

THE ODD COUPLE (FEMALE VERSION) *was first presented on October 4, 1984, at the Majestic Theatre in Dallas, Texas, with the following cast:*

SYLVIE
MICKEY
RENEE
VERA
OLIVE MADISON
FLORENCE UNGER
MANOLO COSTAZUELA
JESUS COSTAZUELA

Jenny O'Hara
Mary Louise Wilson
Kathleen Doyle
Marilyn Cooper
Rita Moreno
Sally Struthers
Lewis J. Stadlen
Tony Shalhoub

3 8 1

THE ODD

COUPLE

(FEMALE

VERSION)

Directed by Gene Saks
Scenery by David Mitchell
Costumes by Ann Roth
Lighting by Tharon Musser

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Time: The present

Place: Olive Madison's Riverside Drive apartment

ACT ONE

A hot summer's night

ACT TWO

SCENE 1: Two weeks later, about 11 p.m.

SCENE 2: A few days later, about 8 p.m.

SCENE 3: The next evening, about 7:30 p.m.

3 8 2

Collected Plays

of Neil Simon,

Volume III

Act One

3 8 3

A hot summer's night.

We are in the apartment of OLIVE MADISON, one of those six-room affairs on Riverside Drive, New York, in the eighties. The building is about forty 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 stage left holds a broken air conditioner. Toward center rear, a doorway leads to the kitchen. At stage right, 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 litter the floors and tables. Unopened mail and unopened laundry packages lie about.

A dining table at stage right 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, are 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 (*She shakes the dice in her hand*) C'mon, baby, we need a piece of the pie. (*She throws the dice*) . . . Five! (*She counts off spaces on the board*) One—two—three—four—five! . . . Science and Nature. (*She sits.*)
(RENEE takes a 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.

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MICKEY I'll say they do it six times.

S VERA Why only six times?

MICKEY Did you ever see what they look like?

S 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.

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

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

SYLVIE Go the other way. *(To VERA)* We take Science. *(RENEE moves the 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.

M VERA *(Reads from a 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.

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

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

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

M 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.

M VERA What kind of hint?

RENEE Is it baseball or football?

M 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.

M VERA Is that your answer?

SYLVIE Peter Windmill.

M VERA Is that your answer?

MICKEY Sixty seconds and counting down.

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

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

14 VERA Do you give up?

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

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

SYLVIE Where the hell are you running?

16 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 had to leave by twelve.

MICKEY I'm really starting to worry about Florence. She's never been this late before.

17 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?

18 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.

19 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 . . . (*She looks at her 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.

20 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 NutraSweet one calorie Pepsi?

MICKEY I do.

OLIVE (*She brings her the can*) One can of chemicals for Mickey the-Cop-

MICKEY (*Holding the 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 the 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 (*Shaking the dice . . . to the 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 the 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 and 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 the 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 the phone*) Hello? Oh, my God. Phil!
. . . I was just talking about you.

MICKEY Somebody hide her checkbook.
(*RENEE throws the 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? (*Hand over
phone, to the 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. (*Hand over
phone, to the 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 the 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 the 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 bangs 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 and 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.

A VERA Entertainment.

RENEE (*Reads*) "What group starred in the movie *Rock Around the Clock*?"

OLIVE Everybody, all together!

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

OLIVE (*Snaps her 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 the phone*)

MICKEY (*Gets up and crosses to the 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 (*Hand 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 the 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 canceled her facial appointment and her pedicure. She never showed up for her yoga class or her spiritual adviser. 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 (*Glaring 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.

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THE ODD

COUPLE

(FEMALE

VERSION)

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 police-woman 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 afternoon 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 (Lowering her voice) Of course! If you're going to kill yourself, where's the safest place to do it? . . . With your friends.

VERA (Starting for the 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. OLIVE sits with RENEE and SYLVIE . . . To MICKEY) Alright, ask us a question.

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Collected Plays
of Neil Simon,
Volume III

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 the sandwiches; looks in a 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, an 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 (*She stands behind VERA and plays with VERA's hair*) . . . Anyone call about me?

OLIVE Call? Not that I can remember. (*To the 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?

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OLIVE (*Turning back to the 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 goddamn 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!
(*She 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.
(*She 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.

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THE OD

COUPL

(FEMAL

VERSION

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 *(Reading from a 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 (*She 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 the 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 the 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 a 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. She burps*)
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 the table to get their things)

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

VERA It's okay. We understand.

MICKEY (*Lowering her 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*)

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

SYLVIE (To OLIVE) I'm three blocks away. I could be here in five minutes.
(OLIVE *nods*; SYLVIE leaves and 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, *whispering*) 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.
(She starts inside)

FLORENCE And a scarf. A woolen scarf . . . Cashmere is better if you have one. (She paces, rubbing her 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"

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

FLORENCE I don't think this is helping me.
(*She wipes off the 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.
(*OLIVE rubs her neck again*)

OLIVE (*She shakes her 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 Häagen-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*)

OLIVE What are you doing?

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. God-damn 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 goddamn 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 (*She 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.
(*She picks up the 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 (*She 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 (*Reaching 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 the 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 the kitchen with the 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 the kitchen*) You know, I'm glad. Because he finally made me realize. It's over! It didn't sink in until just this minute.
(*She 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. *(She 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 the bedroom)* What? *(FLORENCE climbs onto the dining table and begins dusting the light fixture)*

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

OLIVE *(She reenters, and looks at her with foreboding)* Well we'll see!

Act Two

SCENE I

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 spaces.*

MICKEY Entertainment!

OLIVE My meat. Go ahead.

RENEE *(She looks back toward the 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 *(Reading from a 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
RENEE Oh, Christ, I know it. Big
SYLVIE I think her husband owned the

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Collected Plays

of Neil Simon,

Volume III

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.

(FLORENCE 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 the 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 a coaster) And I have my coaster.

FLORENCE (Crosses back to the 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 Sylvie . . .

SYLVIE Thanks.

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

FLORENCE Aaaand a sandwich for Vera.

(She wipes the bottom of the dish with a 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 FLORENCE 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 question.

MICKEY Who was the Queen of Republic Pictures?

FLORENCE Vera Hruba Ralston.
(She goes into the 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 napkin down on the table)* Goddamn 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 her throat)* I can't breathe. That lousy machine has sucked all the air out of here.

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

SYLVIE *(Putting on her 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.

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

cted Plays SYLVIE (*points to VERA*) And people who say that are the third kind.

il Simon, (*She heads for the door*)

me III 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 the kitchen*) Florence, goddammit, we're all waiting. Close up the kitchen and get out here.

RENEE (*She picks up the question cards*) What's that smell? (*She smells the 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. (*She puts on her jacket and shoulder bag*)

4 2 9

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

THE ODD

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

COUPLE

FLORENCE Like what?

(FEMALE

MICKEY Like handcuffing you to the bed.

VERSION)

VERA Did you ever do it?

MICKEY Once. But he fell asleep and I slipped a disk trying to get to the bathroom. (*Heading for the 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 the 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 (*She starts to clean up the 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 livable. I don't want to irritate you.

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

FLORENCE (*She looks at OLIVE, puts down the 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 (*She picks up a cup and 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.

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THE ODI

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Neil Simon,

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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 the 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 (*Watching 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 GODDAMN 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 (*Throwing 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. (*She throws her a napkin*) You know what you are, Florence? You're a human accident.

FLORENCE (*Dabbing at her 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 (*She limps over to the table and puts the broken pieces of the 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.

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon,
Volume III

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.
(She finds the 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 the phone and 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?

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OLIVE You don't pronounce the J.

FLORENCE (*Tbinks*) 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 Valencia with Spanish rice, eggplant, squash, potato dumplings, and lemon soufflé.

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 the 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 the 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

ed Plays

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 a gleeful smile.

OLIVE (*Aloud, to the kitchen*) Oh, God, it's gorgeous . . . It looks like a Noel Coward play.

(She kicks off her shoes, then takes off her jacket and throws it on a 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 the 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 the bedroom, zipping up her dress, brushing back her hair. She crosses to the table against the 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 (*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?

4 3 9

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

THE ODD

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

COUPLE

FLORENCE Try eight-twenty!

(FEMALE

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

VERSION)

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 the 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 milk shakes? 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 (*She waves the 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.
(*She starts for the kitchen*)

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THE ODI

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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 Días 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 Sí. 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 Sí.

OLIVE The candy is no good?

MANOLO Sí. 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.* (*She 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 and bows. Her foot automatically bends up behind her*)

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

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

MANOLO And I double the pleasure. (*He bows and 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 her 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*) Sí . . . 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 Sí.

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 Toledo.

JESUS (*Correcting*) Tolydo.

FLORENCE I thought it was Toledo.

JESUS No. Ees pronounced Tolydo.

OLIVE (*Sings*) "She says Toledo and you say Tolydo, she says Tomeeto and you say Tomayto . . ." (*She and the boys laugh*)

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

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

FLORENCE Oh.

MANOLO You see, Castilian Spanish, you pronounce different than English. Barselona 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 Sí. 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 Sí. 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 That 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 vod-
kas.

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 bath-
room.

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 (Peeking in through the door) I'm fine. I'm just
having a little trouble with the ice cubes.
(She 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-fash-
ioned. They feel eet ees the man who should steal the
cake.

FLORENCE Steal the cake?

MANOLO The cake stealer?

FLORENCE The breadwinner?

MANOLO Sí. 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-fash-
ioned. 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
adiós.

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 "mareedo." Your husband. Sí?

FLORENCE Sí. Sí. 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 (*Sbrugs*) Wrenching . . . No comprendo.

FLORENCE (*Illustrates tearing apart with her 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 the table and shows them to the boys*)

FLORENCE This is the worst part of breaking up.

MANOLO (*He gets up and looks at the 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. Sí. 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 and shows it to them*) That's him. Sidney.

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

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

FLORENCE No. He just likes to wear boots.

JESUS (*Looking at the 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 a dish as the tears flow again*)

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

JESUS Sí. 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 Hayz! . . . 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 Sí. (*He 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 pot-holder 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 into the kitchen, then comes out with the dark, smoldering bird. She shows them the remains)

MANOLO (He crosses, looks at it) Hmmmm . . . 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 Stouffer's 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 the 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)

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FLORENCE (*At the top of the 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 the 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 the 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 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 the sofa. FLORENCE is carrying a tray with a steaming dish of spaghetti on it. She sits at the table and puts cheese on the spaghetti and begins to eat.

OLIVE gets up, takes a 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?

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FLORENCE Si. Yo comprendo. Gracias.

OLIVE (*She takes a key out of her pocket and 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 Gazpacho 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 (*She shakes her 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.

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Collected Plays
of Neil Simon,
Volume III

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.
(*She sits in a chair and crosses her 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?
(*She walks away*)

OLIVE Good. Because now I'm going to tell *you* off . . . (*FLORENCE rushes back, sits in the chair, and crosses her 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 heart-break 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? (*She grabs her pocketbook, takes out an*

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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 the 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 the table three or four times in despair*) God-damn 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! (*She opens up the suitcase and stands back*) There! That's how I settle them.

FLORENCE (*Confused, looks at the 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 them up with your Saran Wrap, and get out of here.

FLORENCE You mean actually move out?

OLIVE (*Heading for the kitchen*) Actually, physically, and immediately. (*She gets pots and pans in the 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. (*She hands the 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. (*She 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 the doorway*)

OLIVE (*She rushes to the 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, then come in*)

MICKEY What's going on? (*Looks at FLORENCE*) Florence, you look white as a ghost.

FLORENCE (*To the 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 the table.*)

(*MICKEY goes into the kitchen, then stops when she sees what's on the opposite wall*)

VERA (*Putting the 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,

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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!!!
(*She puts an arm around OLIVE and 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 of knowing we were worried about her. Everybody sit down, like nothing happened.
(*They all sit*)

SYLVIE (*Holding 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 (*She 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 thenk you already know. I have come to pick up Flo's clothes.

OLIVE (*Looking 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 (*She turns to the 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. (*He notices the 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 the 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 wonderful.
(He kisses her hand)

JESUS *(To FLORENCE)* Shall we help you up weeth your clothes?

FLORENCE *(She 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 toward 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 the 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 a 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 (*She takes items out of her 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 the phone*) Goodbye, girls. I'll send you down a box of nougat. (*She starts for the 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, but 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 the girls*) Are you starting the game now?

VERA Yeah. You want to play?

FLORENCE I would but I'm berry, berry busy . . .
(*She exits.*)

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 a card and reads*) "According to the 1962 Four Seasons' smash hit, who doesn't cry?"

(*OLIVE begins to sing the song "Big Girls Don't Cry."*)
SYLVIE *joins in . . . then VERA, then the others. They are singing as—*)

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