

The Odd Couple

ACT ONE

TIME: *A hot summer's night.*

SCENE: *The apartment of OLIVE MADISON. One of those six-room affairs on Riverside Drive, New York, in the eighties. The building is about fifty years old and still has vestiges of its once glorious past. High ceilings, walk-in closets and thick walls. We are in the combination living room-dining room. Two steps up is the front door and next to that, a hall closet. A window at s.l. with a broken air conditioner. Towards center rear, a doorway leads to the kitchen. At s.r., a hallway leads to the back bedrooms and the bathroom.*

The apartment is quite unkempt. Books are a mess in the bookshelves. Magazines and old newspapers on the floors and tables. Unopened mail and unopened laundry packages lie about.

AT RISE: *A dining table at s.r. is being used for the Girls' weekly Trivial Pursuit game. Four women are at the table playing, two on each side. RENEE and SYLVIE, a compulsive smoker, on one side; VERA and MICKEY, a uniformed policewoman, on the other. Food and drinks, none too appetizing, are on the table. MICKEY is standing.*

MICKEY. *(shakes dice in hand) C'mon, baby, we need a piece of the pie. (She throws dice.) . . . Five! (She counts off spaces on the board.) One—two—three—four—five! . . . Science and Nature. (She sits. RENEE takes card from the box and looks at it.)*

RENEE. Oh, you're going to love this . . . "How many times a year does a penguin have sex?" (*MICKEY looks at her partner, VERA, puzzled.*)

MICKEY. Do you know any penguins? . . . Intimately?

VERA. That shouldn't be Science and Nature. That should be gossip.

MICKEY. I'll say they do it six times.

VERA. Why only six times?

MICKEY. Did you ever see what they look like?

VERA. They live on icebergs. What else could they do all winter? (*to opponents*) I say twenty times.

RENEE. Wrong. They do it once.

SYLVIE. *Once?* Jesus, I married a penguin.

RENEE. Christ, it's hot in here. When is she going to fix her air conditioner?

SYLVIE. (*hands the dice to RENEE*) Your roll.

RENEE. I'm going to pass out, I swear.

VERA. Someone told me you were seeing a doctor. Is it anything serious?

RENEE. No. We only had two dates. (*rolls dice*) Four. (*counts off with marker*) One—two—three—four . . . Oh, Christ. Sports!

SYLVIE. Go the other way. (*to VERA*) We take Science. (*RENEE moves marker the opposite way.*)

MICKEY. Two minutes to go and counting down.

SYLVIE. (*to MICKEY*) Do you mind if she asks the question first? (*to VERA*) Go on, Vera.

VERA. (*reads from card*) "What does C mean in Einstein's Theory of Relativity, E equals MC squared?" (*SYLVIE and RENEE look at her with their mouths open, dumbfounded.*)

SYLVIE. We'll try sports.

VERA. You can't change after you've heard the question.

RENEE. She picked it on *my* turn. I pick sports. (*She moves marker back.*)

MICKEY. (*looks at watch*) A minute thirty and counting down.

VERA. (*reads*) "Who pitched back to back no-hitters for the Cincinnati Reds in 1938?" (*SYLVIE and RENEE stare again with mouths open, dumbfounded.*)

SYLVIE. (*to RENEE*) You want to take a crack at MC squared?

RENEE. (*to VERA*) Give us a hint.

VERA. What kind of hint?

RENEE. Is it baseball or football?

VERA. It's baseball. I'll give you another hint. He has a Dutch name . . .

SYLVIE. . . . Dutch Schultz.

MICKEY. Dutch Schultz was a gangster.

RENEE. Joe Rembrandt.

VERA. Is that your answer?

SYLVIE. Peter Windmill.

VERA. Is that your answer?

MICKEY. Sixty seconds and counting down.

SYLVIE. What is this, liftoff at Cape Canaveral? (*calls off towards kitchen*) Olive, we need help.

OLIVE. (*offstage*) I'm coming. I'm coming.

VERA. Do you give up?

RENEE. Not yet . . . Bobby Amsterdam . . . Tony Tulips.

VERA. Give up. You'll never get it. I have to leave by twelve.

SYLVIE. Where the hell are you running?

VERA. I told you that when I sat down. I have to leave by twelve. Mickey, didn't I say that when I sat down? I have to leave by twelve.

MICKEY. I'm really starting to worry about Florence.