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Neil Simon's

The Odd Couple

(Female Version)

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.

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.

THE ODD COUPLE

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 crissakes?

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

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.

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.

(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.* FLOR-ENCE 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. 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

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.

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.

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 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. 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

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?