

~~OLIVE. What can I do?~~

~~FLORENCE. A towel. Get me a hot towel. Very hot.~~

~~OLIVE. Right. What about some aspirins?~~

~~FLORENCE. Aspirin is good... And some brandy... I can't move my neck.~~

~~OLIVE. Hot towel, aspirin and brandy. Anything else?~~

~~FLORENCE. Ben-Gay. To rub in after.~~

~~OLIVE. Right. *(Starts inside.)*~~

FLORENCE. And a scarf. A woolen scarf... Cashmere is better if you have one. *(Paces, rubbing neck.)* I knew something was coming, Olive. I knew we were in trouble. In the middle of the night I'd tiptoe into the bathroom and I would pray, "Please, God, please help me save my marriage. Please, God, tell me what to do. Tell me what I'm doing wrong. Please, God, help me" ...And then I'd hear Sidney in the bedroom saying, "Please, God, make her shut up. Tell her to be quiet, please, God" ...

OLIVE. *(Comes back in with tray of medicants.)* ...Here. Put the scarf on. Take your aspirins.

FLORENCE. *(Sits at table.)* I'm not a complainer. I've never once tried to change Sidney... He wears a toupee two sizes too big, he looks like an English sheep dog, I never said a word.

OLIVE. Drink them down with brandy.

FLORENCE. Now he's into cowboy boots. Five foot three and a half, he wears cowboy boots. They come up to his knees... He looks like he jumped off a hundred foot horse. He's also into languages. He's studying Russian at the New School. Instead of yes, he says, "Da." Everything is "Da."

OLIVE. You're tensing up again, Florence. Stop tensing.

FLORENCE. I'm married to a five foot three inch man with an oversized toupee and boots up to his knees who walks around saying, "Da," and he walks out on *ME???*.

OLIVE. Will you relax!! RELAX, dammit! Your neck feels like Arnold Schwarzenegger.

FLORENCE. Sometimes I think I'm crazy. Sometimes I think I should be put in an institution.

OLIVE. Later, if the massage doesn't work.

FLORENCE. That doesn't smell like Ben-Gay.

OLIVE. (*Looks at tube.*) You're right. It's toothpaste.

FLORENCE. I don't think this is helping me. (*She wipes off toothpaste with towel.*)

OLIVE. Because you won't relax. Have you always been this tense?

FLORENCE. Since I was a baby. I could chew a thick sirloin steak just with my gums.

OLIVE. Bend over.

(*FLORENCE bends over. OLIVE begins to massage up and down her back.*)

FLORENCE. I do terrible things, Olive. I cry. I panic. I get hysterical.

OLIVE. (*Still massaging.*) If this hurts just tell me because I don't know what the hell I'm doing.

FLORENCE. I take advantage of you, Olive. I abuse our friendship. I know I drive you crazy.

OLIVE. No, you don't.

FLORENCE. Yes, I do.

OLIVE. You don't.

FLORENCE. I do. I see you grit your teeth together when I talk to you. You used to have much longer teeth.

OLIVE. (*Stops massaging.*) Okay. How does your neck feel?

FLORENCE. Better.

OLIVE. Good.

FLORENCE. But it never lasts long.

OLIVE. Maybe this time.

FLORENCE. No. It just came back. (*She rubs neck again.*)

OLIVE. (*Shakes head in despair.*) Drink your brandy.

FLORENCE. I don't think I can. It doesn't go down.

OLIVE. I'll get you a plunger... Come on, drink the brandy. You'll feel better.

FLORENCE. Thank God the kids are away at summer camp. They'll be spared this until September.

OLIVE. Please drink your brandy.

FLORENCE. I don't want to get divorced, Olive. I don't want to suddenly change my whole life. Talk to me. Tell me what to do.

OLIVE. Alright, alright. First of all, you're going to calm down and relax. Then you and I are going to figure out a whole new life for you.

FLORENCE. Without Sidney? What kind of a life is there without Sidney?

OLIVE. I don't live with Sidney and I'm very happy. You can do it, Florence, believe me.

FLORENCE. Olive, you've been through it yourself. What did you do? How did you get through it?

OLIVE. *(She drinks some brandy.)* I drank for four days and five nights. I couldn't work. I ate a quart of Haagen-Dazs jamocha almond fudge every night. I gained fourteen pounds, seven on each hip. I looked like I was carrying my laundry in my pockets... But I got through it.

FLORENCE. And what about Sidney? He's human too. How's he going to get through this?

OLIVE. He's a man. Men have freedom. He can meet women anywhere. *We* have to donate a kidney and hope the man is grateful and single.

FLORENCE. You think Sidney is thinking of other women? At a time like this?

OLIVE. I guarantee you by tomorrow night he'll be at a singles bar sitting on a stool on top of two telephone books.

FLORENCE. You think so? *(She's been playing with her ear. She suddenly starts to make strange noises as she tries to unplug her ear.)*

OLIVE. What's the matter now?

FLORENCE. (*Standing.*) My ears are closing up. It's a sinus condition. I'm allergic.

(*She makes the sinus sound again, then crosses to the open window. OLIVE follows nervously behind.*)

I'm not going to jump. I just want to breathe. (*She takes deep breaths.*) I was even allergic to perfume. I had to wear Sidney's after shave lotion. Old Spice Menthol... I always felt like I just sailed home from Singapore. (*She suddenly bellows like a moose.*)

~~OLIVE. (*Looks dumbfounded.*) What are you doing?~~

~~FLORENCE. I'm trying to clear my ears. You create a pressure inside and then it opens up. (*She bellows again.*)~~

~~OLIVE. Did it open up?~~

~~FLORENCE. A little. (*Rubs her neck.*) I think I strained my throat.~~

~~OLIVE. Florence, leave yourself alone. Don'tinker.~~

~~FLORENCE. 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 Sidney. It's impossible to be married to me.~~

~~OLIVE. It takes two to make a lousy marriage.~~

~~FLORENCE. What'll I do with the rest of my life, Olive? I have so much of it left. If only I was seventy, seventy-five, I could get through it.~~

~~OLIVE. I'll tell you what you're going to do. You're going to start your life over and stand on your own two feet. Be independent!~~

~~FLORENCE. You're right.~~

~~OLIVE. Of course I am.~~

~~FLORENCE. That's what I was before I was married. I was a great bookkeeper. I could have been Price, Waterhouse today. You're right. Go back to work. Be independent. A self-sufficient woman.~~

~~OLIVE. You're damn right.~~