK IN THEIR SHOES?
ALL THOSE PLAYERS PAYING THEIR DUES
ALL THOSE PEOPLE WILLING TO LOSE
WHAT A LIFE
TAKING THEIR LUMPS
KICKED IN THE SHINS
EVERYONE ON
NEEDLES AND PINS
FEELING A KNOT
DEEP DOWN IN THEIR GUTS
DO I WANT THAT?
ARE YOU NUTS?

SPIROS (con't)

ON THE DEALERS' SIDE
 ALL THE ODDS ARE WEIGHED IN ADVANCE
 ON THE PLAYERS' SIDE
 THEY LIVE LIFE BY TAKIN' A CHANCE
 BUT I KEEP IT IN CHECK
 I DON'T STICK OUT MY NECK
 CAUSE I'M WINNING
 AND SITTING HERE GRINNING

EVERYBODY KNOWS
 IT'S A WORLD OF HAVE AND HAVE NOTS
 'ROUND AND 'ROUND IT GOES
 ALL THE HAVE NOTS TAKIN' THEIR SHOTS
 MAYBE LIFE ISN'T FAIR
 BUT I REALLY DON'T CARE CAUSE I GLIDE
 ON THE WINNING SIDE

(SPIROS finishes his song to applause. Lights up on EDWARD, sitting at the craps table with his personal croupier, WILLY. LIONEL, wearing a pair of sunglasses and carrying a brightly colored beach towel enters hurriedly. HE stops when HE spots EDWARD.)

LIONEL

I have one last thing to say to you. Remember the summerhouse we used to go to in New Hampshire before you lost it in a gin rummy game?

EDWARD

Yeah?

LIONEL

It had the only playroom I ever liked.

EDWARD

I'm sorry. Are you going for a swim?

LIONEL

No. I am going to the desert where I will spread myself naked on the sand, close my eyes, and wait for total obliteration.

(EDWARD blows on the dice and with a real flourish, HE rolls.)

WILLY

Say hello to Little Joe. Lay bet.

(EDWARD picks up and shakes the dice.)

Shooter looking for a four.
WILLY (cont'd)

Did you hear me?
LIONEL

Everyone heard you.
EDWARD

Well, aren't you going to stop me?
LIONEL
(EDWARD rolls.)

Come on, four.
EDWARD
(EDWARD shoots.)

A viper on the table. Shooter loses.
WILLY

I'm not moving until you forbid me to go.
LIONEL

What the hell's wrong with these dice anyway? Time for a new pair, Willy.
EDWARD
(SPIROS saunters to their table.)

Here, try these. A little present from the house. Merry Christmas, Edward. Go on. Maybe they'll change your luck. It's the least I can do for my favorite Blackjack opponent. There's nothing fishy about them.
SPIROS

(EDWARD takes the dice. Suspiciously, he eyes them, sniffs them, rattles them next to his ear, rubs the spots looking for smudges.)

You know, your father is the only one who has ever made the game exciting. I envy his stubbornness, that dry throat, those clammy hands – all those palpable signs of life that a person loses when he's the house and he grinds down those fair-weather patsies. But Edward T. Wellspot is the one constant who comes back year after year to prove that there's still life out there.
SPIROS
(to EDWARD)

You've never beaten the Olympus Casino, but you never give up. It's just not the same without you.
SPIROS (cont'd)

EDWARD

Don't get sentimental on me now.

SPIROS

I can't help it. It's the season. So, I trust I'll see you at our annual game tonight. 11 PM. My private game room.

EDWARD

Mr. Olympus, as much as it pains me to say it, I'll pass. I'm going to stay right here in the casino this year.

SPIROS

What? You and me, head to head, it's our Christmas Eve tradition. Maybe you can wipe out that debt this year.

LIONEL

Wipe out his debt? Impossible. This man is the sad victim of a mathematical system that tries, through binomial camouflage, to hide the fact that almost every bet in a game of chance carries astronomical odds against it.

EDWARD

Come on, Big Natural!
(EDWARD rolls craps)

WILLY

Miss.

EDWARD

Damn.
(EDWARD reaches under the table for another stack of chips.)

LIONEL

See what I mean.

SPIROS

There's other ways to wipe out a debt, and in the privacy of my penthouse, when he's broke and desperate, we can work out some form of payment, I'm sure. The barter system is not completely lost on me.

(EDWARD turns to look squarely at SPIROS. His curiosity has peaked,)

LIONEL

What could you possibly want from him? The only thing he owns is a '56 Rambler worth about twelve bucks.

EDWARD

Weren't you going to sunbathe somewhere?

LIONEL

It's too late. The sun has set!
(LIONEL exits.)

SPIROS

What a joy it must be to have a son.

EDWARD

It's beyond words.

SPIROS

I like you, Edward. I get you. We're cut from the same cloth, you and I.

EDWARD

Except you're living the high life and I'm living in a Rambler. Other than that, we're exactly the same.
(EDWARD shoots)

WILLY

Come out roll is 8.

SPIROS

I've been patient with your many markers over the years, but it's the end of the road. I'd hate to call in some favors, but if you can't make good on that ten grand in forty-eight hours, I can – and will – have you reduced to a shameful, pedestrian status. You won't be able to work your way into a game of Old Maid.

EDWARD

Who died and made you Sinatra?

SPIROS

Okay, I understand. You're busy. We can discuss my proposition at another time, and, then, shake on it before our private game this evening.

EDWARD

I said I wasn't –

SPIROS

Don't disappoint me tonight, Edward. Shooter looking for an eight.
(SPIROS exits. Light up on the combo. A stool and mic are lit on the bandstand)

OFF STAGE VOICE

And, now, the Olympus Hotel and Casino presents a man who has taken his share of punches without whimpering any more than a man should. Welcome him, ladies and gentlemen - in what could be his final appearance on our stage – our star crossed main attraction, Edward T. Wellspot.

(EDWARD is on the stool. HE takes the mic.)

"IS THIS ANY WAY TO LIVE?"

EDWARD

MY PULSE IS RACING
 LET'S SEE HOW FAST IT'LL GET
 MY HEART IS BURNING
 MY STOMACH CHURNING
 WHAT NEXT?
 THE SWEAT
 WHEN YOU DROWN IN SWEAT, A MAN MIGHT SAY
 IS THIS ANY WAY TO LIVE?

THE FACTS I'M FACING
 ARE BITTER FACTS I ASSUMED
 THE GAMES ARE CRAFTED
 SO GUYS GET SHAFTED
 WHAT'S NEW?
 I'M DOOMED
 NOW THE FLESH IS TURNING COLD AS CLAY
 IS THIS ANY WAY TO LIVE?

IS THIS ANY WAY TO LIVE
 WHEN LIFE HAS CHOICES?
 CHOICES
 I COULD SHELL CLAMS AND OYSTERS
 I COULD TELL PEOPLE'S FORTUNES
 I COULD SELL VACUUM CLEANERS DOOR TO DOOR
 I COULD TAKE MOVIE TICKETS
 I COULD BAKE PIES AND COOKIES
 I COULD MAKE LADIES' UNDIES BY THE SCORE
 I COULD HAWK BEER AND PEANUTS
 COULD CAULK DOORS AND WINDOWS
 COULD WALK PUGS AND POODLES AND MUCH MORE
 BUT BY CHOOSING THEM WHAT DO I GAIN?
 IF I CHOOSE ONE I CHOOSE THE MUNDANE
 AND IF SO THEN I CHOOSE TO LOSE

I'M MAKING MUCH
 OF A SMALL SITUATION
 IT'S A RUN OF BAD LUCK
 PART OF MY OCCUPATION
 I'LL BE BACK ON TRACK SOON
 SINGIN' A DIFFERENT TUNE
 NOT A CARE IN THE WORLD
 I'LL BE ON TOP AGAIN
 IT'S A QUESTION OF WHEN

EDWARD (cont'd)
 IT'S TIME FOR PACING
 IT'S TIME I TOOK A DEEP BREATH
 MY HANDS ARE ITCHING
 MY EYES ARE TWITCHING
 WHAT NEXT?
 JUST DEATH
 IF I HAD A BRAIN I'D STOP TODAY
 IS THIS ANY WAY TO LIVE?
 BUT I GOT TO PLAY TO LIVE

(Lights down on the combo. Lights up on WILLY at the craps table. EDWARD rolls the dice.)

WILLY
 Craps.

EDWARD
 Damn.

WILLY
 Perhaps Roulette, Mr. Wellspot.
 (WILLY acting like a magician swiftly transforms the craps table to a roulette gaming board.)

WILLY (cont'd)
 The game of kings. Give it a try?

EDWARD
 Why not? One game has to love me this season.
 (MRS. PERIAPT, an elderly widow, enters SHE wears a flowerpot hat, a neutral colored woman's suit and sensible shoes. SHE clutches an oversized pocketbook.)

MRS. PERIAPT
 What a pretty little wheel. Hello. May I sit here with you?

EDWARD
 I don't know, lady. You're looking at a losing gambler, and a losing gambler is a rain cloud to everyone around him. You'd be better off at another table where your luck —

MRS. PERIAPT
 But I'm not going to gamble. I have no idea how these games are played. I'll just watch, if you don't mind the company.

EDWARD
 Suit yourself. What you see here is the last of my bankroll. If you enjoy magic, you will take delight in watching it disappear right before your eyes.

MRS. PERIAPT

I don't understand too much about gambling, but isn't your pile of chips supposed to grow bigger?

EDWARD

You know, you understand just enough about gambling to let it break your heart.

MRS. PERIAPT

How do you play this game?

EDWARD

You're kidding me, right?

MRS. PERIAPT

I was hoping you'd show me.

"LET'S PLAY ROULETTE"

EDWARD

THE PRETTY LITTLE WHEEL
GOES ROUND AND ROUND
AND THE BOUNCING BALL
ON THE PRETTY WHEEL
MAKES A PRETTY SOUND
UNTIL IT HITS A LITTLE NEST
WHERE IT CAN REST
LET'S PLAY ROULETTE

WILLY

Place your bets. Please, place all bets.

EDWARD

What do you say to a black bet?

MRS. PERIAPT

What does that mean?

EDWARD

THE PRETTY LITTLE WHEEL
IS RED AND BLACK
AND THE LITTLE BALL'S
LIKE A CHOO-CHOO TRAIN
CHUGGIN' DOWN THE TRACK
TO STOP AT BLACK OR RED AHEAD
NOW LIKE I SAID
LET'S PLAY ROULETTE

EDWARD (con't)

(Moving his chips to the Black square)
Put it all on Black. A double-or-nothing bet.

MRS. PERIAPT

Oh no, bet red.
(SHE shifts his bet for him.)

EDWARD

Lady, what are you doing? You never change a guy's bet. Never.
(EDWARD reaches to change it back to black.)

WILLY

Bets closed.
(EDWARD pulls his hand back.)

MRS. PERIAPT

But red is so festive
(WILLY spins the wheel)

EDWARD

Of course.
(HE buries his face in his hands.)

MRS. PERIAPT

THE PRETTY LITTLE WHEEL
GOES ROUND AND ROUND
AND THE BOUNCING BALL GOES
HIPPIITY HIPPIITY HOP
I WONDER WHERE THE BOUNCING BALL WILL STOP

WILLY

Paying Red 7. A winner.
(EDWARD lifts his head.)

EDWARD

(Somewhat stunned)
I won.

MRS. PERIAPT

So you did. Aren't you going to collect your chips?

EDWARD

I'm going to keep them right there on red.

MRS. PERIAPT

I'd bet on the green to go with the red for Christmas.

EDWARD

You can't bet green. You can only play two green spaces. Zero or double zero.

MRS. PERIAPT

Well, my late husband Stanley always said our sons were a couple of zeroes.

EDWARD

Then Double Zero it is.

(HE moves all his chips onto Double Zero.)

EDWARD

THE PRETTY LITTLE WHEEL
IS SPINNING RIGHT
AND THE LITTLE WHEEL
NEVER LOOKED SO GOOD
AS IT DOES TONIGHT
SO PLACE A BET AND TALLY-HO!
OK, LET'S GO
LET'S PLAY ROULETTE

WILLY

Bets closed.

(WILLY spins the wheel)

EDWARD & MRS. PERIAPT

THE PRETTY LITTLE WHEEL
GOES ROUND AND ROUND
AND THE BOUNCING BALL GOES
HIPPIITY HIPPIITY HOP
I WONDER WHERE THE BOUNCING BALL WILL—

WILLY

Paying Double Zero.

WILLY (continued)

I don't believe it.

EDWARD

I don't believe it.

MRS. PERIAPT

Dear Stanley would be so happy to know our two zeroes actually amounted to something.

EDWARD

I'm sorry, I haven't properly introduced myself. I'm Edward T. Wellspot, and you are...?

MRS. PERIAPT

Edna Periapt of Mystic, Connecticut...although I hardly recognize myself. I must look a sight. Do you realize I've been up for nineteen hours. Nineteen hours straight. Can you imagine? Nineteen.

(Without ever taking his eyes off MRS. PERIAPT, EDWARD casually slides his entire pile of chips onto number 19.)

WILLY

Bets closed.

(WILLY spins the wheel.)

MRS. PERIAPT (continued)

It's strange, Mr. Wellspot, I should probably get some sleep, a woman of my age. In fact, I was on my way to my room for a nap before I came upon you, but what the heck. It's the holidays, right? So why shouldn't I -

WILLY

Paying Red 19. We have a winner.

MRS. PERIAPT

Again? This is more fun than Mahjong!

EDWARD

You know, I'd like you to meet my family.

EDWARD
THE PRETTY LITTLE WHEEL
WENT ROUND AND ROUND
AND THE BOUNCING BALL
ON THE PRETTY WHEEL
MADE A PRETTY SOUND

MRS. PERIAPT
THE PRETTY LITTLE WHEEL
WENT ROUND AND ROUND
AND THE BOUNCING BALL
ON THE PRETTY WHEEL
MADE A PRETTY SOUND

EDWARD & MRS. PERIAPT

WASN'T IT FUN?
MY GOD WE WON!
LET'S PLAY ROULETTE!

BLACKOUT

ACT 1**Scene 4**

Lights up on EMILY and LIONEL. SHE is wearing a sleep mask.

EMILY

And you woke me from my nap for this? Lionel, you interrupted a lovely dream.

LIONEL

Emily, I just told you that Olympus would take something from Father that will settle the debt between them. Don't you find that odd? I can't think of a — Would you please take that mask off?

(SHE does)

LIONEL (cont'd)

Thank you — I can't think of a single thing that anyone would want from Edward.

EMILY

I'm having a hard time coming up with something myself - Wait a minute. There's Grandfather's pearl handle revolver once owned by Annie Oakley.

LIONEL

That's a family heirloom. He'd never give that up. He won't even let me go near it.

EMILY

For obvious reasons.

LIONEL

This is looking more and more diabolical.

EMILY

You're so suspicious of everyone. We have to put our faith in Father. It will all work out. Father knows best. Now, can I get back to my nap?

LIONEL

How can you sleep at a time like this?

EMILY

How do you think I get through times like this? When I dream, everything is wonderful.

LIONEL

You can't count on dreams, Emily. They never come true.

EDWARD

(off)

Front and center, Wellspots! Hop to it!

LIONEL

It's the nightmares you have to be wary of.

(EDWARD comes barreling on stage.)

EDWARD

Where is everyone? Ahh, there you are, my children. Emily, so glad you're awake. Eleanor! Front and center for some blessed news this holiday season.

LIONEL

Is it news about Olympus' deal?
(HE cups LIONEL's face in his hands)

EDWARD

Such beautiful off-spring. How are you this wonderful afternoon, my son?
(Calling out)

EDWARD (cont'd)

Eleanor!

LIONEL

Father, did you strike some Faustian deal with Mr. Olympus?

EDWARD

Yes, I struck a deal. But not with the Greek Grinch, with a Christmas angel!

LIONEL

Emily, we're doomed.

EDWARD

You would feel doomed with a royal flush sitting in your hand. Eleanor!
(ELEANOR enters)

ELEANOR

Why the shouting, Edward?

EDWARD

Look at us – together, gathered here around the plastic pine tree once again. What a glorious family tradition, our yearly pilgrimage to this gambling capital where we come not only to challenge fate, but to commemorate Nick the Greek, who came to Las Vegas to play poker with Johnny Moss in a game that lasted four months and ended ten years ago on Christmas day. Let us bow our heads in respect for the gutsiest, greatest gambler of all... until *Edward T. Wellspot!*

LIONEL

Have you been into Mother's little pink pills?

ELEANOR

Lionel, you're taking the joy out of the occasion.
(To EDWARD)
Have you, dear?

EDWARD

No, my love, and not even Lionel can strip the joy from today.

(EDWARD takes his place on the bandstand, takes the microphone like a self-satisfied, overly smug lounge lizard.)

EDWARD (cont'd)

ATTENTION PLEASE

NOW FOR A BIG SURPRISE

A WOMAN WHO WORKS MIRACLES

RIGHT HERE BEFORE YOUR EYES!

(Drum roll. EDWARD grabs a tablecloth and swirls it in the air like a Vegas magician.)

EDWARD (cont'd)

Ladies and gentleman, direct from Mystic, Connecticut, the wonder of the ages –I give you *Edna, the Great!*

(MRS. PERIAPT magically appears from behind it. SHE smiles and curtsies.

EDWARD applauds wildly; HE is the only one to do so.)

MRS. PERIAPT

Oh dear. This is a sour looking group.

EDWARD

Otherwise known as my family. Let me introduce you: my wife, Eleanor, a soft, middle-aged woman who regularly retreats into her colorful collection of pills to blur the difficult darkness of her reality.

MRS. PERIAPT

I once had a colorful collection of Oriental fans.

EDWARD

It's not quite the same, my sweet. My son, Lionel: a twenty-seven-year-old perennial student of mathematics with no practical occupation, unless you count his periodic attempts at suicide as a career path.

MRS. PERIAPT

Does he really kill himself periodically?

EDWARD

He only tries, Mrs. Periapt. Sniffing fumes from an electric oven and kissing people with head colds during a flu epidemic are futile stabs at self-destruction.

LIONEL

There was a lot of pneumonia that year. And I took long walks in the rain without a hat or rubbers.

EDWARD

And finally, my thirty-year old daughter, Emily: a narcoleptic, five-time divorcee, currently single, and again living with her parents. I haven't raised children, Mrs. Periapt. I've raised homing pigeons. Yes, homing pigeons. No matter how often I toss them out of the nest, they always come home to roost.

LIONEL

Because every time we go out there, we fail, a trick we learned at Daddy's knee. The world doesn't want us. It doesn't like us. We're unlikeable failures. And you, Father, have no choice but to take us in and to like us!

EDWARD

Look at them, Mrs. Periapt, a ragtag bunch, for sure, but who, in short time, will be forever in your debt.

ELEANOR

And why is that?

EDWARD

Because she is my lucky charm.

ELEANOR

And what about me?

EDWARD

You just stand back and watch. Mrs. Periapt, it's time to show them what you're made of.
(EDWARD produces a deck of cards and fans them. To MRS. PERIAPT)

“LOVELY LADY”

EDWARD (cont'd)

OK
CUE THE SPOTLIGHT
'CAUSE IT'S SHOWTIME
STARRING EDNA THE GREAT!
WATCH NOW
WATCH HER CLOSELY
WATCH AND YOU'LL SEE EDNA'S AMAZING!

PICK OUT A CARD
MY LOVELY LADY
PICK ANY CARD
BUT HIDE THE FACE
WHAT DID YOU PICK
MY LOVELY LADY?

MRS. PERIAT
JIMMINY CRICKET, BUT I PICKED AN ACE!

EDWARD
The ace of spades, ladies and gentlemen! The ace of spades! What are the chances?

LIONEL, EMILY, ELEANOR
BIG DEAL
WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?
HO-HUM
WHAT'S THE FUSS?

LIONEL
PICKING THE CARD THAT YOU WANT HER TO PICK

LIONEL, EMILY, ELEANOR
JUST ANOTHER MOLDY OLD MAGICIAN'S TRICK

MRS. PERIAPT
Wow, this is a tough room.

EDWARD
Don't I know it.

EDWARD (con't)
OK
KEEP YOUR SEATS, FOLKS
'CAUSE THE BEST PART
OF THE SHOW'S YET TO COME
WATCH NOW
WATCH THE DICE, FOLKS
WATCH AND YOU'LL SEE EDNA'S AMAZING!

GIVE 'EM A SHAKE
MY LOVELY LADY
LIGHT UP THE DICE
A THOUSAND WATTS
GIVE 'EM A TOSS
MY LOVELY LADY

MRS. PERIAPT
WELL, LEAPIN' LIZARDS, I GOT SEVEN DOTS!

EDWARD
Seven! A lucky seven for the lovely lady!

LIONEL, EMILY, ELEANOR

BIG DEAL
WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?
HO-HUM
WHAT'S THE FUSS?

EMILY

CALL ME A SKEPTIC, TO BE MORE PRECISE

LIONEL, EMILY, ELEANOR

ANYONE CAN SHOOT A PAIR OF LOADED DICE

MRS. PERIAPT

Are you sure this is your family?

EDWARD

I often wonder.

EDWARD (con't)

OK
YOU WANT PROOF, KIDS
HERE WE GO THEN
IRREFUTABLE PROOF
WATCH NOW
THE FINALE
GUARANTEED TO LEAVE YOU DUMBFOUNDED!

EDNA WILL FACE
THE ONE-ARMED BANDIT
SHE WILL DEFY
THE GAMBLING GODS
BATTLING WITH
THE ONE-ARMED BANDIT

MRS. PERIAPT

WHO BETS THE LOVELY LADY BEATS THE ODDS?

(MUSIC. EDWARD escorts MRS. PERIAPT, to the slot machine and blindfolds her. SHE grabs a hold of the slot and EDWARD begins spinning it and her. SHE pulls the arm. Lights flash, bells ring, and out flush silver dollars. EDWARD is jubilant.)

EDWARD

Jackpot! A hundred bucks!

LIONEL, EMILY, ELEANOR

BIG DEAL
WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?
HO-HUM
WHAT'S THE FUSS?

ELEANOR

THAT ISN'T ANYTHING I HAVEN'T SEEN

LIONEL, EMILY, ELEANOR

AND WE'RE WELL-ACQUAINTED WITH A SLOT MACHINE

EDWARD, MRS. PERIAPT

LOOK AT HER NOW
THE LOVELY LADY
TURNING THE WORLD
ALL UPSIDE DOWN
WHAT DO YOU BET
THE LOVELY LADY
CAN BREAK A BANK OR TWO AND TAKE THE TOWN!

LIONEL, EMILY, ELEANOR

BIG DEAL
SO WHAT?
IS THAT ALL
THE SHOW THAT YOU GOT
HO-HUM
SHOW HER THE DOOR
IT'S NOTHING WE HAVEN'T
SEEN BEFORE

EDWARD, MRS PERIAPT

LOOK AT HER NOW
THE LOVELY LADY
TURNING THE WORLD
ALL UPSIDE DOWN
WHAT DO YOU BET
THE LOVELY LADY
CAN BREAK A BANK OR TWO
AND TAKE THE TOWN!

BIG DEAL
SO WHAT?
IS THAT ALL
THE SHOW THAT YOU GOT
WATCH OUT
YOU'RE GONNA DROWN
IF YOU THINK SHE'S
GONNA TAKE THE TOWN
DON'T THINK THAT LADY
CAN TAKE THE TOWN

TALK ABOUT LUCK
IT'S LOVELY LADY
TURNING THE WORLD
ALL UPSIDE DOWN
WHAT DO YOU BET
THE LOVELY LADY
CAN BREAK A BANK OR TWO
AND TAKE THE TOWN!
CAN BREAK A BANK OR TWO
AND TAKE THE TOWN!

(LIONEL and ELEANOR turn sharply on their heels and exit. EDWARD and MRS.. PERIAPT turn to EMILY, who yawns loudly, and shuffles out.)

MRS. PERIAPT

Maybe we should have gone with Three Card Monte.

(EDWARD gives MRS. PERIAPT a double take, then laughs)

“LUCKY LADY” – reprise

EDWARD, MRS. PERIAPT

LOOK AT HER NOW

THE LOVELY LADY

TURNING THE WORLD

ALL UPSIDE DOWN

WHAT DO YOU BET

THE LOVELY LADY

CAN BREAK A BANK OR TWO AND TAKE THE TOWN!

BLACKOUT

ACT I**Scene 5**

SPIROS' penthouse apartment. HE is mixing a cocktail, which HE sips periodically.

WILLY

I didn't know what to do. Suddenly, everybody was riding with the old lady, and she does nothing but make passes. She tosses the dice in the air like this –

(HE makes an awkward lady-like gesture.)

WILLY (cont'd)

-and even when they bounce off the table they come up on the point or on the natural. Mr. Olympus, was I wrong to keep the table open so long?

SPIROS

Don't worry, you couldn't know. Now, tell me about Wellspot. He's prepared to back this old lady for the rest of his stay, is he?

WILLY

It looks that way. He won't let her out of his sight.

SPIROS

Poor Edward. This is his last desperate stand. Still, I'm willing to take care of his debt here and with another dozen loan sharks who are looking to break his legs. So I don't see how he can refuse my proposition.

WILLY

I swear, Mr. O, you're a saint, a regular saint.

SPIROS

It's not only my philanthropic nature, Willy. There's a bigger reason why he warrants my attention. You see, I'm thinking of getting married to his daughter.

WILLY

You mean that girl who spends all day walking around in her pjs?

SPIROS

That's the one.

WILLY

Did you propose?

SPIROS

That's where her father comes in. I forgive Wellspot's insurmountable pile of debts, if he convinces his daughter that marrying me is in everyone's best interest.

WILLY

So, that's your deal. Sounds like a fair exchange.

SPIROS

But we have to make him sweat like Richard Nixon, Willy. Then, we tap him out, break him, and make him beholden to me.

WILLY

How?

SPIROS

In tonight's head to head Blackjack game.

WILLY

Boss, you're forgetting—Mr. Wellspot hasn't accepted your invitation this year.

SPIROS

A minor setback. He's always been a sucker for our little game. I'll extend the invitation personally. Ingratiate myself with the family.

WILLY

There's this other fly in the ointment... the old lady from Mystic, Connecticut.

SPIROS

Let's just get Edward there tonight, and I'll manage everything.

WILLY

I don't know, Boss. The old lady spooks me. She may not even be human.

SPIROS

Then, put some garlic around your neck.

WILLY

(To himself)

It's going to take a lot more than that.

SPIROS

Did you say something, Willy?

WILLY

Me? No.

(WILLY looks away and twitches nervously.)

SPIROS (cont'd)

Willy, are you hiding anything?

WILLY

What do you mean, Boss?

SPIROS

Willy...?

(SPIROS holds out his hand, and WILLY reluctantly takes a pair of sunglasses from his inside pocket and hands them over to SPIROS who picks up a card from a deck, and examines it through one of the lenses.)

WILLY

They're sunglasses. You know what light does to my eyes when I'm dealing. I squint and look suspicious.

SPIROS

Ahh, magic lenses. Bad boy, Willy.

(SPIROS motions toward WILLY's sleeve.)

SPIROS (Cont'd)

And are those mirror cufflinks? Tsk.Tsk. Tsk.

(WILLY removes the cuff links.)

SPIROS (Cont'd)

I thought I broke your nasty habits after you left the Silver Palace.

(Next, SPIROS motions for WILLY to put his foot on a chair and lift his trouser leg. WILLY does and reveals a leg booster holding aces. SPIROS unbuckles and removes the leg booster.)

WILLY

Boss, playing naked makes no sense, I mean, considering the unexpected turn of events.

(SPIROS removes WILLY's dinner jacket, shakes it, and dislodges four aces.)

SPIROS

This is a class establishment. That's why you came here- to upgrade yourself. Now, don't work so hard and do what I taught you. Get the best odds, stretch the game out, but don't try to force something from it. I run an honest emporium – pants -

(WILLY takes off his pants, hands them to SPIROS who removes cards pinned to the inside seam.)

SPIROS (cont'd)

- always did and always will. Now, Wellspot gets an honest game in the casino and in my penthouse tonight.

WILLY

I'm only thinking about you, Mr. O. About your reputation on the strip if he should -

SPIROS

Don't fret so much. We have the edge. And we're on the side of the angels. Doesn't that make you feel good? So, relax and, this evening, just enjoy watching a master at work. Now set the sun lamp, Willy. I want to take a snooze.

(SPIROS settles into his chair for his tan and puts eyeshades on. WILLY fiddles with the sunlamp.)

SPIROS (cont'd)

What time is it?

WILLY

Four-thirty.

SPIROS

A.M. or P.M.?

WILLY

P.M.

SPIROS

Adjust the lamp to late afternoon intensity. I don't want to burn.

(WILLY begins adjusting the lamp.)

SPIROS (cont'd)

I realize Miss Emily Wellspot elevates the stakes in the game considerably, but I do have a plan. If I can be patient, so should you.

WILLY

How's this?

SPIROS

Very nice, feels like the beginning of sunset on my forehead. Thank you, Willy. I'll take my nap now. Oh, and get dressed.

(SPIROS makes himself comfortable beneath the sunlamp.)

CROSS FADE TO . . .

ACT I
Scene 6

OFF STAGE VOICE

And now, once again, here are the Olympus Casino's very own – Edward and Edna.

(A spotlight hits EDWARD and MRS. PERIAPT on the bandstand.)

EDWARD

Tell me, Edna, how are you enjoying Las Vegas so far?

MRS. PERIAPT

Oh, it's certainly bright and colorful, but not really my kind of place.

EDWARD

So what brought you here?

MRS. PERIAPT

Pan American Airlines, Flight 88.

EDWARD

I mean if it's not your kind of place, why choose Las Vegas for a vacation.

MRS. PERIAPT

I didn't. It was a Christmas gift from my two sons.

EDWARD

A gift from your sons?

MRS. PERIAPT

That's right.

EDWARD

So, are you here alone?

MRS. PERIAPT

No, I'm here with you. Here, I'll show you you in my compact.

EDWARD

No, I mean the trip. Have you traveled out here alone?

MRS. PERIAPT

Oh no, with Doris.

EDWARD

Your daughter?

MRS. PERIAPT

I have a daughter? Are you sure you're not mistaken

EDWARD

Who's Doris, Edna?

MRS. PERIAPT

My sister-in-law. I'm traveling with her. But she's allergic to fruit.

EDWARD

Allergic to fruit?

MRS. PERIAPT

That's right. So she stays in her room.

EDWARD

All day?

MRS. PERIAPT

Well, sure, she breaks out in hives whenever she passes through the casino.

EDWARD

Why's that?

MRS. PERIAPT

Those slot machines. Lemons, cherries, blueberries! They're all over. You can't escape them. Poor Doris, she began scratching the minute we landed.

EDWARD

Well, I'm delighted to share your company.

MRS. PERIAPT

I didn't know you had shares in my company. Poor Stanley, worked like a dog to build it up, and now it's in the hands of a total stranger. Well, better you than my sons. Those two could run Chrysler into the ground.

(EDWARD takes her hand. Warmly, and with caution.)

EDWARD

May I ask you something? What would you say to a game of blackjack against the owner of the casino himself? Fifteen times I've played him in head to head games, and each time I've crawled away feeling like I'd been squeezed to jelly. Just once I'd like to beat this man at his own game. What do you say? Maybe tonight, you and I can make a Christmas Eve miracle for the Wellspot family. Do we dare?

MRS. PERIAPT

Oh, dear, that sounds terribly daunting. You know, whenever there's been pressure placed on me, I begin to doubt what I do. I don't do well under pressure at all.

EDWARD

(snapping back to reality)

Well, then, forget this entire conversation. Just forget the whole thing. They'll be no pressure to wrinkle your lovely brow. No Blackjack. None. Nada. Forget it. It was a foolish notion.

MRS. PERIAPT

What was?

(EDWARD does a slow turn to the audience and smiles wanly.

BLACKOUT)

ACT I**Scene 7**

EMILY, wearing her black sleeping mask, is nestled in a ball, sleeping soundly as furry kitten. There's a knock. It doesn't rouse her. Then, another. Nothing.

SPIROS

(off)
Hello? Is anybody there?
(SPIROS enters somewhat cautiously. When HE spots EMILY, HE smiles and walks toward her.)

SPIROS

Miss Wellspot?
(HE gets down next to her and gently shakes her.)
Emily?
(AS SHE starts to rouse and lift her mask, HE playfully jumps up behind her and covers her eyes with his hands.)

SPIROS

Guess who?

EMILY

(Reaching up behind her and feeling his face with her fingertips. With delight.)
Grandpa Wellspot!
(SHE turns around quickly. Her delight dissipates.)

EMILY (cont'd)

Oh, it's you.

SPIROS

Emily, after all these years, please, call me Spiros.

EMILY

What can I do for you, Mr. Olympus?
(EMILY rises and slips her ratty robe over her pajamas.)

SPIROS

I want to welcome the Wellspot ladies back to the Olympus Hotel and to ask if I can do anything to make your stay with us more comfortable.

EMILY

We're fine. Thank you.

SPIROS

I'm glad.
(HE smiles awkwardly.)

EMILY

Is there anything else?

SPIROS

Yes, of course. I was hoping to see your father. I wanted to deliver this personally.
(HE holds out a large, shimmering black envelope with gold leaf lettering.)

SPIROS (cont'd)

His invitation to our Christmas Eve poker game. He seems a little reluctant to play cards with me this year.

EMILY

Well, he's not here right now, but I'll see that he gets it. Now, if you don't mind, I'd like to get back to my nap.

SPIROS

You seem quite committed to, shall we say, a sedentary lifestyle.

EMILY

I suppose some might say that.

SPIROS

Don't you ever have an urge to get dressed and go out?

EMILY

Why would I want to do that?

"IT'S BETTER IN BED"

EMILY (cont'd)

IT'S BETTER IN BED
IT'S BETTER IN BED
I CAN HIDE
FROM THE WORLD OUTSIDE
UNDER THE SPREAD
DAYS ARE GRAY WITH RAIN AND FLURRIES
WHEN I SLEEP I HAVE NO WORRIES
HAPPY INSTEAD
IT'S BETTER IN BED

SPIROS

So you're sure -

IT'S BETTER IN BED

EMILY

IT'S BETTER IN BED

SPIROS
IT'S BETTER IN BED

EMILY
MUCH BETTER IN BED

SPIROS
AND IN SHORT
HONEY, I SUPPORT
ALL THAT YOU'VE SAID
IT'S WHAT POSTUREPEDIC SELLS US
AND WHAT DOCTOR KINSEY TELLS US
FROM WHAT I'VE READ
IT'S BETTER IN BED

SPIROS
So, being awake offers no allure.

EMILY
None at all.

EMILY (cont'd)
WHEN I'M AWAKE I'M HARRIED
BY THOUGHTS OF TOADS I MARRIED
I SEE THEIR BULGING EYES AND WARTS
WHILE HOPPING IN THEIR JOCKEY SHORTS
BUT WHEN I SNOOZE
AH, WHEN I SNOOZE
I'M WITH A HANDSOME PRINCE
ON A CUNARD CRUISE

SPIROS
BUT TELL ME
WHAT IF THE HOOVER DAM SHOULD BREAK?

EMILY
I WOULDN'T WAKE

SPIROS
IF FLYING SAUCERS FILLED THE SKIES?

EMILY
I'D CLOSE MY EYES

SPIROS
WHAT IF SPUTNIK HIT YOUR HOUSE
WITH A BIG KERPLUNK?

EMILY
I'D PHONE THE SOVIET UNION
AND I'D HIT THE BUNK

SPIROS
SO IT'S BETTER IN BED?

EMILY
IT'S BETTER IN BED

SPIROS
LET ME TUCK YOU IN BED

EMILY
IT'S BETTER IN BED
WHILE MY DREAMS
AND ROMANTIC THEMES
RUN THROUGH MY HEAD
LIFE CAN DISAPPOINT BUT NOT IN
SHEETS MADE OF EGYPTIAN COTTON
FIVE-HUNDRED THREAD
IT'S BETTER IN BED

(EMILY stretches, closes her eyes, wraps her robe more closely around her body.)

Comfy?
SPIROS

Oh, yes. Very.
(Stifling a yawn)
EMILY

EMILY
LIFE CAN DISAPPOINT BUT NOT IN
SHEETS MADE OF EGYPTIAN COTTON
FIVE-HUNDRED THREAD
SO LIKE I SAID

EMILY and SPIROS
IT'S BETTER IN BED
BETTER IN BED
BETTER IN BED

(SHE cuddles up into a round ball and falls asleep as EDWARD enters.)

Mr. Olympus. What are you doing here?
EDWARD

SPIROS

I was looking for you, Edward. I left the invitation for tonight's game with your daughter.
(HE looks at EMILY and smiles.)

EDWARD

How often do I have to say it? I won't be joining you this Christmas Eve.

SPIROS

She really is a dream come true.
(SPIROS turns back to EDWARD.)

SPIROS (cont'd)

How could all those husbands let her slip away? Edward, this life I live has nicely sustained me for a long time. I've never missed the attachment to another person. Never felt the need, but circumstances change, and, well... I'm in the market for a wife.

EDWARD

Sorry, but I have none to spare, so if you'll excuse -

SPIROS

But you have a daughter. I would like to marry her.

EDWARD

You must be referring to someone else's daughter.

SPIROS

No. I'm referring to your Emily. I'll forgive your debts, Edward, if you convince Emily to meet me at the altar.

EDWARD

Wait. This is your deal? My daughter is what you want from me? You're kidding, right?

SPIROS

No. We're admirably suited. She wants to sleep, and I'm ready to finance peignoirs and pajamas for the rest of her life.

EDWARD

But I'm winning now- winning big! And I certainly wouldn't barter my daughter for a \$10,000 marker. Forget it!

SPIROS

Shhh. She's dozing. Don't get angry. But remember, luck quickly changes, and you know the consequences. I can be a very forgiving son-in-law.
(SPIROS smiles, and as HE exits, HE passes ELEANOR and silently acknowledges her. HE continues out.)

ELEANOR

What did he want?

EDWARD

Nothing. I'm worried about her, Ellie.

ELEANOR

Who?

EDWARD

Our daughter. Look at her. Asleep again. I don't understand. She's a good kid. She'll do whatever I ask her to do. But I just can't get her to stay awake. There are a lot of guys out there who could make her happy. What's she afraid of?

ELEANOR

She – *and* Lionel - believe that out there is far worse than in here. Like it or not, they're tethered to us for financial and moral support, as inadequate as that may be.

EDWARD

I made life too easy for them.

ELEANOR

Easy? Since they took their first steps, they've been dodging repo men, landlords, and a collection of monosyllabic henchmen with broken noses. No, life has not been too easy.

EDWARD

Then, I just don't get it.

ELEANOR

Isn't it obvious? They have "a deep-rooted, psychological fear of failure."

EDWARD

Okay, now this sounds like Dear Abby.

ELEANOR

Ann Landers. She actually answered my letter, and she says you're to blame.

EDWARD

I'm to blame? Forget your Ann Landers. I'll show you how we deal with this problem, simply and easily. Emily... Emily. Wake up, Sweetheart.

(HE takes off her sleeping mask and SHE rises.)

EMILY

Oh, hi, Daddy

EDWARD

You should really try to stay awake, Em.

EMILY

I'm sorry. I do try, honestly. In fact, earlier I pulled out my bathing suit to go to the pool, and I kept reminding myself of Mrs. Periap's jackpot – I even came into the room to look at the slot machine again. But then, I dropped off, until Mr. Olympus interrupted a wonderful dream. Oh, he left this for you.

(SHE holds out the invitation. HE takes it and passes it to ELEANOR.)

EDWARD

Forget about him. Do you remember when forcing my little girl to go to sleep was the worst punishment your mother and I could make you endure? What happened to my little insomniac?

EMILY

Oh, when I was young, I couldn't wait to grow up because I believed that I'd fall madly in love and that love would lead to marriage and marriage to my own Donna Reed show. But the mornings after the weddings always looked so bleak. Whenever I took a clear look at the man lying next to me, his stomach moving up and down, up and down, I grew terrified that that would be the only rhythm I'd know for the rest of my life. It just makes more sense to roll over and pull up the covers.

ELEANOR

You'll find the right man. Keep your chin up and your eyes open.

EDWARD

Exactly. Think about it. If I had said I'd never gamble again, where would we be now?

ELEANOR

Well, according to Ann Landers—

EDWARD

I was speaking to our daughter.

(To EMILY)

“BELIEVE ME”

EDWARD

BELIEVE ME
THE FUTURE'S GONNA BE BRIGHT
BELIEVE ME
IT'S GONNA BE ALL RIGHT

TODAY THE ODDS DON'T LOOK SO GREAT
BUT ODDS ARE ODDS IMPROVE
IF YOU WAIT—SO WAIT

EDWARD (cont'd)

BELIEVE ME
SOMEDAY YOU'LL MEET THE RIGHT GUY
BELIEVE ME
ONE GUY WILL CATCH YOUR EYE
IT'S GONNA HAPPEN WAIT AND SEE, EMILY
BELIEVE ME

EMILY

But I've tried so many times. Five marriages, remember? Five.

EDWARD

(Grabs his chest, as if in pain)
Don't remind me. I'm still paying off wedding number four.

ELEANOR

WHEN YOU FIND THE GUY WHO'S MEANT FOR YOU

EDWARD

YOU'LL FEEL LIKE TURNING SOMERSAULTS

EDWARD and ELEANOR

AND IF THE GUY IS BROKE OR WELL TO DO
YOU'LL LOVE HIM
AND ALL HIS FAULTS

(MUSIC. EDWARD takes ELEANOR by the hand and THEY dance. Then, ELEANOR steps aside and EDWARD takes EMILY in his arms to dance.)

EDWARD and ELEANOR

BELIEVE ME
TOMORROW'S TIED UP IN BOWS
BELIEVE ME
HERE'S HOW TOMORROW GOES

EDWARD

ONE DAY YOU'RE STROLLING IN THE SQUARE
THEN GINGER ROGERS MEETS
FRED ASTAIRE! - RIGHT THERE!

EDWARD

BELIEVE ME
YOU'LL GET IT RIGHT THE NEXT TIME

ELEANOR

(GIVE YOURSELF SOME TIME)

EDWARD

BELIEVE ME
THOSE WEDDING BELLS WILL CHIME

ELEANOR

(CAN YOU HEAR THEM CHIME?)

EDWARD and ELEANOR

YOU'LL BE THE BLUSHING BRIDE AGAIN

EDWARD

YET AGAIN!

EDWARD & ELEANOR

BELIEVE ME

EMILY

I want to believe you. I really do.

EDWARD & ELEANOR

BELIEVE ME
BELIEVE YOU ME!

EDWARD

Emily, I've broken more casinos during afternoon naps than you've had husbands, but that one \$5.00 win in the real world is worth all those chips at some dreamed-up Monte Carlo.

EMILY

All right, I'm going to put on my new bathing suit and lay by the pool. Who knows who I'll meet down there.

EDWARD

That's it, Em. Make a splash!

EMILY

Daddy, Mother, thank you.
(SHE kisses them and starts out.)

ELEANOR

Emily, Dear—your bathing suit.
(EMILY stops, takes a beat, makes a deadpan-180-degree turn and slowly exits to her bedroom.)

EDWARD

Okay, so I'm not quite ready for my own advice column. Ellie, I thought Mrs. Periap would be enough for her - and Lionel. Maybe Ann Landers is right. All they'll ever see is their father sitting in a two-dollar game of poker holding a pair of deuces.

ELEANOR

Oh, any amateur can win with aces. But when the cards aren't going your way and you bluff, squeeze, and slip on through and come out ahead, oh, how you make this family proud.

EDWARD

But look what they've become: a narcoleptic five time divorcee and a manic depressive perennial student with seasonal attempts at self-destruction. How could I have played this hand so wrong?

ELEANOR

Now, stop it. You'll always have the player's edge in our hearts.

"BELIEVE ME" (reprise)

ELEANOR (cont'd)

BELIEVE ME
YOU MAKE THIS FAMILY PROUD

EDWARD

You're just saying that.

ELEANOR

IT'S TRUE, DEAR
YOU'RE MILES ABOVE THE CROWD

EDWARD

Do you really think so?

ELEANOR

THERE'S NO ONE QUITE LIKE EDWARD T.
NO SIREE, BELIEVE ME

ELEANOR (cont'd)

Now, I'm going to make sure Emily gets to the pool.
(SHE starts out, but remembers the invitation.)

ELEANOR (cont'd)

Oh, this is yours. Looks like your invitation to this year's Blackjack game. I swear these things get fancier every year.

(ELEANOR hands it to him, kisses him, and exits. EDWARD holds up the black invitation and stares at it intently.)

EDWARD

Mr. Olympus, what kind of father do you think I am? My daughter is not negotiable.

EDWARD (cont'd)
BELIEVE ME
BELIEVE YOU ME

BLACKOUT

ACT I
Scene 8

LIONEL is on the balcony of the hotel room, waving a writing pad and shouting down to people below who are lounging around the pool.

LIONEL

... so go ahead. Lie there in your sunglasses and Coppertone and ignore me. But I've got it all down on paper. All down in Number 2 pencil. The laws of mathematics are everywhere. They cannot be avoided. Why do you refuse to accept the inevitable? Tell me why, you losing ladies on slot machines, you dizzy drunks defending your stacks of five dollar chips, you high living tourists not knowing what a dangerous cave you've picked for your two week vacations.

(EDWARD and MRS.PERIAPT enter)

LIONEL (cont'd)

But go on, sip your Coco Loco Daiquiris and bury your heads in *Life* or *Look* or *Hollywood Confidential*. You'll never learn what I've known since I was eleven and caused a panic when I swallowed mothballs.

MRS. PERIAPT

Oh, dear. Did he really swallow mothballs?

EDWARD

They were actually malted milk balls.

LIONEL

(Still shouting to the people below)
 But no one knew that until they pumped my stomach!

EDWARD

Lionel, stop causing a scene.

LIONEL

They should know the truth - even if you refuse to acknowledge it.

MRS. PERIAPT

What truth?

EDWARD

Something he's figured out with mathematics. Lionel's theorem. Life is equal to the square root of hopeless, times pernicious, divided by pointless. Did I get it right?

LIONEL

Perfectly.

EDWARD

I have had it with your doom and gloom. What is it, Lionel? Do you want me to lose? Why? When I was flush for years, I bought you chemistry sets and sailor suits and took care of every cavity.

(To MRS. PERIAPT)

EDWARD (cont'd)

And this was a kid who brushed his teeth with sugar! I sent him to Paris when he was eighteen on money I won from a solid poker streak. So what does he do to show his appreciation? He throws himself in the Seine at the height of the tourist season. I heard about it during a stud game in Lake Tahoe, left a winning hand to dash off a lovely letter about how wonderful life can be.

LIONEL

It was a telegram with one sentence: "If you're holding a losing hand, at least look at how pretty the cards are."

EDWARD

Poor Lionel, never sees the bright side, always ready to bury the world in some fundamental calculus formula, but now, along comes a jackpot and for a minute you think maybe, maybe even you have a chance. And that makes you crazy because you already have the down payment on a gravestone.

LIONEL

And I don't intend to let it go to waste. I'm putting it all to an end.

(LIONEL climbs onto the balcony's ledge.)

MRS. PERIAPT

Is he going to jump?

EDWARD

Look down, Lionel. That's eight stories of air between you and flagstone.

(LIONEL struggles for a moment to keep his balance on the balcony's ledge.)

MRS. PERIAPT

Oh, no. I can't watch.

EDWARD

About ninety feet. Considering velocity and weight, Archimedes, what do you estimate the diameter of your poolside splatter will be?

LIONEL

I don't care. I'm going to do it.

EDWARD

(to MRS. PERIAPT)

And to think of all the wonderful things he'll miss when I lay every penny I've got on you, you wonderful woman.

LIONEL

What would I miss?

EDWARD

What would you miss? Take your choice: an RCA color TV, a pistachio colored sports car, a key to the Playboy Club.

MRS. PERIAPT

A winter cruise. A musical vacuum cleaner.

EDWARD

It's the American Dream, Lionel. And it could be yours.

LIONEL

Do you think I'd tie myself to any of those things! Offering me trinkets as if I were some illiterate savage.

(ELEANOR and EMILY rush on)

ELEANOR

What's going on? So that *is* you up there, Lionel.

EMILY

I told you. Who else would it be?

(To EDWARD)

EMILY (cont'd)

The whole pool emptied out when they saw him hovering over it.

ELEANOR

I thought it was a teetering gargoyle. Scared the life out of me. Oh, I really do need one of my little blue pills.

(Rifling through her purse looking for the pill.)

EDWARD

All right, let's place our bets on the happier side of the table with some holiday spirits.

(HE begins mixing glasses of Dr. Pepper and Jack Daniels.)

ELEANOR

You know, he gets his cheap theatrics from you, Edward. Now stop showing off, Lionel, and get down from that ledge.

(SHE finds the blue pill, smiles)

ELEANOR (cont'd)

Ahhh, bella pillola!
(Pops it in her mouth)

EDWARD

Let him mope out there while we enjoy a little Jack Daniels with Dr. Pepper.

ELEANOR

Edward, I think we found a good candidate for husband number six in the hotel's swimming instructor.

EDWARD

That's wonderful news. Go get him, Emily. For my darling daughter, a sleepless, even restless, future;

(Hands a glass of the spiked Dr. Pepper to EMILY)

EDWARD (con't)

For my Ellie, who this Christmas gets a winning husband back;

(Hands a glass to ELEANOR.)

EDWARD (cont'd)

- and one for our guest.

(Hands a glass to MRS. PERIAPT)

EDWARD (cont'd)

A toast!

(HE raises his glass.)

EDWARD (cont'd)

To Mrs. Periapt, the Lady Bountiful, on whom I'm betting the ranch! the hacienda! the chateau!! Una fortuna will be ours before Christmas morning.

EMILY

Do you think betting everything is wise, Daddy?

EDWARD

Wise?

(EDWARD takes a coin from his pocket, flips it, catches it, and slaps it to his wrist, hidden. To MRS. PERIAPT.)

EDWARD (con't)

Call.

MRS. PERIPAT

Heads.

EDWARD
 Heads it is.
 (HE repeats the process)

EDWARD (cont'd)
 Call.

MRS. PERIAPT
 Heads.

EDWARD
 Heads again. Brilliant.

LIONEL
 I don't trust you. Let me flip it.

EDWARD
 With pleasure.
 (EDWARD hands the coin to LIONEL, who tosses it in the air, but clumsily misses catching it on its way down. The coin hits the floor. *Clink clink clink.*)

MRS. PERIAPT
 Tails.
 (Suddenly, another *clink*)
 No. Heads.
 (Then, another *clink*)
 No. Tails
 (Another *clink*. Again *clink*)
 Tails. Heads.
 (A quicker *clink*)
 Yes. Heads.
 (Another *clink*)
 Wait
 (Then, the *clinking* stops.)
 That's odd.
 (SHE turns to face EDWARD.)
 I have a feeling it landed straight up on its edge.

EDWARD
 On its edge? Now, now, my sweet Mrs. Periapt, let's not toy with Lionel. You know he has no sense of humor.

(LIONEL is staring in disbelief at the spot where the coin landed.)

LIONEL
 Father...? Mother...? Emily...?

(EDWARD, ELEANOR, EMILY quickly encircle the spot where the coin has landed on its edge. THEY, too, stare at it, dumbstruck. Then, one final *clink*.)

MRS. PERIAPT

Heads.

(A beat. Simultaneously, the FAMILY slowly turns to face a smiling MRS. PERIAPT. LIONEL drops to his knees. HE is a believer at last! EDWARD laughs. Then— sleigh bells.)

“SANTA BROUGHT US LUCK”

EDWARD (cont'd)

WE DON'T HAVE PRESENTS UNDER A TREE
NO BRAND NEW COAT FOR MOM OR HAT FOR ME
NO PRETTY DOLLY
NO FIRE TRUCK
WHO NEEDS A PRESENT
WHEN SANTA BROUGHT US LUCK

(EDWARD puts his arm around MRS. Periapt)

EDWARD (cont'd)

WE GOT LUCK
SANTA BROUGHT US LUCK
SANTA FILLED OUR STOCKINGS UP
HO-HO-HO HOORAY!
SHOWGIRLS SINGIN'
SLOT BELLS RINGIN'
SANTA BROUGHT US LUCK

MRS. PERIAPT

You mean me?

EDWARD

UPON HIS SLEIGH

ELEANOR

Suddenly, there's possibilities everywhere.

EMILY

TONIGHT I'M GONNA STAY OUT OF BED

LIONEL

AND I'M RENOUNCING ALL THAT SARTRE SAID

ELEANOR

BELLA PILLOLA, WHO NEEDS YOU NOW?

EDWARD
I MET A GODDESS NAMED PERIAPT AND POW!

EDWARD, ELEANOR, EMILY, LIONEL
WE GOT LUCK
SANTA BROUGHT US LUCK
SANTA FILLED OUR STOCKINGS UP
HO-HO-HO HOORAY!
SHOWGIRLS SINGIN'
SLOT BELLS RINGIN'
CHIPS ARE WINGIN'
SANTA BROUGHT US LUCK

MRS. PERIAPT

That's me!

EDWARD, ELEANOR, EMILY, LIONEL
UPON HIS SLEIGH

EDWARD
I bet we could win the world matching pennies.

ELEANOR
SO MERRY CHRISTMAS, BE OF GOOD CHEER

EDWARD
LET'S RAISE OUR GLASSES TO A BANNER YEAR
HERE'S TO A CHRISTMAS WE WON'T FORGET

ELEANOR
WE'VE GOT EACH OTHER

EDWARD
BUT, CHILDREN, BETTER YET

EDWARD, ELEANOR, EMILY, LIONEL
WE GOT LUCK
SANTA BROUGHT US LUCK
SANTA FILLED OUR STOCKINGS UP
HO-HO-HO HOORAY!
SHOWGIRLS SINGIN'
SLOT BELLS RINGIN'
CHIPS ARE WINGIN'
CASH CA-CHINGIN'
SANTA BROUGHT US LUCK

MRS. PERIAPT

Whoopee!

EDWARD, ELEANOR, EMILY, LIONEL
UPON HIS SLEIGH

EDWARD
WE'RE GONNA HAVE IT ALL
MIAMI PARTIES AND HOLLYWOOD GALAS

ELEANOR, EMILY & LIONEL
CHAUFFERED AROUND IN PINK IMPALAS

EDWARD

(spoken)

Let the reindeer appear because with Edna here—

(The jubilant EMILY & ELEANOR break into the twist as EDWARD and LIONEL don reindeer antlers and pull EDNA around on a roulette table [her sleigh].)

ALL
WE GOT LUCK!
SANTA BROUGHT US LUCK
SANTA FILLED OUR STOCKINGS UP
HO-HO-HO HOORAY!
SHOWGIRLS SINGIN'
SLOT BELLS RINGIN'
CHIPS ARE WINGIN'
CASH CA-CHINGIN'
BAND IS SWINGIN'
RING-A-DINGIN'
SANTA BROUGHT US LUCK

EDWARD

(Pulls Spiros' invitation from his jacket and holds it aloft.)
Olympus, I accept your invitation!

ALL
UPON HIS SLEIGH!

(As THEY sing, twist, and pull MRS. PERIAPT's "sleigh," a light comes up on an ominous looking SPIROS, casually swirling his scotch in a tumbler. HE smiles with smug self-satisfaction. A second light comes up revealing a dutiful, official-looking WILLY, shuffling cards. The WELLSPOTS continue to twist in feverish joy around MRS. PERIAPT, who is perched on the roulette table. As she basks in their adulation, the curtain falls. **END ACT I**)

ACT II
Scene 1

MUSIC. In the dark we hear...

VOICE OVER

Ladies and gentlemen, great to have you back at the Olympus Hotel and Casino. Let's welcome the newest girl group to the Vegas strip, an act that will make you forget Santa and the elves, Rudolph and the reindeers, *and* The McQuire Sisters. The luckiest little ladies in Sin City—*The Wellspots!*

(LIGHTS UP on ELEANOR, EMILY and MRS. PERIAPT on the bandstand.)

"A SURE THING"

ELEANOR, EMILY, & MRS. PERIAPT

LET'S SPIN THAT WHEEL AGAIN
WE GOT THAT LUCKY FEEL AGAIN
COME ON, LET'S DEAL AGAIN
WE GOT A SURE THING

ALIVE AND KICKIN' NOW
WE GOT A GOOD TIME TICKIN' NOW
THAT VOODOO'S CLICKIN' NOW
WE GOT A SURE THING

ELEANOR & EMILY

WE KNOW ONE THING FOR CERTAIN
WE'RE IN FOR A LIFE OF EASE
WATCH US BRING DOWN THE CURTAIN
WITH OLYMPUS ON HIS KNEES

ELEANOR, EMILY & MRS. PERIPAT

LET GOOD LUCK REIGN TONIGHT
WE'RE ON THE GRAVY TRAIN TONIGHT
POP THAT CHAMPAGNE TONIGHT
WE GOT A SURE THING

HEY, IT'S A CINCH, ANYHOW
NOTHIN'S STOPPIN' US NOW
WE GOT
WE GOT
WE GOT
A SURE THING

ELEANOR

And now ladies and gentleman, our sure thing—the one, the only, the adorable Mr. Edward T. Wellspot!

(EDWARD comes running on. HE is wearing a sparkling, brightly colored tuxedo jacket, which is just a little too garish.)

"A VIEW FROM THE STARS"

EDWARD

I'VE GOT A VIEW FROM THE STARS
AND THERE'S THE EARTH BELOW
LIKE A BIG LAS VEGAS SHOW

ELEANOR, EMILY, PERIAPT
LAS VEGAS SHOW

EDWARD

I LOVE MY VIEW FROM THE STARS
BEYOND THE ATMOSPHERE
LOVIN' LIVIN' UP HERE

LOVIN' LIVIN' UP HERE

EDWARD

WAY DOWN THERE
LITTLE PEOPLE ARE SCRAPING TO GET BY
THEY ENVY OTHER PEOPLE LIKE ME
WITH A FRONT ROW SEAT IN THE SKY

EDWARD (cont'd)

I feel so darn young again. Yeah, crisp, alive, like a new deck of cards. Hell, I may never lose. I'm a human typhoon, a flood, a shooting comet, everything wild in the universe.

EDWARD (cont'd)

I'VE GOT A VIEW FROM THE STARS

ELEANOR, EMILY, PERIAPT
WE GOT WE GOT

EDWARD

MY FRIENDS, I'M TELLIN YOU

ELEANOR, EMILY, PERIAPT
WE GOT A SURE THING

EDWARD

IT'S ONE FANTASTIC VIEW

ELEANOR, EMILY, PERIAPT
A SURE THING

EDWARD

WHAT A FABULOUS MOOD I'M IN

EDWARD, ELEANOR, EMILY, PERIAPT
WATCHING PLANET EARTH SPIN
I'VE GOT A VIEW FROM THE STARS

(As EDWARD finishes—backed up with a big, beautiful three-part harmony—WILLY, in black full tuxedo, pushes a card table on stage and puts it carefully in place. Then, HE starts setting out decks of cards around the card table. SPIROS enters unseen by WILLY; HE watches his protégée intently. WILLY senses his presence, freezes a second, then continues with his business, but now WILLY is nervous and self-conscious, twitching a bit.)

WILLY

Just setting things up for the big Wellspot game.

SPIROS

I can see that. You look a little nervous.

(SPIROS puts his left arm around WILLY'S shoulder, hugging him paternally)

WILLY

Well, there's a lot at stake tonight with Miss Wellspot. A lot of pressure. And that old lady doesn't make it any easier for you.

(With his right hand SPIROS pulls an ace from WILLY'S cummerbund.)

WILLY (cont'd)

It's one lousy ace, Mr. O. I can't help it. I got a drive in me to win. I'm not used to losing.

SPIROS

And neither am I.

(SPIROS, showing his disapproval, rips it in half and pats WILLY down.)

WILLY (cont'd)

I got nothing else. Scout's honor.

SPIROS

We'll be fine, Willie. Tonight, Wellspot will be broken, you'll get a handsome bonus, and by this time tomorrow, I'll have my sleeping bee out of her hive and buzzing down the aisle.

WILLY

It's funny, but I always thought you were the confirmed bachelor type.

SPIROS

And I still am, but when a man approaches his middle years, he begins to think of his mortality. He has spent a lifetime amassing a fortune and commanding the respect and fear of others, but for what? He is an unfinished man until he has produced a legitimate heir. And that takes a wife. It's time I had a son, a prince, who will inherit and extend my empire into the next century.

WILLY

I get it, Mr. O. I mean, who wants all this to end up in the hands of total strangers? But I have to be honest with you. A chick like Wellspot doesn't sound like your type. You can have any showgirl on the strip.

SPIROS

Showgirls demand attention and come with complicated emotional needs derived from a lack of sleep, but not the well-rested Emily Wellspot. She won't allow our marriage to compromise my bachelorhood.

“THE PERFECT GIRL”

SPIROS (con't)

SHE'S THE PERFECT GIRL
FOR A PERFECT WIFE
AND A GIRL I'D IGNORE
AND FOR ALL HER LIFE
SHE WOULDN'T EVEN FIND IT
A PROBLEM OR MIND IT

CAUSE SHE SLEEPS ALL NIGHT
AND SHE SLEEPS ALL DAY
BUT WAIT BETTER YET
NOT A LOT TO SAY
WE'RE POSITIVELY SUITED
I LIKE A GIRL MUTED
SHE'S THE PERFECTLY PERFECT GIRL

NO ARGUMENTS
NO MARITAL SQUABBLES
NO NEED TO BUY
HER BRACELETS AND BAUBLES
NO MAINTENANCE
A MARRIAGE THAT MAKES SENSE

I COULD STAY OUT LATE
I COULD STILL BE FREE
CAUSE THE WIFE ISN'T UP
KEEPING TABS ON ME
SHE'S NOT THE KIND WHO HOVERS
SHE'S UNDER THE COVERS

AND THE GIRL COMES CHEAP
CAUSE HER CLOTHES SO FAR
JUST PAJAMAS, A ROBE
AND THE ODD PENOIR

SPIROS (cont'd)
 WELL, MAYBE THERE'S A TEDDY
 I'M GOOD AND READY
 FOR THE PERFECTLY PERFECT GIRL

WILLY

You wouldn't have to worry about forgetting birthdays or anniversaries. She'd sleep right through them.

SPIROS

Exactly.

SPIROS (con't)
 NO PAIN OR STRAIN
 THERE'S NO PROBLEM SOLVING
 MY EMILY
 IS SO UNINVOLVING
 FOR WEDDED BLISS
 I NEED A GIRL LIKE THIS

WHAT A PEACEFUL LIFE
 AND A PERFECT SPOUSE
 CAUSE I WON'T EVEN KNOW
 THAT SHE'S IN THE HOUSE
 AND SINCE SHE DOESN'T MINGLE
 I'D STILL FEEL I'M SINGLE
 SHE'S THE CATCH OF PERFECTION
 SHE'S THE PERFECTLY PERFECT GIRL

WILLY

You're pretty sold on her.

SPIROS

Yes, I am.

SPIROS (con't)
 AND WHEN WE'RE WED
 I'LL PUT HER BACK IN BED

SPIROS (cont'd)

Now, don't forget to lay out the Juan Lopez cigars. They're Edward's favorites.

BLACK OUT

ACT II**Scene 2**

Lights up on LIONEL, wearing formal dinner jacket. HE is whistling and fumbling with his bowtie. EMILY enters in her usual sleeping attire.
EMILY

My God, don't you look handsome?

LIONEL

Thank you.

EMILY

What are you doing?

LIONEL

What does it look like? I'm trying to tie this darn tie.

EMILY

Where's your clip-on one?

LIONEL

In the trash.

EMILY

So what's the occasion? You're not dressing for the big swan dive are you?

LIONEL

No, it's just that – well, with all the commotion over Mrs. Periapt's jackpots and Christmas Eve, why throw a damper on things.

EMILY

You really think there's a chance that Father might beat Mr. Olympus this year, don't you?

LIONEL

Would I have let the excitement seduce me if there was a micrometer of a doubt? Never.

OFF STAGE VOICE

Ladies and gentlemen, this evening at the Olympus Lounge and Casino we are proud to present a very special young man –

(LIONEL turns to EMILY and tugs on his bowtie.)

LIONEL

What do you think?

EMILY

Do you have a date? With an actual woman?

LIONEL

No. I have a date with a Vegas showgirl.

OFF STAGE VOICE

-- last seen at Nietzsche's Night Club with the Depths of Despair -

EMILY

Well, Merry Christmas, Lionel!

OFF STAGE VOICE

- in his premiere solo performance -

LIONEL

Actually, she's the friend of a second cousin of a Vegas showgirl, but still.

(A spotlight hits a smiling LIONEL. HE jumps onto the bandstand, grabs a guitar, and takes on Elvis-like swagger and confidence that has never been seen before.)

OFF STAGE VOICE

Step aside, Mr. Sinatra. There's a new kid on the block with a new sound - the dynamic Lionel Wellspot!

"ROCKIN' LAS VEGAS TONIGHT"

LIONEL

TONIGHT I'M GOIN' ON THE TOWN
TOLD MY BLUES GOODBYE
CAUSE NOTHING'S GONNA GET ME DOWN
AND HERE'S THE REASON WHY

I'M COMIN' ALIVE
IN LAS VEGAS!
DIGGIN' THE LIGHTS
OF LAS VEGAS!
LIVIN' THE LIFE
IN LAS VEGAS!
ROCKIN' LAS VEGAS TONIGHT!

I TOOK MY BOOKS BY KIERKAGAARD
PACKED THEM ALL AWAY
CAUSE ON LAS VEGAS BOULEVARD
IT'S ONE BIG HOLIDAY

LIONEL (cont'd)

I'M COMIN' ALIVE
IN LAS VEGAS!
DIGGIN' THE LIGHTS
OF LAS VEGAS!
LIVIN' THE LIFE
IN LAS VEGAS!
ROCKIN' LAS VEGAS TONIGHT!

HEY, ONCE I WAS A LONELY BOY
BROKENHEARTED AND BLUE
BUT SINCE THE WORLD'S A BRAND NEW TOY
I GOT NEWS FOR YOU

I LIKE THE TASTE OF LIVIN'
I LIKE FEELIN' FREE
AND NOW I SEE INDUBITABLY
WHAT LIFE, LIFE CAN BE

I'M FEELIN' ALIVE
IN LAS VEGAS!
DIGGIN' THE LIGHTS
OF LAS VEGAS!
LIVIN' THE LIFE
IN LAS VEGAS!
ROCKIN' LAS VEGAS TONIGHT!

I'M OUT OF MY
IVORY TOWER!
FEELIN' BETTER
BY THE HOUR!
I'M GIVIN' UP
SCHOPENHAUR!
ROCKIN' LAS VEGAS TONIGHT!

EMILY

Does father know about this?

LIONEL

He bought me the dinner jacket. Anyway, I shouldn't keep her waiting too long. So, if you'll excuse –

(EDWARD and ELEANOR enter in evening attire.)

ELEANOR

- but I just spent hours getting ready and now you tell me I can't go with you.

EDWARD

I'd love to spend every second of Christmas Eve with you, but there's protocol in a high stake game that says you don't bring your wife to the room, no matter how beautiful she looks.

ELEANOR

But Mrs. Periapt—

EDWARD

—is the four-leaf clover camouflaging my hand grenade.

ELEANOR

But I want to be your four-leaf clover and your hand grenade, too. I told you so on our wedding day when I vowed to be a part of your wildness and said goodbye to the Episcopal Church and all those Episcopalian manners that went along with it.

EMILY

Mother, you were quite shocking in your day.

ELEANOR

With your father, everything seemed astonishing and possible.

EDWARD

And it still is.

(Putting his arm around LIONEL.)

Look at our family, Eleanor. Lionel, my son and heir, on his way to becoming a man.

LIONEL

(As EDWARD removes his own boutonniere and pins it to LIONEL's lapel.)

You know, I've always managed to put my little lusts aside, but tonight this showgirl's second cousin's friend, who would never understand the agony of naturalistic fallacy or a transcendental leap, might be too much to resist.

EDWARD

There. You look like an Italian prince. And my Emily, awake and beautiful, with no threat of becoming Olympus' bride.

EMILY

Olympus' bride?

ELEANOR

What do you mean, Olympus' bride?

EDWARD

It's nothing.

ELEANOR

Edward?

LIONEL

Wait a minute. I know what he means. Was that your backroom deal with Mr. Olympus?

ELEANOR

What backroom deal?

EMILY

I'm confused.

LIONEL

If you lose tonight, are you using Emily to satisfy your marker? That's it, isn't it?

EMILY

I think it's time for a nap.

ELEANOR

Edward, how could you do such a thing?

EDWARD

Can we please not invite those clouds of doom to this evening's mirth? Lionel, we don't have to worry about any backroom deal because I'm not losing—ever again—
(MRS. PERIAPT enters in a glamorous, sparkling evening dress wearing her same flowerpot hat.)

EDWARD (cont'd)

—not with my riverboat queen.

MRS. PERIAPT

I never wore such a fancy dress before. How do I look?

EDWARD

Like a million bucks.

MRS. PERIAPT

Do you know, I'm excited!

EDWARD

As you should be. As we all should be. When I come back, we'll have a Christmas worth celebrating, one without little pink pills or statistics or unsavory marriages. Eleanor, tonight is for us. For all of us. This is what we've been waiting for.

“SANTA BROUGHT US LUCK” - reprise

EDWARD

WE GOT LUCK
SANTA BROUGHT US LUCK
SANTA FILLED OUR STOCKINGS UP
HO-HO-HO HOORAY!

EDWARD, MRS.PERIAPT, ELEANOR
SHOWGIRLS SINGIN’
SLOT BELLS RINGIN’

EDWARD, MRS.PERIAPT, ELEANOR, EMILY,
CHIPS ARE WINGIN’
CASH CA-CHINGIN’

EDWARD, MRS.PERIAPT, ELEANOR, EMILY,
& LIONEL
BAND IS SWINGIN’
RING-A-DINGIN’
WE GOT LUCK AND NOW
THE GAME TO

MRS.PERIAPT, ELEANOR,
EMILY & LIONEL
PLAY

EDWARD
CHRISTMAS IN LAS VEGAS

BLACKOUT

ACT II**Scene 3**

Olympus' penthouse. SPIROS is seated at his Blackjack table smugly swirling his scotch and smoking a cigar. WILLY enters quickly.

WILLY

Hey, Mr. O, they're coming. They're all dressed up and walking big across the casino like they're winners already.

SPIROS

Willy, I told you he couldn't resist the invitation. Get ready to deal.

WILLY

Boss, I hope you have some real clever behind-the-back move you're going to pull.

SPIROS

It's knowledge, Willy. Experience and knowledge. And when this all plays out, I will have secured a fiancée.

(EDWARD, followed by MRS. PERIAPT, enters with a flourish!)

EDWARD

How well I know this room, Spiros. Fifteen times I've crawled out of here on Christmas Eve feeling like I'd been squeezed to jelly. But it feels good to be back tonight.

SPIROS

And this is the illustrious Mrs. Periapt?

MRS. PERIAPT

I guess I am.

SPIROS

Pleased to meet you. Did you meet my dealer for this evening's game? Willy, Mrs. Periapt.

EDWARD

Yeah, yeah, we've all met and we're all pleased as punch. Now, I'm ready to play cards if you are, Mr. Olympus.

SPIROS

Such confidence, eh, Willy? It's making me choke a little.

EDWARD

I thought about putting everything on one hand, but that would be too easy—too quick and painless, Spiros. For you, the death of a thousand cuts!

SPIROS

A cruel gambler, isn't he, Mrs. Periapt?

MRS. PERIAPT

He has a healthy winning spirit.

EDWARD

And why not? The fates have settled on our side of the table, Edna. Now, just sit right here, one thousand dollars in chips, a big Christmas kiss, please, and we're ready for the first hand. History is going to be made in this room tonight. This is my year, Spiros.

SPIROS

Willy, the table's open.

WILLY

Okay. One thousand in chips for the lady and the first hand coming out.
(He shuffles.)

WILLY (cont'd)

Let's place bets.

EDWARD

Five hundred, Willy.

WILLY

Covered.

MRS. PERIAPT

Do I have to do anything?

EDWARD

Just sit and smile, that's all.

WILLY

Cards coming out.

(HE deals. Musical underscoring of "BLACKJACK" begins and is continuous throughout the scene.)

WILLY (con't)

An eight up for the dealer.

MRS. PERIAPT

Now what?

EDWARD

(Slowly peeking at her cards)

Now gently, as though uncovering a very sensitive wound, we peek and ...! Oh! Oh!

MRS. PERIAPT

Is it good?

EDWARD

Is it good?

(HE holds out cards for all to see)

“BLACKJACK”

EDWARD (cont'd)

IT'S BEAUTIFUL

SO GODDMAN BEAUTIFUL

A PRETTY QUEEN PAIRED WITH A LOVELY ACE OF

HEARTS

WELL, OLYMPUS, DO THEY FEEL LIKE POISON DARTS?

MRS. PERIAPT

I don't understand.

EDWARD

IT'S BLACKJACK, MRS. PERIAPT

PERFECT BLACKJACK

EDWARD (cont'd)

And it's mine! All mine!

MRS. PERIAPT

Was that all there was to it?

SPIROS

Edward, can you sit down somewhere?

EDWARD

Sit? I want to dance, Spiros, to make up for all the times I've lost. Deal the cards!

WILLY

Coming out. A six for the dealer.

EDWARD

Do I even have to look?

(HE turns his cards over in a flash)

EDWARD (cont'd)

Oh, oh, oh!

MRS. PERIAPT

Against me? I don't know what you mean. The odds are against me?

EDWARD

Don't listen to him.

SPIROS

This whole city – its miniature golf courses, oversized martinis, the show girls, the fountains – all of it created on the principle that there's a slight head start on you when you put your money down on a number or a card.

MRS. PERIAPT

Edward, did you know that this whole city was built against me? All against me!

EDWARD

Don't worry, my lovely. When we're through, they'll rename this town *Las Edna, Nevada!* The bet is two thousand.

MRS. PERIAPT

Are you sure you should bet that much? The odds are against little ladies like me.

EDWARD

What do you know about odds? Just touch the cards as they come by. Deal the cards, Willy.

(WILLY deals.)

WILLY

Nine up for the dealer.

(MRS. PERIAPT starts to peek at the cards, but EDWARD snatches them from her. HE looks.)

EDWARD

I'll do that. That's strange.

MRS. PERIAPT

Is it bad?

EDWARD

It's not blackjack. Just an ordinary hand.

WILLY

You want another card, Mr. Wellspot?

EDWARD

We'll play these.

MRS. PERIAPT

Why not take another if he's willing to give us one?

WILLY

(Flipping over his card in the hole)
Nineteen, paying twenty. House wins.

EDWARD

It's just a little relapse.

MRS. PERIAPT

But why didn't you take another card? You could have beaten him by even more.

SPIROS

The object of the game is to get as close to twenty-one as possible *without* going over it.

MRS. PERIAPT

Oh my, I didn't know that.

EDWARD

All right, this isn't a course in the fine points of Blackjack. Bet four thousand.

MRS. PERIAPT

What if we go over? You know, even the miniature golf courses are against me.

EDWARD

STOP THINKING, PLEASE
DON'T THINK ABOUT THE ODDS
STOP THAT PERSPIRING, DEAR, AND LET ME MOP YOUR
BROW

(With his handkerchief HE begins patting her brow.)

SPIROS

There's more excitement in gambling when you know the dangers, isn't there, Mrs. Periapt?

MRS. PERIAPT

Well, I'm not a thrill seeker you know. I'm a widow from Connecticut.

EDWARD

DEAL THE CARDS AND DEAL 'EM NOW
(WILLY deals.)

WILLY

Coming out. Ten up for the dealer.

SPIROS

Now that's a bad sign for you, Mrs. Periapt.

EDWARD

Olympus, are you trying to shark a grandmother?

SPIROS

I simply want to point out to her that with ten up the house may have . . .

SPIROS (cont'd)

BLACKJACK, MRS. PERIAPT
PERFECT BLACKJACK

MRS. PERIAPT

(Slaps her hands over her two cards)

Oh, dear.

EDWARD

A ridiculous presumption!

SPIROS

How about it, Willy?

WILLY

(Glancing at his cards)

Not this time.

EDWARD

Let's see our cards, Mrs. Periapt.

MRS. PERIAPT

(Her hands still frozen on her cards)

I feel such pressure. Just let me swallow a moment.

SPIROS

Every gambler chokes under pressure now and then. Right, Edward?

EDWARD

Don't listen to him.

EDWARD (cont'd)

JUST LOOK AT ME
LOOK AT THIS HONEST FACE
DONT LET ME BREAK YOUR FINGERS
SHOW ME WHAT YOU'VE GOT

(EDWARD tries desperately to pry the cards from her hands. SHE fights it.)

MRS. PERIAPT

That handsome dealer has a ten. I wouldn't be so anxious to see what we have.

EDWARD

(Releases her hand and begins massaging her shoulders)
There's no pressure. Just relax. Stay loose.

SPIROS

Think of it, Mrs. Periapt. If you don't perform a miracle, and that's what beating the house would be – a miracle – think about the disappointment and anger of someone who put all his faith in you. Our hotel toilets are stuffed up with rabbits' feet that didn't work miracles for their owners.

EDWARD

Damn it, Olympus, are you saying I'd throw her into the john if she doesn't win?

SPIROS

Look at him, Mrs. Periapt. That's a gambler with his hands around your neck.
(EDWARD stops massaging her neck and quickly pulls his hands away.)

EDWARD

A sweet gambler. A gentle gambler.

SPIROS

After coming on strong, if you don't get him past the odds, he'd have every right in the world to pull the chain on you when you dog it.

MRS. PERIAPT

I need a Speedy Alka Seltzer.

EDWARD

Don't let him bluff you. Why this game is nothing but a little sport for me. Now, let's see the damn cards!

(HE grabs the cards and looks)

WILLY

(HE flips over his cards)

Twenty. Dealer paying twenty-one.

EDWARD

Eighteen. Give me three thousand in chips. Okay, Mrs. Periapt, maybe it's time to show them your unorthodox playing style, you know, blindfolded.

(EDWARD ties his handkerchief around her eyes)

MRS. PERIAPT

Really, Mr. Wellspot, please.

EDWARD
 ATTENTION PLEASE
 NOW FOR A BIG SURPRISE
 A WOMAN WHO WORKS MIRACLES
 RIGHT HERE BEFORE -

SPIROS
 YOU'RE A REAL GAMBLER NOW, MRS. PERIAPT

EDWARD
 Shut up, Spiros! Deal, Willy!
 (WILLY deals.)

SPIROS
 YOU'RE A REAL GAMBLER NOW

WILLY
 Coming out to the lady with the blindfold.
 (WILLY directs the cards into her hands.)

SPIROS
 HOW DO THE CARDS FEEL NOW, MRS. PERIAPT?

EDWARD
 Shut up!

SPIROS
 HOW DO THE CARDS FEEL NOW?

MRS. PERIAPT
 They don't feel good to me.

EDWARD
 Without looking, we stand. Just try to beat us.

WILLY
 (Revealing his cards)
 A six to go with the five.
 (Draws another card)

And a ten to match it off. Twenty-one. The name of the game.

EDWARD
 He got to you!

MRS. PERIAPT
 Mr. Wellspot, I think I've had enough. I'd—

EDWARD

He got to you!
(Rips off her blindfold.)

SPIROS

What are you going to do, Mrs. Periapt?

EDWARD

Don't listen to him!

MRS. PERIAPT

I want to go back to my room.
(SHE gets up to leave)

EDWARD

(Grabbing her and struggling to put her in a headlock.)
I won't let you walk out on me.

MRS. PERIAPT

Let go of me!

EDWARD

No! You can't take it away, a touch like yours. Not when I promised my family.

MRS. PERIAPT

Help me!

SPIROS

I can hear the flushing now, Mrs. Periapt

MRS. PERIAPT

Help!

EDWARD

The cards, Willy.

MRS. PERIAPT

If I see another card, I'll be sick right here.

WILLY

What's the bet?

EDWARD

Everything!

SPIROS

Covered.
(WILLY deals)

MRS. PERIAPT

Stanley never put me in a headlock in forty years of marriage. He only showed me affection.

EDWARD

And so have I.

WILLY

Nine up for the dealer.
(EDWARD picks up his cards)

EDWARD
NOW KISS THE PRETTY CARDS

MRS. PERIAPT

No!

EDWARD
COME ON AND KISS THE CARDS
KISS 'EM FOR LUCK AND WATCH US PULL A WINNING HAND

MRS. PERIAPT

No. It's barbaric, like those "Merry Xmas" banners all over this city.

EDWARD

Kiss them. Please, Mrs. Periapt. They're nice cards. They could be Christmas cards. Just put your lips on them!
(HE holds them up to her face.)

MRS. PERIAPT

Stanley, wherever the hell you are ... *help*.
(SHE reluctantly kisses them.)

EDWARD

(Looking at cards)
Oh, God, I need another one, Willy.

WILLY

(Tossing card onto table)
Ten.

EDWARD

We're over. We went bust.

(HE releases MRS. PERIAPT, who quickly moves away from him. SHE's free.)

MRS. PERIAPT

You're crazy. You're all crazy!

EDWARD

Please, Mrs. Periapt.

MRS. PERIAPT

Stay away from me. You're not stuffing me down a toilet.

EDWARD

Please, I'll borrow another stake. I thought you had class, Mrs. Periapt. I thought you had a one in a million touch.

MRS. PERIAPT

I've got arthritis. That's all. Don't come near me!

EDWARD

Please, I won't have a chance at all if you walk out. One more deal. Please, one more deal!

MRS. PERIAPT

Stanley never begged. Even on his deathbed, gasping for air, he took it like a man.

EDWARD

I want more than air! I want more!

(EDWARD slumps to his knees.)

MRS. PERIAPT

Well, you'll get nothing more from me, Mr. Wellspot.

MRS. PERIAPT (con't)

I'M DONE WITH YOU

EDWARD

DON'T LEAVE ME

MRS. PERIAPT

I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOU

EDWARD

PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME

MRS. PERIAPT

TONIGHT THE TRUTH ABOUT YOU HIT ME LIKE A BRICK
EDWARD

What do you mean?

MRS. PERIAPT
MR. WELLSPOT, YOU'RE A RAVING LUNATIC!

EDWARD

Mrs. Periapt—

MRS. PERIAPT
NOW SHUT YOUR TRAP AND KEEP IT SHUT
I'M LEAVING FOR CONNECTICUT
WHERE PEOPLE KNOW THE HOLIDAYS
ARE NOT FOR CRAPS AND CROUPIERS

(SHE hits EDWARD squarely on the head with her pocketbook, knocking him from his knees.)

EDWARD

But you're my riverboat queen.

MRS. PERIAPT
MR WELLSPOT, I ABDICATE

(MRS. PERIAPT straightens her flowerpot hat, clutches her pocketbook tightly to her breast, and starts out. As SHE is about to exit, SHE stops and turns sharply back to EDWARD.)

MRS. PERIAPT (cont'd)
SAY GOODBYE TO EDNA THE GREAT!

(SHE storms off. EDWARD lies face down on the floor a broken man.)

SPIROS
Willy, give Mr. Wellspot a hand. Don't despair, Edward.
(WILLY helps EDWARD to his feet.)

SPIROS (cont'd)
I can help you with those markers. After all, it's Christmas. Consider it my gift.
(EDWARD is up, but HE is a defeated man.)

SPIROS (cont'd)
Now, about your daughter...
(SPIROS and EDWARD start exiting.)

(BLACKOUT)

ACT II

Scene 4

Lights up on the TRIO and EMILY, who is stretched out sleeping. She is quite restless. Dream music. SPIROS speaks into an off stage microphone.)

SPIROS

(off)
Emily. O, Emily.

EMILY

(Asleep)
Yes? Who's calling?

SPIROS

(Off)
It's me.

EMILY

(Sits up, still asleep)
Mr. Sandman? Have you brought me a dream?

SPIROS

(Off)
I have.

OFF STAGE VOICE

Ladies and gentlemen, direct from the prophetic world of the unconscious mind to a Vegas stage for the first time. Here they are - the strip's newest fun couple!

(EMILY stands. SHE wears a white-lace sleeping mask and a white version of her usual ratty bathrobe. SPIROS enters in white tie and tails.)

"GUESS WHO"

SPIROS

GUESS WHO'S PUTTIN' IN A DIME
GUESS WHO'S CALLIN' ON THE PHONE
GUESS WHO WANTS TO SPEND SOME TIME
GUESS WHO

EMILY

NO CLUE

SPIROS

GUESS WHO'S KNOCKIN' AT THE DOOR
GUESS WHO'S COME TO RING YOUR BELL
THE GUY YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR
GUESS WHO

EMILY

NO CLUE

ARE YOU PETER LAWFORD?

SPIROS

No.

EMILY

ARE YOU BOBBY DARIN?

SPIROS

Nix.

EMILY

ARE YOU JERRY LEWIS?

SPIROS

Nyet

EMILY

GIVE ME TIME, I'LL GUESS IT YET

SPIROS

GUESS WHO'S GONNA HOLD YOU TIGHT
GUESS WHO WRAPS YOU IN HIS ARMS
THE GUY WHO'S YOUR SHINING KNIGHT
GUESS WHO

EMILY

NO CLUE

CLINK CLINK

SPIROS

GUESS WHO DROPPED A DIME

EMILY
RING RING

SPIROS
GUESS WHO'S ON THE PHONE

EMILY
HELLO?

SPIROS
HAVE YOU GOT SOME TIME?

EMILY
WHO'S YOU?

SPIROS
GUESS WHO

EMILY
KNOCK KNOCK

SPIROS
GUESS WHO'S AT THE DOOR

EMILY
DING DONG

SPIROS
GUESS WHO RANG YOUR BELL

EMILY
WHO'S THERE?

SPIROS
SAME GUY AS BEFORE

EMILY
WHO'S YOU?

SPIROS
GUESS WHO

EMILY
ARE YOU MARLON BRANDO?

SPIROS

No.

EMILY
ARE YOU ROBERT MITCHUM?

Nee.

SPIROS

EMILY
ARE YOU LIBERACE?

Nein.

SPIROS

EMILY
THIS IS JUST LIKE “WHAT’S MY LINE?”

(A surreal wedding scene unfolds. EDWARD enters, wearing a top hat as the father of the bride. HE kisses EMILY on the cheek.)

EMILY
Daddy, is that you?
(EDWARD hands EMILY a bouquet, which in this case is an oversized bottle of sleeping tablets.)

What’s this?
(HE and EMILY latch arms and slowly start down the “aisle.”)

Where are we going?

SPIROS
GUESS WHO’S GONNA TAKE YOUR HAND

(As EMILY and EDWARD reach the bridegroom, SPIROS takes a wad of paper from his inside jacket pocket. These are EDWARD’s markers.)

EMILY
Wait a minute . . .

SPIROS
GUESS WHO’S GONNA TAKE A BRIDE

EMILY
Bride?

SPIROS
GUESS WHO'S GOT YOUR WEDDING BAND
IT'S TIME

Oh, no!
EMILY

SPIROS
TO SAY

Not you!
EMILY
(SPIROS holds out the markers to EDWARD. HE smiles broadly.)

SPIROS
I DO!

Guess who!
(HE lifts her sleeping mask. SHE sees SPIROS.)

AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!
EMILY
(The nightmare dissipates in a puff of smoke.)

Mother! Mother!
EMILY

(Running on)
ELEANOR
What is it? What's wrong?

EMILY
He's lost. Daddy's lost everything!

ELEANOR
No, dear. He couldn't, not with Mrs. Periapt. It's out of the question. Now, calm down.

EMILY
But I just had a dream—no, a nightmare— and I saw my wedding day with Mr. Olympus. It's a terrible omen, I'm sure.

ELEANOR
Darling, let's not -

EMILY
Mother, listen to me. I was getting ready for my date. I did my hair, and then in the middle of doing my make-up, I curled up and fell dead asleep.

ELEANOR

Now don't jump to conclusions. Maybe you got an accidental whiff of Lionel's chloroform.

(LIONEL enters. HE is whistling. His tuxedo jacket is casually thrown over his shoulder. HE is in an upbeat mood.)

EMILY

(Clearly confused)

Lionel? Are you okay?

ELEANOR

You look happy.

LIONEL

I was stood up by my Vegas showgirl's second cousin's friend. *But* as I was about to electrocute myself against a neon wedding chapel sign, a young lady asked me to step away from the light I was blocking. She wore thick glasses and was sitting on a bench reading Kierkegaard. Well, one thing led to another and . . .

(A Cheshire-cat smile spreads across LIONEL's face. When HE sees that neither EMILY nor ELEANOR is in a congratulatory mood, his smile quickly melts.)

LIONEL (continued)

Something's wrong. Mother? Emily? Has Father come back from the game?

ELEANOR

Not yet. But we have a feeling that all is not well.

(SHE goes into her purse looking for a pill)

LIONEL

What are you saying?

EMILY

It was your calculations, Lionel. Remember, in the long run we come closer and closer to being broken.

LIONEL

But that was before Mrs. Periapt. Oh, he can't lose now. Not after tonight.

EMILY

Lionel, think about it. I fell asleep as I was dressing for my date - and had a terrible nightmare.

ELEANOR

(Desperately searching through her purse.)
And I have an uncontrollable craving for a little pink pill. Now where is it?

EMILY

It can only mean one thing.

LIONEL

Father has lost it all. No, no, no! Don't tell me that. Not now. I was happy tonight! I had a ball! No one is going to take that away from me! No one!

(EDWARD enters wearing a Santa Claus suit. A sack is slung over his shoulder.)

EDWARD

Ho ho ho – What a sweet family gathered together on this special night.

ELEANOR

Edward, what on earth –

EDWARD

How else should a man dress who's bringing presents and glad tidings to those who stood behind him for so many years?

LIONEL

You won? You came through?

EDWARD

Won? You better believe I won, Lionel. We all won tonight.

LIONEL

How much?

EDWARD

You can't put a ruler next to peace of mind, my son.

LIONEL

Something's wrong. You've never said anything that nauseating before.

ELEANOR

Edward, can you please tell us what happened this evening.

EDWARD

Why not? It's past midnight, and the perfect time for a cautionary Christmas tale. Everyone gather round ol' Santa.

LIONEL

I will not.

EDWARD

Lionel, it's Christmas. Indulge me.

(ELEANOR, EMILY and, finally, LIONEL sit at EDWARD's feet.
THEY could be a Hallmark Christmas card.)

EDWARD (continued)

That's nice. Get comfortable. Comfy? Good. Once upon a Christmas Eve, there was a very poor man mired in cold, troubled times. He was so destitute he had no fire in his hearth to warm his family, and his landlord, a miserly Greek tycoon, would no longer give him an advance on coal. Every day grew colder for his family. His beautiful daughter stayed in her bed of straw to keep the bitter winds away, and his crippled son tied his woolen muffler around his neck so tightly he turned blue. Then, that evening as his wife lay in bed and visions of Valium danced in her head, there came a rumble, then, a loud thud. The family ran to see what rocked their tiny cottage and, lo and behold, a strange lady from the distant land called Connecticut was sitting on the cold embers in their hearth. When the little lady spoke, gold spewed from her mouth as though she were a human slot machine. They were saved! Once again their cottage was alive with a glowing fire. They sang carols and danced the twist deep into the night. But then, suddenly, the strange visitor vanished, and the gold was gone. Soon, the miserly Greek tycoon came to collect his fee. Of course, the man could not pay him, so the landlord said he would forgive his debts in exchange for his beautiful, sleeping daughter. The man had no choice, so she was carried away in her comatose state. The next day, his son walked into the desert, where he was eaten by a Gila monster; his wife refilled her prescription for her little pink pills, and the poor man was miserable for the rest of his life. The end.

ELEANOR

That's a very depressing Christmas story, Edward.

EMILY

What are you saying, Daddy?

LIONEL

He's saying he struck a deal with the Greek! You have been sacrificed like some Iphigenia so he can live to play another day.

EDWARD

Okay, let's not panic. It's time for the presents.

LIONEL

Presents! You have nothing we want.

EDWARD

Now, now. Santa spent a lot of energy selecting the perfect gifts. So, let's keep our spirits bright. Emily, my much married little girl. With Olympus now providing you with a permanent state of unconsciousness, I have a box of velvet sleep shades. Some embroidered with your name.

EMILY

(SHE takes present sadly)
 These will take care of a lot of sleepy days. Daddy, you don't think there's something better?

EDWARD

I can't help you any more, Sweetheart. I'm as tired as you.
 (Almost a cry)
 Ho ho ho...Merry Christmas.
 (He tries to brighten somewhat)
 And for you, Lionel... I've got something you've dreamed about for a long time...
 (HE hands LIONEL his present, which is in a velvet sack. LIONEL fingers it suspiciously)

LIONEL

What is this?
 (Winking in confidence.)

EDWARD

A treasured family heirloom. Now, passed on to the third generation. Use it wisely.

ELEANOR

Is that what I think it is? Edward, what a lovely gesture!

LIONEL

I am not accepting anything from you. You can't give me a taste of jackpot living and then put that thing...
 (HE tosses the velvet sack the floor.)

LIONEL (cont'd)

... in my Christmas stocking. Emily and I are tired of living under the threat of execution, of lying comatose, of having our lives completely butchered. You've been nothing but a Christmas fraud all along!

ELEANOR

Lionel, please. Have a little respect.

EDWARD

He's right. I've disappointed everyone once again.

LIONEL

Yes, you have. Because Father, you –*Edward T. Wellspot* - are an unlucky loser, that's all.

EDWARD

An unlucky loser.

LIONEL

You heard me. Now, I'm going back to the casino to meet my gloomy girlfriend. Yes, the casino—because in spite of her intellectual capacity, Gloria is addicted to craps—an interesting dichotomy, wouldn't you say? And I am going to win a pot of gold for myself. Yes, sir—I'm going to get lucky and win enough money to get *two* degrees in Combinatorics- one from Harvard and one from Yale!

EDWARD

And if that doesn't work out?

LIONEL

Well, that's the chance I'll have to take!
(LIONEL starts out.)

EDWARD

What did you say?
(Suddenly realizing what HE said, LIONEL stops, turns to look at EDWARD, and swallowing his medicine like a man -)

LIONEL

Thank you, Father... and Merry Christmas.
(HE exits as EDWARD watches his son go off. HE is clearly touched.)

EDWARD

Well, there he goes. Next up at the table.
(ELEANOR turns. EMILY suddenly drops her ratty bathrobe revealing her brightly colored bikini. It is so bright, in fact, it lights the stage.)

ELEANOR

Edward.
(HE turns to see his daughter.)

EMILY

It's the first time I've worn it.

ELEANOR

You look beautiful.

EDWARD

More than beautiful.

EMILY

I'm meeting someone at the pool, and I don't want to miss him.

So who's the lucky guy?
EDWARD

Vito, the swimming instructor.
EMILY

Really?
ELEANOR

EMILY
Yesterday, I lost a slipper in the coffee shop and was going crazy looking for it when, suddenly, I felt this tap on my shoulder. When I turned around, there he was, holding it. He asked me -

EDWARD
- if he could slip it on your foot.

EMILY
No, if I'd like to share a bagel. So, we did. He's a little water-logged, but very sweet. Anyway, he has an early morning swim class. After that, he's the croupier for water roulette. I don't want to miss it. I'm sorry, Daddy, but I am thirty – it's time for a permanent husband, and Mr. Olympus doesn't seem the type. Am I leaving you in a desperate situation?

EDWARD
No, you're leaving me a very happy man.

EMILY
You'll like Vito. He has a wonderful, warm smile. Like yours.
(SHE kisses EDWARD)

EMILY (cont'd)
Merry Christmas, Daddy.
(HE watches her hurry off)

ELEANOR
Congratulations. That was quite a hand you played-
(SHE picks up the velvet sack and gingerly places it on the roulette table.)

ELEANOR (cont'd)
- somewhat risky, but magnificent.

EDWARD
I held my breath and prayed they wouldn't fold.

ELEANOR

Fold? Why would they? After all, they're your children, Edward.

EDWARD

You know, Ellie, I'll miss them, but it's time for a little luck for people like them, myopic and serious minded. The world is going to find every inch of Lionel and Emily Wellspot lovable. I know it, and that makes me so damned proud.

ELEANOR

So, we didn't do so terribly by them after all.

EDWARD

I think whoever watches over gamblers has a soft spot for irony. There's no present in Santa's bag of tricks for you Eleanor. Sorry.

ELEANOR

I don't need anything, Edward.

EDWARD

Well, we're going to need something because when Olympus discovers there's no bride waiting in his private chapel, and he has to eat his marker, he'll poison my name all over. I won't be able to bet on a dog sled race in Alaska. I guess it's time to throw in the towel and, like you said, get a new plan.

(ELEANOR offers nothing.)

EDWARD (cont'd)

I thought you'd be happy.

ELEANOR

Oh, Edward, you don't understand. I've always loved the passion in you. It may have scared me from time to time but your life has been exemplary, desirable, in fact. It possibly scared me because it elevated you to... I don't know, to a state of grace.

EDWARD

Eleanor, please. I'm a losing gambler, the guy who leaves the dice so damp with defeat that the stick man pushes them clinically to one side as though they were infected. Even those anonymous eyes surrounding him at the game table say give it up, pack it in – get a job.

ELEANOR

I won't hear of this. I need a pill.

(SHE starts rummaging through her purse.)

EDWARD

I thought I could burn this city down with a deck of cards and offer its ashes to my beautiful family—

ELEANOR

(SHE holds up the pill.)
Ahhh, bella pillola.

EDWARD

But there's no fire anywhere.

ELEANOR

(About to pop the pill, SHE stops.)
That's not true. How many men dare to live as you do? A man committed to taking a chance, welcoming risk, living life as it was meant to be—unpredictable, sloppy, but alive. So, I'm not folding either, darling.

(ELEANOR drops the pill back into her purse.)

ELEANOR (cont'd)

If we're going out on the circuit again, I better start—

EDWARD

No. We're done. It's time to face the inevitable.

ELEANOR

What is it that Nick the Greek said? "The next best thing to gambling and winning is gambling and losing." Yes, that's it. I'm sure.

EDWARD

You should make a sampler out of it. So, what do we do now?

ELEANOR

Well, there is an overheating Rambler that could take us back to Pittsburgh. I bet you could work your way up to a vice presidency in my father's business in no time at all.

(An ironic, half-laugh From EDWARD)

EDWARD

Pittsburgh. Why don't you call your family and tell them to get the guest room ready? We'll be there before they know it.

ELEANOR

Are you sure there's no more aces to chase, Edward?

(EDWARD pauses. Then, nods "yes." ELEANOR kisses him.)

ELEANOR (cont'd)

I'll pack our things.

EDWARD

And leave all my lucky Las Vegas clothes behind.

(SHE exits.)

“MY YEAR”

EDWARD (cont'd)

I THOUGHT THAT IT WAS GONNA BE
BETTER TIMES FOR ME
I REALLY THOUGHT THIS WAS MY YEAR

I THOUGHT I'D GIVE THE WORLD A SHAKE
CATCH A LUCKY BREAK
I REALLY THOUGHT THAT THIS WAS MY YEAR
IT WAS THIS YEAR
TO GIVE MY REGARDS
TO MY OLD PAL FAILURE
BUT IT WASN'T IN THE CARDS

I THOUGHT I'D FIN'LLY HOLLER, “YES!
I'M A BIG SUCCESS!”
MY GOD, I THOUGHT THIS WAS MY YEAR
AND IT WON'T BE NEXT YEAR
OR THE YEAR AFTER THAT
THIS YEAR WAS MY YEAR

BUT IT DIDN'T HAPPEN
I DIDN'T DO IT
I DIDN'T CATCH THE LUCKY BREAKS
I DIDN'T MAKE IT
I DIDN'T GRAB IT
I DIDN'T HAVE WHAT IT TAKES

BUT I NEARLY TOUCHED IT
I NEARLY FELT IT
I NEARLY HELD IT IN MY HAND
I NEARLY MADE IT
I NEARLY WON IT –

EDWARD (cont'd)

Nearly, nearly. What was wrong with me. Was I too crude? Did I dress too loudly? I don't understand.

EDWARD (cont'd)

I THOUGHT I'D WIN A POT OF GOLD
EVERY TIME I ROLLED
I REALLY THOUGHT THIS WAS MY YEAR

I FELT THAT EVERY NEON LIGHT

FLASHING IN THE NIGHT
WAS SAYING “EDWARD, LOOK, IT’S YOUR YEAR”

EDWARD (cont’d)

IT WAS THIS YEAR
TO LET PEOPLE SEE
THAT I’M NOT A LOSER
BUT IT’S WHAT I’LL ALWAYS BE

I SAW ME HANDING YOU THE MOON
LIKE A BIG BALLOON
I REALLY DREAMED
THIS WAS MY YEAR
AND IT WON’T BE NEXT YEAR
OR THE YEAR AFTER THAT
THIS YEAR WAS MY YEAR
MY YEAR
MY YEAR

(EDWARD eerily moves toward the roulette table. Almost unconsciously HE picks up the velvet sack and pulls out the pearl handle pistol.)

EDWARD (cont’d)

(HE indicates all the sleeping gambling machines with a sweep of the pistol.)
Look at you so quiet, so smug.
(They are ghostly, like we have never seen them before: colorless, silent, dead.)

EDWARD (cont’d)

As if you didn’t know you just did in Edward T. Wellspot once and for all. You should be celebrating.

(HE spins a roulette wheel with the tip of the pistol. ELEANOR, carrying that old, well-travel suitcase, enters unseen by EDWARD. HE addresses the spinning wheel.)

EDWARD (cont’d)

I was going to make you dance to my tune this time. This was going to be the Christmas it all happened. Christmas. There’s no Christmas for unlucky losers.

(HE looks at the pistol in his hand. In one fell swoop, EDWARD points the pistol to his temple.)

ELEANOR

Really, Edward, won’t going back to Pittsburgh accomplish the same thing?

(EDWARD takes a beat, then, slowly lowers the gun.)

EDWARD

The Fates blindsided me, Ellie. I should have known that lucky ladies from Mystic are reserved for those privileged few, the blessed, like Olympus, who sit high in their

penthouses looking down on the rest of us with our false idols, driving ourselves crazy chasing empty dreams.

ELEANOR

Not empty dreams, but, maybe, just a bit beyond our reach.

EDWARD

Did I drive you crazy?

ELEANOR

No. Never.

“BELIEVE ME” – reprise

ELEANOR (cont'd)

BELIEVE ME
 YOU MAKE THIS FAMILY PROUD
 IT'S TRUE, DEAR
 YOU'RE MILES ABOVE THE CROWD
 THERE'S NO ONE QUITE LIKE EDWARD T.
 NO SIREE, BELIEVE ME

ELEANOR

You know, I bet the old Pittsburgh Elks Club still has that Friday night bingo. What do you think, Edward? Edward.

EDWARD

I think you're something wonderful, Mrs. Wellspot.

EDWARD (cont'd)

BELIEVE ME
 BELIEVE YOU ME
 (EDWARD raises the gun, aims at the roulette wheel and shoots! It spins wildly.)

EDWARD (cont'd)

Now, let's take those Elks for all they're worth.

(ELEANOR laughs. Music swells. THEY walk off, arm in arm. As THEY do, the slot machine at center stage starts to glow. Its magnificent rainbow of colors grows brighter, then, brighter, then, brighter and brighter - Blackout.

END OF PLAY