

SCENE 2

It is a few days later, about eight o'clock.

No one is on stage. The dining table looks like a page out of House and Garden. It is set for dinner for four, complete with linen tablecloth, candles and wine glasses. There is a floral centerpiece and flowers about the room, and crackers and dip on the coffee table. There are sounds of activity in the kitchen.

The front door opens and OSCAR enters with a bottle of wine in a brown paper bag, his jacket over his arm. He looks about gleefully as he listens to the sounds from the kitchen. He puts the bag on the table and his jacket over a chair.

start

OSCAR (Calls out in a playful mood) I'm home, dear! (He goes into his bedroom, taking off his shirt, and comes skipping out shaving with a cordless razor, with a clean shirt and a tie over his arm. He is joyfully singing as he admires the table) Beautiful! Just beautiful! (He sniffs, obviously catching the aroma from the kitchen) Oh, yeah. Something wonderful is going on in that kitchen. (He rubs his hands gleefully) No, sir. There's no doubt about it. I'm the luckiest man on earth. (He puts the razor into his pocket and begins to put on the shirt. FELIX enters slowly from the kitchen. He's wearing a small dish towel as an apron. He has a ladle in one hand. He looks silently and glumly at OSCAR, crosses to the armchair and sits) I got the wine. (He takes the bottle out of the bag and puts it on the table) Batard Montrachet. Six and a quarter. You don't mind, do you, pussycat? We'll walk to work this week. (FELIX sits glumly and silently) Hey, no kidding, Felix, you did a great job. One little suggestion? Let's come down a little with the lights (He switches off the wall brackets) —and up very softly with the music. (He crosses to the

stereo set in the bookcase and picks up some record (bums) What do you think goes better with London broil, Mancini or Sinatra? (FELIX just stares ahead) Felix? What's the matter? (He puts the albums down) Something's wrong. I can tell by your conversation. (He goes into the bathroom, gets a bottle of after-shave lotion and comes out putting it on) All right, Felix, what is it?

FELIX (Without looking at him) What is it? Let's start with—what time do you think it is?

OSCAR What time? I don't know. Seven thirty?

FELIX Seven thirty? Try eight o'clock.

OSCAR (Puts the lotion down on the small table) All right, so it's eight o'clock. So?

(He begins to fix his tie)

FELIX So? You said you'd be home at seven.

OSCAR Is that what I said?

FELIX (Nods) That's what you said. "I will be home at seven" is what you said.

OSCAR Okay, I said I'd be home at seven. And it's eight. So what's the problem?

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

OSCAR (Pauses while making the knot in his tie) I couldn't call you. I was busy.

FELIX Too busy to pick up a phone? Where were you?

OSCAR I was in the office, working.

FELIX Working? Ha!

OSCAR Yes. Working!

FELIX I called your office at seven o'clock. You were gone.

OSCAR (Tucking in his shirt) It took me an hour to get home. I couldn't get a cab.

FELIX Since when do they have cabs in Hannigan's Bar?

OSCAR Wait a minute. I want to get this down on a tape recorder, because no one'll believe me. You mean now I have to call you if I'm coming home late for dinner?

- FELIX (*Crosses to OSCAR*) Not any dinner. Just the ones I've been slaving over since two o'clock this afternoon—to help save you money to pay your wife's alimony.
- OSCAR (*Controlling himself*) Felix, this is no time to have a domestic quarrel. We have two girls coming down any minute.
- FELIX You mean you told them to be here at eight o'clock?
- OSCAR (*Takes his jacket and crosses to the couch, then sits and takes some dip from the coffee table*) I don't remember what I said. Seven thirty, eight o'clock. What difference does it make?
- FELIX (*Follows OSCAR*) 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 we have dinner. It is now eight o'clock. *My London broil is finished!* If we don't eat now the whole ~~dinner~~ thing'll be *dried out!*
- OSCAR Oh, God, help me.
- FELIX Never mind helping you. Tell Him to save the meat. Because we got nine dollars and thirty-four cents worth drying up in there right now.
- OSCAR Can't you keep it warm?
- FELIX (*Pacing*) What do you think I am, the Magic Chef? I'm lucky I got it to come out at eight o'clock. What am I going to do?
- OSCAR I don't know. Keep pouring gravy on it.
- FELIX What gravy?
- OSCAR Don't you have any gravy?
- FELIX (*Storms over to OSCAR*) Where the hell am I going to get gravy at eight o'clock?
- OSCAR (*Getting up*) I thought it comes when you cook the meat.
- FELIX (*Follows him*) When you cook the meat? You don't know the first thing you're talking about. You have to make gravy. It doesn't come!

OSCAR You asked my advice, I'm giving it to you.
(*He puts on his jacket*)

FELIX Advice? (*He waves the ladle in his face*) You didn't know where the kitchen was till I came here and showed you.

OSCAR You wanna talk to me, put down the spoon.

FELIX (*Exploding in rage, again waving the ladle in his face*) Spoon? You dumb ignoramus. It's a ladle. You don't even know it's a ladle.

OSCAR All right, Felix, get a hold of yourself.

FELIX (*Pulls himself together and sits on the love seat*) You think it's so easy? Go on. The kitchen's all yours. Go make a London broil for four people who come a half hour late.

OSCAR (*To no one in particular*) Listen to me. I'm arguing with him over gravy.

(*The bell rings*)

FELIX (*Jumps up*) Well, they're here. Our dinner guests. I'll get a saw and cut the meat.

(*He starts for the kitchen*)

OSCAR (*Stopping him*) Stay where you are!

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

OSCAR Who's blaming you? Who even cares about the dinner?

FELIX (*Moves to OSCAR*) I care. I take pride in what I do. And you're going to explain to them exactly what happened.

OSCAR All right, you can take a Polaroid picture of me coming in at eight o'clock! Now take off that stupid apron because I'm opening the door.

(*He rips the towel off FELIX and goes to the door*)

FELIX (*Takes his jacket from a dining chair and puts it on*) I just want to get one thing clear. This is the last time I ever cook for you. Because people like you don't even appreciate a decent meal. That's why they have TV dinners.

OSCAR You through?

FELIX I'm through!

OSCAR Then smile. (OSCAR smiles and opens the door. The girls poke their heads through the door. They are in their young thirties and somewhat attractive. They are undoubtedly British) Well, hello.

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GWENDOLYN (To OSCAR) Hallo!

CECILY (To OSCAR) Hallo.

GWENDOLYN I do hope we're not late.

OSCAR No, no. You timed it perfectly. Come on in. (He points to them as they enter) Er, Felix, I'd like you to meet two very good friends of mine, Gwendolyn and Cecily . . .

CECILY (Pointing out his mistake) Cecily and Gwendolyn.

OSCAR Oh, yes. Cecily and Gwendolyn . . . er (Trying to remember their last name) Er . . . Don't tell me. Robin? No, no. Cardinal?

GWENDOLYN Wrong both times. It's Pigeon!

OSCAR Pigeon. Right. Cecily and Gwendolyn Pigeon.

GWENDOLYN (To FELIX) You don't spell it like Walter Pidgeon. You spell it like "Coo-Coo" Pigeon.

OSCAR We'll remember that if it comes up. Cecily and Gwendolyn, I'd like you to meet my room-mate, and our chef for the evening, Felix Ungar.

CECILY (Holding her hand out) Heh d'yew dew?

FELIX (Moving to her and shaking her hand) How do you do?

GWENDOLYN (Holding her hand out) Heh d'yew dew?

FELIX (Stepping up on the landing and shaking her hand) How do you do you?

(This puts him nose to nose with OSCAR, and there is an awkward pause as they look at each other)

OSCAR Well, we did that beautifully. Why don't we sit down and make ourselves comfortable?

(FELIX steps aside and ushers the girls down into the room. There is ad libbing and a bit of confusion and milling about as they all squeeze between the armchair and the couch, and the PIGEONS finally

seat themselves on the couch. OSCAR sits in the arm chair, and FELIX sneaks past him to the love seat. Finally all have settled down)

CECILY This is ever so nice, isn't it, Gwen?

GWENDOLYN (Looking around) Lovely. And much nicer than our flat. Do you have help?

OSCAR Er, yes. I have a man who comes in every night.

CECILY Aren't you the lucky one?

(CECILY, GWENDOLYN and OSCAR all laugh at her joke. OSCAR looks over at FELIX but there is no response)

OSCAR (Rubs his hands together) Well, isn't this nice? I was telling Felix yesterday about how we happened to meet.

GWENDOLYN Oh? Who's Felix?

OSCAR (A little embarrassed, he points to FELIX) He is!

GWENDOLYN Oh, yes, of course. I'm so sorry.

(FELIX nods that it's all right)

CECILY You know it happened to us again this morning.

OSCAR What did?

GWENDOLYN Stuck in the elevator again.

OSCAR Really? Just the two of you?

CECILY And poor old Mr. Kessler from the third floor. We were in there half an hour.

OSCAR No kidding? What happened?

GWENDOLYN Nothing much, I'm afraid.

(CECILY and GWENDOLYN both laugh at her latest joke, joined by OSCAR. He once again looks over at FELIX, but there is no response)

OSCAR (Rubs his hands again) Well, this really is nice.

CECILY And ever so much cooler than our place.

GWENDOLYN It's like equatorial Africa on our side of the building.

CECILY Last night it was so bad Gwen and I sat there in nature's own cooling ourselves in front of the open fridge. Can you imagine such a thing?

OSCAR Er, I'm working on it.

end

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon