

(A light appears from the bedroom. EDNA, his wife, appears in her nightgown.)

EDNA. What's wrong?

MEL. Nothing's wrong.

EDNA. Huh?

MEL. Nothing's wrong. Go back to bed.

EDNA. Are you sure?

MEL. I'm sure. Go back to bed. (EDNA turns and goes back to bedroom.) Oh, God, God, God. (EDNA returns, putting on her robe. She turns on switch on wall, lighting the room.)

EDNA. What is it? Can't you sleep?

MEL. If I could sleep, would I be sitting here calling God at two-thirty in the morning?

EDNA. What's the matter?

MEL. Do you know it's twelve degrees in there? July 23rd, the middle of a heat wave, it's twelve degrees in there.

EDNA. I told you, turn the air conditioner off.

MEL. And how do we breathe? (Points to window.) It's 89 degrees out there . . . 89 degrees outside, 12 degrees inside. Either way they're going to get me.

EDNA. We could leave the air conditioner on and open the window. (She crosses into kitchen.)

MEL. They don't work that way. Once the hot air sees an open window, it goes in.

EDNA. We could leave the air conditioner off for an hour. Then when it starts to get hot, we can turn it back on. (Comes out eating jar of apple sauce.)

MEL. Every hour? Seven times a night? That's a good idea. I can get eight minutes sleep in between working the air conditioner.

EDNA. I'll do it. I'll get up.

MEL. I asked you a million times to call that office. That air conditioner hasn't worked properly in two years.

EDNA. I called them. A man came. He couldn't find anything wrong.

MEL. What do you mean, nothing wrong? I got it on Low, it's twelve God damned degrees.

EDNA. (*Sits, sighs.*) It's not twelve degrees, Mel. It's cold, but it's not twelve degrees.

MEL. Alright, 17 degrees. 29 degrees. 36 degrees. It's not 68. 69. A temperature for a normal person.

EDNA. (*Sits on sofa.*) I'll call them again tomorrow.

MEL. Why do they bother printing on it High, Medium and Low? It's all High. Low is High. Medium is High. Some night I'm gonna put it on High, they'll have to get a flame-thrower to get us out in the morning.

EDNA. What do you want me to do, Mel? You want me to turn it off? You want me to leave it on? Just tell me what to do?

MEL. Go back to sleep.

EDNA. I can't sleep when you're tense like this.

MEL. I'm not tense. I'm frozen stiff. July 23rd. (*He sits on sofa.*)

EDNA. You're tense. You were tense when you walked in the house tonight. You've been tense for a week. Would you rather sleep in here? I could make up the cot.

MEL. You can't even sit in here. (*Picks up small puff pillows behind him.*) Why do you keep these ugly little pillows on here? You spend eight hundred dollars for chairs and then you can't sit on it because you got ugly little pillows shoved up your back. (*He throws one of the pillows on the floor.*)

EDNA. I'll take the pillows off.

MEL. Edna, please go inside, I'll be in later.

EDNA. It's not the air conditioner. It's not the pillows. It's something else. Something's bothering you. I've seen you when you get like this. What is it, Mel?

MEL. (*Rubs face with hands.*) It's nothing. I'm tired. (*He gets up, crosses to terrace door.*)

EDNA. I'm up, Mel, you might as well tell me.

MEL. It's nothing I'm telling you . . . I don't know. It's everything. It's this apartment, it's this building, it's this city. Listen. Listen to this. (*He opens terrace door.*)