

without I think to please you, and still a . . . an everlasting funeral marches round your heart. I cannot speak but I am doubted; every moment judged for lies as though I come into a court when I come into this house!

ELIZABETH, firmly: John, you are not open with me. You saw her with a crowd, you said. Now, you . . .

PROCTOR: I'll plead my honesty no more, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH, now she would justify herself: John, I am only . . .

PROCTOR, in outburst: No more! I should have roared you down when first you told me your suspicion. But I wilted, and like a Christian, I confessed. Some dream I had must have mistaken you for God that day, but you're not, you're not. Let you remember it. Let you look sometimes for the goodness in me, and judge me not.

ELIZABETH: I do not judge you. The magistrate sits in your heart that judges you. I never thought you but a good man, John, only somewhat bewildered.

PROCTOR: Oh, Elizabeth, your justice would freeze beer.

THE OWL AND THE PUSSYCAT

by Bill Manhoff

ACT I

Bill Manhoff's comedy is about a colorful San Francisco hooker and a conservative would-be novelist. Late one night Felix Sherman is hoodwinked into letting his neighbor, Doris, into his home. She has been evicted from her apartment after her landlord received phone calls from Felix reporting on her activities with men. After a barrage of insults and revengeful threats Doris settles in for the night since she has no money and no place to go. Felix is too frightened to make her leave and des-

perately wants to get some sleep. What ensues is the beginning of an unlikely love affair.

The scene opens with Doris alone on Felix's livingroom couch, trying to get her radio to work. After being bullied into letting her stay the night, Felix has crawled into his bedroom to sleep. (The "knock" mentioned in the stage directions is from a neighbor trying to quiet the goings-on in Felix's apartment.)

DORIS, shouts: God damn it! Hey fink, fink!

Felix enters.

FELIX: Now what?

DORIS: My radio won't work. I must have banged it coming up the stairs!

FELIX: Do you really have to—?

DORIS: It's the only way I can go to sleep. You got a radio?

FELIX: No.

DORIS: What'll I do now? Why did I have to come up here?

FELIX: Why not correct your mistake? Leave!

DORIS: I should have just given a certain friend of mine a dollar to beat you up.

FELIX: A dollar? Can't be much of a beating.

DORIS: He's a friend. He would do it for nothing, but I make him take a dollar.

FELIX: I see.

DORIS, calls: What's so goddam funny? I'll send him around tomorrow. I guarantee you won't think it's so funny. Now I'll never get to sleep.

FELIX: Why can't you sleep?

DORIS: I'm very high-strung.

FELIX: I don't have any sleeping pills or I'd—

DORIS: I don't take sleeping pills. I never take them. They're enervating.

FELIX: How about a hot bath? That'll relax you.

DORIS, talking in a compulsive rush: I never take baths. They're enervating too. You know that word—"enervating"?

Most people think it means just the opposite of what it really means. *Felix walks back toward the bedroom in the middle of her speech, yawning, yearning for sleep. Doris raises her voice to a*

shout. *Felix stops.* Another word that kills me is naive—I always thought it was “nave” you know. How do you pronounce it?

FELIX: I never use it.

DORIS: I mean I heard the word na’ive, but—

The knock is heard again

FELIX: What’s the matter with you? What are you trying to do? I got up at five-thirty this morning.

DORIS: Listen, I know this sounds crazy, but will you sit here for a little while and talk to me?

FELIX: You act as though you were afraid to be alone.

DORIS: I usually fall asleep with the television on or the radio—but now my radio’s on the fritz and it’s too late for TV.

FELIX: It’s too late for me, too. I’m signing off. *Sings:*

Oh say can you see by the dawn’s early light—

This is Channel Sherman signing off for the night.

DORIS, *laughing much too hard:* That’s pretty funny. I never would have thought you had a sense of humor.

FELIX: I’m a funny fink.

DORIS: Just goes to show you never can tell about people. *As she talks Felix turns and makes another try for the bedroom. Without a pause and without changing her tone or her volume, Doris goes on:* If you take one more step I’m gonna scream at the top of my lungs.

FELIX: For God’s sake—

DORIS: I can’t help it. Do you think I can help it? I can’t fall asleep unless I’m listening to something. Read me something—you got any magazines?

FELIX: Isn’t there any other way for you to get to sleep?

DORIS: There’s only one other way.

FELIX: That wouldn’t interest me.

DORIS: That is not what I meant—evil-minded!

FELIX: Listen—I must get some sleep.

DORIS: So must I—which I would if not for some dirty rotten bastard who you and I both know. Pardon my language.

FELIX, *humoring a child:* All right—all right. What do you want?

DORIS: Read to me. Read me anything and I’ll fall asleep. Nothing with big words. I hate big words. *Felix looks around*

the room, looks at Doris, looks at his books; looks back at Doris, obviously decides he has nothing suitable. Well?

FELIX: We’re out of bedtime stories. What was the other way you have of falling asleep?

DORIS: Huh? Oh—that’s only in the winter when it’s real cold—I huddle myself down in bed under about a million blankets—it’s a wonder I don’t suffocate—come on read to me—anything.

Felix picks up a small bronze bust, for a second considers hitting her with it.

FELIX: I could put you to sleep with Shakespeare.

DORIS: Shakespeare gives me a headache.

FELIX: I don’t have anything you’d like. I don’t have any comic books, movie magazines or any other literature of that nature!

DORIS, *yawning:* Don’t stop—your voice is very enervating. You know what that means? Oh yeah—I told you before. Come on—keep talking—

FELIX, *looking about desperately, picks up the box of breakfast food, reads the label:* Ingredients: oat flour—wheat starch—sugar, salt, cinnamon, sodium phosphate, calcium carbonate, artificial coloring, iron, niacin, thiamine and riboflavin, caramel, vegetable oil with freshness preserved by Butylated Hydroxylene and—

DORIS: No—that’s no good—I’m getting hungry. Hey—read me one of your stories. Read me your latest one.

FELIX: You wouldn’t like it. *Remembering:* Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation—conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men were created equal—equal—*(Stops, stuck; he sits on the end of the sofa, exhausted.)*

DORIS: Don’t stop—that’s nice—the Declaration of Independence—right?

FELIX: No. Custer’s farewell address to the Indians.

DORIS: Oh, yes—that’s right—why’d you stop?

FELIX: I don’t remember anymore. Listen—I’m exhausted—

DORIS: Why wouldn’t I like your story?

FELIX: It has no rape scene, no beautiful people, and no happy ending.

DORIS: Let's hear it. Maybe I can spot where you went wrong.

FELIX: You ought to be ashamed of yourself. A big girl like you afraid to be alone— (*He yawns.*)

DORIS: Isn't that ridiculous! Ever since I was a kid—I tell you it's not being alone that's scary—I wouldn't mind being alone—but there's somebody there—I can hear him breathing—he just stands there breathing and it just panics me—I had this analysis you know for six months and the doctor told me— (*Stops.*) Hey— (*He's dozed off.*)

FELIX: Oh—what were you saying?

DORIS: About being alone—my analyst said—

FELIX: You were analyzed?

DORIS: Of course.

FELIX: Really?

DORIS: There's a brain in there—honest!

FELIX: What kind of a doctor?

DORIS: Jewish.

FELIX: No. I mean—never mind. What did he say?

DORIS: Oh, I hate that!

FELIX: What?

DORIS: "Never mind" like "forget it, you're too dumb to understand."

FELIX: Oh no—it was just a foolish question on my part.

DORIS: Really?

FELIX: Sure. That's why I said "never mind." What did he tell you?

DORIS: He said I was afraid to be alone because of unconscious guilt.

FELIX: Guilt is very bad.

DORIS: It's enervating.

FELIX: If you don't let me go to sleep you're gonna be completely enervated by guilt feelings tomorrow.

DORIS: Never mind, wise guy! Read me your story.

FELIX, *picks up typewriter script*: You won't like it.

DORIS: If it puts me to sleep I'll love it.

FELIX, *reading*: Scream—

DORIS: "Scream." That's the title, right—"Scream."

FELIX: Yes.

DORIS: That's a wild title.

FELIX: Thank you. *Reads*: The sun spit morning into Werner's

face—one eyelid fluttered—dragging the soul back screaming from its stealthy flight to death—

DORIS, *sitting up*: The sun spit morning into this guy's face?

FELIX: Yes.

DORIS: You were right.

FELIX: When?

DORIS: I don't like it. I hate it.

FELIX: It wasn't written for you to like.

DORIS: Why wasn't it written for me to like? I'm the public—

FELIX: You're raising your voice.

DORIS: The sun spit morning into his face!

FELIX: Shh! What are you getting angry about?

DORIS: What right do you have to put down a terrible thing like that in a story—"The sun spit morning in a man's face."

FELIX: All right—you don't like it—but calm down.

DORIS: Yeah—look at me! I always get mad at stuff like that.

FELIX: Just because you don't understand it?

DORIS: It makes me feel shut out—you know? It makes me mad as hell! You know once I threw a clock at the TV.

SAME TIME, NEXT YEAR

by Bernard Slade

ACT II, SCENE 1

Same Time, Next Year is the story of a love affair that spans twenty-five years. Doris and George are happily married—to other people. Beginning with a chance pickup in 1951, they continue to meet once a year at the same California inn. During the course of the play we witness, through the changes in both characters, a quarter-century of changes in American mores and political and social attitudes.

When the play begins, George is a conservative accountant.