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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

The Odd Couple

by Neil Simon

SAMUEL FRENCH

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THE ODD COUPLE was first present by Saint Subber in the Plymouth Theatre in New York City on March 10, 1965. The performance was directed by Mike Nichols and the set design was by Oliver Smith. The cast was as follows:

SPEED . . . . . Paul Dooley
MURRAY . . . . . Nathaniel Frey
ROY . . . . . Sidney Armus
VINNIE . . . . . John Fiedler
OSCAR MADISON . . . . . Walter Matthau
FELIX UNGAR . . . . . Art Carney
GWENDOLYN PIGEON . . . . . Carole Shelley
CECILY PIGEON . . . . . Monica Evans

CHARACTERS

(In Order of Their Appearance:)

SPEED

MURRAY

ROY

VINNIE

OSCAR MADISON

FELIX UNGAR

GWENDOLYN PIGEON

CECILY PIGEON

SETTING

An apartment on Riverside Drive. New York City.

TIME

ACT I

A hot summer night.

ACT II

Scene 1: Two weeks later. About 11 p.m.

Scene 2: A few days later. About 8 p.m.

ACT III

The next evening. About 7:30 p.m.

ACT I

*(**TIME:** A warm summer night.)*

*(**SCENE:** The apartment of* **OSCAR MADISON***'s. This is one of those large eight-room affairs on Riverside Drive in the upper eighties. The building is about 35 years old and still has vestiges of its glorious past. High ceilings, walk-in closets and thick walls. We are in the living room with doors leading off to kitchen, bedrooms, and a bathroom, and a hallway to other bedrooms. Although the furnishings have been chosen with extreme good taste, the room itself, without the touch and care of a woman these past few months, is now a study in slovenliness. Dirty dishes, discarded clothes, old newspapers, empty bottles, glasses filled and unfilled, opened and unopened laundry packages, mail and disarrayed furniture abound. The only cheerful note left in this room is the lovely view of the New Jersey Palisades through its twelfth floor window. Three months ago, this was a lovely apartment.)*

*(**AT RISE:** The room is filled with smoke. A poker game is in progress. There are six chairs around the table but only four men are sitting. They are simply,* **MURRAY**, **ROY**, **SPEED** *and* **VINNIE**. **VINNIE**, *with the largest stack of chips in front of him, is nervously tapping his foot and keeps checking his watch.* **ROY** *is watching* **SPEED** *and* **SPEED** *is glaring at* **MURRAY** *with incredulity and utter fascination.* **MURRAY** *is the dealer. He slowly and methodically tries to shuffle. It is a ponderous*

and painful business. **SPEED** *shakes his head in disbelief. This is all done wordlessly.)*

SPEED. *(Cups his chin in his hand and looks at* **MURRAY**.*)* …Tell me, Mr. Maverick, is this your first time on the riverboat?

MURRAY. *(With utter disregard.)* You don't like it, get a machine. *(He continues to deal slowly.)*

ROY. Geez, it stinks in here.

VINNIE. *(Looks at his watch.)* What time is it?

SPEED. Again what time is it?

VINNIE. *(Whiny.)* My watch is slow. I'd like to know what time it is.

SPEED. *(Glares at him.)* You're winning ninety-five dollars, that's what time it is… Where the hell are you running?

VINNIE. I'm not running anywhere. I just asked what time it was. Who said anything about running?

ROY. *(Looks at his watch.)* It's ten-thirty.

(Pause. **MURRAY** *continues to shuffle.)*

VINNIE. *(Pause.)* I got to leave by twelve.

SPEED. *(Looks up in despair.)* Oh, Christ!

VINNIE. I told you that when I sat down. I got to leave by twelve. Murray, didn't I say that when I sat down? I said I got to leave by twelve.

SPEED. All right, don't talk to him. He's dealing. *(To* **MURRAY**.*)* Murray, you wanna rest for a while? Go lie down, sweetheart.

MURRAY. You want speed or accuracy, make up your mind. *(He begins to deal slowly.)*

*(***SPEED** *puffs on his cigar angrily.)*

ROY. Hey, you want to do me a really big favor? Smoke towards New Jersey.

*(***SPEED** *blows smoke at* **ROY**.*)*

MURRAY. No kidding, I'm really worried about Felix. *(Points to empty chair.)* He's never been this late before. Maybe

somebody should call. *(Yells offstage.)* Hey, Oscar, why don't you call Felix?

ROY. *(Waves hand through smoke.)* Listen, why don't we chip in three dollars apiece and buy another window. How the hell can you breathe in here?

MURRAY. How many cards you got, four?

SPEED. Yes, Murray, we all have four cards. When you give us one more, we'll all have five. If you were to give us two more, we'd have six. Understand how it works now?

ROY. *(Yells offstage.)* Hey, Oscar, what do you say? In or out?

(From offstage we hear **OSCAR***'s voice.)*

OSCAR. *(Offstage.)* Out, pussycat, out!

*(***SPEED** *opens, and the others bet.)*

VINNIE. I told my wife I'd be home by one the latest. We're making an eight o'clock plane to Florida. I told you that when I sat down.

SPEED. Don't cry, Vinnie. You're forty-two years old. It's embarrassing. Give me two… *(Discards.)*

ROY. Why doesn't he fix the air-conditioner? It's ninety-eight degrees and it sits there sweating like everyone else. I'm out. *(Goes to window and looks out.)*

MURRAY. Who goes to Florida in July?

VINNIE. It's off season. There's no crowds and you get the best room for one-tenth the price. No cards…

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

MURRAY. Dealer takes four… Hey, you think maybe Felix is sick? *(He points to empty chair.)* I mean he's never been this late before.

ROY. *(Takes laundry bag from armchair and sits.)* You know it's the same garbage from last week's game. I'm beginning to recognize things.

MURRAY. *(Throwing cards down.)* I'm out…

SPEED. *(Showing hand.)* Two kings…

VINNIE. Straight… *(Shows hand and takes in pot.)*

MURRAY. Hey, maybe he's in his office locked in the john again. Did you know Felix was once locked in the john overnight? He wrote out his entire will on a half a roll of toilet paper! …Heee, what a nut!

*(***VINNIE** *is playing with his chips.)*

SPEED. *(Glares at him as he shuffles cards.)* Don't play with your chips. I'm asking you nice, don't play with your chips.

VINNIE. *(To* **SPEED**.*)* I'm not playing. I'm counting. Leave me alone. What are you picking on me for? How much do you think I'm winning? Fifteen dollars!

SPEED. *Fifteen dollars?* You dropped more than that in your cuffs! *(***SPEED** *deals a game of draw poker.)*

MURRAY. *(Yells offstage.)* Hey, Oscar, what do you say?

OSCAR. *(Enters carrying a tray with beer, sandwiches, can of peanuts, and opened bags of pretzels and Fritos.)* I'm in! I'm in! Go ahead. Deal!

*(***OSCAR MADISON** *is 43. He is a pleasant, appealing man. He seems to enjoy life to the fullest. He enjoys his weekly poker game, his friends, his excessive drinking and his cigars. He is also one of those lucky creatures in life who even enjoys his work, a sportswriter for the New York Post. His carefree attitude is evident in the sloppiness of his household but it seems to bother others more than it does* **OSCAR**. *This is all not to say that* **OSCAR** *is without cares or worries. He just doesn't seem to have any.)*

VINNIE. Aren't you going to look at your cards?

OSCAR. *(Sets tray on side chair.)* What for? I'm gonna bluff anyway. *(Opens bottle of Coke.)* Who gets the Coke?

MURRAY. I get a Coke.

OSCAR. My friend Murray, the policeman, gets a warm Coke. *(He gives him the bottle.)*

ROY. *(Opens the betting.)* You still didn't fix the refrigerator? It's been two weeks now. No wonder it stinks in here.

OSCAR. *(Picking up his cards.)* Temper, temper. If I wanted nagging I'd go back with my wife… *(Throws them down.)* I'm out… Who wants food?

MURRAY. What have you got?

OSCAR. *(Looks under bread.)* I got brown sandwiches and green sandwiches… Well, what do you say?

MURRAY. What's the green?

OSCAR. It's either very new cheese or very old meat.

MURRAY. I'll take the brown.

*(***OSCAR** *gives* **MURRAY** *a sandwich.)*

ROY. *(Glares at* **MURRAY**.*)* Are you crazy? You're not going to eat that, are you?

MURRAY. I'm hungry.

ROY. His refrigerator's been broken for two weeks. I saw milk standing in there that wasn't even in the bottle.

OSCAR. *(To* **ROY**.*)* What are you, some kind of a health nut? Eat, Murray, eat!

ROY. I've got six cards…

SPEED. That figures… I've got three aces. Misdeal.

(All throw their cards in. **SPEED** *begins to shuffle.)*

VINNIE. You know who makes very good sandwiches? Felix. Did you ever taste his cream cheese and pimento on date nut bread?

SPEED. *(To* **VINNIE**.*)* All right, make up your mind, poker or menus.

*(***OSCAR** *opens a can of beer, which sprays in a geyser over all players and table. There is a hubbub as they all yell at* **OSCAR**. *He hands* **ROY** *the overflowing can, and pushes the puddle of beer under the chair. The Players start to go back to the game only to be sprayed by the beer again as* **OSCAR** *opens another can. There is another outraged cry as they try to stop* **OSCAR** *and mop up the beer on the table with a towel which is hanging on the standing lamp.* **OSCAR**, *undisturbed, gives*

them the beer and the bags of refreshments, and they finally sit back in their chairs. **OSCAR** *wipes his hands on the sleeve of* **ROY***'s jacket which is hanging on the back of the chair.)*

SPEED. Hey, Vinnie, tell Oscar what time you're leaving.

VINNIE. *(Like a trained dog.)* Twelve o'clock.

SPEED. *(To others.)* You hear? We got ten minutes before the next announcement. All right, this game is five-card stud… *(Deals, and ad libs calling cards, ending with* **MURRAY**'s *card.)* And a bullet for the policeman… All right, Murray, it's your bet. *(No answer.)* Do something, huh?

OSCAR. *(Getting drink at bar.)* Don't yell at my friend Murray.

MURRAY. *(Throwing in coin.)* I'm in for a quarter.

OSCAR. *(Proudly looks in* **MURRAY**'s *eyes.)* Beautiful, baby, beautiful. *(Sits down and begins to open can of peanuts.)*

ROY. Hey, Oscar, let's make a rule. Every six months you have to buy fresh potato chips. How can you live like this? Don't you have a maid?

OSCAR. *(Shakes head.)* She quit after my wife and kids left. The work got to be too much for her… *(Looks on table.)* The pot's shy. Who didn't put in a quarter?

MURRAY. *(To* **OSCAR**.*) You* didn't.

OSCAR. *(Puts in money.)* You got a big mouth, Murray. Just for that, lend me twenty dollars.

*(***SPEED** *deals another round.)*

MURRAY. I just loaned you twenty dollars ten minutes ago.

(All join in a round of betting.)

OSCAR. You loaned me *ten* dollars *twenty* minutes ago. Learn to count, pussy cat.

MURRAY. Learn to play poker, chicken licken! …Borrow from somebody else. I keep winning my own money back.

ROY. *(To* **OSCAR**.*)* You owe everybody in the game. If you don't have it, you shouldn't play.

OSCAR. …All right, I'm through being the nice one. You owe me six dollars apiece for the buffet.

SPEED. *(Dealing another round of cards.) Buffet?* Hot beer and two sandwiches left over from when you went to high school?

OSCAR. What do you want at a poker game, a tomato surprise? …Murray, lend me twenty dollars or I'll call your wife and tell her you're in Central Park wearing a dress.

MURRAY. You want money, ask Felix.

OSCAR. He's not here.

MURRAY. Neither am I.

ROY. *(Gives him money.)* All right, here. You're on the books for another twenty.

OSCAR. How many times are you gonna keep saying it? *(Takes money.)*

MURRAY. When are you gonna call Felix?

OSCAR. When are we gonna play poker?

MURRAY. Aren't you even worried? It's the first game he's missed in over two years.

OSCAR. The record is fifteen years set by Lou Gehrig in 1939! …I'll call! I'll call!

ROY. How can you be so lazy?

(The phone rings.)

OSCAR. *(Throwing cards in.)* Call me irresponsible, I'm funny that way. *(Goes to phone.)*

SPEED. Pair of sixes…

VINNIE. Three deuces…

SPEED. *(Throws up hands in despair.)* This is my last week. I get all the aggravation I need at home.

*(***OSCAR** *picks up phone.)*

OSCAR. Hello! Oscar the Poker Player!

VINNIE. *(To* **OSCAR**.*)* If it's my wife tell her I'm leaving at twelve.

SPEED. *(To* **VINNIE**.*)* You look at your watch once more and you get the peanuts in your face… *(To* **ROY**.*)* Deal the cards!

(The game continues during **OSCAR***'s phone conversation, with* **ROY** *dealing a game of stud.)*

OSCAR. *(Into phone.)* Who? …Who did you want, please? …Dabby? Dabby who? …No, there's no Dabby here… Oh, *Daddy! (To others.)* For crissakes, it's my kid. *(Back into phone, he speaks with great love and affection.)* Brucey, hello, baby. Yes, it's Daddy! *(There is a general outburst of ad-libbing from the Poker Players. To others.)* Hey, come on, give me a break, willya? My five-year-old kid is calling from California. It must be costing him a fortune. *(Back into phone.)* How've you been, sweetheart? … Yes, I finally got your letter. It took three weeks… Yes, but next time you tell Mommy to give you a stamp… I know, but you're not supposed to draw it on… *(Laughs. To others.)* You hear?

SPEED. We hear. We hear. We're all thrilled.

OSCAR. *(Into phone.)* What's that, darling…? What goldfish? …Oh, in your room! …Oh, sure. Sure, I'm taking care of them… *(He holds phone over chest.)* Oh, God, I killed my kid's goldfish! *(Back into phone.)* Yes, I feed them every day.

ROY. Murderer!

OSCAR. Mommy wants to speak to me? Right… Take care of yourself, soldier. I love you.

VINNIE. *(Beginning to deal a game of stud.)* Ante a dollar…

SPEED. *(To* **OSCAR**.*)* Cost you a dollar to play. You got a dollar?

OSCAR. Not after I get through talking to this lady. *(Into phone. False cheerfulness.)* Hello, Blanche. How are you? …Err… Yes… I have a pretty good idea why you're calling… I'm a week behind with the check, right? …*Four* weeks?? That's not possible… Because it's not possible… Blanche, I keep a record of every check and I *know* I'm only *three* weeks behind! …Blanche, I'm

trying the best I can… Blanche, don't threaten me with jail because it's not a threat… With my expenses and my alimony, a prisoner takes home more pay than I do! …Very nice, in front of the kids… Blanche, don't tell me you're going to have my salary attached, just say goodbye! …Goodbye! *(He hangs up. To players.)* I'm eight hundred dollars behind in alimony so let's up the stakes… *(Gets drink from poker table.)*

ROY. She can do it, you know.

OSCAR. What?

ROY. Throw you in jail. For non-support of the kids.

OSCAR. Never. If she can't call me once a week to aggravate me, she's not happy. *(Crosses to bar.)*

MURRAY. It doesn't bother you? That you can go to jail? Or that maybe your kids don't have enough clothes or enough to eat?

OSCAR. Murray… *Poland* could live for a year on what my kids leave over for lunch! …Can we play cards? *(Refills drink.)*

ROY. But that's the point. You shouldn't *be* in this kind of trouble. It's because you don't know how to manage anything. I should know, I'm your accountant.

OSCAR. *(Crossing to table.)* If you're my accountant, how come I need money?

ROY. If you need money, how come you play poker?

OSCAR. Because I need money.

ROY. But you always lose.

OSCAR. That's why I need the money! …Listen, *I'm* not complaining. *You're* complaining. I get along all right. I'm living.

ROY. Alone? In eight dirty rooms?

OSCAR. If I win tonight, I'll buy a broom.

*(***MURRAY** *and* **SPEED** *buy chips from* **VINNIE**, *and* **MURRAY** *begins to shuffle the deck for a game of draw.)*

ROY. That's not what you need. What you need is a wife.

OSCAR. How can I afford a wife when I can't afford a broom?

ROY. Then don't play poker.

OSCAR. *(Puts down drink, rushes to* **ROY** *and they struggle over the bag of potato chips, which rips showering everyone, who all begin to yell at one another.)* Then don't come to my house and eat my potato chips!

MURRAY. What are you yelling about? We're playing a friendly game.

SPEED. Who's *playing?* We've been sitting here talking since eight o'clock.

VINNIE. Since *seven.* That's why I said I was going to quit at *twelve.*

SPEED. How'd you like a stale banana right in the mouth?

MURRAY. *(The peacemaker.)* All right, all right, let's calm down… Take it easy… I'm a cop, you know. I could arrest the whole lousy game. *(Finishes dealing cards.)* Four…

OSCAR. *(Sitting at table.)* My friend Murray the Cop is right. Let's just play cards. And please hold them up, I can't see where I marked them.

MURRAY. You're worse than the kids from the PAL.

OSCAR. But you still love me, Roy, sweety, right?

ROY. *(Petulant.)* Yeah yeah.

OSCAR. That's not good enough. Come on, say it. In front of the whole poker game. "I love you, Oscar Madison."

ROY. You don't take any of this seriously, do you? You owe money to your wife, your government, your friends…

OSCAR. *(Throws cards down.)* What do you want me to do, Roy, jump in the garbage disposal and grind myself to death? *(The phone rings. He goes to answer it.)* Life goes on even for those of us who are divorced, broke and sloppy. *(Into phone.)* Hello? Divorced, Broke and Sloppy. Oh, hello, sweetheart. *(He becomes very seductive and pulls phone to side and talks low, but still audibly to others, who turn and listen.)* I told you not to call me during

the game… I can't talk to you now… You *know* I do, darling… All right, just a minute. *(He turns.)* Murray, it's your wife. *(Puts phone on table and sits on sofa.)*

MURRAY. *(Nods disgustedly as he crosses to phone.)* I wish you *were* having an affair with her… Then she wouldn't bother *me* all the time. *(Picks up phone.)* Hello, Mimi, what's wrong?

*(***SPEED** *gets up, stretches, and goes into bathroom.)*

OSCAR. *(Woman's voice, imitating Mimi.)* What time are you coming home? *(Then imitating* **MURRAY**.*)* I don't know, about twelve, twelve-thirty.

MURRAY. *(Into phone.)* I don't know, about twelve, twelve-thirty! *(***ROY** *gets up and stretches.)* Why, what did you want, Mimi? …"A corned beef sandwich and a strawberry malted!"

OSCAR. Is she pregnant again?

MURRAY. *(Holds phone over chest.)* No, just fat!

(There is the sound of a toilet flushing, and after **SPEED** *comes out of the bathroom,* **VINNIE** *goes in. Into phone again.)*

What? …How could you hear that, I had the phone over my chest? …Who? …Felix? …No, he didn't show up tonight… What's wrong? …You're kidding! …How should I know? …All right, all right, goodbye…

(The toilet flushes again, and after **VINNIE** *comes out of the bathroom,* **ROY** *goes in.)*

Goodbye, Mimi… Goodbye. *(He hangs up. To others.)* Well, what did I tell you? I knew it!

ROY. What's the matter?

MURRAY. *(Pacing above the couch.)* Felix is missing!

OSCAR. Who?

MURRAY. Felix! Felix Ungar! The man who sits in that chair every week and cleans ashtrays. I told you something was up.

SPEED. *(At the table.)* What do you mean, missing?

MURRAY. He didn't show up for work today. He didn't come home tonight. No one knows where he is. Mimi just spoke to his wife.

VINNIE. *(In his chair at the poker table.)* Felix*?*

MURRAY. They looked everywhere… I'm telling you he's missing.

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

VINNIE. That's right. You've got to be missing for forty-eight hours before you're missing. The worst he could be is lost.

MURRAY. How could he be lost? He's forty-four years old and lives on West End Avenue. What's the matter with you?

ROY. *(Sitting in armchair.)* Maybe he had an accident.

OSCAR. They would have heard.

ROY. If he's laying in a gutter somewhere? Who would know who he is?

OSCAR. He's got ninety-two credit cards in his wallet. The minute something happens to him, America lights up.

VINNIE. Maybe he went to a movie. You know how long those pictures are today.

SPEED. *(Looks at* **VINNIE** *contemptuously.)* No wonder you're going to Florida in July! *Dumb dumb dumb!*

ROY. Maybe he was mugged?

OSCAR. For thirty-six hours? How much money could he have on him?

ROY. Maybe they took his clothes. I knew a guy who was mugged in a doctor's office. He had to go home in a nurse's uniform.

*(***OSCAR** *throws a pillow from the couch at* **ROY**.*)*

SPEED. Murray, you're a cop. What do you think?

MURRAY. I think it's something real bad.

SPEED. How do you know?

MURRAY. I can feel it in my bones.

SPEED. *(To others.)* You hear? Bulldog Drummond.

ROY. Maybe he's drunk. Does he drink?

OSCAR. Felix? On New Year's Eve he has Pepto Bismal… What are we guessing? I'll call his wife. *(He picks up phone.)*

SPEED. Wait a minute! Don't start anything yet. Just 'cause we don't know where he is doesn't mean *somebody else* doesn't… Does he have a girl?

VINNIE. A what?

SPEED. A girl? You know. Like when you're through work early.

MURRAY. Felix? Playing around? Are you crazy? He wears a vest and galoshes.

SPEED. *(Gets up and moves towards* **MURRAY**.*)* You mean you automatically know who has and who hasn't got a girl on the side?

MURRAY. *(Moves to* **SPEED**.*)* Yes, I automatically know.

SPEED. All right, you're so smart. Have *I* got a girl?

MURRAY. No, you haven't got a girl. What you've got is what *I've* got. What you *wish* you got and what you *got* is a whole different civilization! …Oscar maybe has a girl on the side.

SPEED. That's different. He's divorced. That's not on the *side*. That's in the *middle. (Moves to table.)*

OSCAR. *(To them both as he starts to dial.)* You through? 'Cause one of our poker players is missing. I'd like to find out about him.

VINNIE. I thought he looked edgy the last couple of weeks. *(To* **SPEED**.*)* Didn't you think he looked edgy?

SPEED. No. As a matter of fact, I thought *you* looked edgy. *(Moves down right.)*

OSCAR. *(Into phone.)* Hello? …Frances? …Oscar. I just heard.

ROY. Tell her not to worry. She's probably hysterical.

MURRAY. Yeah, you know women. *(Sits down on couch.)*

OSCAR. *(Into phone.)* Listen, Frances, the most important thing is not to worry… Oh! *(To others.)* She's not worried.

MURRAY. Sure.

OSCAR. *(Into phone.)* Frances, do you have *any* idea where he could be? …He what? …You're kidding? …Why? …No, I didn't know… Gee, that's too bad… All right, listen, Frances, you just sit tight and the minute I hear anything I'll let you know… Right… G'bye.

(He hangs up. They all look at him expectantly. He gets up wordlessly and crosses to the table, thinking. They all watch him a second, not being able to stand it any longer.)

MURRAY. Ya gonna tell us or do we hire a private detective?

OSCAR. They broke up!

ROY. Who?

OSCAR. Felix and Frances! They broke up! The entire marriage is through.

VINNIE. You're kidding?

ROY. I don't believe it.

SPEED. After twelve years?

*(***OSCAR** *sits down at the table.)*

VINNIE. They were such a happy couple.

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

SPEED. Go figure it. Felix and Frances.

ROY. What are you surprised at? He used to sit there every Friday night and tell us how they were fighting.

SPEED. I know. But who believes Felix?

VINNIE. What happened?

OSCAR. She wants out, that's all.

MURRAY. He'll go to pieces. I know Felix. He's going to try something crazy.

SPEED. That's all he ever used to talk about. "My beautiful wife. My wonderful wife." What happened?

OSCAR. His beautiful, wonderful wife can't stand him, that's what happened.

MURRAY. He'll kill himself. You hear what I'm saying? He's going to go out and try to kill himself.

SPEED. *(To* **MURRAY**.*)* Will you shut up, Murray? Stop being a cop for two minutes. *(To* **OSCAR**.*)* Where'd he go, Oscar?

OSCAR. He went out to kill himself.

MURRAY. What did I tell you?

ROY. *(To* **OSCAR**.*)* Are you serious?

OSCAR. That's what she said. He was going out to kill himself. He didn't want to do it at home 'cause the kids were sleeping.

VINNIE. Why?

OSCAR. Why? Because that's Felix, that's why. *(Goes to bar and refills his drink.)* You know what he's like. He sleeps on the window sill. "Love me or I'll jump" … 'Cause he's a nut, that's why.

MURRAY. That's right. Remember he tried something like that in the army? She wanted to break off the engagement so he started cleaning guns in his mouth.

SPEED. I don't believe it. Talk! That's all Felix is, talk.

VINNIE. *(Worried.)* But is that what he said? In those words? "I'm going to kill myself"?

OSCAR. *(Pacing about the table.)* I don't know in what words. She didn't read it to me.

ROY. You mean he left her a note?

OSCAR. No, he sent a telegram.

MURRAY. A *suicide telegram?* …Who sends a *suicide telegram?*

OSCAR. Felix, the nut, that's who! …Can you imagine getting a thing like that? She even has to tip the kid a quarter.

ROY. I don't get it. If he wants to kill himself, why does he send a telegram?

OSCAR. Don't you see how his mind works? If he sends a note, she might not get it 'til Monday and he'd have no

excuse for not being dead. This way, for a dollar ten, he's got a chance to be saved.

VINNIE. You mean he really doesn't want to kill himself? He just wants sympathy.

OSCAR. What *he'd* really like is to go to the funeral and sit in the back. He'd be the biggest cryer there.

MURRAY. He's right.

OSCAR. Sure I'm right…

MURRAY. We get these cases every day. All they want is attention. We got a guy who calls us every Saturday afternoon from the George Washington Bridge.

ROY. I don't know. You never can tell what a guy'll do when he's hysterical.

MURRAY. Nahhh. Nine out of ten times they don't jump.

ROY. What about the tenth time?

MURRAY. They jump. He's right. There's a possibility.

OSCAR. Not with Felix. I know him. He's too nervous to kill himself. He wears his seat belt in a drive-in movie.

VINNIE. Isn't there someplace we could look for him?

SPEED. Where? Where would you look? Who knows *where* he is?

(The doorbell rings. They all look at **OSCAR**.*)*

OSCAR. Of course! …If you're going to kill yourself, where's the safest place to do it? …With your friends!

*(***VINNIE** *starts for door.)*

MURRAY. *(Stopping him.)* Wait a minute! The guy may be hysterical. Let's play it nice and easy. If *we're* calm, maybe *he'll* be calm.

ROY. *(Getting up and joining them.)* That's right. That's how they do it with those guys out on the ledge. You talk nice and soft.

*(***SPEED** *rushes over to them, and joins in the frenzied discussion.)*

VINNIE. What'll we say to him?

MURRAY. We don't say nothin'. Like we never heard a thing.

OSCAR. *(Trying to get their attention.)* You through with this discussion? Because he already could have hung himself out in the hall. *(To* **VINNIE**.*)* Vinnie, open the door!

MURRAY. Remember! Like we don't know nothin'.

(All rush back to their seats and grab up cards, which they concentrate on with the greatest intensity. **VINNIE** *opens the door.* **FELIX UNGAR** *is there. About 44. His clothes are rumpled as if he had slept in them, and he needs a shave. Although he tries to act matter-of-fact, there is an air of great tension and nervousness about him.)*

FELIX. *(Softly.)* Hi, Vin!

*(***VINNIE** *quickly goes back to his seat and studies his cards.* **FELIX** *has his hands in his pockets, trying to be very nonchalant. Controlled calm.)*

Hi, fellas.

(They all mumble hello, but do not look at him. He puts his coat over the railing and crosses to the table.)

How's the game going?

(They all mumble appropriate remarks, and continue staring at their cards.)

Good! …Good! …Sorry I'm late.

*(***FELIX** *looks a little disappointed that no one asks "What?" …He starts to pick up a sandwich, changes his mind, and makes a gesture of distaste. He vaguely looks around.)*

Any Coke left?

OSCAR. *(Looking up from his cards.)* Coke? …Gee, I don't think so… I got a Seven Up!

FELIX. *(Bravely.)* No… I felt like a Coke. I just don't feel like Seven Up…tonight! *(Stands watching the game.)*

OSCAR. What's the bet?

SPEED. You bet a quarter…it's up to Murray… Murray, what do you say? *(***MURRAY** *is staring at* **FELIX.***)* Murray! …Murray!

ROY. *(To* **VINNIE.***)* Tap his shoulder.

VINNIE. *(Taps* **MURRAY**'s *shoulder.)* Murray!

MURRAY. *(Startled.)* What? What?

SPEED. It's up to you.

MURRAY. Why is it always up to me?

SPEED. It's not always up to you. It's up to you now. What do you do?

MURRAY. I'm in. I'm in. *(He throws in quarter.)*

FELIX. *(Moves to bookcase.)* Anyone call about me?

OSCAR. Er…not that I can remember. *(To others.)* Did anyone call for Felix? *(They all shrug and ad-lib "No.")* Why? …Were you expecting a call?

FELIX. *(Looking at books on shelf.)* No! …No! …Just asking. *(He opens book and examines it.)*

ROY. Er… I'll see his bet and raise it a dollar.

FELIX. *(Without looking up from book.)* I just thought someone might have called.

SPEED. It costs me a dollar and a quarter to play, right?

OSCAR. Right!

FELIX. *(Still looking at book…sing-song.) But…*if no one called, no one called. *(Slams book shut and puts it back. All jump at the noise.)*

SPEED. *(Getting nervous.)* What does it cost me to play again?

MURRAY. *(Angry.)* A dollar and a quarter! *A dollar and a quarter!* Pay attention, for crise sakes!

ROY. All right, take it easy. Take it easy.

OSCAR. Let's calm down, everyone, heh?

MURRAY. I'm sorry. I can't help it. *(Points to* **SPEED.***)* He makes me nervous.

SPEED. I make *you* nervous. You make *me* nervous. You make *everyone* nervous.

MURRAY. *(Sarcastic.)* I'm sorry. Forgive me. I'll kill myself.

OSCAR. Murray! *(He motions with his head to* **FELIX**.*)*

MURRAY. *(Realizes his error.)* Oh! …Sorry.

*(***SPEED** *glares at him. They all sit in silence a moment, until* **VINNIE** *catches sight of* **FELIX** *who is now staring out upstage window. He quickly calls the others' attention to* **FELIX**.*)*

FELIX. *(Looking back at them from the window.)* Gee, it's a pretty view from here… What is it, twelve floors?

OSCAR. *(Quickly crossing to the window and closing it.)* No. It's only eleven. That's all. Eleven. It says twelve but it's really only eleven. *(He then turns and closes the other window as* **FELIX** *watches him.* **OSCAR** *shivers slightly.)* Chilly in here. *(To others.)* Isn't it chilly in here? *(Crosses back to table.)*

ROY. Yeah, that's much better.

OSCAR. *(To* **FELIX**.*)* Want to sit down and play? It's still early.

VINNIE. Sure. We're in no rush. We'll be here 'til three, four in the morning.

FELIX. *(Shrugs.)* I don't know… I just don't feel much like playing now.

OSCAR. *(Sitting at table.)* Oh! …Well…what *do* you feel like doing?

FELIX. *(Shrugs.)* I'll find *some*thing… *(Starts to walk toward other room.)* Don't worry about me…

OSCAR. Where are you going?

FELIX. *(Stops in the doorway. He looks at others who are all staring at him.)* To the john.

OSCAR. *(Looks at others worried, then at* **FELIX**.*)* Alone?

FELIX. *(Nods.)* I always go alone! Why?

OSCAR. *(Shrugs.)* No reason! …You gonna be in there long?

FELIX. *(Shrugs, then says meaningfully, like the martyr.)* As long as it takes.

(Then he goes into the bathroom and slams the door shut behind him. Immediately they all jump

up and crowd about the bathroom door, whispering in frenzied anxiety.)

MURRAY. Are you crazy? Letting him go to the john alone?

OSCAR. What did you want me to do?

ROY. Stop him! Go in with him!

OSCAR. Suppose he just has to go to the john?

MURRAY. Supposing he does? He's better off being *embarrassed* than dead!

OSCAR. How's he going to kill himself in the john?

SPEED. What do you mean, how? Razor blades, pills. Anything that's in there.

OSCAR. That's the *kids'* bathroom. The worst he could do is brush his teeth to death.

ROY. He could jump.

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

OSCAR. It's only six inches wide.

MURRAY. He could break the glass. He could cut his wrists.

OSCAR. He could also flush himself into the East River. I'm telling you he's not going to try anything! *(Moves to table.)*

ROY. *(Goes to doorway.)* Shhh! Listen! He's crying… *(There is a pause as all listen as* **FELIX** *sobs.)* You hear that. He's crying.

MURRAY. Isn't that terrible? …For God's sakes, Oscar, do something! Say something!

OSCAR. What? What do you say to a man who's crying in your bathroom?

(There is the sound of the toilet flushing and **ROY** *makes a mad dash back to his chair.)*

ROY. He's coming!

(They all scramble back to their places. **MURRAY** *gets mixed up with* **VINNIE** *and they quickly straighten it out.* **FELIX** *comes back into room. But he seems calm and collected with no evident signs of having cried.)*

FELIX. I guess I'll be running along.

(He starts for the door. **OSCAR** *jumps up. So do others.)*

OSCAR. Felix, wait a second.

FELIX. No! No! I can't talk to you. I can't talk to anyone.

(They all try to grab him, stopping him near the stairs.)

MURRAY. Felix, please. We're your friends. Don't run out like this.

*(***FELIX** *struggles to pull away.)*

OSCAR. Felix, sit down. Just for a minute. Talk to us.

FELIX. There's nothing to talk about. There's nothing to say. It's over. Over. Everything is over. Let me go!

(He breaks away from them and dashes into the stage right bedroom. They start to chase him and he dodges from the bedroom through the adjoining door into the bathroom.)

ROY. Stop him! Grab him!

FELIX. *(Looking for an exit.)* Let me out! I've got to get out of here!

OSCAR. Felix, you're hysterical.

FELIX. Please let me out of here!

MURRAY. The john! Don't let him get in the john!

FELIX. *(Comes out of the bathroom into the room with* **ROY** *hanging onto him, and the others trailing behind.)* Leave me alone. Why doesn't everyone leave me alone?

OSCAR. All right, Felix, I'm warning you… Now cut it out! *(Throws half-filled glass of water, which he has picked up from the bookcase, into* **FELIX**'s *face.)*

FELIX. It's *my* problem. I'll work it out. Leave me alone… Ohh, my stomach. *(He collapses in* **ROY**'s *arms.)*

MURRAY. What's the matter with your stomach?

VINNIE. He looks sick. Look at his face.

(All try to hold him as they lead him over to the couch.)

FELIX. I'm not sick. I'm all right. I didn't take anything, I swear… Ohh, my stomach.

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

FELIX. *(Sitting on couch.)* Nothing! Nothing! I didn't take anything… Don't tell Frances what I did, please! …Oohh, my stomach.

MURRAY. He took something! I'm telling you he took something.

OSCAR. What, Felix? *What??*

FELIX. Nothing! I didn't take anything.

OSCAR. Pills? Did you take pills?

FELIX. No! No!

OSCAR. *(Grabbing* **FELIX**.*)* Don't lie to me, Felix. Did you take pills?

FELIX. No, I didn't. I didn't take anything.

MURRAY. Thank God, he didn't take pills.

(All relax and take a breath of relief.)

FELIX. Just a few, that's all.

(All react in alarm and concern over pills.)

OSCAR. He took pills.

MURRAY. How many pills?

OSCAR. What kind of pills?

FELIX. I don't know what kind. Little green ones. I just grabbed anything out of her medicine cabinet… I must have been crazy.

OSCAR. Didn't you look? Didn't you see what kind?

FELIX. I couldn't see. The light's broken. Don't call Frances. Don't tell her. I'm so ashamed. So ashamed.

OSCAR. Felix, how-many-pills-did-you-take?

FELIX. I don't know. I can't remember.

OSCAR. I'm calling Frances.

FELIX. *(Grabs him.)* No! Don't call her. Don't call her. If she hears I took a whole bottle of pills…

MURRAY. *A whole bottle? A whole bottle of pills? (He turns to* **VINNIE**.*)* My God, call an ambulance!

*(***VINNIE** *runs to the front door.)*

OSCAR. *(To* **MURRAY**.*)* You don't even know what *kind!*

MURRAY. What's the difference? He took-a-whole-bottle!

OSCAR. Maybe they were vitamins. He could be the healthiest one in the room! …Take it easy, will you?

FELIX. Don't call Frances. Promise me you won't call Frances.

MURRAY. Open his collar. Open the window. Give him some air.

SPEED. Walk him around. Don't let him go to sleep.

*(***SPEED** *and* **MURRAY** *pick* **FELIX** *up and walk him around, while* **ROY** *rubs his wrists.)*

ROY. Rub his wrists. Keep his circulation going.

VINNIE. *(Running to bathroom to get a compress.)* A cold compress. Put a cold compress on his neck.

(They sit **FELIX** *in the armchair, still chattering in alarm.)*

OSCAR. One doctor at a time, heh? All the interns shut the hell up!

FELIX. I'm all right. I'll be all right… *(To* **OSCAR** *urgently.)* You didn't call Frances, did you?

MURRAY. *(To others.)* You just gonna stand here? No one's gonna do anything? I'm calling a doctor. *(Crosses to phone.)*

FELIX. No! No doctor.

MURRAY. You *gotta* have a doctor.

FELIX. I don't need a doctor.

MURRAY. You gotta get the pills out.

FELIX. I got them out. I threw up before! …

(Sits back weakly. **MURRAY** *hangs up the phone.)*

Don't you have a root beer or a ginger ale?

*(***VINNIE** *gives compress to* **SPEED**.*)*

ROY. *(To* **VINNIE**.*)* Get him a drink.

OSCAR. *(Glares angrily at* **FELIX**.*)* He threw them up!

VINNIE. Which would you rather have, Felix, the root beer or the ginger ale?

SPEED. *(To* **VINNIE**.*)* Get him the drink! Just get him the drink.

*(***VINNIE** *runs into the kitchen as* **SPEED** *puts the compress on* **FELIX***'s head.)*

FELIX. Twelve years. Twelve years we were married. Did you know we were married twelve years, Roy?

ROY. *(Comforting him.)* Yes, Felix. I knew.

FELIX. *(Great emotion in his voice.)* And now it's over. Like that it's over. That's hysterical, isn't it?

SPEED. Maybe it was just a fight. You've had fights before, Felix.

FELIX. No, it's over. She's getting a lawyer tomorrow… *My* cousin… She's using *my* cousin! … *(He sobs.)* Whom am *I* going to get? …

*(***VINNIE** *comes out of kitchen with glass of root beer.)*

MURRAY. *(Patting his shoulder.)* It's okay, Felix. Come on. Take it easy.

VINNIE. *(Gives glass to* **FELIX**.*)* Here's the root beer.

FELIX. I'm all right. Honestly… I'm just crying.

(He puts his head down. They all look at him helplessly.)

MURRAY. All right, let's not stand around looking at him. *(Pushes* **SPEED** *and* **VINNIE** *away.)* Let's break it up, heh?

FELIX. Yes, don't stand there looking at me. Please.

OSCAR. *(To others.)* Come on, he's all right. Let's call it a night.

*(***MURRAY**, **SPEED** *and* **ROY** *turn in their chips at the poker table, get their coats and get ready to go.)*

FELIX. I'm so ashamed. Please, fellas, forgive me.

VINNIE. *(Bending to* **FELIX**.*)* Oh, Felix, we—we understand.

FELIX. Don't say anything about this to anyone, Vinnie. Will you promise me?

VINNIE. I'm going to Florida tomorrow.

FELIX. Oh, that's nice. Have a good time.

VINNIE. Thanks.

FELIX. *(Turns away and sighs in despair.)* We were going to go to Florida next winter. *(He laughs, but it's a sob.)* Without the kids! …Now they'll go without me.

*(***VINNIE** *gets his coat and* **OSCAR** *ushers them all to the door.)*

MURRAY. *(Stopping at door.)* Maybe one of us should stay?

OSCAR. It's all right, Murray.

MURRAY. Suppose he tries something again?

OSCAR. He won't try anything again.

MURRAY. How do you *know* he won't try anything again?

FELIX. *(Turns to* **MURRAY**.*)* I won't try anything again. I'm very tired.

OSCAR. *(To* **MURRAY**.*)* You hear? He's very tired. He had a busy night… Good night, fellows…

(All ad-lib goodbyes and leave. The door closes, but opens immediately and **ROY** *comes back in.)*

ROY. If anything happens, Oscar, just call me.

(He exits, and as door starts to close, it reopens and **SPEED** *comes in.)*

SPEED. I'm three blocks away. I could be here in five minutes.

(He exits, and as door starts to close it reopens and **VINNIE** *comes back in.)*

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

OSCAR. You'll be the first one I'll call, Vinnie.

*(***VINNIE** *exits. The door closes and then reopens as* **MURRAY** *comes back.)*

MURRAY. *(To* **OSCAR.***)* You're sure?

OSCAR. I'm sure.

MURRAY. *(Loud to* **FELIX***, as he gestures to* **OSCAR** *to come to door.)* Good night, Felix. Try to get a good night's sleep. I guarantee you things are going to look a lot brighter in the morning. *(To* **OSCAR***, sotto voce.)* Take away his belt and his shoe laces.

(He nods and exits. **OSCAR** *turns and looks at* **FELIX** *sitting in the armchair and slowly moves across the room. There is a moment's silence.)*

OSCAR. *(He looks at* **FELIX** *and sighs.)* Ohh, Felix, Felix, Felix, Felix!

FELIX. *(Sits with his head buried in his hands. He doesn't look up.)* I know, I know, I know, I know! …What am I going to do, Oscar?

OSCAR. You're gonna wash down the pills with some hot, black coffee… *(He starts for kitchen, then stops.)* Do you think I could leave you alone for two minutes?

FELIX. No, I don't think so! …Stay with me, Oscar. Talk to me.

OSCAR. A cup of black coffee. It'll be good for you. Come on in the kitchen. I'll sit on you.

FELIX. Oscar, the terrible thing is, I think I still love her. It's a lousy marriage but I still love her… I didn't want this divorce.

OSCAR. *(Sitting on arm of couch.)* How about some Ovaltine? You like Ovaltine? With a couple of Fig Newtons…or chocolate mallomars?

FELIX. All right, so we didn't get along… But we had two wonderful kids…and a beautiful home… Didn't we, Oscar?

OSCAR. How about vanilla wafers? …Or Vienna Fingers? …I got everything.

FELIX. What more does she want? What does *any* woman want?

OSCAR. I want to know what *you* want. Ovaltine, coffee or tea. Then we'll get to the divorce.

FELIX. It's not fair, dammit! It's just not fair! *(He bangs his fist on the arm of the chair angrily and suddenly winces in great pain and grabs his neck.)* Ohh! Ohh, my neck. My neck!

OSCAR. What? What?

FELIX. *(He is up and paces in pain. He is holding his twisted neck.)* It's a nerve spasm. I get it in the neck. Ohh! Ohh, that hurts.

OSCAR. *(Rushing to help.)* Where? Where does it hurt?

FELIX. *(Stretches out arm like a halfback.)* Don't touch me! Don't touch me!

OSCAR. I just want to see where it hurts.

FELIX. It'll go way. Just let me alone a few minutes… Ohh! …Ohh!

OSCAR. *(Moving to couch.)* Lie down, I'll rub it. It'll ease the pain.

FELIX. *(In wild contortions.)* You don't know how. It's a special way. Only Frances knows how to rub me.

OSCAR. You want me to ask her to come over and rub you?

FELIX. *(Yells.) No!* No! … We're getting divorced. She wouldn't want to rub me anymore… It's tension. I get it from tension. I must be tense.

OSCAR. I wouldn't be surprised. How long does it last?

FELIX. Sometimes a minute, sometimes hours… I once got it while I was driving… I crashed into a liquor store… Ohhh! Ohhh! *(He sits, painfully, on the couch.)*

OSCAR. *(Getting behind him.)* You want to suffer or do you want me to rub your stupid neck? *(He starts to massage it.)*

FELIX. Easy! Easy!

OSCAR. *(Yells.)* Relax… Dammit, relax!

FELIX. *(Yells back.)* Don't yell at me! … *(Then quietly.)* What should I do? Tell me nicely.

OSCAR. *(Rubbing neck.)* Think of warm jello! …

FELIX. Isn't that terrible? I can't do it… I can't relax. I sleep in one position all night… Frances says when I die on my tombstone it's going to say, "Here Stands Felix Ungar." *(He winces.)* Oh! Ohh!

OSCAR. *(Stops rubbing.)* Does that hurt?

FELIX. No, it feels good.

OSCAR. Then say so. You make the same sound for pain or happiness. *(Starts to massage neck again.)*

FELIX. I know. I know… Oscar—I think I'm crazy.

OSCAR. Well, if it'll make you feel any better… I think so, too.

FELIX. I mean it. Why else do I go to pieces like this? Coming up here, scaring you to death. Trying to kill myself. What is that?

OSCAR. That's panic. You're a panicky person. You have a low threshold for composure. *(Stops rubbing.)*

FELIX. Don't stop. It feels good…

OSCAR. If you don't relax I'll break my fingers… *(Touches his hair.)* Look at this… The only man in the world with clenched hair…

FELIX. I do terrible things, Oscar. You know I'm a crybaby.

OSCAR. Bend over.

*(***FELIX** *bends over and* **OSCAR** *begins to massage his back.)*

FELIX. *(Head down.)* I tell the whole world my problems.

OSCAR. *(Massaging hard.)* Listen, if this hurts just tell me because I don't know what the hell I'm doing.

FELIX. It just isn't nice, Oscar, running up here like this, carrying on like a nut.

OSCAR. *(Finishes massaging.)* How does your neck feel?

FELIX. *(Twists neck.)* Better. Only my back hurts. *(Gets up and paces, rubbing back.)*

OSCAR. What you need is a drink. *(He starts for bar.)*

FELIX. I can't drink. It makes me sick. I tried drinking last night.

OSCAR. *(At bar.)* Where *were* you last night?

FELIX. Nowhere. I just walked.

OSCAR. All night?

FELIX. All night.

OSCAR. In the rain?

FELIX. No. In a hotel. I couldn't sleep. I walked around the room all night… It was over near Times Square. A dirty, depressing room. Then I found myself looking out the window. And suddenly… I began to think about jumping.

OSCAR. *(He has two glasses filled and crosses to* **FELIX**.*)* What changed your mind?

FELIX. Nothing. I'm still thinking about it.

OSCAR. Drink this. *(He hands him glass, crosses to the couch and sits.)*

FELIX. I don't want to get divorced, Oscar. I don't want to suddenly change my whole life… *(Moves to couch and sits next to* **OSCAR**.*)* Talk to me, Oscar. What am I going to do? …What am I going to do?

OSCAR. You're going to pull yourself together. And then you're going to drink that Scotch and then you and I are going to figure out a whole new life for you.

FELIX. Without Frances? Without the kids?

OSCAR. It's been done before.

FELIX. *(Paces right.)* You don't understand, Oscar. I'm nothing without them. I'm *nothing!*

OSCAR. What do you mean, nothing? You're *something!*

*(***FELIX** *sits in armchair.)*

A person! You're flesh and blood and bones and hair and nails and ears. You're not a fish. You're not a buffalo. You're *you!* …You walk and talk and cry and complain and eat little green pills and send suicide telegrams. No one else does that, Felix. I'm telling you, *you're-the-only-one-of-its-kind-in-the-world! (Goes to bar.)* Now drink that.

FELIX. Oscar, you've been through it yourself. What did you do? How did you get through those first few nights?

OSCAR. *(Pours drink.)* I did exactly what you're doing.

FELIX. Getting hysterical!

OSCAR. No, drinking! *Drinking! (Comes back to couch with bottle. Sits.)* I drank for four days and four nights. And then I fell through a window. I was bleeding but I was forgetting. *(He drinks again.)*

FELIX. How can you forget your kids? How can you wipe out twelve years of marriage?

OSCAR. You can't. When you walk into eight empty rooms every night it hits you in the face like a wet glove. But those are the facts, Felix. You've got to face it. You can't spend the rest of your life crying. It annoys people in the movies! …Be a good boy and drink your Scotch. *(Stretches out on couch with head near* **FELIX**.*)*

FELIX. I can imagine what Frances must be going through.

OSCAR. What do you mean, what *she's* going through?

FELIX. It's much harder on the woman, Oscar. She's all alone with the kids. Stuck there in the house. She can't get out like me. I mean where is she going to find someone now at her age? With two kids. Where?

OSCAR. I don't know. Maybe someone'll come to the door! …Felix, there's a hundred thousand divorces a year. There must be *something* nice about it. *(***FELIX** *suddenly puts both his hands over his ears and hums quietly.)* What's the matter now? *(Sits up.)*

FELIX. My ears are closing up. I get it from the sinus. It must be the dust in here. I'm allergic to dust. *(Hums. Then gets up and tries to clear ears by hopping first on one leg then the other as he goes to the window and opens it.)*

OSCAR. *(Jumping up.)* What are you doing?

FELIX. I'm not going to jump. I'm just going to breathe. *(He takes deep breaths.)* I used to drive Frances crazy with my allergies. I'm allergic to perfume. For a while the only thing she could wear was my after shave lotion… I was impossible to live with. It's a wonder she took it this

long. *(He suddenly bellows like a moose. He does this strange sound another time.* **OSCAR** *looks at him dumbfounded.)*

OSCAR. What are you doing?

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

OSCAR. Did it open up?

FELIX. A little bit. *(He rubs neck.)* I think I strained my throat. *(Paces about the room.)*

OSCAR. Felix, why don't you leave yourself alone? Don't tinker.

FELIX. 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 her. It's impossible to be married to me.

OSCAR. It takes two to make a rotten marriage. *(Lies back down on couch.)*

FELIX. You don't know what I was like at home. I bought her a book and made her write down every penny we spent. Thirty-eight cents for cigarettes, ten cents for a paper. Everything had to go in the book. And then we had a big fight because I said she forgot to write down how much the book was… Who could live with anyone like that?

OSCAR. An accountant! …What do I know? We're not perfect. We all have faults.

FELIX. Faults? Heh! …Faults… We have a maid who comes in to clean three times a week. And on the other days, Frances does the cleaning. And at night, after they've both cleaned up, I go in and clean the whole place again. I can't help it. I like things clean. Blame it on my mother. I was toilet trained at five months old.

OSCAR. How do you remember things like that?

FELIX. *I* loused up the marriage. Nothing was ever right. I used to recook everything. The minute she walked out of the kitchen I would add salt or pepper. It's not that I didn't trust her, it's just that I was a better cook… Well, I cooked myself out of a marriage. *(He bangs his head*

with the palm of his hand three times.) God-damned-idiot! (Sinks down in armchair.)

OSCAR. Don't do that, you'll get a headache.

FELIX. I can't stand it, Oscar. I hate me. Oh, boy, do I hate me.

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

FELIX. Don't give me that analyst jazz. I happen to know I hate my guts.

OSCAR. Come on, Felix, I've never *seen* anyone so in love.

FELIX. *(Hurt.)* I thought you were my friend.

OSCAR. That's why I can talk to you like this. Because I love you almost as much as *you* do…

FELIX. Then help me.

OSCAR. *(Up on one elbow.)* How can I help you when I can't help myself? You think *you're* impossible to live with? Blanche used to say, "What time do you want dinner?" And I'd say, "I don't know. I'm not hungry." Then at three o'clock in the morning I'd wake her up and say, "Now!" …I've been one of the highest paid sports writers in the East for the past fourteen years—and we saved eight and a half dollars—in pennies! I'm never home, I gamble, I burn cigar holes in the furniture, drink like a fish and lie to her every chance I get, and for our tenth wedding anniversary, I took her to see the New York Rangers-Detroit Red Wings hockey game, where she got hit with a puck. And I *still* can't understand why she left me. That's how impossible *I* am!

FELIX. I'm not like you, Oscar. I couldn't take it living all alone. I don't know how I'm going to work. They've got to fire me… How am I going to make a living?

OSCAR. You'll go on street corners and cry. They'll throw nickels at you! …You'll work, Felix, you'll work. *(Lies back down.)*

FELIX. You think I ought to call Frances?

OSCAR. *(About to explode.) What for? (Sits up.)*

FELIX. Well…talk it out again.

OSCAR. You've *talked* it all out. There are no words left in your entire marriage. When are you going to face up to it?

FELIX. I can't help it, Oscar, I don't know what to do.

OSCAR. Then listen to me. Tonight you're going to sleep here. And tomorrow you're going to get your clothes and your electric tooth brush and you'll move in with me.

FELIX. No, no. It's your apartment. I'll be in the way.

OSCAR. There's eight rooms. We could go for a year without seeing each other… Don't you understand? I *want* you to move in.

FELIX. Why? I'm a pest.

OSCAR. I *know* you're a pest. You don't have to keep telling me.

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

OSCAR. Because I can't-stand-living-alone, that's why! …For crying out loud, I'm proposing to you. What do you want, a ring?

FELIX. *(Moves to* **OSCAR**.*)* Well, Oscar, if you really mean it, there's a lot I can do around here. I'm very handy around the house. I can fix things.

OSCAR. You don't have to fix things.

FELIX. I want to do *something*, Oscar. Let me do something.

OSCAR. *(Nods.)* All right, you can take my wife's initials off the towels. Anything you want.

FELIX. *(Beginning to tidy up.)* I can cook. I'm a terrific cook.

OSCAR. You don't have to cook. I eat cold cuts for breakfast.

FELIX. Two meals a day at home, we'll save a fortune. We've got to pay alimony, you know.

OSCAR. *(Happy to see* **FELIX**'s *new optimism.)* All right, you can cook. *(Throws pillow at him.)*

FELIX. *(Throws pillow back.)* Do you like leg of lamb?

OSCAR. Yes, I like leg of lamb.

FELIX. I'll make it tomorrow night… I'll have to call Frances. She has my big pot.

OSCAR. *Will you forget Frances!* We'll get our own pots. Don't drive me crazy before you move in. *(The phone rings.* **OSCAR** *picks it up quickly.)* Hello? …Oh, hello, Frances!

FELIX. *(Stops cleaning and starts to wave his arms wildly and whispers screamingly.)* I'm not here! I'm not here! You didn't see me. You don't know where I am. I didn't call. I'm not here. I'm not here.

OSCAR. *(Into phone.)* Yes, he's here.

FELIX. *(Pacing back and forth.)* How does she sound? Is she worried? Is she crying? What is she saying? Does she want to speak to me? I don't want to speak to her.

OSCAR. *(Into phone.)* Yes, he is! …

FELIX. You can tell her I'm not coming back. I've made up my mind. I've had it there. I've taken just as much as she has. You can tell her for me if she thinks I'm coming back she's got another think coming. Tell her. Tell her.

OSCAR. *(Into phone.)* Yes! …Yes, he's fine.

FELIX. Don't tell her I'm fine! You heard me carrying on before. What are you telling her that for? I'm not fine.

OSCAR. *(Into phone.)* Yes, I understand, Frances.

FELIX. *(Sits down next to* **OSCAR**.*)* Does she want to speak to me? Ask her if she wants to speak to me?

OSCAR. *(Into phone.)* Do you want to speak to him?

FELIX. *(Reaches for phone.)* Give me the phone. I'll speak to her.

OSCAR. *(Into phone.)* Oh. You don't want to speak to him.

FELIX. She doesn't want to speak to me?

OSCAR. *(Into phone.)* Yeah, I see… Right… Well, goodbye. *(He hangs up.)*

FELIX. She didn't want to speak to me?

OSCAR. No!

FELIX. Why did she call?

OSCAR. She wants to know when you're coming over for your clothes… She wants to have the room repainted.

FELIX. Oh!

OSCAR. *(Pats* **FELIX** *on shoulder.)* Listen, Felix, it's almost one o'clock. *(Gets up.)*

FELIX. Didn't want to speak to me, huh?

OSCAR. I'm going to bed. Do you want a cup of tea with Fruitanos or Raisonettos?

FELIX. She'll paint it pink. She always wanted it pink.

OSCAR. I'll get you a pair of pajamas. You like stripes, dots, or animals? *(Goes into downstage bedroom.)*

FELIX. She's really heartbroken, isn't she? …I want to kill myself and she's picking out colors.

OSCAR. *(In bedroom.)* Which bedroom do you want? I'm lousy with bedrooms.

FELIX. *(Up and moves towards bedroom.)* You know, I'm glad. Because she finally made me realize…it's over. It didn't sink in until just this minute.

OSCAR. *(Comes back with pillow, pillowcase, and pajamas.)* Felix, I want you to go to bed.

FELIX. I don't think I believed her until just now. My marriage is *really* over.

OSCAR. Felix, go to bed.

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

OSCAR. Live with it tomorrow. Go to bed tonight.

FELIX. In a little while. I've got to think. I've got to start rearranging my life… Do you have a pencil and paper?

OSCAR. Not in a little while. Now! It's my house, I make up the bedtime. *(Throws pajamas to him.)*

FELIX. Oscar, please… I have to be alone for a few minutes. I've got to get organized. Go on, you go to bed… I'll—I'll clean up. *(Begins picking up debris from floor.)*

OSCAR. *(Putting pillow in pillowcase.)* You don't have to clean up. I pay a dollar fifty an hour to clean up.

FELIX. It's all right, Oscar, I wouldn't be able to sleep with all this dirt around anyway. Go to bed. I'll see you in the morning. *(Puts dishes on tray.)*

OSCAR. You're not going to do anything big, are you, like rolling up the rugs?

FELIX. Ten minutes, that's all I'll be.

OSCAR. You're sure…?

FELIX. *(Smiles.)* I'm sure.

OSCAR. No monkey business?

FELIX. No monkey business… I'll do the dishes and go right to bed.

OSCAR. Yeah… *(Crosses up to his bedroom, throwing pillow into the downstage bedroom as he passes. Closes his bedroom door behind him.)*

FELIX. *(Calls him.)* Oscar! *(***OSCAR** *anxiously comes out of his bedroom and crosses to* **FELIX**.*)* I'm going to be all right! …It's going to take me a couple of days…but I'm going to be all right.

OSCAR. *(Smiles.)* Good! Well—good night, Felix.

(He turns to go towards bedroom as **FELIX** *begins to plump up pillow from the couch.)*

FELIX. Good night, Frances.

*(***OSCAR** *stops dead.* **FELIX**, *unaware of his error, plumps another pillow as* **OSCAR** *turns and stares at* **FELIX** *with a troubled, troubled expression.)*

(Curtain.)

ACT II

Scene One

*(**TIME:** Two weeks later. About 11:00 p.m.)*

*(**AT RISE:** It is late in the evening and the poker game is in session again.* **VINNIE**, **ROY**, **SPEED**, **MURRAY** *and* **OSCAR** *are all seated at the table.* **FELIX***'s chair is empty. There is one major difference between this scene and the opening poker game scene. It is the appearance of the room. It is immaculately clean. No, not clean. Sterile! Spotless! Not a speck of dirt can be seen under the ten coats of Johnson's Glo-Coat that have been applied in the last two weeks. No laundry bags, no dirty dishes, no half-filled glasses. Suddenly* **FELIX** *appears from the kitchen. He carries a tray with glasses and food and napkins. After putting the tray down, he takes the napkins one at a time, flicks them out to full length and hands one to every player. They take them with grumbling and put them on their laps.* **FELIX** *picks up a can of beer and very carefully pours it into a tall glass, measuring it perfectly so that not a drop spills or overflows. With a flourish he puts can down.)*

FELIX. *(Moves to* **MURRAY**.*)* …An ice-cold glass of beer for Murray.

MURRAY. *(He reaches up for it.)* Thank you, Felix.

FELIX. *(Holds glass back.)* Where's your coaster?

MURRAY. My what?

FELIX. Your coaster. The little round thing that goes under the glass.

MURRAY. *(Looks around on the table.)* I think I bet it.

OSCAR. *(Picks it up and hands it to* **MURRAY**.*)* I knew I was winning too much. Here!

FELIX. Always try to use your coasters, fellows. *(He picks up another drink from tray.)* Scotch and a little bit of water?

SPEED. *(Raises hand.)* Scotch and a little bit of water. *(Proudly.)* And I have my coaster. *(He holds it up for inspection.)*

FELIX. *(Hands him drink.)* I hate to be a pest, but you know what wet glasses do? *(Goes back to the tray and picks up and wipes a clean ashtray.)*

OSCAR. *(Coldly and deliberately.)* They-leave-little-rings-on-the-table.

FELIX. *(Nods.)* Ruins the finish. Eats right through the polish.

OSCAR. *(To others.)* So let's watch those little rings, huh?

FELIX. *(Takes ashtray and plate with a sandwich from tray and crosses to table.)* And we have a clean ashtray for Roy… *(Handing* **ROY** *ashtray.)* Aaaaand…a sandwich for Vinnie. *(Like a doting headwaitery he skillfully places the sandwich in front of* **VINNIE**.*)*

VINNIE. *(Looks at* **FELIX**, *then at sandwich.)* Gee, it smells good. What is it?

FELIX. Bacon, lettuce and tomato with mayonnaise on pumpernickel toast.

VINNIE. *(Unbelievingly.)* Where'd you get it?

FELIX. *(Puzzled.)* I made it. In the kitchen.

VINNIE. You mean you put in toast and cooked bacon? Just for me?

OSCAR. If you don't like it, he'll make you a meatloaf. Takes him five minutes.

FELIX. It's no trouble. Honest. I love to cook… Try to eat over the dish. I just vacuumed the rug. *(Goes back to tray, stops.)* Oscar!

OSCAR. *(Quickly.)* Yes, sir?

FELIX. I forgot what you wanted. What did you ask me for?

OSCAR. Two three-and-a-half-minute eggs and some petit fours.

FELIX. *(Points to him.)* A double gin and tonic. I'll be right back… *(***FELIX** *starts out, then stops at a little box on the bar.)* Who turned off the Pure-A-Tron?

MURRAY. The what?

FELIX. The Pure-A-Tron! *(He snaps it back on.)* Don't play with this, fellows. I'm trying to get some of the grime out of the air.

(He looks at them and shakes his head disapprovingly, and exits. They all sit in silence a few seconds.)

OSCAR. Murray—I'll give you two hundred dollars for your gun.

SPEED. *(Throws his cards on table and gets up angrily.)* I can't take it anymore. *(Hand on neck.)* I've had it up to here. In the last three hours we played four minutes of poker. I'm not giving up my Friday nights to watch cooking and housekeeping.

ROY. *(Slumped in his chair, head hanging down.)* I can't breathe. *(Points to Pure-A-Tron.)* That lousy machine is sucking everything out of the air.

VINNIE. *(Chewing.)* Gee, this is delicious. Who wants a bite?

MURRAY. Is the toast warm?

VINNIE. Perfect. And not too much mayonnaise. It's really a well-made sandwich.

MURRAY. Cut me off a little piece.

VINNIE. Give me your napkin. I don't want to drop any crumbs.

SPEED. *(Watches them, horrified, as* **VINNIE** *carefully breaks sandwich over* **MURRAY**'s *napkin. Then turns to* **OSCAR**.*)* Are you listening to this? Martha and Gertrude at the Automat. *(Almost crying in despair.) What the hell happened to our poker game?*

ROY. *(Still choking.)* I'm telling you that thing could kill us. They'll find us here in the morning with our tongues on the floor.

SPEED. *(Yells at* **OSCAR**.*)* Do something! Get him back in the game.

OSCAR. *(Rises, containing his anger.)* Don't bother me with your petty little problems. You get this one stinkin' night a week. I'm cooped up here with Mary Poppins twenty-four hours a day. *(Moves to window.)*

ROY. It was better before. With the garbage and the smoke, it was better before.

VINNIE. *(To* **MURRAY**.*)* Did you notice what he does with the bread?

MURRAY. What?

VINNIE. He cuts off the crusts. That's why the sandwich is so light.

MURRAY. And then he only uses the soft, green part of the lettuce. *(Chewing.)* It's really delicious.

SPEED. *(Reacts in amazement and disgust.)* I'm going out of my mind.

OSCAR. *(Yells towards kitchen.) Felix!* …Damn it, *FELIX!*

SPEED. *(Takes kitty box from bookcase, puts it on table, and puts money in.)* Forget it. I'm going home.

OSCAR. Sit down!

SPEED. I'll buy a book and I'll start to read again.

OSCAR. Siddown! Will you siddown! *(Yells.) Felix!*

SPEED. Oscar, it's all over. The day his marriage busted up was the end of our poker game. *(Takes his jacket from back of chair and crosses to door.)* If you find some real players next week, call me.

OSCAR. *(Following him.)* You can't run out now. I'm a big loser.

SPEED. *(With door open.)* You got no one to blame but yourself. It's all your fault. You're the one who stopped him from killing himself. *(He exits and slams door.)*

OSCAR. *(Stares at door.)* He's right! …The man is absolutely right. *(Moves to table.)*

MURRAY. *(To* **VINNIE**.*)* Are you going to eat that pickle?

VINNIE. I wasn't thinking of it. Why? Do you want it?

MURRAY. Unless you want it. It's your pickle.

VINNIE. No, no. Take it. I don't usually eat pickle.

*(***VINNIE** *holds plate with pickle out to* **MURRAY**. **OSCAR** *slaps the plate which sends the pickle flying through the air.)*

OSCAR. Deal the cards!

MURRAY. What did you do that for?

OSCAR. Just deal the cards. You want to play poker, deal the cards. You want to eat, go to Schrafft's. *(To* **VINNIE**.*)* Keep your sandwich and your pickles to yourself… I'm losing ninety-two dollars and everybody's getting fat! *(He screams.) Felix…*

*(***FELIX** *appears in the kitchen doorway.)*

FELIX. What?

OSCAR. Close the kitchen and sit down. It's a quarter to twelve. I still got an hour and a half to win this month's alimony.

ROY. *(Sniffs.)* What is that smell? Disinfectant! *(He smells cards.)* It's the cards. *He washed the cards! (Throws down cards, takes jacket from chair and moves above table. Puts money into kitty box.)*

FELIX. *(Comes to table with* **OSCAR**'s *drink, which he puts down, and then sits in his own seat.)* Okay… What's the bet?

OSCAR. *(Hurrying to his seat.)* I can't believe it. We're gonna play cards again. *(He sits.)* It's up to Roy… Roy, baby, what are you gonna do?

ROY. I'm going to get in a cab and go to Central Park. If I don't get some fresh air, you got yourself a dead accountant. *(Moves towards door.)*

OSCAR. *(Follows him.)* What do you mean? It's not even twelve o'clock.

ROY. *(Turns back to* **OSCAR**.*)* Look, I've been sitting here breathing lysol and ammonia for four hours! …Nature didn't intend for poker to be played like that. *(He crosses to door.)* If you wanna have a game next week… *(He points to* **FELIX**.*)* either Louis Pasteur cleans up *after* we've gone…or we play in the Hotel Dixie! Good night! *(He goes and slams door.)*

(There is a moment's silence. **OSCAR** *goes back to table and sits.)*

OSCAR. We got just enough for handball!

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

VINNIE. No, I guess no one feels like playing much lately.

MURRAY. Yeah. I don't know what it is, but something's happening to the old gang. *(Goes to side chair, sits, and puts on shoes.)*

OSCAR. Don't you know what's happening to the old gang? It's breaking up. Everyone's getting divorced… I swear, we used to have better games when we couldn't get out at night.

VINNIE. *(Getting up and putting on jacket.)* Well—I guess I'll be going, too. Bebe and I are driving to Asbury Park for the weekend.

FELIX. Just the two of you, heh? Gee, that's nice! …You always do things like that together, don't you?

VINNIE. *(Shrugs.)* We have to. I don't know how to drive! … *(Takes all the money from the kitty box and moves to door.)* You coming, Murray?

MURRAY. *(Gets up, takes jacket and moves towards door.)* Yeah, why not? If I'm not home by one o'clock with a hero sandwich and a frozen éclair, she'll have an all-points out on me… Ahhh, you guys got the life.

FELIX. Who?

MURRAY. *(Turns back.)* Who? …You! The Marx Brothers! Laugh laugh laugh. What have you got to worry about? …If you suddenly want to go to the Playboy Club to hunt Bunnies, who's gonna stop you?

FELIX. I don't belong to the Playboy Club.

MURRAY. I know you don't, Felix, it's just a figure of speech… Anyway, it's not such a bad idea. Why don't you join?

FELIX. Why?

MURRAY. *Why?* Because for twenty-five dollars they give you a key—and you walk into Paradise. *My* keys cost thirty cents—and you walk into corned beef and cabbage. *(He winks at him.)* Listen to me. *(Moves to door.)*

FELIX. What are you talking about, Murray? You're a happily married man.

MURRAY. *(Turns back on landing.)* I'm not talking about *my* situation… *(Puts on jacket.)* I'm talking about *yours!* …Fate has just played a cruel and rotten trick on you… so enjoy it! *(Turns to go, revealing "PAL" letters sewn on back of his jacket.)* C'mon, Vinnie.

*(***VINNIE** *waves goodbye and they both exit.)*

FELIX. *(Staring at door.)* That's funny, isn't it, Oscar? …They think we're happy… They really think we're enjoying this… *(Gets up and begins to straighten up chairs.)* They don't know, Oscar. They don't know what it's like. *(He gives a short, ironic laugh, tucks napkins under arm and starts to pick up dishes from table.)*

OSCAR. I'd be immensely grateful to you, Felix, if you didn't clean up just now.

FELIX. *(Puts dishes on tray.)* It's only a few things… *(He stops and looks back at door.)* I can't get over what Murray just said… You know I think they really envy us. *(Clears more stuff from table.)*

OSCAR. Felix, leave everything alone. I'm not through dirtying up for the night. *(Drops poker chips on floor.)*

FELIX. *(Putting stuff on tray.)* But don't you see the irony of it? … Don't you see it, Oscar?

OSCAR. *(Sighs heavily.)* Yes, I see it.

FELIX. *(Clearing table.)* No, you don't. I really don't think you do.

OSCAR. Felix, I'm telling you I see the irony of it.

FELIX. *(Pauses.)* Then tell me. What is it? What's the irony?

OSCAR. *(Deep breath.)* The irony is—unless we can come to some other arrangement, I'm gonna kill you! …That's the irony.

FELIX. What's wrong? *(Crosses back to tray, puts down glasses, etc.)*

OSCAR. There's something wrong with this system, that's what's wrong. I don't think that two single men living alone in a big eight-room apartment should have a cleaner house than my mother.

FELIX. *(Gets rest of dishes, glasses and coasters from table.)* What are you talking about? I'm just going to put the dishes in the sink. You want me to leave them here all night?

OSCAR. *(Takes his glass which* **FELIX** *has put on tray and crosses to bar for refill.)* I don't care if you take them to bed with you. You can play Mr. Clean all you want. But don't make *me* feel guilty.

FELIX. *(Takes tray into kitchen, leaving swinging door open.)* I'm not asking you to do it, Oscar. You don't have to clean up.

OSCAR. *(Moves up to door.) That's* why you make me feel guilty. You're always in my bathroom hanging up my towels… Whenever I smoke you follow me around with an ashtray… Last night I found you washing the kitchen floor shaking your head and moaning, "Footprints, footprints"! *(Paces right.)*

FELIX. *(Comes back to table with silent butler into which he dumps the ashtrays; then wipes them carefully.)* I didn't say they were yours.

OSCAR. *(Angrily; sits down right in wing chair.)* Well, *they were* mine, damn it. I have feet and they make prints. What do you want me to do, climb across the cabinets?

FELIX. No! I want you to walk on the floor.

OSCAR. I appreciate that! I really do.

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