

The Odd Couple

ACT ONE

TIME: *A hot summer's night.*

SCENE: *The apartment of OLIVE MADISON. One of those six-room affairs on Riverside Drive, New York, in the eighties. The building is about fifty years old and still has vestiges of its once glorious past. High ceilings, walk-in closets and thick walls. We are in the combination living room-dining room. Two steps up is the front door and next to that, a hall closet. A window at s.l. with a broken air conditioner. Towards center rear, a doorway leads to the kitchen. At s.r., a hallway leads to the back bedrooms and the bathroom.*

The apartment is quite unkempt. Books are a mess in the bookshelves. Magazines and old newspapers on the floors and tables. Unopened mail and unopened laundry packages lie about.

AT RISE: *A dining table at s.r. is being used for the Girls' weekly Trivial Pursuit game. Four women are at the table playing, two on each side. RENEE and SYLVIE, a compulsive smoker, on one side; VERA and MICKEY, a uniformed policewoman, on the other. Food and drinks, none too appetizing, are on the table. MICKEY is standing.*

MICKEY. *(shakes dice in hand)* C'mon, baby, we need a piece of the pie. *(She throws dice.)* . . . Five! *(She counts off spaces on the board.)* One—two—three—four—five! . . . Science and Nature. *(She sits. RENEE takes card from the box and looks at it.)*

RENEE. Oh, you're going to love this . . . "How many times a year does a penguin have sex?" (*MICKEY looks at her partner, VERA, puzzled.*)

MICKEY. Do you know any penguins? . . . Intimately?

VERA. That shouldn't be Science and Nature. That should be gossip.

MICKEY. I'll say they do it six times.

VERA. Why only six times?

MICKEY. Did you ever see what they look like?

VERA. They live on icebergs. What else could they do all winter? (*to opponents*) I say twenty times.

RENEE. Wrong. They do it once.

SYLVIE. *Once?* Jesus, I married a penguin.

RENEE. Christ, it's hot in here. When is she going to fix her air conditioner?

SYLVIE. (*hands the dice to RENEE*) Your roll.

RENEE. I'm going to pass out, I swear.

VERA. Someone told me you were seeing a doctor. Is it anything serious?

RENEE. No. We only had two dates. (*rolls dice*) Four. (*counts off with marker*) One—two—three—four . . . Oh, Christ. Sports!

SYLVIE. Go the other way. (*to VERA*) We take Science. (*RENEE moves marker the opposite way.*)

MICKEY. Two minutes to go and counting down.

SYLVIE. (*to MICKEY*) Do you mind if she asks the question first? (*to VERA*) Go on, Vera.

VERA. (*reads from card*) "What does C mean in Einstein's Theory of Relativity, E equals MC squared?" (*SYLVIE and RENEE look at her with their mouths open, dumbfounded.*)

SYLVIE. We'll try sports.

VERA. You can't change after you've heard the question.

RENEE. She picked it on *my* turn. I pick sports. (*She moves marker back.*)

MICKEY. (*looks at watch*) A minute thirty and counting down.

VERA. (*reads*) "Who pitched back to back no-hitters for the Cincinnati Reds in 1938?" (*SYLVIE and RENEE stare again with mouths open, dumbfounded.*)

SYLVIE. (*to RENEE*) You want to take a crack at MC squared?

RENEE. (*to VERA*) Give us a hint.

VERA. What kind of hint?

RENEE. Is it baseball or football?

VERA. It's baseball. I'll give you another hint. He has a Dutch name . . .

SYLVIE. . . . Dutch Schultz.

MICKEY. Dutch Schultz was a gangster.

RENEE. Joe Rembrandt.

VERA. Is that your answer?

SYLVIE. Peter Windmill.

VERA. Is that your answer?

MICKEY. Sixty seconds and counting down.

SYLVIE. What is this, liftoff at Cape Canaveral? (*calls off towards kitchen*) Olive, we need help.

OLIVE. (*offstage*) I'm coming. I'm coming.

VERA. Do you give up?

RENEE. Not yet . . . Bobby Amsterdam . . . Tony Tulips.

VERA. Give up. You'll never get it. I have to leave by twelve.

SYLVIE. Where the hell are you running?

VERA. I told you that when I sat down. I have to leave by twelve. Mickey, didn't I say that when I sat down? I have to leave by twelve.

MICKEY. I'm really starting to worry about Florence.

She's never been this late before.

VERA. I told Harry I'd be home by one the latest. We're making an eight o'clock plane to Florida. (SYLVIE glares at her.)

MICKEY. Who goes to Florida in July?

VERA. It's off-season. There are no crowds and you get the best rooms for one-tenth the price.

SYLVIE. Some vacation. Six cheap people in an empty hotel.

MICKEY. Maybe Florence is sick. I'm really getting nervous.

VERA. Do you give up?

SYLVIE. Mickey Dikes . . . I hate this game.

MICKEY. Did you know Florence once locked herself in the bathroom overnight in Bloomingdale's? She wrote out her entire will on a half a roll of toilet paper . . . (looks at watch) Time is almost up.

SYLVIE. (calls out) Olive! We're running out of time.

(OLIVE comes out of the kitchen with a tray of food and soft drinks.)

OLIVE. Alright, what's the question?

MICKEY. You only have four seconds.

VERA. Who pitched back to back no-hitters—

OLIVE. (in one breath) Johnny Van Der Meer on June 11th against the Boston Braves, three-nothing, and on June 15th against the Brooklyn Dodgers, six-nothing, his overall record for the year was fifteen wins and ten losses, I have one second left over, ask me another question.

RENEE. She's incredible.

SYLVIE. You really love sports, don't you?

OLIVE. I love big men in tight pants . . . Who gets a no caffeine nutra sweet one calorie Pepsi?

MICKEY. I do.

OLIVE. (brings her the can) One can of chemicals for Mickey the Cop.

MICKEY. (holds can) It's warm.

RENEE. Because her refrigerator's been broken for two weeks.

OLIVE. So it drips a little, who wants food?

MICKEY. What have you got?

OLIVE. (looks at sandwiches) I got brown sandwiches and green sandwiches.

MICKEY. What's the green?

OLIVE. (looks) It's either very new cheese or very old meat.

MICKEY. I'll take the brown.

RENEE. You're going to eat food from that refrigerator? I saw milk standing in there that wasn't even in the bottle.

OLIVE. What are you, some kind of health nut? Eat, Mickey. Eat.

SYLVIE. (to RENEE) We go again. Roll 'em.

RENEE. (to OLIVE) I thought you had a new maid starting to work on Monday.

OLIVE. No. I didn't pass the interview.

RENEE. (shakes dice . . . to others) The woman produces a prime time news show and she doesn't have a maid. (She throws the dice.) Five. One—two—three—four—five . . . Science and Nature.

VERA. Oh, this is good . . . "What closes when a frog swallows?" (RENEE and SYLVIE look at OLIVE.)

SYLVIE. HIS EYES!! . . . They close their eyes.

MICKEY. That's right. How did you know that?

SYLVIE. I went out with a guy who looked like a frog.

MICKEY. (to RENEE) Your turn again. Roll 'em.

RENEE. Hey, Olive, can we make a rule? Every six months you have to buy fresh potato chips.

OLIVE. I do. Eat those until September.

RENEE. At least at Florence's house you get decent food.

OLIVE. My food isn't decent?

RENEE. It's not even food.

OLIVE. Alright, I'm through being the nice one. You owe me six dollars apiece for the buffet. (*They all react derisively.*)

SYLVIE. Buffet? Hot diet colas and two sandwiches left over from when you went to high school?

RENEE. (*moves her marker*) One—two—three . . . Again sports.

MICKEY. (*reads card*) "What did Forrest Smithson carry in his hand for inspiration while running the hurdles at the 1908 Olympics?" (*RENEE and SYLVIE turn and look at OLIVE.*)

OLIVE. . . . Extra jockey shorts.

VERA. Is that your answer?

SYLVIE. (*to VERA*) If you say that one more time, I'm taking you hostage, I swear to God.

MICKEY. Sixty seconds and counting down.

OLIVE. He carried a Bible.

VERA. That's right.

RENEE. The woman's unbelievable.

MICKEY. (*to OLIVE*) How could you know about the 1908 Olympics?

OLIVE. From Phil. Phil knew more about sports than any man I ever knew . . . I think we'd still be married today if only I could have won the Kentucky Derby. (*She looks off, thinking of Phil.*)

RENEE. Don't get that mournful look in your eye again. The man lost your entire life savings at the track.

RENEE. Two. Science and Nature.

VERA. What's the strongest muscle in a man's body?

SYLVIE. Before or after?

MICKEY. You're not still sending Phil money, are you?

OLIVE. Nah.

MICKEY. Yes she does.

OLIVE. . . . a few hundred dollars. Just until he gets his life straightened out.

MICKEY. He's been trying to get straightened out for two years. How bent was he?

OLIVE. I can't help it. Every time I hear his voice on the phone, I end up sending him a check. He's so good at it. He puts a little whimper in because he knows it gets to me.

RENEE. I would never support an ex-husband. Not until women are getting equal pay with men.

SYLVIE & MICKEY. Right!

VERA. Well, you have to look at it both ways. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

SYLVIE. (*looks at her*) You're going to be some big hit in Florida.

VERA. You give up on the strongest muscle?

RENEE. The tongue.

VERA. That's right.

RENEE. (*throws dice*) Don't ask me how I know that. Three. One—two—three . . . Sports and Leisure. (*The phone rings.*)

VERA. (*reads*) "What's the southern dish made of pigs' small intestines called?"

OLIVE. Airplane food.

SYLVIE. Chitlins.

OLIVE. (*She picks up phone.*) Hello? Oh, my God. Phil! . . . I was just talking about you.

MICKEY. Somebody hide her checkbook. (*RENEE throws dice again. She moves the marker during OLIVE's conversation.*)

OLIVE. (*into phone*) How have you been, Phil? . . .

You sound good. Tired? . . . Yeah, you sound like you have a little cold . . . Haven't been sleeping, heh? (*hands over phone, to girls*) He's whimpering. This is going to cost me.

MICKEY. Don't give in. Remember the Alamo.

OLIVE. (*into phone*) So what have you been doing, Phil? . . . Mostly thinking of me. Ah, that's sweet. (*hands over phone, to girls*) We're talking about four figures here. (*back into phone*) You're in a bind? What kind of bind?

SYLVIE. You want us to cut the wire?

OLIVE. (*holds up her hand to quiet SYLVIE; into phone*) You owe two months' back rent? Oh gee, I'm sorry . . . How much does it come to?

RENEE. (*to girls*) A million six.

OLIVE. (*into phone*) Gee, I wish I could help you out, Phil, but I'm broke myself. I just paid the last two years' taxes.

MICKEY. That's it. Hang in, girl. Win this one for the Gipper.

OLIVE. (*into phone*) I know . . . I know you hate to ask, Phil. And I hate to turn you down.

SYLVIE. Hang up. Hang up before his voice cracks.

OLIVE. (*into phone*) What's wrong with your voice, Phil? . . . Oh, gee. Phil, don't do that . . . Please don't, Phil . . . Listen, I'll send you three hundred dollars, is that alright?

RENEE. Gloria Steinem hates you!

OLIVE. Stop coughing, Phil . . . Sympathy is not going to work with me . . . I'm sending you five hundred dollars and that's it.

SYLVIE. (*to girls*) Even money she goes to six-fifty.

OLIVE. (*into phone*) Phil, I've got to go . . . It was nice speaking to you . . . It's what? . . . Our anniversary? . . . When? . . . My God, next week, you're right

. . . Oh . . . Well, the same to you, Phil . . . Sure. Six-fifty's fine . . . G'bye, Phil. (*She hangs up. She looks at the girls, embarrassed and ashamed.*) He sounded like Orphan Annie in a snowstorm, what do you want from me?

RENEE. (*holding potato chips*) You give your ex-husband six hundred and fifty dollars and your best friends get to eat the Dead Sea Scrolls?

OLIVE. I have a fatal flaw in my character. Him. Go ahead and shoot me.

MICKEY. If you mean it, I have my gun here.

VERA. (*reads*) "What's the oldest known vegetable in the world?" (*Everybody stares at her, astonished.*)

SYLVIE. . . . You are!!

RENEE. (*to OLIVE*) There's other men around, you know.

OLIVE. (*pacing*) You think I don't know? There's two Spanish brothers in this building who are crazy about me. Sexiest guys you ever saw . . . I must be crazy. Why am I sending a shiftless gambler like Phil seven hundred and fifty dollars?

MICKEY. (*to RENEE*) Hand me my purse. I'll shoot her now.

VERA. (*to SYLVIE and RENEE*) Is that your final answer?

SYLVIE. Yes! You are the oldest vegetable known to man.

VERA. Wrong. It's the pea.

SYLVIE. Then you're runner-up. (*VERA tosses the dice, moves her marker.*)

OLIVE. The kids today are smarter than us. Why go through all the trouble of marriage when you can have a roommate? I'm going to start looking around on the bus tomorrow.

VERA. Entertainment.

RENEE. (*reads*) "What group starred in the movie, *Rock Around the Clock*?"

OLIVE. Everybody, all together!

ALL FIVE WOMEN. (*ALL raise fists in air.*)
"BILL HALEY AND THE COMETS"!!!

OLIVE. (*snaps fingers*) Yeah! God, give me one more night in the back of a T-Bird! Whoo-hoo!

SYLVIE. Remember Danny Flannigan? Hot! Hot stuff!

MICKEY. He wore size 28 jeans on a 32 body.

RENEE. I remember the first time I danced close with him. He kept saying, "It's not what you think. I got two packs of cigarettes in my pocket" . . . I had to go to confession the next day.

OLIVE. Always had a pound of grease in his hair. Remember the winter he went out and his head froze. He had to comb his hair with a hammer and chisel.

VERA. You know who I thought the cutest one in the school was? . . . Mr. Schwartzman, the Principal. (*The girls look at each other.*)

OLIVE. Jesus, I hated being seventeen . . . until I got to be thirty-five. You know what I mean? (*They all get lost in thought.*)

MICKEY. Yeah.

SYLVIE. Yeah.

RENEE. Yeah.

VERA. Yeah.

(*SYLVIE, RENEE and MICKEY nod . . . Then they all become quiet as they ponder this thought quietly. They are all momentarily lost in memories of their youth. The phone rings. It's as though they don't hear it. It rings again. OLIVE crosses and picks it up.*)

OLIVE. (*into phone*) The Chubby Checker Fan Club. Hello. (*She suddenly smiles, lowers her voice, turns away from the others.*) Oh, hello, sweetheart. (*She becomes very seductive. The others listen.*) I told you not to call me tonight . . . I can't talk to you now . . . You know I do, darling . . . Alright. Just a minute. (*She turns.*) Mickey! It's your husband. (*She lays down phone.*)

MICKEY. (*gets up, crosses to phone*) I wish you were having an affair with him. Then he wouldn't bother me all the time. (*She picks up the phone.*) Hello, Stanley. What's wrong? Did you make yourself dinner? . . . What'd you have? . . . Lamb chops? That's very good, Stan.

VERA. Your husband can make lamb chops?

MICKEY. (*hands over phone*) He boils them in water. (*back into phone*) Who? . . . No, she didn't show up tonight. What's wrong? . . . You're kidding! . . . How should I know? . . . Alright. I will . . . Yes. Goodbye. (*to others*) What did I tell you?

RENEE. What's the matter?

MICKEY. Florence is missing.

RENEE. Oh, my God!

MICKEY. I *told* you something was up.

SYLVIE. What do you mean, missing?

MICKEY. She wasn't home all day today. She cancelled her facial appointment and her pedicure. She never showed up for her Yoga class or her spiritual advisor. No one knows where she is. Stan just spoke to her husband.

OLIVE. Wait a minute. No one is missing for one day.

RENEE. That's right. You've got to be missing for forty-eight hours before you're missing.

SYLVIE. She loves the Museum of Modern Art. Maybe she went there.

VERA. Maybe she got locked in the museum. I once talked to a security guard there for twenty minutes until I found out he was a statue. (*SYLVIE glares at her.*)

RENEE. Maybe she had an accident.

OLIVE. They would have heard.

RENEE. If she's lying in a gutter somewhere? Who would know who she is?

OLIVE. She's got charge plates for forty-seven stores. If eight hours go by without her shopping, New York shuts down.

RENEE. Maybe she was mugged.

OLIVE. Do you know what she carries in her handbag? Tear gas, a siren and a police radio. If you tap her on the shoulder, a squad car shows up.

MICKEY. I don't know. I have a feeling in my bones she's someplace in trouble right now.

OLIVE. What are we guessing for? I'll call Sidney. (*She starts for phone.*)

SYLVIE. Wait a minute! Don't start anything yet. Just because we don't know where she is doesn't mean somebody *else* doesn't know . . . Is she seeing someone? On the side?

VERA. You mean like a hypnotist?

SYLVIE. (*glares at her*) Are you on Valium? . . . Did you ever think of taking speed so you can keep up with the rest of us?

OLIVE. Florence doesn't play around. She didn't even take her clothes off when she had her children . . . Please.

SYLVIE. You never can tell. It's a different world we live in today. What a man can do, a woman can do . . . I've never personally done it myself, but I've gotten the itch once in a while. Admit it. We all have.

VERA. I haven't.

SYLVIE. I'm talking about *normal* women.

OLIVE. (*dialing*) We're wasting time. I'm going to call Sidney and find out what's what. (*into phone*) Hello? Sidney? . . . Olive. I just heard. Listen, Sidney, do you have any idea where she could be? . . . She what? . . . You're kidding? . . . Why? . . . No, I didn't know . . . Gee, that's too bad . . . Alright, listen, Sid. You just sit tight and the minute I hear anything I'll let you know . . . Right. Goodbye. (*She hangs up. They all look at her with great suspense. She crosses wordlessly to the end of the sofa, lost in thought. They just stare at her. Finally she turns to them.*) They broke up.

VERA. Who?

OLIVE. *Who???* . . . Florence and Sidney, that's who. They broke up. The marriage is over.

VERA. Don't tell me.

RENEE. I can't believe it.

SYLVIE. After fourteen years.

VERA. They were such a happy couple.

MICKEY. Fourteen years doesn't mean you're a happy couple. It just means you're a *long* couple.

SYLVIE. What happened?

OLIVE. The man wants out, that's all.

MICKEY. She'll go to pieces. I know Florence. She's going to try something crazy.

SYLVIE. She used to say, "Our marriage will last a hundred years" . . . What happened?

OLIVE. She missed by eighty-six years.

MICKEY. She'll kill herself. You hear what I'm saying. She's going to go out and try to kill herself.

SYLVIE. Will you shut up, Mickey? Stop being a policewoman for two minutes. (*to OLIVE*) Where'd she go, Olive?

OLIVE. She went out to kill herself.

MICKEY. (to SYLVIE) What'd I tell you?

RENEE. (to OLIVE) Are you serious?

OLIVE. That's what the man said. She went out to kill herself. She didn't want to do it at home because her mother was sleeping over.

VERA. Why did she want to kill herself?

OLIVE. Why? Because she's an hysteric.

SYLVIE. (to OLIVE) You mean she actually said, "I'm going out to kill myself"? What did she do, leave a note?

OLIVE. No. She sent a telegram.

MICKEY. A suicide telegram?

RENEE. If she wants to kill herself, why does she send a telegram?

OLIVE. Because the quicker it gets there, the quicker she has a chance to be saved.

VERA. Oh, I get it. She really doesn't want to kill herself. She just wants sympathy.

MICKEY. We get people like her all the time. They crave attention. We have a man who calls us every Saturday from the top of the George Washington Bridge. We don't even answer it.

RENEE. I don't know. There's always a first time. Maybe this is the one time she really means it.

OLIVE. Please. She's too nervous to kill herself. She wears her seat-belt in a drive-in movie.

SYLVIE. Well, we can't sit here and do nothing.

VERA. Isn't there someplace we could look for her?

SYLVIE. Where? Where would you look for a suicidal person who wants to live? (The doorbell rings.)

OLIVE. (lowers voice) Of course! If you're going to kill yourself, where's the safest place to do it? . . . With your friends.

VERA. (starts for door) I'll let her in. (ALL talk quickly, nervously.)

RENEE. Wait a minute! She may be hysterical. Let's play it nice and easy. If we're calm, maybe *she'll* be calm.

MICKEY. That's right. That's how they talk to those people out on ledges. Gentle and soothing, like a priest.

VERA. What'll we say to her?

MICKEY. Nothing. We say nothing. As if we never heard a thing.

SYLVIE. Maybe we should notify the police.

MICKEY. (angrily) What the hell do you think *I* am, for crise sakes?

OLIVE. Are you girls through with this discussion? Because she already could have died of old age out in the hall . . . Everybody, sit down. (They all rush into their chairs. VERA crosses to the door. Sitting with RENEE and SYLVIE . . . To Mickey:) Alright, ask us a question.

MICKEY. You have to roll the dice first. Get your category.

OLIVE. Who gives a crap what the category is? Just ask a question.

MICKEY. My mind is too logical. I can't ask a question till someone gives me a category.

RENEE. Sports and Leisure. (The bell rings again.)

SYLVIE. Not Sports and Leisure—it's too tough.

OLIVE. I can't believe this.

VERA. Should I tell Florence to wait a minute?

OLIVE. (to MICKEY) Movies! Entertainment! Open the door!

(MICKEY picks up a card as VERA opens the door. FLORENCE stands there, dressed neatly. She carries a purse. She tries to act as if everything is fine but we can sense the tension and anxiety underneath.)

FLORENCE. Hello, Vera.

VERA. Oh, hello, Florence. We practically forgot all about you. (*She scurries back to her seat. FLORENCE steps into the apartment.*)

OLIVE. One more piece of the pie is all we need.

FLORENCE. Hello, girls. (*The girls barely look up. They throw her a perfunctory, "Hello, Florence," but their attention is on the game.*)

SYLVIE. (*to MICKEY*) Could you repeat the question, please?

MICKEY. I didn't ask it yet . . . "Name three actors who played Charlie Chan on the screen."

FLORENCE. (*wanders around*) I'm sorry I'm late.

OLIVE. Five, ten minutes. Big deal . . . There are some sandwiches there if you're hungry.

FLORENCE. Yes, I am. I didn't eat all day. (*She crosses to sandwiches; looks in the sandwich.*) No. Never mind.

OLIVE. What was the question?

RENEE. Three actors who played Charlie Chan.

FLORENCE. Is there anything to drink?

OLIVE. Sure. Coke, Pepsi, 7-Up, anything.

FLORENCE. I meant hard stuff. Do you have any hard stuff? . . . A Dubonnet?

OLIVE. Dubonnet? . . . No, I just killed my last case.

FLORENCE. It's not important. (*as she turns away from them; audible sigh*) Nothing is very important.

OLIVE. (*back to the game*) . . . Three actors who played who?

MICKEY. Charlie Chan! Charlie Chan! How many times do I have to say it? Charlie Chan!

SYLVIE. Alright, take it easy, everyone. Calm down.

FLORENCE. (*stands behind VERA, plays with VERA's hair*) . . . Anyone call about me?

OLIVE. Call? Not that I can remember. (*to others*)

Did anyone call for Florence? (*They quickly mumble "they can't remember."*) Why? Were you expecting a call?

FLORENCE. Me? Who would call for me?

OLIVE. (*turns back to game*) Er, three actors who played Charlie Chan, is that it?

MICKEY. That's it. That's the question. You got it!

OLIVE. You mean in the same picture?

MICKEY. (*losing patience*) How can they play in the same picture? What do they want three Charlie Chans in the same Goddam picture for?

VERA. They had two Tarzans in the same picture once.

MICKEY. (*attacking her*) Never! Never two Tarzans in one picture.

VERA. One of them pretended to be Tarzan.

MICKEY. (*losing control*) Then it wasn't two Tarzans. It was *one* Tarzan and one pretending to be Tarzan.

RENEE. Alright, take it easy. Take it easy.

OLIVE. Calm down, everyone, alright?

MICKEY. I'm sorry. I can't help it. Everyone makes me nervous.

SYLVIE. That's because you make everybody *else* nervous.

MICKEY. (*sarcastically*) I'm sorry. Forgive me. I'll go kill myself!

OLIVE. (*warning her*) Mickey! (*Motions her head to FLORENCE; they all sit in silence a moment as FLORENCE crosses to the window.*)

FLORENCE. Gee, it's a pretty view from up here. What is it, twelve floors?

OLIVE. (*gets up very quickly*) No. It's only eleven. (*She closes the window quickly.*) It says twelve but it's only eleven . . . Want to sit down and play, Flo? It's still

early. (*as OLIVE crosses back to table*)

FLORENCE. No . . . I don't think I could concentrate tonight.

SYLVIE. It's your favorite category. Movies.

FLORENCE. I wouldn't know one movie from another tonight.

OLIVE. You'd know this one . . . "Name three actors who played Tarzan in the movies."

MICKEY. Charlie Chan! *CHARLIE CHAN!!*

FLORENCE. Sidney Toler, Warner Oland and Peter Ustinov . . . Excuse me. (*crosses*)

OLIVE. Where are you going?

FLORENCE. I have to go to the bathroom.

OLIVE. Alone?

FLORENCE. I always go alone . . . Why?

OLIVE. No reason . . . You gonna be in there long?

FLORENCE. . . . As long as it takes. (*She goes into the bathroom.*)

MICKEY. Are you crazy? Letting her go in there alone?

OLIVE. How is she going to kill herself in the john?

SYLVIE. What do you mean, how? She could take pills. She could slash her wrists.

OLIVE. It's the guest bathroom. There's nothing in there. What is she going to do, swallow a towel?

MICKEY. She could jump.

VERA. That's right. Isn't there a window in there?

OLIVE. It's only six inches wide.

MICKEY. She could stick her head out and slam the window on her neck.

OLIVE. She could also flush herself into the East River. I'm telling you she's not going to try anything.

VERA. Shh! Quiet! (*They all listen. We hear FLORENCE sobbing in the bathroom.*) She's crying.

RENEE. We should do something. She shouldn't be in there crying all alone.

OLIVE. You want to go in there and cry *with* her? (*We hear the toilet flush.*)

VERA. She's coming out! (*They all make a mad dash for the table and sit. They're all in the wrong seats. They get up and quickly change seats. They resume positions of being relaxed and even bored. FLORENCE comes out and wipes her eyes and nose.*)

OLIVE. (*reads from card*) "What picture did Claude Rains and Bette Davis—"

FLORENCE. *Mr. Skeffington*. I think I'm going to take a little walk. (*She gets her coat and bag.*)

OLIVE. Where are you going to walk this time of night?

FLORENCE. I don't know. Along the river is nice.

OLIVE. The river??

FLORENCE. You heard something, didn't you?

OLIVE. No.

FLORENCE. Yes. You're worried I'm going to try something because Sidney dumped me after fourteen years of marriage, the dirty bastard! (*She bursts into tears and rushes for the front door.*) I've got to go!

OLIVE. Florence, no!!

RENEE. Don't do it, Florence, please! (*They all plead with her.*)

FLORENCE. Don't stop me. Don't try to stop me. (*FLORENCE is trying to get out the door, they are pulling her back in.*)

MICKEY. Florence, we're your friends. You can talk to us.

FLORENCE. (*tearfully*) I can't live without him. There's no point in going on.

(*MICKEY, the cop, grabs FLO and pulls her arm back behind her. With her free arm, FLORENCE jabs MICKEY in the ribs with her elbow. MICKEY doubles over in pain. Leaving MICKEY behind, she breaks away from them and rushes across the room to the bathroom on the opposite side. They all rush after her in single file because there's only room behind the table and chairs to run that way. They all follow FLORENCE into the bathroom. The last one in closes the door. There is a loud commotion inside unseen by the audience. Suddenly it stops. The first one out is OLIVE who holds her hand in pain. She is followed out by RENEE.*)

RENEE. You didn't have to hit her so hard.

OLIVE. She was biting my neck. What did you want me to do, lick her face?

MICKEY. (*comes out walking backwards, directing with her hands as if she was directing traffic*) Lay her down on the sofa. (*SYLVIE comes out carrying the unconscious FLORENCE on her shoulders, followed by VERA.*)

SYLVIE. Rub her wrists.

RENEE. She's coming around.

FLORENCE. Leave me alone, will you? I'll work it out. Just please, everybody, leave me alone . . . Oh, God! Oh, my stomach.

MICKEY. What's the matter with your stomach?

VERA. She looks sick. Look at her face.

FLORENCE. I'm not sick. I'm alright. I didn't take anything, I swear.

OLIVE. What do you mean you didn't take anything? What did you take?

FLORENCE. Nothing!

OLIVE. Do you swear?

FLORENCE. I swear.

OLIVE. On your children's life?

FLORENCE. No. On my husband's.

MICKEY. You hear that? She took pills.

FLORENCE. Just a few, that's all. (*ALL react in alarm and concern for the pills.*)

OLIVE. How many pills?

MICKEY. What kind of pills?

FLORENCE. I don't know. Little green ones. I just grabbed anything out of Sidney's cabinet. I must have been crazy.

OLIVE. I'm gonna call Sidney. He'll check the cabinet.

FLORENCE. NO!! Don't call him! If he hears I took a whole bottle of pills—

MICKEY. A WHOLE BOTTLE?? A WHOLE BOTTLE OF PILLS?? . . . Quick! Call for an ambulance! (*RENEE picks up phone and dials.*)

OLIVE. You don't even know what kind.

MICKEY. What's the difference? She took a whole bottle.

OLIVE. Maybe they were vitamins. She could be the healthiest one in the room . . . Take it easy, will you.

FLORENCE. Don't call Sidney. Promise me you won't call Sidney.

MICKEY. Slap her face. Open the window. Give her some air.

SYLVIE. Walk her around. Don't let her go to sleep. (*SYLVIE and MICKEY pull FLORENCE up, drape her arms over their shoulders and begin to walk her around the room.*)

MICKEY. (*waiting on phone*) Rub her wrists. Keep her circulation going. Keep walking. Keep her blood moving.

RENEE. The hospital is busy. (*She hangs up. OLIVE has been sitting on the sofa watching this madhouse contemptuously.*)

SYLVIE. (*to OLIVE*) Isn't there a doctor in the building?

OLIVE. He's an optometrist. If she goes blind, I'll call him. (*They continue to walk her.*)

FLORENCE. Please let me sit down. I can't walk this much without my Nikes.

MICKEY. You're not sitting down till we get those pills out.

FLORENCE. I got them out. They're out. (*SYLVIE and MICKEY stop and look at her.*)

MICKEY. When did they come out?

FLORENCE. I had a pizza on Broadway. I threw up in the elevator. (*SYLVIE and MICKEY look at her, then walk away, leaving her alone.*) I'm sorry. They'll think a dog did it . . . Can I have a drink, somebody?

VERA. I'll get it. Do you want a Fresca or a Sprite?

SYLVIE. (*yells*) Will you just get her a drink?

VERA. Alright. (*She scurries into the kitchen. FLORENCE is sitting in club chair.*)

FLORENCE. (*crying*) Fourteen years! Did you know we were married fourteen years, Renee?

RENEE. Yes, Florence. I knew.

FLORENCE. And now it's over. Just like that. Fourteen years out the window.

SYLVIE. Maybe it was just a fight. You've had fights before.

FLORENCE. No. It's over. He's getting a lawyer tomorrow . . . My cousin.

MICKEY. It's alright, darling. Let it out. Let it all out.

FLORENCE. Twelve hours I've been crying. I don't know where it's all coming from. I think it's all the same tears just going around in circles.

VERA. Is Dr. Pepper alright?

FLORENCE. Don't call him. I'm fine.

VERA. No, it's a drink.

FLORENCE. Oh. Thanks, Vera. (*She takes soda and slowly drinks entire can; burp.*) Pardon me.

OLIVE. Florence, everyone's been worried sick about you. Where have you been for the whole day?

FLORENCE. I don't know. I just wandered around the city . . . I ended up in the Museum of Modern Art. I talked to this security guard for an hour, he just stood there listening to everything I said. So patient. (*They all look at VERA. She shrugs.*)

MICKEY. Alright, let's not stand around looking at her. Let's break it up, heh?

OLIVE. Yeah. Come on. She's alright. Let's call it a night. (*MICKEY, SYLVIE, RENEE and VERA cross back to table to get their things.*)

FLORENCE. I'm so ashamed. Please forgive me, girls.

VERA. It's okay. We understand.

MICKEY. (*lowers voice*) Do you know the number for the Suicide HotLine?

OLIVE. (*looks at her*) I'll get it from Florence, she has an account there . . . (*MICKEY nods and goes. The other girls file out.*)

GIRLS. Goodnight, Flo . . . Take care, honey . . . We'll call you tomorrow. (*They all leave. The door closes. Then it opens as RENEE sticks her head in.*)

RENEE. If anything happens, Olive, just call me. (*OLIVE nods, RENEE goes, closes door. It reopens and SYLVIE sticks head in.*)

SYLVIE. (*to OLIVE*) I'm three blocks away. I could be here in five minutes. (*OLIVE nods, SYLVIE leaves, closes the door. It opens again and VERA comes in.*)

VERA. If you need me, I'll be at the Meridian Motel in Miami Beach.

OLIVE. You'll be the first one I call, Vera. (*VERA nods and leaves.*)

MICKEY. (*to OLIVE*) You sure?

OLIVE. I'm sure.

MICKEY. (*loud, to FLORENCE*) Goodnight, Florence. Try to get a good night's sleep. I guarantee you things are going to look a lot brighter in the morning. (*to OLIVE, whispers*) Hide all your belts and plastic bags. (*OLIVE closes the door, looks at FLORENCE, then slowly crosses into the room.*)

OLIVE. Ohh, Florence, Florence, Florence, Florence.

FLORENCE. I know, I know, I know, I know . . . What am I going to do, Olive?

OLIVE. You're going to wash down those pills with some hot black coffee. I'll make it.

FLORENCE. The terrible thing is, I still love him. It's a lousy marriage, but I still love him. I didn't want this divorce.

OLIVE. You want a brownie? A chocolate brownie? It's about three weeks old but I could toast it.

FLORENCE. If Sidney and I break up, I'll be the first one in my family to be divorced.

OLIVE. You told me your mother and father were divorced.

FLORENCE. I mean since them . . . My sister is still married . . . Separated but married.

OLIVE. How about some espresso? With Stella D'Oro cookies?

FLORENCE. How dare he treat me like this? How dare he? (*In anger, she bangs her fist down on the arm of the chair and suddenly grabs her neck in great pain.*) Oh! Oh, my neck! My neck!

OLIVE. What did you do?

FLORENCE. (*holding her neck*) It's a nerve spasm. I get it in the neck. Oh, God. Oh, God, it hurts.

OLIVE. What can I do?

FLORENCE. A towel. Get me a hot towel. Very hot.

OLIVE. Right. What about some aspirins?

FLORENCE. Aspirin is good . . . And some brandy . . . I can't move my neck.

OLIVE. Hot towel, aspirin and brandy. Anything else?

FLORENCE. Ben-Gay. To rub in after.

OLIVE. Right. (*starts inside*)

FLORENCE. And a scarf. A woolen scarf . . . Cashmere is better if you have one. (*paces, rubbing neck*) I knew something was coming, Olive. I knew we were in trouble. In the middle of the night I'd tiptoe into the bathroom and I would pray, "Please, God, please help me save my marriage. Please, God, tell me what to do. Tell me what I'm doing wrong. Please, God, help me" . . . And then I'd hear Sidney in the bedroom saying, "Please, God, make her shut up. Tell her to be quiet, please, God" . . .

OLIVE. (*comes back in with tray of medicants*) . . . Here. Put the scarf on. Take your aspirins.

FLORENCE. (*sits at table*) I'm not a complainer. I've never once tried to change Sidney . . . He wears a toupee two sizes too big, he looks like an English sheep dog, I never said a word.

OLIVE. Drink them down with brandy.

FLORENCE. Now he's into cowboy boots. Five foot three and a half, he wears cowboy boots. They come up to his knees . . . He looks like he jumped off a hundred foot horse. He's also into languages. He's studying Russian at the New School. Instead of yes, he says, "Da." Everything is "Da."

OLIVE. You're tensing up again, Florence. Stop tensing.

FLORENCE. I'm married to a five foot three inch man with an oversized toupee and boots up to his knees who

walks around saying, "Da," and he walks out on *ME???*

OLIVE. Will you relax!! RELAX, dammit! Your neck feels like Arnold Schwarzenegger.

FLORENCE. Sometimes I think I'm crazy. Sometimes I think I should be put in an institution.

OLIVE. Later, if the massage doesn't work.

FLORENCE. That doesn't smell like Ben-Gay.

OLIVE. (*looks at tube*) You're right. It's toothpaste.

FLORENCE. I don't think this is helping me. (*She wipes off toothpaste with towel.*)

OLIVE. Because you won't relax. Have you always been this tense?

FLORENCE. Since I was a baby. I could chew a thick sirloin steak just with my gums.

OLIVE. Bend over. (*FLORENCE bends over. OLIVE begins to massage up and down her back.*)

FLORENCE. I do terrible things, Olive. I cry. I panic. I get hysterical.

OLIVE. (*still massaging*) If this hurts just tell me because I don't know what the hell I'm doing.

FLORENCE. I take advantage of you, Olive. I abuse our friendship. I know I drive you crazy.

OLIVE. No, you don't.

FLORENCE. Yes, I do.

OLIVE. You don't.

FLORENCE. I do. I see you grit your teeth together when I talk to you. You used to have much longer teeth.

OLIVE. (*stops massaging*) Okay. How does your neck feel?

FLORENCE. Better.

OLIVE. Good.

FLORENCE. But it never lasts long.

OLIVE. Maybe this time.

FLORENCE. No. It just came back. (*She rubs neck again.*)

OLIVE. (*shakes head in despair*) Drink your brandy.

FLORENCE. I don't think I can. It doesn't go down.

OLIVE. I'll get you a plunger . . . Come on, drink the brandy. You'll feel better.

FLORENCE. Thank God the kids are away at summer camp. They'll be spared this until September.

OLIVE. Please drink your brandy.

FLORENCE. I don't want to get divorced, Olive. I don't want to suddenly change my whole life. Talk to me. Tell me what to do.

OLIVE. Alright, alright. First of all, you're going to calm down and relax. Then you and I are going to figure out a whole new life for you.

FLORENCE. Without Sidney? What kind of a life is there without Sidney?

OLIVE. I don't live with Sidney and I'm very happy. You can do it, Florence, believe me.

FLORENCE. Olive, you've been through it yourself. What did you do? How did you get through it?

OLIVE. (*She drinks some brandy.*) I drank for four days and five nights. I couldn't work. I ate a quart of Haagen-Dazs jamocha almond fudge every night. I gained fourteen pounds, seven on each hip. I looked like I was carrying my laundry in my pockets . . . But I got through it.

FLORENCE. And what about Sidney? He's human too. How's he going to get through this?

OLIVE. He's a man. Men have freedom. He can meet women anywhere. *We* have to donate a kidney and hope the man is grateful and single.

FLORENCE. You think Sidney is thinking of other women? At a time like this?

OLIVE. I guarantee you by tomorrow night he'll be at a singles bar sitting on a stool on top of two telephone books.

FLORENCE. You think so? (*She's been playing with her ear. She suddenly starts to make strange noises as she tries to unplug her ear.*)

OLIVE. What's the matter now?

FLORENCE. (*standing*) My ears are closing up. It's a sinus condition. I'm allergic. (*She makes the sinus sound again, then crosses to the open window. OLIVE follows nervously behind.*)

FLORENCE. I'm not going to jump. I just want to breathe. (*She takes deep breaths.*) I was even allergic to perfume. I had to wear Sidney's after shave lotion. Old Spice Menthol . . . I always felt like I just sailed home from Singapore. (*She suddenly bellows like a moose.*)

OLIVE. (*looks dumbfounded*) What are you doing?

FLORENCE. I'm trying to clear my ears. You create a pressure inside and then it opens up. (*She bellows again.*)

OLIVE. Did it open up?

FLORENCE. A little. (*rubs her neck*) I think I strained my throat.

OLIVE. Florence, leave yourself alone. Don't tinker.

FLORENCE. I can't help myself. I drive everyone crazy. A marriage counselor once kicked me out of his office. He wrote on my chart, "Lunatic"! . . . I don't blame Sidney. It's impossible to be married to me.

OLIVE. It takes two to make a lousy marriage.

FLORENCE. What'll I do with the rest of my life, Olive? I have so much of it left. If only I was seventy, seventy-five, I could get through it.

OLIVE. I'll tell you what you're going to do. You're going to start your life over and stand on your own two feet. Be independent!

FLORENCE. You're right.

OLIVE. Of course I am.

FLORENCE. That's what I was before I was married. I was a great bookkeeper. I could have been Price, Waterhouse today. You're right. Go back to work. Be independent. A self-sufficient woman.

OLIVE. You're damn right.

FLORENCE. Maybe I should ask for my old job back.

OLIVE. Why not? Who did you work for?

FLORENCE. Sidney. God, the mistakes I've made. Goddam idiot!! I hate me.

OLIVE. You don't hate you. You love you. You think no one has problems like you.

FLORENCE. You're wrong. I happen to know I hate my guts.

OLIVE. Come on, Florence. I've never seen anyone so in love. If you had two more legs, you'd take yourself out dancing.

FLORENCE. I thought you were my friend.

OLIVE. I am. That's why I can talk to you like this. I love you almost as much as you do.

FLORENCE. Then help me.

OLIVE. How can I help you when I can't help myself? You think you're impossible to live with? I was sloppy since I was a kid. I got married in a white gown with Coca-Cola stains on it . . . My mind is into other things . . . I like to write, I like to paint, I like photography. I don't like to clean up. I leave a mess after I read a book.

FLORENCE. I don't do it for myself. I liked Sidney to come home to a clean house. I want my children growing up having respect for things. How else will they learn?

OLIVE. But what's the point of it all? When you're dead, they're going to throw dirt on you anyway.

FLORENCE. If only I could change . . . Maybe I should call Sidney.

OLIVE. What for?

FLORENCE. To talk it out again. Maybe we left something unsaid.

OLIVE. Where's your self-respect? You want to crawl back on your hands and knees?

FLORENCE. He wouldn't notice. He'd think I was scrubbing the floors.

OLIVE. Florence, listen to me . . . Tonight you're going to sleep here. Tomorrow you're going to go home, pack up your sinus medicines and your after shave lotions and move in here with me.

FLORENCE. Won't I be in the way?

OLIVE. Of course you will.

FLORENCE. I'm a pest.

OLIVE. I *know* you're a pest. I was the one who gave you the name.

FLORENCE. Then why do you want me to live with you?

OLIVE. Because—I can't stand living by myself either . . . Because I'm lonely, that's why.

FLORENCE. I never thought of you being lonely. You have so many friends.

OLIVE. Friends go home at eleven o'clock . . . Come on, Florence, I'm proposing to you. What do you want, a Goddam ring?

FLORENCE. If you really mean it, Olive, there's a lot I can do around here. I could turn this place into something out of *Architectural Digest*.

OLIVE. Florence, *Sports Illustrated* is fine with me.

FLORENCE. I want to do something, Olive. Let me do something.

OLIVE. Alright. Tomorrow you can build me a terrace. Anything you want.

FLORENCE. (*begins to tidy up*) You'll eat like you

never ate before. You like hot Russian blinis? Or Shashlik Caucasian? I'll make it for dinner. (*picks up dirty dishes*)

OLIVE. You don't have to cook. I like eating out.

FLORENCE. Breakfast and dinner at home, we'll save a fortune. We'll need it. Because I'm not taking one single penny from Sidney.

OLIVE. Wait a minute. Let's not be hasty.

FLORENCE. You told me to have self-respect, didn't you? How am I going to have self-respect if I take money from Sidney?

OLIVE. Money is the one area where self-respect doesn't work.

FLORENCE. I don't need anything from Sidney. I'll show him. I'll show him what I can do. (*The telephone rings. She looks at it.*) That's him. That's Sidney. I can tell his ring. (*It rings again. OLIVE crosses and picks it up.*)

OLIVE. Hello? Oh, hello, Sidney. (*She nods to FLORENCE.*)

FLORENCE. (*waves her arms frantically*) I'm not here. You didn't see me. You don't know where I am. I didn't call. You can't get in touch with me. I'm not here.

OLIVE. (*into phone*) Yes. She's here.

FLORENCE. DON'T TELL HIM THAT! DIDN'T I TELL YOU NOT TO TELL HIM THAT?

OLIVE. (*into phone*) Yes, she told me everything.

FLORENCE. How does he sound? Is he worried? What is he saying? Does he want to speak to me? Because I don't want to speak to him.

OLIVE. (*into phone*) I agree with that, Sidney.

FLORENCE. You agree with *what*? Don't agree with him. Agree with *me*! I'm your friend. I can't believe you agreed with him.

OLIVE. (*into phone*) Well, personally I think she's taking it very well, Sidney.

FLORENCE. I am *NOT* taking it well. I'm taking it like a crazy woman. You call this taking it well?

OLIVE. (*into phone, warmly*) Oh, I know you have, Sidney. You've been wonderful that way, God bless you.

FLORENCE. WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "GOD BLESS YOU"? DON'T "GOD BLESS HIM"!!

OLIVE. (*to FLORENCE*) He sneezed, what do you want from me??

FLORENCE. I'm sorry. Does he want to speak to me? Ask him if he wants to speak to me?

OLIVE. (*into phone*) Er, Sidney, would you like to talk to her?

FLORENCE. (*reaches out*) Give me the phone. I'll talk to him.

OLIVE. (*into phone*) Oh, you *don't* want to talk to her.

FLORENCE. (*shocked*) He doesn't want to talk to me?

OLIVE. (*into phone*) Yes. I see . . . I understand . . . I agree . . . You're absolutely right . . . Okay. You take care too . . . Goodbye. (*She hangs up.*)

FLORENCE. He didn't want to speak to me?

OLIVE. (*sympathetically*) No.

FLORENCE. Then why did he call?

OLIVE. He just wanted to make sure you were alright.

FLORENCE. He did?

OLIVE. He said he loves you very much and that you're a wonderful mother and a wife.

FLORENCE. He said that? . . . What else did he say?

OLIVE. It wasn't important.

FLORENCE. What else did he say?

OLIVE. It was nothing.

FLORENCE. What else did he say?

OLIVE. But as a woman, you're crazy as a bedbug.

FLORENCE. (*She walks to kitchen door, stops and says deliberately:*) Oh, really? . . . Is that what the short, hairless cowboy said? . . . Well, tell him he'll never find another woman like me if he lives to be a thousand. (*She goes into kitchen with dishes.*)

OLIVE. . . . Which bedroom do you want? One you can see New Jersey, the other you can see a guy who sleeps naked.

FLORENCE. (*She comes out of kitchen.*) You know I'm glad. Because he finally made me realize. It's over! It didn't sink in until just this minute. (*continues to tidy up*)

OLIVE. You want some sleeping pills? Take some sleeping pills.

FLORENCE. I can't swallow them.

OLIVE. You can *suck* on them all night.

FLORENCE. I don't think I believed him until just now. My marriage is really over.

OLIVE. Florence, let's go to bed. I have another career besides you.

FLORENCE. Somehow it doesn't seem so bad now. I mean I think I can live with this thing.

OLIVE. Good. Live with it tomorrow. Go to bed tonight.

FLORENCE. I will. I just want to start rearranging our life. Get things in order. Do you have a pad? I want to make out the menus for the week.

OLIVE. NO MENUS! Don't plan my food. I don't want to make any promises to a roast chicken. *Please go to bed!!*

FLORENCE. Can I please be alone for a few minutes? I have to collect my thoughts. (*starts to pick up the debris*)

from the game) I think better when I'm cleaning.

OLIVE. I won't sleep if I hear you in here. You want to clean, go downstairs and clean the elevator.

FLORENCE. You'll appreciate it in the morning. Once I get this junk out of here, you'll see furniture you never knew you had. Go on. Go to bed. I'll see you for breakfast. *(She is on her hands and knees cleaning up under the table.)*

OLIVE. You're not going to do anything big, are you? Like putting up wallpaper?

FLORENCE. Ten minutes. That's all I'll be. I promise. *(kiss) Olive!*

OLIVE. *(who has started for bedroom)* What? *(FLORENCE climbs on dining table and begins dusting fixture.)*

FLORENCE. I never realized you were so lonely. It must have been awful for you without anyone else here.

OLIVE. *(re-enters, looks at her, with foreboding)* Well . . . We'll see!!

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE 1

Two weeks later. About 10:00 P.M.

The Trivial Pursuit game is in progress. OLIVE, VERA and MICKEY are on one side of the table, RENEE and SYLVIE on the other. An empty chair, presumably FLORENCE's, is on SYLVIE's team's side.

The appearance of the room is decidedly different than in the first act. It is sterile, spotless and shining. No laundry bags around, no newspapers on the floor or old magazines, no dirty dishes.

MICKEY tosses the dice, then moves her marker six paces.

MICKEY. Entertainment!

OLIVE. My meat. Go ahead.

RENEE. *(looks back towards kitchen)* How long does it take Florence to make coffee?

OLIVE. Well, first she has to go to Colombia to pick the beans. Come on, come on. What's the question?

SYLVIE. *(reads from card)* . . . "In the 1940's, who was known as the 'Queen of Republic Pictures'?"

OLIVE. Oh. Oh. Easy. I know that. Don't tell me. It's er . . . what's her name? . . . Oh, Christ, I know it. Big blonde. Lousy actress. I think her husband owned the studio.

VERA. Give us a hint.

OLIVE. NO!! No hints. I don't want hints . . . Alright, give us a hint.

SYLVIE. She had the same name as a cereal.

MICKEY. A cereal?

VERA. . . . A cold cereal or a hot cereal?

(*MICKEY and OLIVE glare at VERA. FLORENCE appears from the kitchen. She is wearing a frilly apron. She carries a tray with glasses, food and linen napkins. After putting the tray down, she takes the napkins one at a time, flicks them out at full length and starts to lay them out on each player's lap, one at a time from left to right around the table.*)

MICKEY. (to SYLVIE) What do you mean? Like Grape Nuts?

VERA. There's no actress named Grape Nuts. I would remember. (*FLORENCE continues spreading the napkins on them as they play.*)

OLIVE. No . . . It's the name of the company. Kellogg. Kitty Kellogg . . . Nabisco . . . Nora Nabisco. (*FLOR- ENCE pours a Pepsi into a glass with ice in it.*)

FLORENCE. An ice-cold Pepsi for Mickey. (*She crosses to MICKEY.*)

MICKEY. Thank you.

FLORENCE. (*holds back glass*) Where's your coaster?

MICKEY. My what?

FLORENCE. Your coaster. I just bought a beautiful new set of plastic coasters.

VERA. (*holds up a brown coaster*) Here. I thought they were big chocolate mints.

FLORENCE. Always try to use your coasters, girls . . . Sherry on the rocks?

SYLVIE. (*raises her hand*) Sherry on the rocks. (*holds up coaster*) And I have my coaster.

FLORENCE. (*crosses back to food tray*) I hate to be a pest but wet glasses eat right through the polish. Ruins the finish.

OLIVE. (*still on the game*) Farina? (to VERA and MICKEY) Is it Farina?

VERA. Wasn't Farina in the *Our Gang* comedies?

MICKEY. Right. The cute little black girl with a circle around her eye.

FLORENCE. Aaaand we have a clean ashtray for Syl- vie . . .

SYLVIE. Thanks.

OLIVE. . . . It's three names. Something something cereal.

FLORENCE. Aaaand a sandwich for Vera. (*She wipes the bottom of the dish with napkin and places it in front of VERA.*)

VERA. That smells wonderful. What is it, Florence?

FLORENCE. It's crab salad with curry sauce and a little dash of dill on Swedish rye.

VERA. You went to all this trouble just for me?

FLORENCE. It's no trouble. Honest. You know how I love to cook. (*VERA is about to bite in when FLOR- ENCE pushes VERA's head forward.*) I just vacuumed the rug, try to eat over the dish . . . Olive, what did you want?

OLIVE. Peking duck for seven! . . . Can't you see I'm trying to concentrate?

FLORENCE. Gin and tonic. I'll be right back. (*She starts for kitchen, stops at metal box on table.*) Who turned off the Pure-A-Tron?

MICKEY. The what?

FLORENCE. The Pure-A-Tron. (*She turns it back on.*) Don't play with this, girls. I'm trying to get some of the grime out of the air. (*She flicks the air with her napkin.*)

OLIVE. (*losing patience*) You're purposely doing this, aren't you? You're trying to distract me so your team can win.

FLORENCE. No, I'm not. I don't even know the ques- tion.

MICKEY. Who was the Queen of Republic Pictures?

FLORENCE. Vera Hruba Ralston. (*She goes into kitchen. OLIVE yells.*)

VERA. Ralston! *That's* the cereal.

OLIVE. (*stands and shouts*) THAT'S NOT HER QUESTION!!! THAT WAS MY QUESTION!!! . . . I did all the hard work and she gets the fun of saying Vera Hruba Ralston!!! (*She throws her napkins down on the table.*) Goddam it! . . . Mickey? What would it cost me to hire a hit man?

SYLVIE. (*gets up*) I can't take this anymore. In three hours we haven't got past four questions . . . I can't think. I get nervous she's going to sneak up behind us and shampoo our hair.

RENEE. (*holds throat*) I can't breathe. That lousy machine has sucked all the air out of here.

VERA. (*tastes sandwich*) This is delicious. The toast is crisp without being dry.

MICKEY. You know what I hear? I hear Sidney looks terrible. Sends out for Chinese food every night. Stanley saw him on the street with soy sauce on his mouth.

VERA. (*still eating*) Everything on the sandwich is so fresh. Where does she get fresh crab?

OLIVE. We raise them in the bathtub.

SYLVIE. Is that hotel in Florida still open? I think I may go.

RENEE. (*indicating Pure-A-Tron*) I'm telling you that thing could kill us. They'll find us here in the morning with our tongues on the floor.

SYLVIE. Do something, Olive! She's turned a nice friendly game into the Christian Science Reading Room.

VERA. I was just in the bathroom. The towels are so clean and fluffy. And they smell so good. Does she do that too, Olive?

OLIVE. No, she sends them to India and they beat them on rocks.

MICKEY. The trouble is, Florence should have lived a hundred years ago. She would have been appreciated in that world.

OLIVE. I'm trying to arrange it.

RENEE. (*near window, touches drapes*) Jesus, that machine has cleaned the drapes. It's probably vacuuming our lungs right now.

SYLVIE. (*putting on jacket*) Listen. Forget it. I'm going home.

OLIVE. Sit down. She's coming out.

SYLVIE. When? She's probably putting up shelf paper.

OLIVE. Don't leave, Sylvie. The game isn't over.

SYLVIE. Listen, I don't even like this game that much. But it's the one night a week I can spend with the girls. I'll talk sex. I'll talk gossip. I will even talk *National Enquirer* . . . But I will *not* talk crispy toast and fluffy towels. (*She puts her shoulder bag on.*) There are two kinds of people who drive you crazy in this world. Those who just gave up smoking and those who just got separated.

VERA. (*to SYLVIE*) You really have to learn to have more compassion.

SYLVIE. (*points to VERA*) And people who say that are the third kind. (*She heads for door.*)

OLIVE. Don't go, Sylvie. Not yet.

SYLVIE. It's your own fault. You're the one who stopped her from killing herself. (*She opens the door and goes.*)

OLIVE. She's right. The woman is right.

VERA. I would have talked sex. No one brought it up.

RENEE. I hope I have my wallet so they can identify my body.

OLIVE. (*yells into kitchen*) Florence, Goddammit, we're all waiting. Close up the kitchen and get out here.

RENEE. (*picks up question cards*) What's that smell?

(*She smells cards.*) Disinfectant! . . . It's the cards. She washed the cards. (*She throws them down.* FLORENCE comes in with a drink for OLIVE.)

FLORENCE. Alright, what's the question?

RENEE. (*getting up*) Name a Philip Marlowe movie starring Robert Mitchum.

FLORENCE. *Farewell, My Lovely.*

RENEE. And goodnight to you, sweetheart. (*She puts on her jacket and goes.*)

FLORENCE. Gee, I'm sorry. Is it my fault?

VERA. No. I guess no one feels much like playing tonight.

MICKEY. I gotta get up early for work anyway. (*puts on jacket and shoulder bag*)

FLORENCE. Does your husband like you being a cop, Mickey?

MICKEY. (*getting up*) Well, all he wants to do is kinky things.

FLORENCE. Like what?

MICKEY. Like handcuffing you to the bed.

VERA. Did you ever do it?

MICKEY. Once. But he fell asleep and I slipped a disc trying to get to the bathroom. (*heading for door*) If you ask me, you two are the lucky ones. I envy the both of you.

FLORENCE. Envy us? Why?

MICKEY. Because you're free. You can do what you want, go where you like. Live out your fantasies.

FLORENCE. Is that how you feel, Vera?

VERA. I'm not good at fantasies. Harry makes one up and gives it to me.

MICKEY. (*nearing door*) Believe me, this is the time to be single. I look around. Men are better looking today than they ever were before.

FLORENCE. Why do you think that is?

MICKEY. Because they're eleven years younger today. (*VERA and MICKEY exit.*)

FLORENCE. (*starts to clean up table*) That's something, isn't it, Olive. They think we're lucky. They think we're enjoying this. They don't know, Olive. They don't know what it's like.

OLIVE. (*flat and cold*) I'd be immensely grateful to you, Florence, if you didn't clean up just now.

FLORENCE. (*still cleaning up*) It's only a few things . . . Can you imagine they actually envy us.

OLIVE. Florence, leave everything alone. I'm not through dirtying up for the night.

FLORENCE. It's just a few dishes. You want me to leave them here all night?

OLIVE. I don't care if you have them cleaned by your dentist. But don't make *me* feel guilty about it.

FLORENCE. I'm not asking you to do it.

OLIVE. That's why you make me feel guilty. You're always in my bathroom hanging up my towels. Whenever someone smokes, you follow them around with an ashtray. Last night I found you washing the kitchen floor, shaking your head and moaning, "Footprints! Footprints!" . . .

FLORENCE. I didn't say they were yours.

OLIVE. Well, they *were* mine, dammit. I have feet and they make prints. What did you want me to do, climb across the cabinets?

FLORENCE. No. I want you to walk on the floor. (*She crosses to clean the telephone.*)

OLIVE. Can I? Oh, that's wonderful. (*FLORENCE cleans the phone with a rag and then cleans the wire as well.*)

FLORENCE. I'm just trying to keep the place liveable. I

don't want to irritate you.

OLIVE. Then don't wipe the telephone. Some of my favorite fingerprints are on that telephone.

FLORENCE. (*Looks at OLIVE, puts down cloth and sits in a chair; self-pity is coming on.*) . . . I was wondering how long it would take.

OLIVE. How long *what* would take?

FLORENCE. Before I got on your nerves.

OLIVE. I didn't say you got on my nerves.

FLORENCE. Well, it's the same thing. You said I irritated you.

OLIVE. *You* said you irritated me. I didn't say it.

FLORENCE. Then what *did* you say?

OLIVE. I don't know what I said. What's the difference what I said?

FLORENCE. It doesn't make any difference. I was just repeating what I thought you said.

OLIVE. (*angrily*) Well, don't repeat what you *thought* I said. Repeat what I SAID!! . . . My God, that's irritating.

FLORENCE. (*picks up a cup, paces*) I'm sorry. Forgive me, Olive. I don't know what's wrong with me.

OLIVE. And don't pout. If you want to fight, we'll fight. But don't pout. Fighting *I* win, pouting you win.

FLORENCE. You're right. Everything you say about me is absolutely right.

OLIVE. (*getting angry*) And don't give in so easily. I'm not always right. Sometimes *you're* right.

FLORENCE. You're right. I do that. I always figure I'm in the wrong.

OLIVE. Only this time you *are* wrong and I'm right.

FLORENCE. Oh, leave me alone.

OLIVE. And don't sulk. That's the same as pouting.

FLORENCE. I know. I know. (*She squeezes cup with*

anger.) Damn me! Why can't I do one lousy thing right? (*She suddenly cocks her arm back angrily about to hurl the cup against the wall, then thinks better of it and stops herself.*)

OLIVE. (*watches this*) Why didn't you throw it?

FLORENCE. I almost did. I get so insane with myself sometimes.

OLIVE. Then why didn't you throw the cup?

FLORENCE. Because I'm trying to control myself.

OLIVE. Why?

FLORENCE. What do you mean, why?

OLIVE. Why do you have to control yourself? You're angry, you felt like throwing the cup, why don't you throw it?

FLORENCE. Because there's no point to it. I'd still be angry and I'd have a broken cup.

OLIVE. How do you *know* how you'd feel? Maybe you'd feel *wonderful*. Why do you have to control every single thought in your head? Why don't you let loose once in your life? Do something that you *feel* like doing and not what you're *supposed* to do . . . Stop keeping books. Relax! Get drunk! Get angry! . . . C'mon! BREAK THE GODDAM CUP!!

(*FLORENCE suddenly gets a surge of anger, faces the wall and with all her might, throws the cup against the wall. It smashes to bits. She suddenly grabs her arm in pain.*)

FLORENCE. Ohh, my arm! I hurt my arm! (*She is in agony.*)

OLIVE. (*throws up her hands*) You're hopeless! You're a hopeless mental case!

FLORENCE. I'm not supposed to use this arm. I have

bursitis. (*She rubs it.*)

OLIVE. You're not going to cry, are you? I think all those tears dripping on the arm is what gave you bursitis. (*throws her a napkin*) You know what you are, Florence? You're a human accident.

FLORENCE. (*dabs at knee*) Uh huh. Who just happens to cook and clean and take care of this house. I save us a lot of money, don't I?

OLIVE. Thank you, Paine Webber.

FLORENCE. (*limps over to table and puts broken pieces of cup on tray*) Okay, I may be compulsive but I'm not a grouch. We have our good times too, don't we?

OLIVE. Good times?? . . . Florence, getting a clear picture on Channel Two is not my idea of whoopee.

FLORENCE. What are you talking about?

OLIVE. I've spent enough nights watching you put paper strips between your toes. The night was made for better things.

FLORENCE. Like what?

OLIVE. Like the smell of a good cigar circling under my nose. Listen to me good. There are two sexes in this world. We're one of them. I didn't make this up, but nature demands that our sex sometimes has to get in touch with their sex.

FLORENCE. You mean men?

OLIVE. If you want to give it a name, alright. Men!

FLORENCE. That's funny. I haven't thought about men in weeks.

OLIVE. I fail to see the humor.

FLORENCE. You think I don't find men attractive? I find plenty of men attractive.

OLIVE. Like who? Name one.

FLORENCE. I always thought Adlai Stevenson was attractive.

OLIVE. Yes, but he doesn't date anymore . . . Florence, we can't stay home alone every night like this.

FLORENCE. Listen, I intend to go out. I get lonely too. But I'm just separated a few weeks. Give me a little time.

OLIVE. What am I asking? I would just like to have dinner one night with a couple of nice guys.

FLORENCE. Who would I call? The only single man I know is my hairdresser and he's into other things.

OLIVE. Leave that to me. There are two brothers who live in this building. They're Spanish. They used to live in Spain. They're a million laughs.

FLORENCE. How do you know?

OLIVE. I was trapped in the elevator with them last week. They asked me to dinner. This'll be perfect.

FLORENCE. What do they look like?

OLIVE. Real gentlemen. They wore double-breasted suits.

FLORENCE. Double-breasted suits doesn't mean you're a gentleman.

OLIVE. These had cuffs on the pants.

FLORENCE. But are they young or old? Are they nice looking.

OLIVE. I'm trying to tell you, these are two classy Spanish guys. No taps on their shoes. (*finds number*)

FLORENCE. Which one do I get?

OLIVE. Take whoever you want. When they come in, point to the Spaniard of your choice. (*She crosses to phone, starts to dial.*)

FLORENCE. I wouldn't know what to say to them.

OLIVE. (*stops dialing*) Will you relax. They're easy to be with. I talked to them for a half hour and didn't even understand a word they said.

FLORENCE. They don't speak English?

OLIVE. They speak *perfect* English—every once in a while . . . Just promise me one thing.

FLORENCE. What?

OLIVE. Don't call one of them Sidney. Forget Sidney. It's Manolo and Hay-zoos.

FLORENCE. Manolo and Hay-zoos?

OLIVE. You don't pronounce the J.

FLORENCE. (*thinks*) Where is there a J in Manolo and Hay-zoos?

OLIVE. Stop worrying, will you? We're going to have a night out on the town. They know the best Spanish restaurant in New York.

FLORENCE. I'm not going out to a restaurant and being seen by everyone in this city.

OLIVE. You think people are lining the streets waiting to see who we go out with?

FLORENCE. I'm talking about my friends. My family. What if my mother-in-law walks in and sees me drinking tequilas with Manolo and Hay-zoos?

OLIVE. Your mother-in-law lives in Florida!!!

FLORENCE. THIS COULD BE THE ONE NIGHT SHE COMES TO TOWN.

OLIVE. Florence . . . I need a date *real bad*. Time is going by. My hormones are going tick-tock, tick-tock . . . Give me your hand.

FLORENCE. What?

OLIVE. Give me your hand. (*She takes FLORENCE's hand and puts it on her chest.*) Do you feel my breast?

FLORENCE. Yes.

OLIVE. Well, it's not good enough. I want to feel a bigger hand with knuckles . . . Please!

FLORENCE. Alright. Alright . . . But not outside. We'll eat here.

OLIVE. HERE??? . . . Florence, this is not a date

about *food*. It's about nibbling fingertips. It's about fighting for a woman's honor and making sure we *lose*!

FLORENCE. I don't intend to lose anything. You want dinner, I'll make dinner. I'll make a roast chicken Valencian with Spanish rice, eggplant, squash, potato dumplings and lemon souffle.

OLIVE. Are you crazy? You'll blow them up. They'll need help to get out of the chairs. I want them romantic, not diabetic.

FLORENCE. My food is light. My food is fluffy. Don't tell me how to cook. You want them to nibble on your fingers, I'll spread pâté on them. (*She crosses to phone.*)

OLIVE. Who are you calling?

FLORENCE. My kids. I want them to know what I'm doing. In case their friends tell them their mother is a tramp. (*She finishes dialing. As she waits for phone to ring:*) Manolo and who?

OLIVE. Hay-zoos.

FLORENCE. How do you spell it?

OLIVE. J-E-S-U-S!

FLORENCE. That's Jesus! His name is JESUS???

OLIVE. It's a different Jesus. Will you stop worrying, for God's sakes!

FLORENCE. You didn't tell me his name was Jesus . . . I'll make something simpler. Fish and loaves or something.

CURTAIN

SCENE 2

*A few days later. Early evening.
No one is onstage. The dining table looks like a page*

out of House and Garden. It's set up for dinner for four, complete with linen tablecloth, candles and wine glasses. There is a floral centerpiece, flowers about the room, crackers and dip on the coffee table.

The front door opens and OLIVE enters. She carries her purse, briefcase, a paper bag with wine. She looks around the room with gleeful smile.

OLIVE. (aloud to kitchen) Oh, God, it's gorgeous . . . It looks like a Noel Coward play. (She kicks off her shoes, takes off her jacket, throws it on chair but it misses and hits the floor. She starts to take off her skirt. She has already put her briefcase on the dining table.) I feel alive again . . . I feel glamorous . . . I feel like somebody on "Dynasty" . . .

(She crosses into bathroom carrying the dress in the plastic bag from the cleaners that she brought in with her.

FLORENCE comes in from the kitchen. She is carrying a large green garbage bag. She looks around at the mess OLIVE has left. She goes around and picks up the items, the briefcase, the skirt, blouse, shoes and one by one, puts them in the garbage bag. Then she twirls it into a knot, crosses to the hall closet, opens the door and throws the bag in along with five or six other filled garbage bags. Then she crosses back into the kitchen.

OLIVE comes out of bedroom, zipping up her dress, brushing back her hair. She crosses to table against wall and gets out bobby pins and her shoes from one of the drawers.

FLORENCE comes out holding a wooden ladle and glares at OLIVE. FLORENCE sits.)

OLIVE. (continued; doing up her hair) Oh, you look beautiful. I love the big earrings. Very Espanol . . . What's the matter, Florence? . . . Something's wrong. I can tell by your conversation . . . Alright. Come on. What is it?

FLORENCE. What is it? Let's start with what time do you think it is?

OLIVE. What time? I don't know. Seven-thirty? Eight?

FLORENCE. Try eight-twenty!

OLIVE. Alright, so it's eight-twenty. So?

FLORENCE. You said you'd be home by seven.

OLIVE. Is that what I said?

FLORENCE. That's what you said. "I will be home at seven" is what you said.

OLIVE. Okay. I said I'd be home by seven and it's eight-twenty. So what's the problem? . . .

FLORENCE. If you knew you were going to be late, why didn't you call me?

OLIVE. I couldn't call you. I was busy.

FLORENCE. Too busy to pick up a phone? Where were you?

OLIVE. I was running up and down Sixth Avenue looking for a pair of earrings.

FLORENCE. I have dozens of earrings. I could have loaned you a pair.

OLIVE. I told you. I can't wear pierced earrings. My earlobes closed up.

FLORENCE. I could have bitten them open. When Sidney was late, he always called me.

OLIVE. Late?? I'm not late!! I was the first one in the room . . . What difference does it make what time it is?

FLORENCE. I'll tell you what difference. You told me they were coming at seven-thirty. You were going to be here at seven to help me with the hors d'oeuvres. At

seven-thirty they arrive and we have cocktails. At eight o'clock sharp we sit down and have dinner. It is now eight-twenty-one and I have a big beautiful bird that's ready to be served. If we don't eat in five minutes, it might as well fly the hell out of here.

OLIVE. (*looks up*) Oh, God, help me!

FLORENCE. Never mind helping you. Tell him to save my twelve pound capon.

OLIVE. Twelve pounds?? You cooked twelve *pounds*??? They'll fall asleep without us.

FLORENCE. When I have company, I serve the best. And tonight I'm serving the best dried capon money can buy.

OLIVE. Can't you keep it moist for a while? (*FLORENCE exchanges wine bottle.*)

FLORENCE. MOIST??? Don't you understand, it DRIES UP!! . . . Food can't be cooked forever. It turns into fossils.

OLIVE. Well, then slice it up now and we'll serve cold capon.

FLORENCE. (*slightly crazed*) Cold capon?? . . . COLD CAPON??? . . . For a sit-down dinner? . . . You think I'm some kind of BARBARIAN? . . .

OLIVE. It was just a suggestion.

FLORENCE. Really? How about franks and beans? What about four Big Macs and some milkshakes? You think I went to Elizabeth Arden's today for a leg wax so I could serve COLD CAPON??

OLIVE. You asked my advice, I'm giving it to you.

FLORENCE. (*waves ladle in her face*) Why don't we have a bag of Halloween candy and let them grab what they want?

OLIVE. Alright, Florence, get ahold of yourself.

FLORENCE. You think it's easy? Go on. Go out and shop and clean and make floral arrangements and stamp

little Spanish designs on the butter patties. I'm slaving in a hot kitchen all day and you're in an air-conditioned office giving out baseball scores.

OLIVE. *Baseball scores*?? . . . I'm responsible for getting important news out to the public. Do you know there was a major revolution today in Baggi? A *major revolution*!

FLORENCE. Where the hell is Baggi?

OLIVE. It's a new African country.

FLORENCE. Since when?

OLIVE. Since Thursday.

FLORENCE. No kidding? Well, I have a capon that's older than Baggi.

OLIVE. Who tells you to cook? We could have been at the Casa mi Casa watching Flamenco dancers instead of your lousy twirling ladle. (*The doorbell rings. They both freeze.*)

FLORENCE. Well, they're here. Our dinner guests. I'll get a chain saw and cut the wings off. (*starts for kitchen*)

OLIVE. STAY WHERE YOU ARE!!

FLORENCE. I'm not taking the blame for this dinner.

OLIVE. Who's blaming you? Who even cares about the dinner? We're having a date tonight, not a bake-off.

FLORENCE. I take pride in what I do. I'm known all over New York for my cooking. And you're going to explain to them exactly what happened.

OLIVE. I'll write a full confession on their dinner napkins. Now take off that Peter Pan apron because I'm opening the door.

FLORENCE. Why don't we send out to Arthur Treacher's for some fish sticks?

OLIVE. Are you through?

FLORENCE. I am through.

(FLORENCE forces a smile as OLIVE opens the door. TWO GENTLEMEN in dark double-breasted suits, each with a mustache and each holding a box of candy and a bouquet of roses, stand there. They are extremely polite, good-natured, good laughers and have engaging personalities. They speak with Castilian accents. They are, of course, MANOLO and JESUS.)

OLIVE. Well, hello there. Or should I say, "Buenas Dias"?

MANOLO. You can, but ees wrong. Say "Buenas tardes."

JESUS. Dias ees morning.

MANOLO. Tardes ees evening.

OLIVE. Got it. I capeesh.

MANOLO. No. You "comprendo."

JESUS. Capeesh ees Italian.

MANOLO. Comprendo ees Spanish.

OLIVE. I understand.

MANOLO. I understand is English. (*The boys and OLIVE laugh.*)

OLIVE. Well, come on in, "amigos."

MANOLO. Amigos! Very good! (*They come in.*) Jesus? You have something to say?

JESUS. Si. With our deep felicitations, Manolo and I have brought you fresh flowers and fresh candy.

MANOLO. And red roses for your red hair.

OLIVE. Oh, how sweet.

JESUS. And the candy. I hope you like them. They are no good.

OLIVE. They're no good?

JESUS. Si.

OLIVE. The candy is no good?

MANOLO. Si. Very chewy.

OLIVE. Do you mean *nougat*?

MANOLO. Ah, yes! *Nou-gat!* (*to JESUS*) Not no good. *Nougat!*

JESUS. I'm sorry . . . We are still new at English.

OLIVE. But very thoughtful. I'll put them in water.

MANOLO. Just the flowers. Candy in water is no good.

JESUS. (*to MANOLO*) I thought it was *nougat*.

MANOLO. No, this time I meant no good was no good.

OLIVE. (*holding two bunches of flowers and two boxes of candy*) Well, they certainly are beautiful. I feel like Miss America.

JESUS. I feel the same. I miss Spain sometimes.

MANOLO. (*to JESUS*) No. She means the girl in the bathing suit. We'll talk later. (*to OLIVE*) Are you alone tonight?

OLIVE. No. Where is she? . . . Manolo! Jesus! I'd like you to meet my roommate and chef for the evening, Florence Unger.

FLORENCE. Mrs. (*extends her hand*) How do you do?

MANOLO. My pleasure is most extreme. (*He bows and kisses her hand.*) I am Manolo Costazuela. (*He bows and kisses her hand again.*) And thees ees my very dear brother, Hayzoos Costazuela.

FLORENCE. (*extends her hand*) How do you do?

JESUS. I am filled with much gratification to meet you. (*He kisses her hand, bows. Her foot automatically bends up behind her.*)

OLIVE. (*extends her hand*) And one for me.

JESUS. Always a pleasure. (*bows, kisses OLIVE's hand*)

MANOLO. And I double the pleasure. (*bows, kisses her hand*) Thees ees a charming surprise for me, Mrs. Unger.

OLIVE. Why don't we all sit down, boys?

MANOLO. Gracias. You like me een thees chair?

OLIVE. I don't know. Park it anywhere.

JESUS. We did. The car is outside.

MANOLO. No. No. She means park yourself. (*The boys laugh.*)

OLIVE. Hayzoos, why don't you sit on the sofa?

JESUS. Of course, eef eet's not too much trouble.

OLIVE. Well, do it the easiest way you can. (*The boys laugh.*) And, Florence, why don't you sit on the sofa next to Hayzoos? . . . or the chair. (*FLORENCE sits in the single club chair. JESUS sits.*) Manolo, aren't you going to sit?

MANOLO. After you, Olivia.

JESUS. (*gets up*) Oh, excuse me.

OLIVE. (*to JESUS*) You don't like that chair?

JESUS. No, I love this chair. Perhaps you like this chair.

OLIVE. No, no. I gave you that chair. Please sit.

JESUS. Of course. (*He sits.*)

MANOLO. (*to JESUS*) Not until Olivia sits.

JESUS. (*He gets up.*) I'm so stupid. Forgive me.

MANOLO. (*to OLIVE*) Now you sit, Olivia.

OLIVE. Good. It's my turn. (*She sits.*)

MANOLO. Now I sit. (*He sits. To JESUS:*) Now you sit. (*He sits. FLORENCE gets up.*)

FLORENCE. Would anyone like anything? (*MANOLO and JESUS get up.*)

OLIVE. Why don't we just see if we can all sit at the same time?

MANOLO. Of course. (*He sits.*)

OLIVE. (*snaps fingers*) Florence, sit! (*FLORENCE sits as MANOLO and JESUS rise in deference.*) Down, boys, down. (*The boys sit.*)

MANOLO. Thees happens all the time een Spain. That's why we have to take siestas . . . Olivia! I am so much impressed with your home.

OLIVE. Oh? You like it?

MANOLO. Like it? No. Love it! (*kisses his fingers*) Beautiful, like an El Greco.

OLIVE. Who?

MANOLO. El Greco. The painter, no?

OLIVE. (*looks around, shrugs*) I don't remember who painted it. (*MANOLO and JESUS laugh uproariously.*)

MANOLO. You lie to me, Olivia. You say to us eet ees too—er, sloppy—here to invite us. Ees not sloppy.

OLIVE. Yes, but since then I have a woman who cleans every day.

MANOLO. I have the same thing. It's Hayzoos. (*He points to JESUS. They all enjoy this.*)

JESUS. Ees true. I like my house very clean. Manolo and I are very different. I am neat, he is not. I am always on time, he is always late. Ees very difficult to live together, you understand?

OLIVE. I've heard of people like that, yes . . . You've heard of people like that, haven't you, Florence?

FLORENCE. (*pauses . . . then to MANOLO*) . . . You mean El Greco, the great Spanish painter, don't you?

MANOLO. (*a little confused*) Si . . . You wish to go back a little een the conversation?

FLORENCE. No. I caught up. (*There is an awkward moment of silence.*)

OLIVE. Well, this is really nice . . . I was telling Flo the other day how we met.

MANOLO. Ahh . . . Who ees Flo?

OLIVE. She is.

FLORENCE. I am.

OLIVE. Flo is short for Florence.

JESUS. Noo. She is not too short.

OLIVE. No. Her name is.

JESUS. Her name ees too short?

OLIVE. No. It's like er . . . a nickname. Like my name

is Olive. But sometimes they call me Ollie. It's shorter.

JESUS. Ollie ees shorter than Olive?

OLIVE. . . . It's a tricky language.

FLORENCE. . . . Actually, El Greco was Greek.

MANOLO. Si.

JESUS. Ah!

FLORENCE. That's what the name El Greco means

. . . "The-Greek"!

MANOLO. (*nods*) Yes, we know. We speak Spanish.

FLORENCE. I know. I was speaking about art. I read about him in a travel guide. He lived in a Spanish city called Toleedo.

JESUS. (*correcting*) Tolaydo.

FLORENCE. I thought it was Toleedo.

JESUS. No. Ees pronounced Tolaydo.

OLIVE. (*sings*) "She says Tomeeto and you say Tolaydo, she says Tomeeto and you say Tomayto . . ."

(*She and the boys laugh.*)

FLORENCE. . . . We have a Tolaydo in Ohio . . . Tolaydo, Ohio.

JESUS. No . . . I think that's Toleedo.

FLORENCE. Oh.

MANOLO. You see, Castillian Spanish, you pronounce different than English. Bargselona ees Barthelona. San Jo-say is San Ho-say. Very very good vitamins ees berry berry good bitamins . . . So—they haf berry berry good bitamins in San Ho-say but berry berry bad bodka martinis in Barthelona . . . I do good, Hay-zoos?

JESUS. Berry berry nith. (*They laugh . . . Then—there is an awkward silence.*)

OLIVE. Say—hasn't this been one shitty summer? . . . Oh. I'm berry berry sorry.

MANOLO. Oh, eet ees the most hot I can remember. Last night Jesus and I sleep with nothing on.

OLIVE. (*sexily*) Is that right?

MANOLO. The old couple next door see us naked. We leave the door open for the breeze. They see us, they theenk we are—what ees the word when you theenk two men love each other?

FLORENCE. Brothers?

MANOLO. No. Not brothers. You know. *Happy* people.

OLIVE. Gay?

MANOLO. Si. Gay. Yes. They think we are gay.

JESUS. We are not gay, believe me. (*They laugh.*) We are the opposite. What is the opposite of gay?

OLIVE. *Not* gay.

JESUS. Si. Yes. We are *not* gay.

MANOLO. We are the most not gay that ees possible. (*They laugh at this.*)

JESUS. Tell me, Florence—because you live with Olivia, do people think you are gay?

FLORENCE. Of course not. That's ridiculous . . . Why do you ask?

MANOLO. Because each Friday night you only have women to veesit you, people say funny things.

FLORENCE. We used to play cards, now we play Trivial Pursuit. What's wrong with that?

MANOLO. That ees a good point. Florence makes a good point.

FLORENCE. Why is it when *men* play poker, no one thinks that *they're* gay.

MANOLO. That ees another good point. Florence makes two good points.

JESUS. In America, people are very suspicious of people who are not married.

MANOLO. Yes. Ees true. Jesus makes a very good point.

OLIVE. So Florence is leading two points to one . . . Listen, I'm sure the boys would like a cocktail first . . . Wouldn't you, boys? (*She gets up.*)

MANOLO. Than would be very nice.

OLIVE. Good. What would you like?

MANOLO. I don't wish to put you to trouble. You have perhaps a double vodka.

JESUS. Manolo! You promise me. No more double vodkas.

MANOLO. You hear? My brother ees like my mother sometimes. But he's right. I'm not good with liquor. I get very aggressive. Sometimes I attack people.

OLIVE. Come, on, let the kid have a drink . . . And for Jesus?

JESUS. Jesus will have a very, very, very, dry martini.

OLIVE. I'll put a sponge in the glass. Coming right up. (*She starts for the kitchen.*)

FLORENCE. (*following her*) Where are you going?

OLIVE. To get the refreshments. I'll give you plenty of time to get acquainted.

(*She exits into the kitchen. FLORENCE seems lost. She looks over at the boys, they smile at her. She crosses back to her chair and sits, crossing her legs. There is a long, awkward silence.*)

FLORENCE. So . . . You're brothers, are you?

MANOLO. Oh, yes . . . Both of us.

FLORENCE. That's nice . . . Where are you from?

JESUS. Barthelona.

FLORENCE. Ah . . . And how long have you been in the United States of America?

JESUS. Tres anyos. Three years.

FLORENCE. Three years . . . You're on a holiday?

MANOLO. No, no. We work here, yes, Jesus?

JESUS. Yes. Iberia.

FLORENCE. You work in Siberia?

JESUS. No. Iberia. The Spanish airlines.

FLORENCE. Oh. I didn't understand . . . Are you pilots?

MANOLO. No, no. Sales and administration.

FLORENCE. I'm really going to have to learn Spanish. Today everyone in New York does. If you don't know what Caballero means, you're afraid to go to the bathroom.

MANOLO. That's another very good point. Now you have three good points, Fly.

FLORENCE. Fly?

MANOLO. Isn't that your name for short?

FLORENCE. Flo.

MANOLO. Flo! I am so much sorry, Flo.

FLORENCE. That's alright, *Manny*.

MANOLO. Manny? . . . Oh, ees short for Manolo. Very good, yes, Jesus?

JESUS. Not Hayzoos . . . *Hayz!* (*They all three laugh, then FLORENCE calls out.*)

FLORENCE. OLIVE?? YOU NEED HELP?

OLIVE. (*peeks in door*) I'm fine. I'm just having a little trouble with the ice cubes. (*disappears*)

JESUS. So, Flo . . . What occupation are you?

FLORENCE. I'm separated.

JESUS. From your job?

FLORENCE. No, from my husband.

JESUS. Forgive me, I didn't understand.

FLORENCE. I used to work but then I stopped to become a mother.

MANOLO. You have children?

FLORENCE. (*explaining to foreigners*) Yes. Mothers-have-children.

MANOLO. How many?

FLORENCE. *All* mothers have children.

MANOLO. No. How many children have *you*?

FLORENCE. Oh . . . er, three . . . No! Two . . . I was counting my husband. (*She laughs embarrassedly. They do too.*) But now that I'm separated, I'm going to look for a job again.

MANOLO. That ees where Spain ees very different than America. Spain is still very traditional, very old-fashioned. They feel eet ees the man who should steal the cake.

FLORENCE. Steal the cake?

MANOLO. The cake stealer?

FLORENCE. The breadwinner?

MANOLO. Si. The breadwinner . . . But Jesus and I are very up-to-date. Very new-fashioned. Tell her, Jesus.

JESUS. Manolo and I are very up-to-date. Very new-fashioned. That ees why we divorced our wives. That ees why we come to this wonderful country to start our lives over. We still love Spain but it was time to say adios.

FLORENCE. How sad . . . Are there any children still over there?

JESUS. Oh, yes. Millions of children. They have plenty of children.

FLORENCE. No, I meant *yours*.

JESUS. Ah. No. No children. We are honorable men. If we had children, we would have stayed there with our wives and family and been miserable forever.

FLORENCE. It's hard, isn't it? When you lose a spouse?

MANOLO. Ah, yes . . . What ees a spouse?

FLORENCE. (*realizes they don't understand*) A spouse! (*She thinks.*) . . . My husband is a spouse.

MANOLO. Did you know he was a spouse before you marry him?

FLORENCE. No. The person you're married to *is* a spouse. Your *wife* was a spouse.

MANOLO. I don't think so. We did not keep secrets from each other.

FLORENCE. No, you see, when you get married the person you're married to becomes your spouse.

JESUS. Ya comprendo. Your spouse is your "maredo." Your husband. Si?

FLORENCE. Si. Si. Grathias. Mucho thank God.

JESUS. You are unhappy to be separated from your spouse?

FLORENCE. Well, after fourteen years, sure. It's so wrenching, isn't it?

JESUS. Wrenching? (*looks puzzled*) Que es wrenching?

MANOLO. (*shrugs*) Wrenching . . . No comprendo.

FLORENCE. (*illustrates tearing apart with hands*) Wrenching. Tearing apart.

JESUS. Your husband tore you apart?

FLORENCE. No. *Life* tore us apart. Problems tore us apart. I'm still not over it. It's been a very difficult time. You understand?

JESUS. Oh, yes. It's nougat.

MANOLO. (*correcting*) No good.

JESUS. It's no good.

MANOLO. (*to FLORENCE*) You are unhappy now, Flo, but in time eet will be better. In Spain we have an expression. "The house is not built until smoke comes from the chimney" . . . You understand?

FLORENCE. No.

MANOLO. Maybe thees will explain . . . "The bull does not cry till his horns touch the sky" . . . Yes? (*Still puzzled, she shakes her head.*)

JESUS. "The ship comes home when the sailor is lost" . . . (*She shakes her head.*) "The dog drinks water when the—"

MANOLO. Never mind, Jesus. (*FLORENCE takes pictures from table and shows it to them.*)

FLORENCE. This is the worst part of breaking up.

MANOLO. (*rises, looks at pictures*) Ah. You were childhood sweethearts?

FLORENCE. No. That's my little boy and girl.

MANOLO. Ohh. Preciosos. Such pretty children. Look, Jesus. Preciosos, no?

JESUS. Oh. Si. Muy preciosos. (*points*) The little girl looks like you.

FLORENCE. That's the little boy.

MANOLO. Ahh . . . They live with their father?

FLORENCE. No. They're still in summer camp. He's a wonderful father. He's very strict with them but he's always fair. Sidney's a very exceptional man. One day he—oh, what am I saying? You don't want to hear any of this.

MANOLO. But of course we do. Eet ees good to get everything up. *We* got it up. You have to get it up too, Flo.

FLORENCE. I'm trying. (*takes out another picture, shows it to them*) That's him. Sidney.

MANOLO. (*looks at picture, a little skeptical*) Oh. Very distinguished. Jesus, distinguished, no?

JESUS. (*looks; just as skeptical*) Oh, yes . . . Very distinguished . . . He ees a cowboy?

FLORENCE. No. He just likes to wear boots.

JESUS. (*looks at picture*) He has beautiful thick black hair. Is he Spanish?

FLORENCE. No, but I think the hair is. (*She picks out another picture.*) Isn't this nice? (*JESUS looks at it. He is puzzled. He shows it to MANOLO, who is puzzled too. They turn it upside down, then right side up.*)

JESUS. There ees no one een this picture.

FLORENCE. I know. That's a picture of our living room. We had a gorgeous apartment.

MANOLO. Oh, yes. Ees very beautiful.

JESUS. (*looks at picture*) The lamps are very beautiful.

FLORENCE. We bought those lamps in Italy. Very rare lamps. I loved my apartment so much, I never wanted to go out. It was such a happy place, everybody laughing, everybody talking to each other. I thought it would go on forever . . . And suddenly it's all gone . . . Sidney, the laughter, the lamps—(*She can't finish. She breaks down, sobbing.*)

JESUS. . . . Don't be sad, Flo . . . There's a place in Brooklyn you can get the same lamps.

FLORENCE. Please forgive me. I didn't mean to get so emotional. Would you like some guacamole dip? (*She hands them dish as the tears flow again.*)

MANOLO. Eet ees good to cry. It washes the pain away, ees true, Hayz?

JESUS. Si. When Manolo say goodbye to his spouse, he cried for three days.

FLORENCE. Really?

MANOLO. I loved her like no man could love a spouse. (*His voice starts to crack with emotion. He cries.*) Every night I still theenk of her. Is this true, Zoos?

JESUS. Hays! . . . Ees true. Every night I hear him thinking of her.

MANOLO. (*wiping his eyes*) Sometimes I theenk I have made a mistake. Eef I loved Salina so much, why did I leave her? I was insane. And now ees too late. (*He is sobbing.*)

FLORENCE. Maybe it's *not* too late.

MANOLO. Eet ees too late . . . (*tearfully*) She got married last month.

JESUS. For me ees the same. Only was much worse. My Consuela was—forgive me—unfaithful. (*crying*) But today I would forgive her. Because I loved her so very much. I will never find another woman like Consuela.

FLORENCE. Did you know who the other man was?

JESUS. Si. (*points to MANOLO*) His ex-wife's new husband.

FLORENCE. My God!!

(*All three are crying. OLIVE suddenly walks into the room with the drinks.*)

OLIVE. Is everybody happy? (*She stops dead at the sight of the maudlin scene. They all try to pull themselves together.*) What the hell happened? What did you say to them?

FLORENCE. Nothing.

OLIVE. Well, if you really want to cry, go inside and look at your dead bird.

FLORENCE. (*jumps up*) Oh, my God! Why didn't you call me? I told you to call me. (*She rushes into the kitchen.*)

OLIVE. I should have warned you, boys. She's the highest rated soap opera in New York.

MANOLO. I think she is the most sensitive woman I have ever met.

JESUS. So fragile. So delicate. So Spanish. She is the kind of woman you find only in Barthelona.

OLIVE. Well, when she comes out of that kitchen, that's where she may head for. (*The kitchen door opens and FLORENCE comes out. She wears potholder gloves.*)

FLORENCE. I hope everybody likes dark meat.

OLIVE. Wait a minute. Maybe we can save it.

FLORENCE. Save what? The Black Bird? It looks like the Maltese Falcon.

MANOLO. (*sympathetically*) Can we look at it, Flo?

JESUS. Please? (*FLORENCE reluctantly goes in kitchen, then comes out with dark, smoldering bird, shows them the remains.*)

MANOLO. (*crosses, looks at it*) Hmmm . . . Thees ees a berry berry burnt bird.

JESUS. Ees no problem. We can have chicken paella upstairs in my house in ten minutes.

FLORENCE. With *this*?

JESUS. No. I have Stouffers frozen paella. Ees better than real food.

MANOLO. Then we see you upstairs. Apartment 14B.

OLIVE. We won't even wait for the elevator.

MANOLO. Ees true. There's always dogs in there. (*Hand kisses. They both rush to the door and are gone in a flash. OLIVE turns to FLORENCE, beaming.*)

OLIVE. Are they cute?? . . . ARE THEY CUTE??? . . . Our time has come, Florence. This is going to be a great year for women . . . Come on, get the guacamole dip. (*She grabs wine bottle.*)

FLORENCE. I'm not going.

OLIVE. What?

FLORENCE. I don't know how to talk to them. I don't understand them . . . "The ship comes home when the

sailor is lost"? What does that mean?

OLIVE. I don't know. I'm not a Spanish philosopher. I'm a frustrated American woman . . . Now take the guacamole dip.

FLORENCE. I can't. I feel too guilty. Emotionally I'm still tied to Sidney.

OLIVE. Florence . . . defrosting paella with Jesus is not adultery. Now, take the guacamole dip. (*She starts for the door.*)

FLORENCE. (*She gets the guacamole dip. She starts for the door.*) All right, all right, but it's not going to be any fun. I'm tense as a board. Even my dress feels hard.

OLIVE. Stop it, Florence. You'll get sick in the elevator again. (*FLORENCE grabs her back on the first step.*)

FLORENCE. OHH!! . . . OH, GOD!!! . . . OH, MY BACK!!! . . . OHH! It's broken. My back is broken. It feels broken.

OLIVE. Your back isn't broken . . . Let's get to the chair. (*FLORENCE can't move from the pain.*)

FLORENCE. (*at top of stairs*) NO!!! . . . I can't move! Don't move me! (*She leans against the wall.*)

OLIVE. Damn it, you're going to ruin my whole evening . . . I can't leave you like this.

FLORENCE. I want you to go. You're just making me tenser. Please, just go.

OLIVE. I'll get you some aspirin. (*She goes into kitchen. FLORENCE stands there, immobile.*)

FLORENCE. . . . Please, God, don't let me fall. Don't let me die here, God, please, I still have two children to raise, please, God . . .

OLIVE. (*from in kitchen*) Please, God, make her shut up. Please, God make her be quiet.

CURTAIN

SCENE 3

The next evening about 7:30 P.M.

The room is once again set up for the game, the chairs set around it. FLORENCE is vacuuming the living room rug. The door opens and OLIVE comes in looking a little weary. She wears a raincoat over her slacks and shirt. She carries the evening newspaper. FLORENCE is oblivious to OLIVE. OLIVE takes off her raincoat, then she crosses to the wall plug and unplugs the vacuum. FLORENCE notices it and turns and sees OLIVE. OLIVE sits in the wing chair and opens her newspaper.

FLORENCE takes the vacuum cleaner and crosses into the kitchen with it.

OLIVE steps on the cord, as FLORENCE yanks from the kitchen. On the third yank, OLIVE lifts her foot and we hear a loud crash from the kitchen.

FLORENCE comes out limping as OLIVE smiles and sits on sofa. FLORENCE is carrying a tray with a steaming dish of spaghetti on it. She sits at the table and sprays cheese on the spaghetti and begins to eat.

OLIVE gets up, takes deodorizer can and crosses. She sprays all around FLORENCE to erase the scent of the spaghetti and gives one final spray into the dish of spaghetti itself . . . FLORENCE puts down her fork and napkin, trying to contain her anger. OLIVE has resumed her seat on the sofa and continues reading.

FLORENCE. Alright, how much longer is this going to go on? Are you going to spend the rest of your life not talking to me?

OLIVE. You had your chance to talk last night. I

begged you to come upstairs with me. I was looking for romance and instead I got a petrified woman standing in my doorway. I never want to hear the sound of your voice again, do you understand?

FLORENCE. Si. Yo comprendo. Gracias.

OLIVE. (*takes key out of pocket, crosses to FLORENCE*) There's a key to the back door. Stick to the hallway and your room and you won't get hurt.

FLORENCE. (*indignant*) Oh, really? Well, let me remind you that I pay half the rent and I'll go into any room I want.

OLIVE. Not in my apartment. I don't want to see you. Cover the mirrors when you walk through the house . . . (*threatening*) And I'm sick and tired of smelling your cooking. I've had it up to here with your polyunsaturated oils. Now get that spaghetti off of my table.

FLORENCE. (*laughs*) That's funny. That's really funny.

OLIVE. What the hell's so funny about it?

FLORENCE. It's not spaghetti. It's linguini.

(*OLIVE looks at her as if she's crazy. Then OLIVE picks up the plate of pasta, crosses to the kitchen door and hurls it into the room against the far, unseen wall.*)

OLIVE. Now it's garbage!! (*OLIVE looks self-satisfied. FLORENCE looks into the kitchen, aghast.*)

FLORENCE. Are you CRAZY??? . . . I'm not cleaning that up . . . It's *your* mess . . . Look at it hanging all over the walls.

OLIVE. (*looks at it*) I like it.

FLORENCE. You'd just let it hang there, wouldn't you? Until it turns hard and brown and yich—I'm cleaning it up! (*She starts in.*)

OLIVE. (*yells*) You touch one strand of that linguini and I'll break every sinus in your head.

FLORENCE. Why? What is it I've done? What's driving you crazy? The cooking? The cleaning? The crying? What?

OLIVE. I'll tell you exactly what it is. It's the cooking, the cleaning and the crying. It's the moose calls that open your ears at two o'clock in the morning. I can't take it anymore, Florence. I'm cracking up. Everything you do irritates me. And when you're not here, the things I know you're going to do when you come in irritate me . . . You leave me little notes on my pillow. "We're all out of corn flakes. F.U." . . . It took me three hours to figure out that F.U. was Florence Unger . . . It's no one's fault, Florence. We're just a rotten pair.

FLORENCE. I get the picture.

OLIVE. That's just the frame. The picture I haven't even painted yet . . . Every night in my diary I write down the things you did that day that aggravate me . . . This is June and so far I filled up till January . . . And I haven't even put down the Gaspacho Brothers yet.

FLORENCE. Oh! Is that what's bothering you? That I loused up your sex life last night?

OLIVE. What sex life? I can't even have dirty dreams. You come in and clean them up.

FLORENCE. (*shakes finger in OLIVE's face*) Don't blame me. I warned you not to make that date in the first place.

OLIVE. Don't point that finger at me unless you intend to use it.

FLORENCE. Alright, Olive, get off my back. Off! You hear me? (*She turns away as if she's just won a major battle.*)

OLIVE. What's this? A display of temper? I haven't

seen you really angry since the day I dropped my eyelashes in your pancake batter.

FLORENCE. Olive, you're asking to hear something I don't want to say . . . But if I say it, I think you'd better hear it.

OLIVE. (*sarcastically*) I'm trembling all over. Look how I'm trembling all over. (*sits in a chair, crosses legs calmly*)

FLORENCE. Alright, I warned you . . . You're a wonderful girl, Olive. You've done everything for me. If it weren't for you, I don't know what would have happened to me. You took me in here, gave me a place to live and something to live for. I'll never forget you for that. You're *tops* with me, Olive.

OLIVE. (*motionless, thinking it over*) . . . If I've just been told off, I think I may have missed it.

FLORENCE. It's coming now.

OLIVE. Good.

FLORENCE. You are also one of the biggest slobs in the world.

OLIVE. I see.

FLORENCE. And completely unreliable.

OLIVE. Is that so?

FLORENCE. Undependable.

OLIVE. Is that it?

FLORENCE. Unappreciative, irresponsible and indescribably inefficient.

OLIVE. What is that, a Cole Porter song?

FLORENCE. That's it. I'm finished. Now you've been told off. How do you like that? (*crosses away*)

OLIVE. Good. Because now I'm going to tell you off . . . (*FLORENCE rushes, sits in chair, crosses legs calmly.*) For eight months I've lived all alone in this apartment. I thought I was miserable. I thought I was

lonely. I took you in here because I thought we could help each other . . . And after three weeks of close, personal contact, I have hives, shingles and the heartbreak of psoriasis . . . I am growing old at twice the speed of sound . . . I have seven new liver spots on my hand that look like the Big Dipper . . . I can't take any more, Florence . . . Do me a favor and move into the kitchen. Live with your pots, your pans, your ladle and your meat thermometer . . . I'm going inside to lie down now . . . My teeth are coming loose and I'm afraid if I drop them in here, you'll get out your vacuum cleaner again. (*She goes off, a wreck.*)

FLORENCE. (*waits, then —*) Walk on the papers, will you? I just washed the floors in there. (*OLIVE comes back out, seething, a maniacal look in her eyes, bent on murder. She comes after FLORENCE.*) Keep away from me. I'm warning you, don't you touch me.

OLIVE. In the kitchen! I want to get your head in the oven and cook it like a capon.

FLORENCE. You're going to find yourself in one sweet lawsuit, Olive.

OLIVE. It's no use running, Florence. There's only six rooms and I know all the shortcuts.

(*OLIVE chases FLORENCE, who runs into the bathroom and closes the door. OLIVE chases but instead of going into the bathroom, she goes back into the bedroom. The stage is empty for a moment. Then FLORENCE screams as OLIVE has apparently entered the bathroom through the other door. FLORENCE runs out into the living room.*)

FLORENCE. Is this how you settle your problems, Olive? Like an animal? (*grabs her pocketbook, takes*

out an object and points it at her) Stand back! That's tear gas. You lay one finger on me and you'll be using eyedrops the rest of your life.

OLIVE. You want to see how I settle my problems? I'll show you how I settle them. (*She runs into FLORENCE's bedroom. FLORENCE takes a siren out of her pocketbook.*)

FLORENCE. (*calling out*) Alright. I warned you. I'm turning on my siren. (*She presses switch but it doesn't scream. She holds it to her ear and listens.*) What's wrong with this? Have you been playing with my siren? (*She bangs it on table three or four times in despair.*) Goddam it! Twenty-two fifty for a piece of Japanese shit! (*OLIVE comes out of FLORENCE's room with an empty suitcase. She throws it on the table.*)

OLIVE. I'll show you how I settle them! (*opens up suitcase, stands back*) There! That's how I settle them.

FLORENCE. (*confused, looks at suitcase*) Where are you going?

OLIVE. (*apoplectic*) Not me, you idiot! You!! You're the one who's going. I'll fix your siren so it can whistle for a cab.

FLORENCE. What are you talking about?

OLIVE. The marriage is over, Florence. We're getting an annulment. I don't want to live with you anymore. I want you to pack your things, tie it up with your Saran Wrap and get out of here.

FLORENCE. You mean actually move out?

OLIVE. (*heads for kitchen*) Actually, physically and immediately. (*She gets pots and pans in kitchen. She comes out with the utensils, drops them in the bag and slams the bag closed.*) There! You're all packed.

FLORENCE. You know, I've got a good mind to really leave.

OLIVE. (*looks up to heaven*) Why doesn't she hear me? I know I'm talking, I recognize my voice.

FLORENCE. In other words, you're throwing me out.

OLIVE. Not in other words. Those are the perfect ones. (*hands suitcase to FLORENCE, who doesn't take it*)

FLORENCE. Alright. I just wanted to get the record straight. Let it be on your conscience. (*She goes into her bedroom.*)

OLIVE. Let what be on my conscience?

FLORENCE. That you're throwing me out. (*She comes out, putting on her jacket.*) "Get out of the house" is what you said. (*crosses to her purse and puts in her siren and tear gas*) But remember this: Whatever happens to me is your responsibility. Let it be on your head!

OLIVE. What did you put on my head? Don't put things on my head! Take it off! (*She swats at her hair as if trying to get insects out.*)

FLORENCE. I left you plenty of food, you just have to heat it up. You can ask the neighbors how to light a match. (*She heads for doorway.*)

OLIVE. (*rushes to door and blocks the way*) You're not leaving till you take it back.

FLORENCE. Take what back?

OLIVE. "Let it be on your head" . . . What the hell is that, "The Curse of the Cat People"?

FLORENCE. I'd like to leave now. (*The doorbell rings.*) . . . That's your bell . . . Aren't you going to answer it?

OLIVE. Florence, we've been good friends too long to end it this way. We're civilized people. Let's shake hands and part like gentlemen . . .

FLORENCE. There's nothing gentle about being kicked out.

OLIVE. (*nods*) Okay . . . I tried. (*She opens the door. MICKEY and VERA peer in. They come in.*)

MICKEY. What's going on? (*Looks at FLORENCE*) Florence, you look white as a ghost.

FLORENCE. (*to girls*) Olive will explain everything to you. Have a nice game. If you're hungry, Olive'll get you a plate of linguini. Don't forget to duck . . . Good-bye, everyone. (*She goes, closing the door.*)

MICKEY. Isn't Florence playing tonight?

OLIVE. She's too busy. She has to go out and spread guilt throughout the land . . . Alright, let's get started. Get the game out. (*VERA gets the Trivial Pursuit game and opens it on table. MICKEY goes into kitchen, then stops when she sees what's on the opposite wall.*)

VERA. (*putting game out*) I know what you're going through. Harry and I had a big fight this morning too.

OLIVE. About what?

VERA. He's very jealous. He thinks I dress too sexy.

OLIVE. (*looks at her*) Hold on to Harry. He's an unusual man.

(*The front door opens and RENEE enters, looking harassed.*)

RENEE. Hi . . . Listen, can I please have a scotch. I've got really bad news. I broke up with the doctor.

OLIVE. Did he leave you with a curse on your head?

RENEE. He's not a witch doctor. He's a gynecologist. (*The door opens and SYLVIE comes in.*)

SYLVIE. Everybody sit down. I've got major news to tell you.

OLIVE. Jesus, this place is like group therapy.

VERA. Is it good news or bad news?

SYLVIE. It depends what your income is . . . I'm pregnant.

MICKEY. Hey! Congratulations.

SYLVIE. Isn't it great? The penguin came through.

RENEE. Are you sure you're pregnant? I don't trust gynecologists.

SYLVIE. Where's Florence? I want to tell her the big news.

OLIVE. She left. She's angry because she didn't like what I said.

VERA. What did you say?

OLIVE. I said, "Get out of my house!"

RENEE. You threw her out?

OLIVE. I couldn't help it. I couldn't take it anymore . . . It was bad enough watching her straightening out the telephone cord, but when she put nuts in a bowl, she would arrange them—almond next to cashew, cashew next to peanut, peanut next to pecan, pecan next to Brazil nut, Brazil nut next to almond—

SYLVIE. Alright! Stop it, Olive. You're getting yourself sick.

OLIVE. —walnuts around the edges—

SYLVIE. That's enough!!! (*puts arm around OLIVE, comforts her*)

MICKEY. Okay, we all know she's impossible, but she's still our friend and she's still out on the street and I'm still worried about her.

OLIVE. And I'm not? I'm not concerned? I'm not worried? Who do you think sent her out there in the first place?

MICKEY. Sidney.

OLIVE. What?

MICKEY. Sidney sent her out in the first place. *You* sent her out in the second place. And whoever she lives with next will send her out in the third place. Don't you understand? It's Florence. She does it to herself.

OLIVE. Why?

MICKEY. I don't know. There are people like that. There's a tribe in Africa who hit themselves on the head with rocks all day.

OLIVE. . . . I'll bet they don't arrange their nuts.

SYLVIE. I wonder where she'll go this time? (*The doorbell rings.*)

OLIVE. It's her. I knew it. She wants to come back. New York City didn't want her either.

VERA. I'll get the door.

OLIVE. Start the game! I'm not giving her the satisfaction knowing we were worried about her. Everybody sit down, like nothing happened. (*They all sit.*)

SYLVIE. (*holds her stomach*) I hope my baby's not listening to this. She'll think women are crazy.

OLIVE. (*to VERA*) Open it! Open it! (*VERA opens the door. MANOLO stands there.*)

VERA. Oh, hello . . . It's not her, Olive.

MANOLO. Buenas tardes.

VERA. Olive, it's Mr. Tardes.

OLIVE. (*gets up*) Oh, hello, Manolo . . . Girls, I'd like you to meet my neighbor, Manolo Venezuela.

MANOLO. *Costazuela*. Manolo *Costazuela*. (*to OLIVE*) Olibia, may I see you a moment, please.

OLIVE. (*crosses*) Certainly, Manolo. (*He takes her aside.*) What's the matter?

MANOLO. I theenk you already know. I have come to pick up Flo's clothes.

OLIVE. (*looks at him in disbelief*) Flo's clothes??? . . . My Flo's clothes?

MANOLO. Yes. Florence Unger, that sweet tortured woman who ees een my apartment now wrenching her heart out to Jesus . . . You've been a very naughty spouse, Olibia . . . Friendship is more important than capons . . . She is in our apartment now getting it up.

OLIVE. (*turns to girls*) I'll translate all this later.

(*JESUS comes in, pulling a reluctant FLORENCE.*)

JESUS. Manolo, Florence doesn't want to stay. Please tell her to stay. (*notice girls*) Excuse my intrusiveness, por favor.

FLORENCE. Really, fellows, this is very embarrassing. I can go to a hotel. (*to the ladies*) Hello, girls.

GIRLS. (*quietly awed*) Hi, Florence.

MANOLO. (*to FLORENCE*) Nonsense. I told you we have a spare room nobody ever uses. You cannot refuse our invitation.

JESUS. We were not raised to allow a woman to wander the streets alone.

FLORENCE. You sure I wouldn't be too much trouble?

MANOLO. It is *we* who are the trouble. Jesus snores and I talk in my sleep.

OLIVE. (*to girls*) That should sound great with her moose calls.

MANOLO. (*to OLIVE*) I do not weesh to be rude, Olibia, but in Spain, to throw one's friend out of the house is like killing a bull with a pistol. (*to FLORENCE*) Please, Flo. Just for a few days.

JESUS. Just until you get settled.

FLORENCE. Well—maybe just for one night. I have to look for a job tomorrow.

MANOLO. Oh, that ees wanderful. (*He kisses her hand.*)

JESUS. (*to FLORENCE*) Shall we help you up weeth your clothes?

FLORENCE. (*looks at her dress*) *These* clothes?? . . . Oh, the ones inside. No, thanks. I'll get them.

MANOLO. Very well. Come up as soon as you are ready—Flosy!

OLIVE. *Flosy*???

JESUS. Don't be late. Cock-a-tails een fifteen minutes.

MANOLO. And keep studying the Spanish language book I gave you.

FLORENCE. Monto bastante bien.

MANOLO. Oh, good. I like to ride horses too. Buenas tardes. (*The boys leave with a flourish. FLORENCE turns and looks at the girls on her way towards the bedroom.*)

RENEE. Hey, Florence. Are you really going to move in with two guys?

FLORENCE. One kicks you out, two take you in. Women are finally making progress. (*She goes into bedroom proudly.*)

SYLVIE. (*amazed at FLORENCE*) I think I'm going to give birth right here on the floor.

OLIVE. Well, it's cleaner than a hospital.

VERA. I'm really impressed. I never saw such a change come over a woman so fast in my life. (*FLORENCE comes out with her dresses in plastic bag.*)

FLORENCE. (*beaming happily*) I don't know, I suddenly feel so high. I feel like I'm floating—like when you take cough syrup . . . Olive, I want to thank you.

OLIVE. Thank me? For what?

FLORENCE. For the two greatest things you ever did for me. Taking me in and kicking me out. (*The phone rings. MICKEY gets up to answer it.*) That must be the boys. Spanish blood is so hot. (*MICKEY picks up the phone.*)

MICKEY. (*into phone*) Hello? . . . Just a minute.

FLORENCE. (*takes items out of purse*) Olive, here's my mace and my siren. I think I can handle men on my own now.

MICKEY. It's your husband.

FLORENCE. Oh! . . . Well, do me a favor, Mickey. Tell him I can't speak to him now. But tell him I'll be calling

him in a few days because I think we have a lot to talk about. And tell him if I sound different to him it's because I'm not the same woman who left that house three weeks ago. Go ahead, Mickey, tell him.

MICKEY. I will when I see him. This is Olive's husband.

FLORENCE. (*embarrassed*) Oh! (*OLIVE crosses to phone.*) Goodbye, girls. I'll send you down a box of nougat. (*She starts for door, OLIVE stops her.*)

OLIVE. Florence, don't go yet. (*into phone*) Hello, Phil . . . Look, I can't talk now. Can I call you back? . . . What check? . . . Phil, I am positively through sending you any more checks. There's a limit to—what? You sent me a check? . . . You mean you repaid everything? . . . Gee, I'm glad you had a big winner, Phil, but I never expected you to pay back all the—no, no . . . I know what you mean by self-respect. (*She and FLORENCE exchange glances.*) . . . Does that mean you won't be calling me anymore, Phil? . . . Good. I hope you will . . . G'bye, Phil. (*She hangs up. She looks a little sad, tries to force a smile.*) Isn't that nice? I guess he doesn't need me anymore.

FLORENCE. Liking you is better than needing you.

OLIVE. (*wipes her eyes*) Listen, you'd better go. You're starting to talk like a fortune cookie.

FLORENCE. (*to girls*) Are you starting the game now?

VERA. Yeah. You want to play?

FLORENCE. I would but I'm berry, berry busy . . .

(*Exit. SYLVIE comes out of the bedroom holding a towel. OLIVE takes it and folds it up neatly.*)

OLIVE. . . . Come on, let's start the game . . . (*She sits.*) Renee and me against you three . . . Roll 'em, Renee . . .

RENEE. (*rolls them*) Four . . . Entertainment.

VERA. (*picks up card, reads*) "According to the 1962 Four Seasons' smash hit, who doesn't cry?"

OLIVE. (*She sings.*) * "Big girls don't cry" [etc.] (SYLVIE joins in . . . Then VERA, then the others. They are singing as—)

CURTAIN FALLS

*Note: permission to produce this play does *not* include permission to use this song in production. For rights to use "Big Girls Don't Cry" in production, producers should contact MPL Communications, c/o Eastman and Eastman, 39 West 54th Street, New York, NY 10019.

COSTUME PLOT

OLIVE

ACT ONE

Blue print shorts and top
Tan t-shirt
Blue sneakers
Black watch

ACT TWO

SCENE 1

Faded jeans
Blue Hawaiian print top
Sneakers

SCENE 2

2 piece rust/pink knit suit
Pink print blouse
Beige sling back pumps
Brown belt
Earrings

Change offstage to:

Yellow silk print dress
Beige heeled sandals
Glass beads
Gold earrings
Gold bracelets

SCENE 3

Beige jumpsuit
Tan heels