

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 a 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. (He moves to the 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 around) 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 the 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! (He goes to the 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 a drink) I did exactly what you're doing.

FELIX Getting hysterical!

OSCAR No, drinking! Drinking! (He comes back to the couch with the bottle and 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.

(He stretches out on the couch with his 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?

(He 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.

(He hums. Then he gets up and tries to clear his 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 makes 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 his neck) I think I strained my throat.

(He paces about the room)

Start

[cut down
for time]

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.
(*He lies back down on the 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? Hell! 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!

(*He sinks down in the 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.

(*He lies back down*)

FELIX You think I ought to call Frances?

OSCAR (*About to explode*) What for?

(*He 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 toothbrush 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.

ix 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 some thing.

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.

(He throws a pillow at him)

FELIX (Throws the 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.)

He 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 the phone) Yes, he's here.

FELIX (Pacing back and forth) How does she sound? Is

she worried? Is she crying? What is she saying? I she want to speak to me? I don't want to speak to her.

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

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

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

FELIX She doesn't want to speak to me?

OSCAR (Into the phone) Yeah, I see. Right. Well, good-bye.

(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 the shoulder) Listen, Felix, it's almost one o'clock.

(He 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 Raisinetos?

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?

(He goes into the bedroom)

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

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

FELIX (*Gets up and moves toward the 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.

(*He throws the 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.

(*He begins picking up debris from the floor*)

OSCAR (*Putting the pillow into the 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.~~

(*He puts the dishes on the 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 the pillow into the downstage bedroom as he passes. He 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 toward the bedroom as FELIX begins to plump up a 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 expression*)

Curtain

end