

ERNEST: I'm not wrong! I know that's what he said. I just wanted to see if you remembered.

WINIFRED: *(Enjoying herself.)* We did!

ERNEST: All right, all right. Let's go.

LORA: What do we do?

WINIFRED: We smile and say brilliant things. *(To Ernest.)* How do you do, Lord Fiddle?

ERNEST: *(Catching on.)* How do you do, Lady Fiddle?

WINIFRED: How nice of you to come.

ERNEST: How nice of you to let me.

WINIFRED: How nice of you to say so.

ERNEST: How nice!

WINIFRED: How charming!

ERNEST: How delightful!

WINIFRED: Curtain! *(She looks at the curtain, which does not move.)* Guess that wasn't enough.

The Odd Couple

Neil Simon

ACT I

Scene 1

(Setting: Oscar's apartment.)

(Felix is staying with Oscar during this time of separation, and he and Oscar have invited the Pigeon sisters down for a social evening. Felix is chatting with them while Oscar makes the drinks.)

(Enter) Madison: Divorced, sportswriter, 40's, a slob.

(Enter) Ungar: Separated from his wife, 40's, neat, fussy, articulate.

(Enter) Birdolyn Pigeon: 20's – 30's, British, pert, lively.

(Enter) Pigeon: Her sister, 20's – 30's, they share an apartment upstairs in the same building, British, cute, fun loving.

*(Enter) Felix. Yes, I see. *(He laughs. They all laugh. Suddenly he shouts toward the kitchen.)* Oscar, where's the drinks?*

*(Enter) Oscar. *(Offstage.)* Coming! coming!*

(Enter) Felix. What field of endeavor are you engaged in?

(Enter) Felix. I write the news for CBS.

(Enter) Birdolyn. Oh! Fascinating!

(Enter) Birdolyn. Where do you get your ideas from?

*(Enter) Birdolyn. *(He looks at her as though she's a Martian.)* From the news.*

(Enter) Birdolyn. Oh yes, of course. Silly me. . . .
(Enter) Birdolyn. Maybe you can mention Gwen and I in one of your news reports.

(Enter) Birdolyn. Well, if you do something spectacular, maybe I will.

*(Enter) Birdolyn. Oh, we've done spectacular things but I don't think we'd want it spread all over the telly, do you, Gwen? *(They both laugh.)**

*(Enter) Birdolyn. *(She laughs too, then cries out almost for help.)* Oscar!*

*(Enter) Birdolyn. *(Offstage.)* Yeah, yeah!*

*(Enter) Birdolyn. *(To the girls.)* It's such a large apartment, sometimes you have to shout.*

(Enter) Birdolyn. Just you two baches live here?

(Enter) Birdolyn. Baches? Oh, bachelors! We're not bachelors. We're divorced.

(Enter) Birdolyn. That's, Oscar's divorced. I'm getting divorced.

(Enter) Birdolyn. Oh. Small world. We've cut the dinghy loose too, as they say.

GWENDOLYN: You mustn't be ashamed. I think it's a rare quality in a man to be able to cry.

FELIX: *(Puts a hand over his eyes.)* Please. Let's not talk about it.

CECILY: I think it's sweet. Terribly, terribly sweet. *(She takes a potato chip.)*

FELIX: You're just making it worse.

GWENDOLYN: *(Teary-eyed.)* It's so refreshing to hear a man speak so highly of the woman he's divorcing! Oh, dear. *(She takes out her handkerchief.)* Now you've got me thinking about poor Sydney.

CECILY: Oh, Gwen. Please don't. *(She puts the bowl down.)*

GWENDOLYN: It was a good marriage at first. Everyone said so. Didn't they, Cecily? Not like you and George.

CECILY: *(The past returns as she comforts Gwendolyn.)* That's right. George and I were never happy. Not for one single, solitary day. *(She remembers her unhappiness, grabs her handkerchief and dabs her eyes. All three are now sitting with handkerchiefs at their eyes.)*

FELIX: Isn't this ridiculous?

GWENDOLYN: I don't know what brought this on. I was feeling so good a few minutes ago.

CECILY: I haven't cried since I was fourteen.

FELIX: Just let it pour out. It'll make you feel much better. I always do.

GWENDOLYN: Oh, dear, oh, dear, oh, dear. *(All three sit sobbing into their handkerchiefs. Suddenly Oscar bursts happily into the room with a tray full of drinks. He is all smiles.)*

OSCAR: *(Like a corny M.C.)* Is ev-rybuddy happy? *(Then he see the maudlin scene. Felix and the girls quickly try to pull themselves together.)* What the hell happened?

FELIX: Nothing! Nothing! *(He quickly puts his handkerchief away.)*

OSCAR: What do you mean, nothing? I'm gone three minutes and I walk into a funeral parlor. What did you say to them?

FELIX: I didn't say anything. Don't start in again, Oscar.

OSCAR: I can't leave you alone for five seconds. Well, if you really want to cry, go inside and look at your London broil.

FELIX: *(He rushes madly into the kitchen.)* Oh, my gosh! Why didn't you call me? I told you to call me.

OSCAR: *(Giving a drink to Cecily.)* I'm sorry girls. I forgot to warn you about Felix. He's a walking soap opera.

GWENDOLYN: I think he's the dearest thing I ever met.

CECILY: *(Taking the glass.)* He's so sensitive. So fragile. I just want to bundle him up in my arms and take care of him.

OSCAR: *(Holds out Gwendolyn's drink. At this, he puts it back down on the tray and takes a swallow from his own drink.)* Well, I think when he comes out of that kitchen you may have to. *(Sure enough, Felix comes out of the kitchen onto the landing looking like a wounded puppy. With a protective kitchen glove, he holds a pan with the exposed London broil. Black is the color of his true love.)*

FELIX: *(Very calmly.)* I'm going down to the delicatessen. I'll be right back.

OSCAR: *(Going to him.)* Wait a minute. Maybe it's not so bad. Let's see it.

FELIX: *(Show him.)* Here! Look! Nine dollars and thirty-four cents worth of ashes! *(Pulls the pan away. To the girls.)* I'll get some corned beef sandwiches.

OSCAR: *(Trying to get a look at it.)* Give it to me! Maybe we can save some of it.

FELIX: *(Holding it away from Oscar.)* There's nothing to save. It's all crack meat. Nobody likes black meat!

OSCAR: Can't I even look at it?

FELIX: No, you can't look at it!

OSCAR: Why can't I look at it?

FELIX: If you looked at your watch before, you wouldn't have to look at the black meat now! Leave it alone! *(He turns to go back into the kitchen.)*

GWENDOLYN: *(Going to him.)* Felix! Can we look at it!

CECILY: *(Turning to him, kneeling on the couch.)* Please? *(Felix stops in the kitchen doorway. He hesitates for a moment. He likes tram. Then he turns and wordlessly holds the pan out to them. Gwendolyn and Cecily inspect it wordlessly, and then turn away sobbing quietly. To Oscar.)* How about Chinese food!

OSCAR: A wonderful idea.

GWENDOLYN: I've got a better idea. Why don't we just make potluck in the kitchen?

OSCAR: A much better idea.

FELIX: I used up all the pots! *(He crosses to the love seat and sits, still avoiding the pan.)*

GWENDOLYN: Well, you couldn't have a better matched foursome, could you?

FELIX: *(Smiles weakly.)* No, I suppose not.

GWENDOLYN: Although technically I'm a widow. I was divorcing my husband, but he died before the final papers came through.

FELIX: Oh, I'm awfully sorry. *(Sighs.)* It's a terrible thing, isn't it? Divorce.

GWENDOLYN: It can be—if you haven't got the right solicitor.

CECILY: That's true. Sometimes they can drag it out for months. I was lucky. Snip, cut and I was free.

FELIX: I mean it's terrible what it can do to people. After all, what is divorce? It's taking two happy people and tearing their lives completely apart. It's inhuman, don't you think so?

CECILY: Yes, it can be an awful bother.

GWENDOLYN: But of course, that's all water under the bridge now, eh? Er, I'm terribly sorry, but I think I've forgotten your name.

FELIX: Felix.

GWENDOLYN: Oh, yes, Felix.

CECILY: Like the cat. *(Felix takes his wallet from his jacket pocket.)*

GWENDOLYN: Well, the Pigeons will have to beware of the cat, won't they? *(She laughs.)*

CECILY: *(Nibbles on a nut from the dish.)* Mmm, cashews. Lovely.

FELIX: *(Takes a snapshot out of his wallet.)* This is the worst part of breaking up. *(He hands the picture to Cecily.)*

CECILY: *(Looks at it.)* Childhood sweethearts, were you?

FELIX: No, no. That's my little boy and girl. *(Cecily gives the picture to Gwendolyn, takes a pair of glasses from her purse and puts them on.)* He's seven, she's five.

CECILY: *(Looks again.)* Oh! Sweet.

FELIX: They live with their mother.

GWENDOLYN: I imagine you must miss them terribly.

FELIX: *(Takes back the picture and looks at it longingly.)* I can't stand being away from them. *(Shrugs.)* But—that's what happens with divorce.

CECILY: When do you get to see them?

FELIX: Every night. I stop there on my way home! Then I take them on the weekends, and I get them on holidays and July and August.

CECILY: Oh! Well, when is it that you miss them?

FELIX: Whenever I'm not there. If they didn't have to go to school so

early, I'd go over and make them breakfast. They love my French toast.

GWENDOLYN: You're certainly a devoted father.

FELIX: It's Frances who's the wonderful one.

CECILY: She's the little girl?

FELIX: No. She's the mother. My wife.

GWENDOLYN: The one you're divorcing?

FELIX: *(Nods.)* Mm! She's done a terrific job bringing them up. They always look so nice. They're so polite. Speak beautifully. Never, "Yeah." Always, "Yes." They're such good kids. And she did it all. She's the kind of woman who,—Ah, what am I saying? You don't want to hear any of this. *(He puts the picture back in his wallet.)*

CECILY: Nonsense. You have a right to be proud. You have two beautiful children and a wonderful ex-wife.

FELIX: *(Containing his emotions.)* I know. I know. *(He hands Cecily another snapshot.)* That's her, Frances.

GWENDOLYN: *(Looking at the picture.)* Oh, she's pretty. Isn't she pretty, Cecy?

CECILY: Oh, yes. Pretty. A pretty girl. Very pretty.

FELIX: *(Takes the picture back.)* Thank you. *(Shows them another snapshot.)* Isn't this nice?

GWENDOLYN: *(Looks.)* There's no one in the picture.

FELIX: I know. It's a picture of our living room. We had a beautiful apartment.

GWENDOLYN: Oh yes. Pretty. Very pretty.

CECILY: Those are lovely lamps.

FELIX: Thank you! *(Takes the picture.)* We bought them in Mexico on our honeymoon. *(He looks at the picture again.)* I used to love to come home at night. *(He's beginning to break.)* That was my whole life. My wife, my kids—and my apartment. *(He breaks down and sobs.)*

CECILY: Does she have the lamps now too?

FELIX: *(Nods.)* I gave her everything. It'll never be like that again. Never! — *(He turns his head away.)* I'm sorry. *(He takes out a handkerchief and dabs his eyes. Gwendolyn and Cecily look at each other with compassion.)* Please forgive me. I didn't mean to get emotional. *(Trying to pull himself together, he picks up a bowl from the side table and offers it to the girls.)* Would you like some potato chips? *(Cecily takes the bowl.)*

CECILY: Well, then we can eat up in our place. We have tons of Horn and Hardarts.

OSCAR: (Gleefully.) That's the best idea I ever heard.

GWENDOLYN: Of course it's awfully hot up there. You'll have to take off your jackets.

OSCAR: (Smiling.) We can always open up a refrigerator.

CECILY: (Gets her purse from the couch.) Give us five minutes to get into our cooking things. (Gwendolyn gets her purse from the couch.)

OSCAR: Can't you make it four? I'm suddenly starving to death. (The girls are crossing to the door.)

GWENDOLYN: Don't forget the wine.

OSCAR: How could I forget the wine?

CECILY: And a corkscrew.

OSCAR: And a corkscrew.

GWENDOLYN: And Felix.

OSCAR: No, I won't forget Felix.

CECILY: Ta, tai

OSCAR: Ta, tai

GWENDOLYN: Ta, tai

(The girls exit.)

OSCAR: (Throws a kiss at the closed door.) You bet your sweet little crumpets, "Ta, Tai!" (He wheels around beaming and quickly gathers up the corkscrew from the bar, and picks up the wine and the records.) Felix, I love you. You've just overcooked us into one hell of a night. Come on, get the ice bucket. Ready or not, here we come. (He runs to the door.)

FELIX: (Sitting motionless.) I'm not going!

OSCAR: What?

FELIX: I said I'm not going.

OSCAR: (Crossing to Felix.) Are you out of your mind? Do you know what's waiting for us up there? You've just been invited to spend the evening in a two-bedroom hothouse with the Coo-Coo Pigeon Sisters! What do you mean you're not going?

FELIX: I don't know how to talk to them. I don't know what to say. I already told them about my brother in Buffalo. I've used up my conversation.

OSCAR: Felix, they're crazy about you. They told me! One of them wants to wrap you up and make a bundle out of you. You're

doing better than I am! Get the ice bucket. (He starts for the door.)

FELIX: Don't you understand? I cried! I cried in front of two women.

OSCAR: (Stops.) And they loved it! I'm thinking of getting hysterical.

(Goes to the door.) Will you get the ice bucket?

FELIX: But why did I cry? Because I felt guilty. Emotionally I'm still tied to Frances and the kids.

OSCAR: Well, untie the knot just for tonight, will you!