

the beginning of

OH HAPPY DAY (from **COUPLES**)

a short comedy by Rich Orloff

Time: The present.

Place: A living room.

Characters: ELLIOT and LARRY, about the same age

The living room of ELLIOT and LARRY, early one evening. ELLIOT enters through the front door, puts down his briefcase, and takes off his trenchcoat. He wears a suit, his tie is loosened, and he's drained from a very trying day. LARRY enters from the kitchen. He got home awhile ago, and he's changed into jeans and a T-shirt or sweater. He's refreshed and glad to see Elliot.

LARRY

Hi, darling. Happy –

ELLIOT

Don't talk to me.

LARRY

(upset, but not too much)

Well.

ELLIOT

Look, I, traffic was lousy, my day was lousy, and Huns are taking over America. I'm sorry I can't be more –

LARRY

That's okay.

ELLIOT

If I could just have, as a special gift to me, for the next few minutes, I just, I just need to not talk to you or the plants or anyone.

LARRY

Do you want me to start dinner, or shall we eat out?

ELLIOT

At this moment, even that question is too taxing for my brain.

LARRY

I'll make an executive decision.

Larry exits.

ELLIOT

(calling after him:)

Thank you.

Elliot sits on the couch. For a few moments, he stares vacantly into space. Then he notices his nose. He becomes intrigued, looking away and back at it. Larry returns with a bottle of champagne and two glasses.

ELLIOT (cont'd)

Do you realize that when we have our eyes open, our nose is always within our view. We act as if it's not, but it is, all the time.

LARRY

Are you saying we're in nasal denial?

As they talk, Larry opens the champagne and pours two glasses. He hands one to Elliot.

ELLIOT

I'm not sure *what* I'm saying...
You spoil me, you know that?

LARRY

Only on certain days.

ELLIOT

You spoil me a lot.

LARRY

It's completely selfish. I spoil *you* one day,
and you're obligated to spoil *me* one day.

ELLIOT

I'm so far behind I've lost track.

LARRY

I haven't.

ELLIOT

How far behind am I?

LARRY

Last time I checked my list... 358 days.

ELLIOT

Uh-oh.

LARRY

Pretty soon, you're gonna owe me
one helluva year.

They each hold champagne glasses.

ELLIOT

To spoiling each other.

LARRY

To spoiling each other.

They clink glasses and drink.

ELLIOT

Today sucked, Larry.

LARRY

Yes, I know; I saw a TV news promo:
"Today sucked; details at eleven."
Did you get any support at all?

ELLIOT

None I can count on.

LARRY

I'm sorry, Elliot.

ELLIOT

I spent all day with Huns. Duly-elected Huns.

LARRY

What about Engleman?

ELLIOT

He sympathizes, but is afraid
of losing the next election.

LARRY

Dixon?

ELLIOT

Is busy courting the Christian right.

LARRY

Palmer?

ELLIOT

Palmer suggested we meet for drinks.
In the Bahamas.

LARRY

And what did you reply?

ELLIOT

"I don't drink."

Elliot finishes his champagne and pours himself some more.

LARRY

(holding out his glass)

Me, neither.

ELLIOT

Huns. They should stop calling themselves
Republicans and Democrats and rename
themselves "Huns" and "Those Who Aren't
Huns But Who Act Like Huns So They
Won't Lose the Hun Vote".

LARRY

Well, I'll be glad to move out of this
state any day you want.

ELLIOT

Where'd you like to live?

LARRY

Oh, I don't know. Someplace fantastic
and unreal. Like where *Will and Grace* live.

ELLIOT

What really gets me is that off the record,
they all agree the bill's a distraction
from the serious issues of the day.

LARRY

Then why don't they –

ELLIOT

I think politicians define their job as distracting
the public from the serious issues of the day.

LARRY

Think their bill will pass?

ELLIOT

It's a toss-up. I keep hoping it'll get buried somewhere in committee, but I don't think Dolmatch will allow that.

LARRY

Great. For eons they label us as promiscuous and decadent, and now they try to pass a bill to keep us that way.

ELLIOT

This morning Dolmatch said his bill was essential to protect the sanctity of the institution of marriage. Fortunately, this afternoon both his ex-wives came out against it.

LARRY

Now *there's* a dangerous institution nobody's looking at.

ELLIOT

Pompous hypocrites?

LARRY

Worse. I think it's time someone passed a law prohibiting what any sane person can see is destroying the fabric of our society.

ELLIOT

What's that?

LARRY

Opposite-sex marriages.

ELLIOT

Now there's an idea.

LARRY

Granted some of them work, but when you look at history, you'll see a high percentage of them lead to adultery, abuse, violence, and incredibly boring talk shows.

ELLIOT

Half of them end up in divorce.

LARRY

Exactly. Would you buy a toaster if you knew it had a 50% chance of breaking down? What does it say about our society when we have higher standards for toasters than for marriage?

ELLIOT

Now let's not trash all opposite-sex couples. Some of them are fine people.

LARRY

Stop apologizing for them. Most of them don't even go to church. And the ones who do dress as if God had no fashion sense.

ELLIOT

Good point.

LARRY

I think if anyone looked objectively at the statistics of how many straight people have alcohol or drug problems, and how many are just plain unstable – well, I'd be afraid to let them teach in our schools.