IRA and MAX side

SCENE IV

(*Lights come up on Max and his long-time friend Ira Feinberg, who is a bit older than Max and much more laid back about life. They are sitting at a park playing a game of chess. Ira has been waiting for Max to make a move, but Max sits and just stares at the board, distracted with other thoughts.*)

IRA: Max.
MAX: Yes, Ira.
IRA: You want to play today or what? You haven't moved in 5 minutes, but who's counting.
MAX: Apparently, *you're* counting.
IRA: Well, I don't mean to rush you, but I'd like to finish the game before my next birthday.
MAX: Alright, alright (*he moves one of his chess pieces*)….there, I moved. (*Ira gives him a look.*) What?
IRA: You've been staring at that board for that long and *that's* your move?
MAX: You complained that I didn't move, so I moved. Now, you don't like my move. Maybe you don't like my move because now you're in trouble. Maybe this is just strategy on your part just to psych me out… to make me feel like I should have done something else, when maybe *you're* the one who's in trouble. I think that's it. I think you're about to lose this game, and that's why you're questioning my move. No more complaints, smart guy. It's your move now. Go ahead.
IRA: (*Ira moves*) Checkmate.
MAX: I hate this game. Next time, we're playing something else, like Checkers, or Poker. Anything but chess!
IRA: You want to play a different game? We'll play a different game. Max, what's the matter? I know you're not the biggest fan of chess, but you usually don't get this emotional about it.
MAX: Ruth and I had a fight last night.
IRA: Yeah… so?
MAX: You asked what was wrong, and I told you.
IRA: Ok. You and Ruth had a fight.
MAX: Yeah.
IRA: You two argued?
MAX: Yes, we argued.
IRA: And that's why you're upset?
MAX: Yes, that's why I'm upset.
IRA: Ok. So, do you want to play some Poker?
MAX: No!

IRA and MAX side

IRA: Why not?
MAX: Why not!? I don't believe this. Ira, I just told you I had a fight with Ruth last night.
IRA: Yeah, I heard you. So, what's the big deal? Make up with her. It'll be fine. Let's play some cards.
MAX: You make it sound easy.
IRA: Max, it *is* easy. Ok, what did you fight about?
MAX: Well, it started after dinner. I was watching TV. The ball game was on.
IRA: Hey, that was a great game! Tyler shut'em down in the 9th inning. That guy can throw over 90 mph!
MAX: Yeah, I know. Anyway, I went to the bathroom during a commercial break, but when I came back, she was sitting down on the couch, where I was, and had changed the channel. So, I sat back down and switched the channel back to the game. And she gives me one of those looks.
IRA: What kind of a look?
MAX: You know, *a look*. Like a "what do you think you're doing?" look. So I gave a look back.
IRA: What kind of a look did you give her?
MAX: You know, *a look*. Like a "you know very well I was watching the game before I couldn't hold it any longer" look, but she says that she didn't know I was coming back.
IRA: A likely story.
MAX: That's what I thought, "a likely story." Of course, she had to know I was coming back. I always watch the game after dinner. But she tells me that she didn't know and it would be nice if we could watch something we both were interested in. Can you believe it?
IRA: (*Sarcastically*) That's unbelievable.
MAX: That's what *I* thought, "unbelievable." So, one thing leads to another, and the next thing you know, we're arguing about other stuff too – not just the TV. We're arguing about me going to bed and not helping her around the house, me going out after work for a drink with the guys, me not giving her enough quality time. I couldn't take it anymore, so I went upstairs to bed.
IRA: You left her there?
MAX: Yeah, I went upstairs. I didn't want to argue anymore.
IRA: And you went to sleep?
MAX: Yes. (*Ira stares at him*) What?
IRA: Didn't anyone ever tell you not to go to bed angry?
MAX: Yeah, why is that? We weren't getting anywhere with the arguing, so I thought it would be better to take a break and sleep on it.
IRA: Did you sleep?

IRA and MAX side

MAX: No.
IRA: There's your answer. *No one* sleeps well when they're angry.
MAX: Okay, so what do I do now?
IRA: Well, did you say anything to her this morning, before you came here?
MAX: She was still sleeping when I left. I made it a point to get out of there in a hurry. I didn't want to talk to her.
IRA: You can't just avoid her forever.
MAX: Who says?
IRA: What do you mean, "who says"? You're married for God's sake.
MAX: Yeah, well maybe that was a mistake.
IRA: Max, what are you talking about? You and Ruth have been married for three decades; you have kids. You want to throw all that away over one night of watching television?
MAX: It's not just one night of TV. We haven't been getting along. We don't have anything in common.
IRA: What are you talking about? You're married.
MAX: I like watching sports and science fiction; she likes watching reality shows. I like taking walks outside; she likes exercising in the gym. I like eating pizza and subs; she's always pushing the vegetarian food. I like to throw out stuff; she recycles … *everything*! Not just paper. Oh, no. She recycles receipts, movie stubs, cereal boxes…. God forbid I throw out a toilet paper roll!
IRA: Well, you must have something in common.
MAX: That's just it, Ira. I'm not sure that we do.
IRA: So, I guess this means you don't want to play cards, right? (*Answering his own question*) Right….. Look, Max, you and Ruth are just going through a thing. Everybody goes through it at some point during marriage. Judy and I went through the same kind of thing, and we got through it.
MAX: You're divorced.
IRA: Yeah, well that doesn't have to happen to you. Don't make more out of it than it is. Just give it some time. (*Ruth enters. Ira sees her and makes a quick exit.*) I'll see you around.