

OSCAR. What am I going to do with two girls? Felix, don't do this to me. I'll never forgive you!

FELIX. I'm not going!

OSCAR. (*Screams.*) All right, damn you, I'll go without you! (*And he storms out the door and slams it. Then it opens and he comes in again.*) Are you coming?

FELIX. (*Comes out of kitchen looking at magazine.*) No.

OSCAR. You mean you're not going to make any effort to change. . . . This is the person you're going to be . . . until the day you die.

FELIX. (*Sitting on couch.*) We are what we are.

OSCAR. (*Nods, then crosses to a window, pulls back drapes and opens window wide. Starts back to door.*) It's twelve floors, not eleven.

(*He walks out as FELIX stares at the open windows.*)

CURTAIN



ACT III

TIME: *The next evening about 7:30 P.M.*

AT RISE: *The room is once again set up for the poker game, with the dining table pulled Down Right, and the chairs set about it and the love seat moved back beneath the windows in the alcove. FELIX appears from the bedroom with a vacuum cleaner. He is doing a thorough job on the rug. As he vacuums around the table, the door opens and OSCAR comes in wearing a summer hat and carrying a newspaper. He glares at FELIX, still vacuuming, and shakes his head contemptuously, as he crosses behind FELIX, leaving his hat on the side table next to the armchair, and goes into his bedroom. FELIX is not aware of his presence. Then suddenly the power stops on the vacuum as OSCAR has obviously pulled the plug in the bedroom. FELIX tries switching the ON button a few times, then turns to go back into bedroom. He stops and realizes what's happened as OSCAR comes back into the room. OSCAR takes a cigar out of his pocket and as he crosses in front of FELIX to the couch, he unwraps it and drops the wrappings carelessly on the floor. He then steps up on the couch and walks back and forth mashing down the pillows. Stepping down, he plants one foot on the armchair and then sits on the couch, taking a wooden match from the coffee table, striking it on the table, and lighting his cigar. He flips the match onto the rug and settles back to read his newspaper. FELIX has watched this all in silence, and now carefully picks up the cigar wrappings and the match and drops them into OSCAR's hat. He then dusts his hands and takes the vacuum cleaner into the kitchen, pulling the cord in after him. OSCAR takes the wrappings*

from the hat and puts them in the butt-filled ash-tray on the coffee table. Then takes the ashtray and dumps it on the floor. As he once more settles down with his newspaper, FELIX comes out of the kitchen carrying a tray with steaming dish of spaghetti. As he crosses behind OSCAR to the table, he smells it "deliciously" and passes it close to OSCAR to make sure OSCAR smells the fantastic dish he's missing. As FELIX sits and begins to eat, OSCAR takes can of aerosol spray from the bar, and circling the table sprays all about FELIX, puts can down next to him and goes back to his newspaper.

FELIX. (*Pushing spaghetti away.*) All right, how much longer is this gonna go on?

OSCAR. (*Reading his paper.*) Are you talking to me?

FELIX. That's right, I'm talking to you.

OSCAR. What do you want to know?

FELIX. I want to know if you're going to spend the rest of your life not talking to me. Because if you are, I'm going to buy a radio. (*No reply.*) Well? (*No reply.*) I see. You're not going to talk to me. (*No reply.*) All right. Two can play at this game. (*Pause.*) If you're not going to talk to me, I'm not going to talk to you. (*No reply.*) I can act childish too, you know. (*No reply.*) I can go on without talking just as long as you can.

OSCAR. Then why the hell don't you shut up?

FELIX. Are you talking to me?

OSCAR. You had your chance to talk last night. I begged you to come upstairs with me. From now on I never want to hear a word from that shampooed head as long as you live. That's a warning, Felix.

FELIX. (*Stares at him.*) I stand warned. . . . Over and out!

OSCAR. (*Gets up taking key out of his pocket and slams it on the table.*) There's a key to the back door. If you stick to the hallway and your room, you won't get hurt. (*Sits back down on couch.*)

FELIX. I don't think I gather the entire meaning of that remark.

OSCAR. Then I'll explain it to you. Stay out of my way.

FELIX. (*Picks up key and moves to couch.*) I think you're serious. I think you're really serious. . . . Are you serious?

OSCAR. This is my apartment. Everything in my apartment is mine. The only thing here that's yours is you. Just stay in your room and speak softly.

FELIX. Yeah, you're serious. . . . Well, let me remind you that I pay half the rent and I'll go into any room I want. (*He gets up angrily and starts towards hallway.*)

OSCAR. Where are you going?

FELIX. I'm going to walk around your bedroom.

OSCAR. (*Slams down newspaper.*) You stay out of there.

FELIX. (*Steaming.*) Don't tell me where to go. I pay a hundred and twenty dollars a month.

OSCAR. That was off-season. Starting tomorrow the rates are twelve dollars a day.

FELIX. All right. (*He takes some bills out of his pocket and slams them down on table.*) There you are. I'm paid up for today. Now I'm going to walk in your bedroom. (*He starts to storm off.*)

OSCAR. Stay out of there! Stay out of my room!

(*He chases after him. FELIX dodges around the table as OSCAR blocks the hallway.*)

FELIX. (*Backing away, keeping table between them.*) Watch yourself! Just watch yourself, Oscar!

OSCAR. (*With a pointing finger.*) I'm warning you. You want to live here, I don't want to see you, I don't want to hear you and I don't want to smell your cooking. Now get this spaghetti off my poker table.

FELIX. Ha! Haha!

OSCAR. What the hell's so funny?

FELIX. It's not spaghetti. It's linguini!

(OSCAR picks up the plate of linguini, crosses to the doorway, and hurls it into the kitchen.)

OSCAR. Now it's garbage! (Paces above couch.)

FELIX. (Looks at OSCAR unbelievably. What an insane thing to do.) You are crazy! . . . I'm a neurotic nut but you are crazy!

OSCAR. I'm crazy, heh? That's really funny coming from a fruitcake like you.

FELIX. (Goes to kitchen door and looks in at the mess. Turns back to OSCAR.) I'm not cleaning that up.

OSCAR. Is that a promise?

FELIX. Did you hear what I said? I'm not cleaning it up. It's your mess. (Looking into kitchen again.) Look at it. Hanging all over the walls.

OSCAR. (Crosses up on landing and looks at kitchen door.) I like it. (Closes door and paces Right.)

FELIX. (Fumes.) You'd just let it lie there, wouldn't you? Until it turns hard and brown and . . . yich. . . . It's disgusting. . . . I'm cleaning it up.

(He goes into kitchen. OSCAR chases after him. There is the sound of a STRUGGLE and falling POTS.)

OSCAR. (Off.) Leave it alone! . . . You touch one strand of that linguini—and I'm gonna punch you right in your sinuses.

FELIX. (Dashes out of kitchen with OSCAR in pursuit. Stops and tries to calm OSCAR down.) Oscar . . . I'd like you to take a couple of phenobarbital.

OSCAR. (Points.) Go to your room! . . . Did you hear what I said? Go to your room!

FELIX. All right . . . let's everybody just settle down, heh? (He puts his hand on OSCAR's shoulder to calm him but OSCAR pulls away violently from his "touch.")

OSCAR. If you want to live through this night, you'd better tie me up and lock your doors and windows.

FELIX. (Sits at table with great pretense of calm.) All right, Oscar, I'd like to know what's happened.

OSCAR. (Moves towards him.) What's happened?

FELIX. (Hurriedly slides over to the next chair.) That's right. Something must have caused you to go off the deep end like this. What is it? Something I said? Something I did? Heh? What?

OSCAR. (Pacing.) It's nothing you said. It's nothing you did. It's you!

FELIX. I see. . . . Well, that's plain enough.

OSCAR. I could make it plainer but I don't want to hurt you.

FELIX. What is it, the cooking? The cleaning? The crying?

OSCAR. (Moving towards him.) I'll tell you exactly what it is. It's the cooking, cleaning and crying. . . . It's the talking in your sleep, it's the moose calls that open your ears at two o'clock in the morning. . . . I can't take it any more, Felix. I'm crackin' up. Everything you do irritates me. And when you're not here, the things I know you're gonna do when you come in irritate me. . . . You leave me little notes on my pillow. I told you a hundred times, I can't stand 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 Felix Ungar. . . . It's not your fault, Felix. It's a rotten combination.

FELIX. I get the picture.

OSCAR. That's just the frame. The picture I haven't even painted yet. . . . I got a typewritten list in my office of the "Ten Most Aggravating Things You Do That Drive Me Berserk." . . . But last night was the topper. Oh, that was the topper. Oh, that was the ever loving lulu of all times.

FELIX. What are you talking about, the London broil?

OSCAR. No, not the London broil. I'm talking about those two lamb chops. (He points upstairs.) I had it all set up with that English Betty Boop and her sister and I wind up drinking tea all night and telling them your life story.

FELIX. (Jumps up.) Oho! So that's what's bothering you. That I loused up your evening!

OSCAR. After the mood you put them in, I'm surprised they didn't go out to Rockaway and swim back to England.

FELIX. Don't blame me. I warned you not to make the date in the first place. *(He makes his point by shaking his finger in OSCAR's face.)*

OSCAR. Don't point that finger at me unless you intend to use it!

FELIX. *(Moves in nose to nose with OSCAR.)* All right, Oscar, get off my back. Get off! *Off!* *(Startled by his own actions, FELIX jumps back from OSCAR, warily circles him, crosses to the couch and sits.)*

OSCAR. What's this? A display of temper? I haven't seen you really angry since the day I dropped my cigar in your pancake batter. *(Starts towards the hallway.)*

FELIX. *(Threateningly.)* Oscar . . . You're asking to hear something I don't want to say. But if I say it, I think you'd better hear it.

OSCAR. *(Comes back to table, places both hands on it, leans towards FELIX.)* If you've got anything on your chest besides your chin, you'd better get it off.

FELIX. *(Strides to table, places both hands on it, leans towards OSCAR. They are nose to nose.)* All right, I warned you. . . . You're a wonderful guy, Oscar. 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, Oscar.

OSCAR. *(Motionless.)* If I've just been told off, I think I may have missed it.

FELIX. It's coming now! . . . You're also one of the biggest slob in the world.

OSCAR. I see.

FELIX. And completely unreliable.

OSCAR. Finished?

FELIX. Undependable.

OSCAR. Is that it?

FELIX. And irresponsible.

OSCAR. Keep going. I think you're hot.

FELIX. That's it. I'm finished. *Now* you've been told off. How do you like that? *(Crosses to couch.)*

OSCAR. *(Straightening up.)* Good. Because now I'm going to tell you off. . . . For six months I lived alone in this apartment. All alone in eight rooms. . . . I was dejected, despondent and disgusted. . . . Then you moved in. My dearest and closest friend. . . . And after three weeks of close, personal contact—I am about to have a nervous breakdown! . . . Do me a favor. Move in'o the kitchen. Live with your pots, your pans, your ladle and your meat thermometer. . . . When you want to come out, ring a bell and I'll run into the bedroom. *(Almost breaking down.)* I'm asking you nicely, Felix. . . . As a friend. . . . Stay out of my way! *(And he goes into the bedroom.)*

FELIX. *(Hurt by this; then remembering something. Calls after him.)* Walk on the paper, will you? The floors are wet. *(OSCAR comes out of the door. He is glaring maniacally, as he slowly strides back down the hallway FELIX quickly puts the couch between him and OSCAR.)* Awright, keep away. Keep away from me.

OSCAR. *(Chasing him around the couch.)* Come on. Let me get in one shot. You pick it. Head, stomach, or kidneys.

FELIX. *(Dodging about the room.)* You're gonna find yourself in one sweet law suit, Oscar.

OSCAR. It's no use running, Felix. There's only eight rooms and I know the short cuts.

(They are now poised at opposite ends of the couch.)

FELIX picks up a lamp for protection.)

FELIX. Is this how you settle your problems, Oscar? Like an animal?

OSCAR. All right. You wanna see how I settle my problems. I'll show you. *(Storms off into FELIX's bedroom. There is the sound of falling objects and he returns with a suitcase.)* I'll show you how I settle them. *(Throws suitcase on table.)* There! That's how I settle them!

FELIX. (*Bewildered, looks at suitcase.*) Where are you going?

OSCAR. (*Exploding.*) Not me, you idiot! You. You're the one who's going. I want you out of here. Now! Tonight! (*Opens suitcase.*)

FELIX. What are you talking about?

OSCAR. It's all over, Felix. The whole marriage. We're getting an annulment! Don't you understand? I don't want to live with you any more. I want you to pack your things, tie it up with your Saran Wrap and get out of here.

FELIX. You mean actually move out . . . ?

OSCAR. Actually, physically and immediately. I don't care where you go. Move into the Museum of Natural History. (*Goes into kitchen. There is the crash of falling POTS and PANS.*) I'm sure you'll be very comfortable there. You can dust around the Egyptian mummies to your heart's content. But I'm a human living person. (*Comes out with stack of cooking utensils which he throws into the open suitcase.*) All I want is my freedom. Is that too much to ask for? (*Closes it.*) There. . . . You're all packed.

FELIX. You know, I've got a good mind to really leave.

OSCAR. (*Looking to the heavens.*) Why doesn't he ever listen to what I say? Why doesn't he hear me? I know I'm talking. . . . I recognize my voice.

FELIX. (*Indignantly.*) Because if you really want me to go, I'll go.

OSCAR. Then go. I want you to go, so go. When are you going?

FELIX. When am I going, huh? Boy, you're in a bigger hurry than Frances was. . . .

OSCAR. Take as much time as she gave you. I want you to follow your usual routine.

FELIX. In other words you're throwing me out.

OSCAR. Not in other words. Those are the perfect ones. (*Picks up suitcase and holds it out to FELIX.*) I am throwing you out.

FELIX. All right. . . . I just wanted to get the record

straight. Let it be on *your* conscience. (*Goes into his bedroom.*)

OSCAR. What . . . ? What . . . ? (*Follows him to bedroom doorway.*) Let what be on my conscience?

FELIX. (*Comes out putting on jacket, goes by OSCAR.*) That you're throwing me out. (*Stops and turns back to him.*) I'm perfectly willing to stay and clear the air of our differences. . . . But you refuse, right?

OSCAR. (*Still holding suitcase.*) Right. . . . I'm sick and tired of you clearing the air. That's why I want you to leave!

FELIX. Okay. . . . As long as I heard you say the words, "Get out of the house." . . . Fine. . . . But remember, what happens to me is your responsibility. Let it be on *your* head. (*Crosses to the door.*)

OSCAR. (*Follows him to door; screams.*) Wait a minute, damn it! Why can't you be thrown out like a decent human being? Why do you have to say things like, "Let it be on your head"? I don't want it on my head. I just want you out of the house.

FELIX. What's the matter, Oscar? Can't cope with a little guilt feelings—?

OSCAR. (*Pounding railing in frustration.*) Damn you. I've been looking forward to throwing you out all day long and now you even take the pleasure out of that.

FELIX. Forgive me for spoiling your fun. I'm leaving now . . . according to your wishes and desires. (*Starts to open the door.*)

OSCAR. (*Pushes by FELIX and slams the door shut. Stands between FELIX and the door.*) You're not leaving here until you take it back.

FELIX. Take what back?

OSCAR. "Let it be on your head." . . . What the hell is that, the Curse of the Cat People?

FELIX. Get out of my way, please.

OSCAR. Is this how you left that night with Frances? No wonder she wanted to have the room repainted right away. (*Points to FELIX's bedroom.*) I'm gonna have yours dipped in bronze.

FELIX. (*Sits on back of couch with his back to OSCAR.*) How can I leave if you're blocking the door?

OSCAR. (*Very calmly.*) Felix, we've been friends a long time. For the sake of that friendship, please say, "Oscar, we can't stand each other, let's break up."

FELIX. I'll let you know what to do about my clothes. . . . Either I'll call . . . or someone else will. (*Controlling great emotion.*) I'd like to leave now.

(OSCAR, resigned, moves out of the way. FELIX opens the door.)

OSCAR. Where will you go?

FELIX. (*Turns in doorway and looks at him.*) Where? . . . (*He smiles.*) Oh, come on, Oscar. You're not really interested, are you? (*He exits.*)

(OSCAR looks as though he's about to burst with frustration. He calls after FELIX.)

OSCAR. All right, Felix, you win. (*Goes out into hall.*) We'll try to iron it out. Anything you want. Come back, Felix. . . . Felix . . . ? Felix? Don't leave me like this. —You louse! (*But FELIX is gone. OSCAR comes back into the room closing the door. He is limp. He searches for something to ease his enormous frustration. He throws a pillow at the door, and then paces about like a caged lion.*) All right, Oscar, get a hold of yourself! . . . He's gone! Keep saying that over and over. . . . He's gone. He's really gone! (*He holds his head in pain.*) He did it. He put a curse on me. It's on my head. I don't know what it is, but something's on my head. (*The DOORBELL rings and he looks up hopefully.*) Please let it be him. Let it be Felix. Please give me one more chance to kill him.

(*Putting the suitcase on the sofa, he rushes to the door and opens it. MURRAY comes in with VINNIE.*)

MURRAY. (*Putting jacket on chair at table.*) Hey,

what's the matter with Felix? He walked right by me with that "human sacrifice" look on his face again. (*Takes off shoes.*)

VINNIE. (*Laying jacket on love seat.*) What's with him? I asked him where he's going and he said, "Only Oscar knows. Only Oscar knows." Where's he going, Oscar?

OSCAR. (*Sitting at table.*) How the hell should I know? All right, let's get the game started, heh? Come on, get your chips.

MURRAY. I have to get something to eat. I'm starving. Mmm, I think I smell spaghetti. (*Goes into kitchen.*)

VINNIE. Isn't he playing tonight? (*Takes two chairs from dining alcove and puts them Downstage of table.*)

OSCAR. I don't want to discuss it. I don't even want to hear his name.

VINNIE. Who? Felix?

OSCAR. I told you not to mention his name.

VINNIE. I didn't know what name you meant. (*Clears table and places what's left from FELIX's dinner on bookcase.*)

MURRAY. (*Comes out of the kitchen.*) Hey, did you know there's spaghetti all over the kitchen?

OSCAR. Yes, I know and it's not spaghetti, it's linguini.

MURRAY. Oh. I thought it was spaghetti. (*He goes back into the kitchen.*)

VINNIE. (*Taking poker stuff from bookcase and putting it on table.*) Why shouldn't I mention his name?

OSCAR. Who?

VINNIE. Felix. What's happened? Has something happened?

(SPEED and ROY come in the open door.)

SPEED. Yeah, what's the matter with Felix?

(SPEED puts his jacket over a chair at the table. ROY sits in armchair. MURRAY comes out of the kitchen with a six-pack of beer and bags of pretzels and