

OSCAR. (*Gets up and moves right.*) 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. (*Putting on jacket.*)

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

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

FELIX. (*Exploding in rage, again waving 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, sits on loveseat.*) 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. (*Starts for 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. (*Rips the towel off FELIX and goes to the door.*)

FELIX. (*Takes jacket from 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 T.V. 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 both in their young thirties and somewhat attractive. They are undoubtedly British.)

Well, hello.

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 roommate...and our chef for the evening... Felix Ungar.

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

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

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

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

(*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 armchair, and FELIX sneaks past him to the loveseat. 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 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. 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 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.

GWENDOLYN. Actually, it's impossible to get a night's sleep.

Cec and I really don't know what to do.

OSCAR. Why don't you sleep with an air conditioner?

GWENDOLYN. We haven't got one.

OSCAR. I know. But we have.

GWENDOLYN. Oh you! I told you about that one, didn't I, Cec?

FELIX. They say it may rain Friday.

(They all stare at FELIX.)

GWENDOLYN. Oh?

CECILY. That should cool things off a bit.

OSCAR. I wouldn't be surprised.

FELIX. Although sometimes it gets hotter after it rains.

GWENDOLYN. Yes, it does, doesn't it?

(They continue to stare at FELIX.)

FELIX. *(Jumps up and, picking up ladle, starts for the kitchen.)*
Dinner is served!

OSCAR. *(Stopping him.)* No, it isn't!

FELIX. Yes, it is!

OSCAR. No, it isn't! I'm sure the girls would like a cocktail first. *(To girls.)* Wouldn't you, girls?

GWENDOLYN. Well, I wouldn't put up a struggle.

OSCAR. There you are. *(To CECILY.)* What would you like?

CECILY. Oh, I really don't know. *(To OSCAR.)* What have you got?

FELIX. London broil.

OSCAR. (To FELIX.) She means to drink. (To CECILY.) We have everything. And what we don't have, I mix in the medicine cabinet. What'll it be? (*Crouches next to her.*)

CECILY. Oh...a double vodka.

GWENDOLYN. Cecily...not before dinner.

CECILY. (To the men.) My sister... She watches over me like a mother hen. (To OSCAR.) Make it a small double vodka.

OSCAR. A small double vodka! ...And for the beautiful mother hen?

GWENDOLYN. Oh... I'd like something cool. I think I would like to have a double Drambuie with some crushed ice...unless you don't have the crushed ice.

OSCAR. I was up all night with a sledge hammer... I shall return! (*Goes to bar and gets bottles of vodka and Drambuie.*)

FELIX. (*Going to him.*) Where are you going?

OSCAR. To get the refreshments.

FELIX. (*Starting to panic.*) Inside? What'll I do?

OSCAR. You can finish the weather report. (*He exits into kitchen.*)

FELIX. (*Calls after him.*) Don't forget to look at my meat! (*He turns and faces the girls. He crosses to chair and sits. He crosses his legs nonchalantly. But he is ill at ease and he crosses them again. He is becoming aware of the silence and he can no longer get away with just smiling.*) Er... Oscar tells me you're sisters.

CECILY. Yes. That's right. (*She looks at GWENDOLYN.*)

FELIX. From England.

GWENDOLYN. Yes. That's right. (*She looks at CECILY.*)

FELIX. I see. (*Silence. Then, his little joke.*) We're not brothers.

CECILY. Yes. We know.

FELIX. Although I am a brother. I have a brother who's a doctor. He lives in Buffalo. That's upstate in New York.

GWENDOLYN. (*Taking cigarette from her purse.*) Yes, we know.

FELIX. You know my brother?

GWENDOLYN. No. We know that Buffalo is upstate in New York.

FELIX. Oh!

(*Gets up, takes cigarette lighter from side table and lights GWENDOLYN's cigarette.*)

CECILY. We've been there! ...Have you?

FELIX. No! ...Is it nice?

CECILY. Lovely.

(*FELIX closes lighter on cigarette and turns to go back to chair, taking the cigarette, now caught in the lighter, with him. He notices cigarette and hastily gives it back to GWENDOLYN, stopping to light it once again. He puts lighter back on table and sits nervously. There is a pause.*)

FELIX. Isn't that interesting? ...How long have you been in the United States of America?

CECILY. Almost four years now.

FELIX. (*Nods.*) Uh-huh... Just visiting?

GWENDOLYN. (*Looks at CECILY.*) No! ...We live here.

FELIX. And you work here too, do you?

CECILY. Yes. We're secretaries for Slenderama.

GWENDOLYN. You know. The Health Club.

CECILY. People bring us their bodies and we do wonderful things with them.

GWENDOLYN. Actually, if you're interested, we can get you ten percent off.

CECILY. Off the price, not off your body.

FELIX. Yes, I see. (*He laughs, they all laugh. Suddenly shouts towards kitchen.*) Oscar, where's the drinks?

OSCAR. (*Offstage.*) Coming! Coming!

CECILY. What field of endeavor are you engaged in?

FELIX. I write the news for C.B.S.

CECILY. Oh! Fascinating!

GWENDOLYN. Where do you get your ideas from?

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

GWENDOLYN. Oh, yes, of course. Silly me...

CECILY. Maybe you can mention Gwen and I in one of your news reports.

FELIX. Well, if you do something spectacular, maybe I will.

CECILY. 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.)

FELIX. *(He laughs too, then cries out almost for help.)* Oscar!

OSCAR. *(Offstage.)* Yeah yeah!

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

GWENDOLYN. Just you two baches live here?

FELIX. Baches? Oh, bachelors! We're not bachelors. We're divorced. That is, Oscar's divorced. I'm *getting* divorced.

CECILY. Oh. Small world. We've cut the dinghy loose too, as they say.

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 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 snapshot out of wallet.)* This is the worst part of breaking up. *(He hands picture to CECILY.)*

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

FELIX. No, no. That's my little boy and girl.

(CECILY gives picture to GWENDOLYN, and takes 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 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.