

THE ODD COUPLE

THE COL.
PLAZA SUITE

LEGATED

BAREFOOT IN THE PARK

P DAYS

COME BLOW YOUR HORN

OF NELL

THE STAR-SPANGLED GIRL

SIMON

LAST OF THE RED HOT LOVERS

VOLUME 1

PROMISES, PROMISES



PLUME

ABOUT

Since 1962, Neil Simon has written 27 plays, the first play being *Come Blow Your Horn*. During the 1966-67 season, *Barefoot in the Park*, *The Odd Couple*, *Sweet Charity* and *The Star-Spangled Girl* were all running simultaneously; in the 1970-71 season, Broadway theatergoers had their choice of *Plaza Suite*, *Last of the Red Hot Lovers*, and *Promises, Promises*. Next came *The Gingerbread Lady*, *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*, *The Sunshine Boys*, *The Good Doctor*, *God's Favorite*, *California Suite*, *Chapter Two*, the musical *They're Playing Our Song*, *I Ought to Be in Pictures*, *Fools*, *Brighton Beach Memoirs* (which won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Play of 1983), *Biloxi Blues* (which won the Tony Award for Best Play of 1985), and the female version of *The Odd Couple*.

Mr. Simon began his writing career in television, writing *The Phil Silvers Show* and Sid Caesar's *Your Show of Shows*. He has also written the screen adaptations of *Barefoot in the Park*, *The Odd Couple*, *Plaza Suite*, *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*, *The Sunshine Boys*, *California Suite*, *Chapter Two*, and *I Ought to Be in Pictures*. His original screenplays include *The Out-of-Towners*, *The Heartbreak Kid*, *Murder by Death*, *The Goodbye Girl*, *The Cheap Detective*, *Seems Like Old Times*, *Only When I Laugh*, *Max Dugan Returns*, and *The Slugger's Wife*.

The author lives in California and New York. He has two daughters, Ellen and Nancy.

The
COLLECTED
PLAYS *of*
Neil Simon

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Neil Simon

Volume I

*With an Introduction
by Neil Simon*



A PLUME BOOK

All for Joan

PLUME

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The
COLLECTED
PLAYS of
Neil Simon

Introduction

Portrait of the Writer as a Schizophrenic

Not long after we were married, my wife and I stood toe to toe in the kitchen, exchanging verbal punches that were as devastating and as painful as any thrown in a championship heavyweight match. Each accusation, each emotional blow found its mark, and we both reeled from the awesome destructive power of the truths we hurled. Then suddenly, because there were no adequate words left to express her hurt, frustration and anger, my wife did what now seems to be the only sensible and rational thing she could have done. She picked up a frozen veal chop recently left out on the table to defrost, and hurled it at me, striking me just above the right eye. I was so stunned I could barely react; stunned not by the blow nor the intent, but by the absurdity that I, a grown man, had just been hit in the head with a frozen veal chop. I could not contain myself, and a faint flicker of a smile crossed my face. Suddenly the anger and hostility drained from me and I found myself outside the situation looking in, no longer involved as a man in conflict, but as an observer, an audience so to speak, watching two people on a stage, both of whom cared for each other, but were unable or unwilling to yield or to submit without having first gained some small vicious victory. Add to the scene the fact that, like the two policemen in a Roald Dahl short story who ate the frozen mutton leg murder instrument for dinner, thus depriving themselves of their single piece of evidence, I would soon be eating the object that nearly destroyed my marriage. And I hate veal chops.

The marriage survived and is still prospering, despite occasional rematches of our earlier, more successful fights. On these occasions, I again find myself subtly extricating myself from the scene of battle, and taking a seat at a higher and safer vantage point, viewing the struggle much like Lord Cardigan and Lord Raglan in the Crimean War, con-

Introduction

cerned about the outcome, but at the same time making notes for future use. A strange phenomenon, this two-headed monster who finds himself totally involved in situations, and then suddenly and without warning steps back to watch the proceedings. There is evidence that this phenomenon is prevalent among that strange breed called writers, but it is even more prevalent among that stranger breed called comic writers. It is one thing for a writer to understand this; it is another to live with it. Like the werewolf, that half-man, half-beast, I have had to come to grips with the frightening but indisputable truth: I am a creature controlled by some cruel fate that had twisted and warped my personality so that at the first sign of personal involvement, I became transformed from human being into the most feared and dangerous beast on earth, the observer-writer. Like Lon Chaney's portrayal of Lawrence Talbot, the monster-turned-back-into-man, the writer-once-more-human suffers great pangs of guilt the mornings after his transformations, but is powerless to do anything about it. He is cursed. He tries to go about his normal life—until he feels the transformation beginning again, and he knows what lies ahead.

I wasn't always like that. In the beginning, I was a boy. A plain boy. A nice, plain boy. I went to school, I ate breakfast, I listened to *The Shadow*, I dreamt of being Joe DiMaggio, I went to the movies a lot and once was thrown out of a theater for laughing too loud at Chaplin in *Modern Times*. No sinister signs, no black omens. A nice, plain boy . . . Well, perhaps a few telltale hints to a discerning eye. I would go with my parents to visit a "distant" relative, distant in those days meaning a forty-minute trolley ride across the river to the Bronx, and once there, I imagined myself invisible. No earthly creature could see me because no earthly creature talked to me for hours at a time, save for grown-ups, when they offered me a cookie or a nice apple. I refused, hoping this would discourage them from further contact, enabling me to mask myself again in a cloak of obscurity. Hours would go by. They would talk, I would listen. I got to know them better by listening than if I had engaged them in conversation myself. On the trolley going home I realized again that I could not be seen by the human eye. People talked to each other, not to me. They looked at each other, not at me. Unobserved, unnoticed, unheeded, I

could go about my curious business, storing up vast amounts of valuable information like accents, hair styles; those who shined their shoes and those who did not, nose blowers, nose wipers, nose leakers and those with various other nose habits too indelicate to mention. Occasionally I would be noticed, invariably by another young boy my own age and alone with his parents. I would have to be careful. If the other boy noticed what I was doing, I would be exposed. I stared at the Wrigley Chewing Gum sign above the heads of the occupants on the other side, hoping and praying the interloper would get off before I did. Success at last. There he goes. Stubby arms and a fat behind. Bad athlete, good student, and probably gets an allowance. Oh, terrific, his underwear constantly sticks in his crotch and he pulls at it in a really ridiculous way. I have him now. Let him dare to threaten to expose me, to reveal to the world my existence, and I shall shame him with vivid descriptions of how he gets off a trolley. Home to bed and dreams of victory and triumph. The Shadow knows.

I grow. An inch here, an inch there, a crack in the voice, a stubble on the chin, a passing shot at puberty, a glancing blow at sex and Shazam, I'm a man. If not a man, at least a tall boy. Would you accept an enormous child? My dreams, my goals, my ambitions are to be like Them, the Others. Accepted, Respected and Noticed. Not an impossible dream to fulfill if one works zealously, passionately and tirelessly. But at what? Business? No interest. Sports? No talent. Doctor? Lawyer? Engineer? No college degree, no talent, no interest.

My dreams and ambitions suddenly seem to be unreachable. How can you be Accepted, Respected and Noticed, when you are Unseen, Unobserved and Unheeded? Dichotomy. A Division in two. Split right down the old middle. May I make a suggestion? How about a blending of the two? If you remain Unseen, Unobserved and Unheeded, and write down for others to read what you see, observe and heed, you might become Accepted, Respected and Noticed.

Marriage, a home, a child here, a child there, Manhood at last. But the breach widens, the rift expands. The Unseen Eye observes, the Unseen hand writes—but it doesn't live comfortably alongside normal human functions. How can one be a husband, a father, a friend, a person, by withdraw-

ing? How does one become an Observer, a Listener, if one is engaged, involved? The two continue to grow, to mature, but separately, apart . . . Until finally the split is complete. They can and do exist by themselves, housed in the same shell, but functioning as single and independent entities. A Monster is born.

The Human Being is a rather dull fellow. He doesn't smoke, is a moderate social drinker, dresses neatly but conservatively, watches his weight, his receding hairline and long-legged girls in short skirts, like the millions of faceless and fairly undistinguished members of his class and generation. He is often mistaken for looking like a grocery clerk—often *by* grocery clerks. He enjoys sports and indulges in childhood fantasies. He throws a pass, catches a long fly or hits a smashing backhand and envisages some shrewd sports promoter standing on the sidelines, cigar in mouth, asking, "Who's the new kid? Tell him I want to see him in my office." He drives rented Avis cars, always within the speed limits, his reading habits fluctuate somewhere between the Classics and *Variety*, and he would skip a seven-course meal in a three-star French restaurant for a corned beef on a seeded roll anytime. He watches his children perform in school plays, leaving in the middle on some pretext of an important business appointment and later regretting it, and sometimes stays to the bitter end, and regrets that too. He is kind to his mother, respectful to his mother-in-law, and is politically liberal, dove-ish, active and incredibly naive. He is an ecologist who believes in trees and grass and fresh air and the freedom of all animals, and has been seen on more than one occasion kicking his dog in the kidneys to get the mutt off the bed. He is a childish optimist. He thinks that justice will always prevail, that the meek shall inherit the earth, that bigotry and prejudice will not go unpunished and that the New York Football Giants, the Mets and the Knicks all will finish first next season. He is a dreamer and a realist, not acknowledging pain and defeat in his life but accepting it when it comes. He is a sensitive man and a sentimentalist; he reveres *Jules and Jim* for its classic beauty and cries at *Love Story*. Some would say, an ordinary man.

A look, the sound of a voice, a stranger passing on the street—and in an instant the transformation takes place. The mild-mannered Human Being suddenly dashes for

cover behind his protective cloak called skin and peers out, unseen, through two tiny keyholes called eyes. He stands there undetected, unnoticed, a gleeful, malicious smirk on his face watching, penetrating, probing the movements, manners and absurd gestures of those ridiculous creatures performing their inane daily functions. "How laughably that woman dresses . . . How pathetically that man eats . . . How forlornly that couple walks . . ." The writer is loose!

The lenses are constantly adjusted, more distance for wider observations of physical behavior and characteristics; close range for deep probing and psychological motivations. But wait. Look there. A familiar face approaches. Quick. Look the other way. Don't risk discovery. There's important work to be done, this is no time for social amenities. Too late. He's spotted you. A fast Hello, How's your wife, Why don't we have dinner next week? He's gone. Relax. Nice fellow, but who's he kidding with that mustache? Compensating for a height deficiency. Did you notice how his eyes kept avoiding yours, constantly looking at the traffic as he talked? What's he afraid of? What's he done? Who is he looking for? When is he—Stop it! Stop it! Behave yourself. Leave that poor fellow with his short legs alone. He's your friend. You like him. He's a decent man. So his eyes avoid yours, does that make him guilty of a criminal act? Perhaps he just likes to watch traffic when he talks. You really must call him next week and say you'd like to have dinner.

The Human Being, having asserted his position and being satisfied with his own decency and humane behavior, relaxes into his reveries. If the Knicks can just get by Baltimore, and Willis Reed's knee can hold out just a little longer—what's that? There's a crazy lady who's talking to her dog. She's not crazy because she's talking to him but because she expects an answer. "Why did you do that, Teddy? Don't pull away from me, you naughty dog. You tell Mommy, why you did that." She will not be satisfied until Teddy answers, which Teddy will not, which means she will never be satisfied, which she is not, which is why she is a little old lady living by herself, which is why—Oh, God, shut up! Shut up, will you? Leave the poor woman alone. She's lucky she's got a Teddy. I am bored with your probing and prying. Stop looking at everyone. It's a beauti-

ful spring day. Can't we just walk and enjoy the sun, for God's sakes?

The warmth of the sun passes through his body, pleasing him and comforting him. Is life not wonderful? Is nature not divine? Are God's creatures not truly wonderful? Is a hot dog with sauerkraut and a cold Pepsi in the park not one of mankind's greatest joys? His pleasure is not long lasting. A man and an attractive woman are walking slowly in front of him, talking in muted but heated words. He loves her but this can't go on. What can't go on? Their marriage? Their affair? Their business partnership? Their dance team? Damn that loud bus, I missed what she said. They're stopping. She's tired, she wants to sit on the bench. What do I do? Sit on the other end of the bench and pretend to read my newspaper? Fool, I have no newspaper. I could read the contents on my Pepsi bottle but how long would that take? Surely they'll suspect and move on . . . How about letting them alone and permitting them to live their lives in privacy? Monster, Monster, leave the world alone, it's none of your business.

Not content to pray on his fellow creatures, the Monster eventually turns on his alter ego, the Human Being, and dissects him unmercifully. In one play he has a newlywed accuse her husband of a week of being a stuffed shirt. "You're very proper and dignified. Even when you're drunk. You sit in a restaurant looking unhappy and watching your coat." It's true. He does. He tries to protect and defend himself. "The only reason I was watching my coat was because I saw someone else watching my coat." But the Monster will not be put off. He knows a stuffed shirt when he sees one, and he cuts even deeper. He uses the newlywed as the instrument to voice the feelings he has about the young husband. "You can't even walk into a candy store and ask for a Tootsie Roll. You've got to point to it and say to the lady, 'I'll have that thing in the brown and white wrapper.'" The Human-Being-Young-Husband fights back feebly. The Monster turns on the newlywed. He accuses her of being immature, adolescent, childishly romantic. Words echoing a real-life encounter that ended with a flying frozen veal chop. Is nothing sacred? Are there no secrets to be kept? But the Monster has observed, and what he has observed, he will reveal. Even the truth about himself. The young bride points another accusing finger: "Do

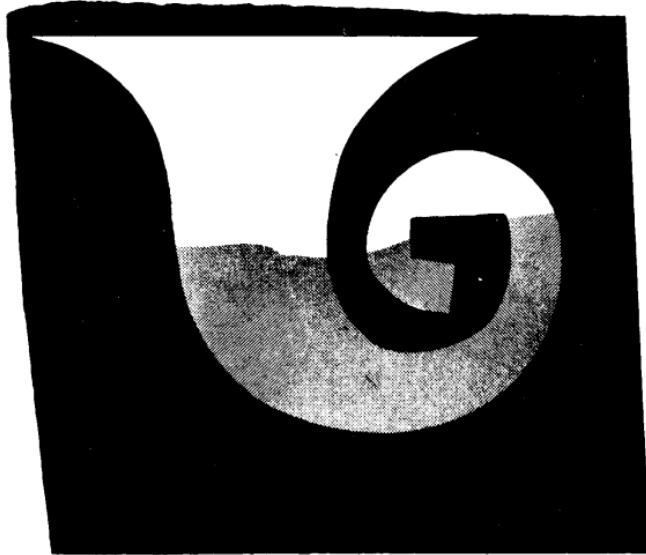
you know what you are? You're a Watcher. There are Watchers in this world and there are Do-ers. And the Watchers sit around watching the Do-ers do. Well, tonight you watched and I did." Damn you, Monster, they're just a couple of nice kids starting out in life. Give them a break, will you?

The transformation begins to take place more often, more easily, sometimes almost going unnoticed, not realizing it's even happening. The distinguishing characteristics that separated them slowly become faded and muted until finally it is difficult to tell one from the other. Who is that now, looking back at me in the glass? If it's the Monster, why does the face look so benign, so innocent, so content with the world? If it's the Human Being, why does he look into the eyes so deeply, with such disgust and self-contempt? It is night. The battle for sleep rages. The human is tired, but the writer is restless with ideas, characters, conflicts, situations. "Shut up, damn you," screams the gentle self, "and let a person get some sleep." After a fitful night, morning comes and it's the Human who pays the price, who bears the baggy-eyed scars of a sleepless night. The Monster is bright, alert, ready to go to work. The man drags his weary body into the kitchen and force-feeds himself so that the Beast can live for another day, to pry and probe and eventually to leave the remains of his victims spread out on a typewritten page with their names disguised, but their identities known to the world, exposed for all to see, to examine, to jeer at, to sympathize and identify with, and hopefully to laugh with, at and for—all under the soon-to-be disparaged, cheered, ignored and overpraised title of

—“A New Comedy by . . . ”

NEIL SIMON
New York City
March 10, 1971

*COME
BLOW
YOUR
HORN*



SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

TIME: The present

PLACE: Alan's apartment in the East Sixties, New York City.

ACT I: Six o'clock in the evening, early fall.

ACT II: Immediately after.

ACT III: Late afternoon. Three weeks later.

Act One

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At rise: ALAN BAKER, in a short Italian suede ski jacket is standing in the doorway being his charming, persuasive best in attempting to lure PEGGY EVANS into his bachelor apartment. PEGGY is in a ski outfit that fits her so snugly it leaves little room for skiing. ALAN puts down his valise, then slides PEGGY's overnight bag out of her hand without her even noticing it and places it on the floor. ALAN is very adept at this game. Being good-looking, bright, thirty-three and single against PEGGY's twenty-two years of blissful ignorance and eagerness to please, it appears that ALAN has all the marbles stacked on his side.

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

PEGGY Alan, no!

ALAN Come on, honey.

PEGGY Alan, no.

ALAN (*Taking off her ski jacket*) Just five more minutes. Come on.

PEGGY Alan, no. Please.

(*He pulls her into the living room*)

ALAN But you said you were cold.

PEGGY I am.

ALAN (*Embracing her*) I'll start a fire. I'll have your blood going up and down in no time.

PEGGY Alan, I want to go upstairs and take a bath. I've got about an inch of the New York Thruway on me.

ALAN Honey, you can't go yet. We've got to have one last drink. To cap the perfect weekend.

PEGGY It was four days.

ALAN It's not polite to count . . . Don't you ever get tired of looking sensational?

PEGGY Do you think I do?

ALAN You saw what happened at the ski jump. They were looking at you and jumping into the parking lot . . . Come here.

(*He bites her on the neck*)

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

PEGGY Why do you always do that?

ALAN Do what?

PEGGY Bite me on the neck.

ALAN What's the matter? You don't think I'm a vampire, do you?

PEGGY Gee, I never thought of that.

ALAN If it'll make you feel safer, I'll chew on your ear lobe.

(*He does*)

PEGGY (*Giggles*) Kiss me.

ALAN I'm not through with the hors d'oeuvres yet.

(*He kisses her*)

PEGGY (*Sighs and sits on sofa*) Now I feel warm again.

ALAN Good.

PEGGY Thank you for the weekend, Alan. I had a wonderful time.

ALAN Yeah, it was fun.

(*Crossing toward bar*)

PEGGY Even though he didn't show up.

ALAN (*Stops and turns*) Who?

PEGGY Your friend from M-G-M.

ALAN (*Continuing to bar. Quickly*) Oh, Mr. Manheim. Yeah . . . Well, that's show biz.

PEGGY Did it say when he expects to be in New York again?

ALAN Did what?

(*Picks up carton containing scotch bottle*)

PEGGY The telegram. From Hollywood.

ALAN Oh! Didn't I tell you? Next week. Early part.

PEGGY It's kind of funny now that you think of it, isn't it?

ALAN What is?

PEGGY Him wanting to meet me in a hotel.

ALAN (*Taking bottle out of carton*) It was a ski lodge.

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COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

PEGGY Was it? Anyway, it was nice. I've never been to New Hampshire before.

ALAN It was Vermont.

(*Putting down carton*)

PEGGY Oh. I'm terrible with names. I can't imagine why an important man like that wants to travel all the way up there just to meet me.

ALAN (*Puts bottle back on bar*) I explained all that. Since this picture he's planning is all about a winter carnival, he figured the best place to meet you would be against the natural setting of the picture. To see how you photograph against the snow. That makes sense . . . (*Not too sure*) Doesn't it?

(*Crosses right*)

PEGGY Oh, sure.

ALAN Sure.

(*Pulls PEGGY up from couch and embraces her*)

PEGGY We ought to go again sometime when it's not for business. Just for fun.

ALAN *That* should be a weekend.

PEGGY Maybe next time I could learn to ski.

ALAN I wouldn't be surprised.

PEGGY It's a shame we were cooped up in the room so long.

ALAN Yes. Well, I explained, we had that bad break in the weather.

PEGGY You mean all that snow.

ALAN Exactly . . . But you make the cutest little Saint Bernard . . .

(*He is just about to kiss her when the buzzer rings*)

PEGGY That's the lobby.

ALAN I don't hear a thing.

PEGGY Maybe it's for me.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ALAN My buzzer? You live up in the penthouse.

PEGGY I know. But I'm always here.

(*He looks at her quizzically, then goes to wall phone and picks it up*)

ALAN (*Into phone*) Yes? . . . Who? . . . Buddy? . . . Hi, kid . . . Now? . . . Well, sure. Sure, if it's important. You know the apartment. (*He hangs up*) My kid brother.

PEGGY Oh. I'd better go.

ALAN (*ALAN reaches for her again*) This is the seventh floor. We still have over a minute.

PEGGY (*Eluding him*) I want to go up and change anyway. (*She picks up her parka and goes to him, then says invitingly*) You think he'll be here long?

ALAN Not when you ask me like that.

PEGGY Why don't you come up in twenty minutes?

ALAN Why don't you come down in nineteen?

PEGGY All right. 'By, Alan.

ALAN 'By, Connie.

PEGGY Peggy!

(*She breaks from him*)

ALAN What?

PEGGY Peggy! That's the third time this weekend you called me Connie.

ALAN I didn't say Connie. I said Honey!

PEGGY Oh!

ALAN Oh!

PEGGY Sorry.

(ALAN opens door. She smiles and exits. ALAN breathes a sigh of relief. Picks up suitcase and goes into bedroom as the doorbell rings)

ALAN (Off stage) Come on in, it's open.

(BUDDY BAKER, his younger brother, enters with a valise in hand. Buddy is the complete opposite of Alan. Reserved, unsure, shy)

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BUDDY Hello, Alan . . . Are you busy?

(Enters apartment and looks around)

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

ALAN (Off stage) No, no. Come on in, kid. (ALAN on) What's up? (ALAN sees suitcase) What's in there?

BUDDY Pajamas, toothbrush, the works.

ALAN You're kidding.

BUDDY Nope.

ALAN You mean you left? (BUDDY nods) Permanently?

BUDDY I took eight pairs of socks. For me, that's permanently.

ALAN I don't believe it. You can't tell me you actually ran away from home.

BUDDY Well, I cheated a little. I took a taxi.

(Takes off coat and places it on suitcase)

ALAN You're serious. You mean my baby brother finally broke out of prison?

BUDDY We planned it long enough, didn't we?

ALAN Yes, but every time I brought it up you said you weren't ready. Why didn't you say something to me?

BUDDY When? You weren't at work since Thursday.

ALAN Hey, did Dad say anything? About my being gone?

BUDDY Not at the office. But at home he's been slamming doors. The chandelier in the foyer fell down. Where were you?

ALAN Vermont.

BUDDY Skiing?

ALAN Only during the day.

(*Sits on sofa and lights cigarette*)

BUDDY I don't know how you do it. If I'm at work one minute after nine, he docks my pay . . . and I get less to eat at home.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ALAN Because he expects it from you. From me he says he expects nothing, so that's what I give him.

BUDDY You're better off. At least you're not treated like a baby. You can talk with him.

ALAN We don't talk. We have heart to heart threatening

. . .

BUDDY That's better than the subtle treatment I get. Last night I came home three o'clock in the morning. He didn't approve. What do you think he did? (*ALAN shakes his head*) As I passed his bedroom door, he crowed like a rooster. Cock-a-doodle-doo.

ALAN You're kidding. What'd you say?

BUDDY Nothing. I wanted to cluck back like a chicken but I didn't have the nerve.

ALAN Oh, he's beautiful.

BUDDY And then yesterday was my birthday. (*Sits on sofa*) Twenty-one years old.

ALAN Oh, that's right. Gee, I'm sorry I wasn't there, Buddy. Happy birthday, kid.

(*He shakes BUDDY's hand warmly*)

BUDDY Thanks.

ALAN I even forgot to get you a present.

BUDDY I got one. A beaut. From Mom and Dad.

ALAN What was it?

BUDDY A surprise party. Mom, Dad, and the Klingers.

ALAN Who are the Klingers?

BUDDY Oh, the Klingers are that lovely couple the folks met last summer at Lake Mahopac.

ALAN Why? They're not your friends.

BUDDY Think. Why would they have the Klings to meet me?

ALAN They've got a daughter.

BUDDY Oh, have they got a daughter.

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ALAN You mean they brought her with them?

BUDDY In a crate.

COME BLOW

YOUR HORN

ALAN Let me guess. Naomi?

BUDDY Close. Renee.

ALAN Not much on looks but brilliant.

BUDDY A genius. An I.Q. of 170. Same as her weight.

ALAN And of course they had her dressed for the kill. They figured what she couldn't do, maybe Bergdorf could.

BUDDY Nothing could help. So I spent the night of my twenty-first birthday watching a girl devour an entire bowl of cashew nuts.

ALAN Oh, I'm sorry, kid.

BUDDY (*Rises, crosses right center*) It's been getting worse and worse. He looks in my closets, my drawers. He listens to my phone calls. I don't know what it is I've done, Alan, but I swear he's going to turn me in.

ALAN Well, it's simple enough. He's afraid you're going to follow in my footsteps.

BUDDY I did. I thought it over all day and realized I had to leave . . . Well—here I am.

ALAN Oh, I'm so proud of you, Buddy. If you weren't twenty-one, I'd kiss you.

BUDDY You really think I did the right thing?

ALAN What did you do, rob a bank? You're only going to be living four subway stations away. You're still working for him, aren't you?

BUDDY Well, there's going to be trouble there too.

ALAN What do you mean?

BUDDY I know I'm going to be struck by lightning for saying this . . . but I'm thinking of leaving the business.

ALAN . . . On the level?

BUDDY I'm not happy there, Alan. I'm not like you. You're good in the business . . . I'm not.

20

ALAN It's just that you're inexperienced.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BUDDY It's not only that. It just doesn't interest me. Gee whiz, there's a million more important things going on in the world today. New countries are being born. They're getting ready to send men to the moon. I just can't get excited about making wax fruit.

ALAN Why not? It's a business like anything else.

BUDDY It's different for you, Alan. You're hardly ever there. (*He sits*) You're the salesman, you're outside all day. Meeting people. Human beings. But I'm inside looking at petrified apples and pears and plums. They never rot, they never turn brown, they never grow old . . . It's like the fruit version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

ALAN (*Follows*) You know why you feel that way? Because you never get a chance to take the chains off. During the day it's all right. But at night you've got to bite into the *real* fruit of life, Buddy, not wax.

BUDDY Yeah, I guess so.

ALAN But that's all behind you now, right?

BUDDY (*Crosses downstage left*) Well . . . (*He looks at his watch*) In a few minutes anyway.

ALAN (*Crosses downstage left*) What do you mean?

BUDDY Dad should be coming home soon.

ALAN You mean you didn't tell him you were leaving?

BUDDY I couldn't, Alan.

ALAN Why not? Were you scared?

BUDDY You bet I was. With you out of work these last few days he hasn't been all smiles . . . And besides . . . I just didn't want to hurt him . . . Sure he's stubborn and old-fashioned . . . but he means well.

ALAN I know, kid. I understand.

BUDDY I left him at the plant and came home early tonight.

Then I wrote him a long letter explaining how I felt and left it on his bed. And in the morning, I think I'll be able to reason with him. Don't you?

(Crosses to ALAN right)

21

ALAN Frankly no, but what's the difference? I'm proud of you. You walked out of Egypt, kid. How about a drink? To celebrate. Scotch or bourbon?

(He crosses to bar)

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

BUDDY (Sits on sofa) Sure . . .

ALAN Scotch, bourbon?

BUDDY Scotch.

ALAN Scotch it is.

BUDDY And ginger ale.

ALAN (Stops) Scotch and ginger ale? . . . They must know you in every bar in town. (He makes drinks) Hey, how did Mom take all this?

BUDDY (Crosses and sits sofa) Oh, she's upset, of course. The most important thing to her is peace in the family.

ALAN And a clean apartment.

BUDDY (Smiles) And a clean apartment.

ALAN By the way, how is the Museum of Expensive Furniture?

BUDDY Oh, the living room is still closed to the public!

ALAN Living room? I don't remember ever seeing a living room.

BUDDY Sure you did. The one that had the lamp shades wrapped in cellophane for the past twenty years.

ALAN (Placing drinks on coffee table) Oh, yes. I was outlawed from that room years ago for putting a cigarette in an ash tray.

BUDDY . . . But you know why I really left home. I don't want to have milk and cake standing over the

sink any more. I want to sit in a chair and eat like real people.

ALAN Whoa, boy. You've got to start easy otherwise you'll get the bends. Maybe tonight you can hang your coat on the doorknob. Then maybe in a few days you'll be ready for bigger things . . . like leaving your socks on the floor.

22

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BUDDY (*Swings around right*) Oh, it's going to be wonderful, just the two of us, Alan. (*He looks around*) Hey, I never realized it before, but this is a great apartment.

ALAN Yeah. It comes a little high, but you pay for the atmosphere.

BUDDY Oh, I almost forgot. How much is my rent?

ALAN What rent?

BUDDY For my share? I won't stay here unless I can pay my share.

ALAN All right, sport. Give me thirty dollars.

BUDDY Who are you kidding? This place is no sixty dollars a month.

ALAN Look, that's your rent. Thirty dollars. When the old man starts paying you more, you can pay *me* more.

BUDDY Well, just to start with. But we split everything else. The food and gas and electricity and everything. Agreed?

ALAN (*Crosses right to BUDDY, bringing a drink*) Agreed. (*Hands BUDDY a drink*) Here. You owe me seventy-five cents. (*Raising his glass*) Well, here's to the Baker Brothers. The dream we've planned for years . . . You take all the girls on the West Side, I'll take the East Side . . . and I'll get in trouble afore ye. (*He winks affectionately at BUDDY.* BUDDY *drinks*, ALAN *watches*) How is it?

BUDDY (*Not very happy*) Different.

ALAN It should be. You just invented it. (*The phone rings*) Ten to one it's a gorgeous girl. (*Phone rings again. He picks up phone*) Hello? . . . Oh, Mom! . . . How are you, gorgeous? . . . We were just talking about you . . . Yes, about ten minutes ago . . . He's fine . . . Of course I'm going to take

care of him . . . All right, sweetheart. (*He holds phone out to BUDDY*) It's the Curator of the Museum.

BUDDY (*He takes the phone anxiously and sits on sofa. ALAN goes to bar for refill*) Hello, Mom? . . . How are you? . . . Fine . . . Fine . . . No, no. I'll have dinner soon . . . I don't know, some place in the neighborhood . . . Mom . . . Did Dad read the letter yet? . . . Oh, still at the plant. (*ALAN crosses to BUDDY. BUDDY breathes a little easier*) What? . . . Mom, I don't want you to hide the letter . . . I want him to read it . . . He what? . . . Oh, boy!

23

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

ALAN What's wrong?

BUDDY Well, I know that just makes it worse, Mom, but I can't—Mom! . . . Mom! . . . Mom! . . .

ALAN She's crying?
(*Nods*)

BUDDY She's crying.

ALAN Crying.

BUDDY (*Back into phone*) Mom, please calm down . . . No, Mom, that's not fair of you to ask me that.

ALAN What does she want you to do, come home?

BUDDY (*Jumping up*) Mom, don't tear up the letter. I can't come home.

ALAN (*Crossing downstage left in front of table*) Let me talk to her.

BUDDY But what about my life?

ALAN Let me talk to her.

BUDDY Mom, please-don't-tear-up-the-letter!

ALAN (*Reaching for phone*) Give me the phone.

BUDDY (*Turns away*) Alan, will you wait a minute. (*Back into phone*) All right, Mom. Let me think about it. I will. I'll call you back . . . Later . . . I promise . . . All right . . . Don't tear up the letter . . . Good-by.
(*He hangs up*)

ALAN You'll think about what?

BUDDY Dad called Mom about ten minutes ago from the plant. Screaming. Some customer is angry at you! Because you didn't show up for a meeting today?

ALAN Oh, my gosh, Mr. Meltzer, I forgot.

24

Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

BUDDY Anyway, Mom's afraid when he finds out that I left on top of this he'll go to pieces.

ALAN All right, all right. One thing has nothing to do with the other. I'll straighten him out.

BUDDY But he's going to let this all out on Mom. And you know when he starts to yell. You could get killed just from the fall-out.

ALAN Well, what do you want to do?

BUDDY I don't know. Maybe I should go home.

(*Picks up coat and suitcase*)

ALAN Go home? Why?

BUDDY Why should Mother get the blame for something we've done?

ALAN (*Follows*) Don't ask me. I don't crow like a rooster at three o'clock in the morning.

BUDDY What am I supposed to do?

ALAN Grow up. Be a man. You're twenty-one years old.
(*Takes his suitcase and coat and puts them down by sofa*)

BUDDY You mean just forget about it?

ALAN Buddy, how long do you want to wait until you start enjoying life? When you're sixty-five you get social security, not girls.

BUDDY I don't know how we got all twisted around. I'm on your side. I want to leave. It's Dad who's against it.

ALAN Buddy, I know he means well. But he'll just never understand that things in life change. He's been in the wax-fruit business too long. *You've changed.*

BUDDY I know, but-

ALAN You're twenty-one years old now. You're ripe. Come on, kid. You've got one shoe off. Kick the other one off.

BUDDY (*Looks at ALAN a moment, then shrugs*) I—I guess you're right.

ALAN Then you'll stay?

25

BUDDY (*Nods*) Yeah . . . Why not?

ALAN (*Puts arm around him*) That's the kid brother I love and adore. Now go put your stuff in the bedroom.

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

BUDDY You sure I won't be in your way here or anything?
(*Picking up his coat and suitcase*)

ALAN Of course not. We just may have to work out a traffic system. I've got a girl coming down in a few minutes.

BUDDY A girl? Why didn't you say so? Whenever you want to be alone, just say the word. I'll go out to a movie.

ALAN Don't worry. With my schedule, you won't miss a picture this year. (*The doorbell rings*) You hear that? She's here ten minutes ahead of time.

(*The doorbell rings again*)

BUDDY I'd better put this in here and go.
(*Goes into bedroom*)

ALAN No, no. I want you to see her first. (*He crosses to door*) Ready for the thrill of your life? (*He opens the door a crack as he says:*) . . . and my third wish, O Geni, is that when I open the door, the most beautiful girl in the world will be standing there. (*He motions BUDDY to come out of bedroom. As he opens the door, there stands his FATHER, scowling disgustedly*) Dad!!

(*BUDDY enters and immediately goes back into bedroom closing door quietly behind him*)

FATHER (*Steps in and looks at ALAN and nods disgustedly. He walks into the room. ALAN looks after him, dismayed, and seems puzzled when he doesn't see BUDDY. The FATHER examines the room. It is obvious he approves of nothing in the apartment*)

ALAN (*Meeting him downstage center*) Gee, Dad . . . this is a . . . pleasant . . . surprise. (*The FATHER looks at him as if to say, "I'll bet"*) How . . . how are you?

FATHER How am I? . . . I'll tell you sometime . . . That's how I am.

(He continues his inspection)

ALAN I've redecorated the place . . . How do you like it?

FATHER Fancy . . . Very fancy . . . You must have some nice job.

(Sniffs bigball glass)

26

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ALAN I just got in, Dad. I was about to call you.

FATHER The phone company shouldn't have to depend on your business.

ALAN I wanted to explain what happened to me. Why I wasn't in the last two days.

FATHER There's nothing to explain.

ALAN Yes, there is, Dad.

FATHER Why? I understand. You work very hard two days a week and you need a five-day weekend. That's normal.

ALAN Dad, I'm not going to lie. I was up in Vermont skiing. I intended to be back Sunday night, but I twisted my bad ankle again. I couldn't drive. I thought it was broken.

FATHER I'll send you a get-well card.

ALAN I'm sorry, Dad. I really am.

FATHER You're sorry. I can't ask more than that.

ALAN I'll be in the office first thing in the morning.

FATHER That's good news. You know the address, don't you?

ALAN Yes, Dad. I know the address.

FATHER See. I always said you were smart. So I'll see you in the morning.

ALAN Right!

(ALAN starts upstage)

FATHER (Stops) Oh, by the way . . . How's the Meltzer account going?

ALAN The Meltzer account?

(ALAN comes back)

FATHER From Atlantic City? The one you bragged about
was all wrapped up?

ALAN Oh . . . er . . . fine.

27

FATHER Fine? . . . I'm glad to hear that . . . Because he called
today.

ALAN (*Surprised*) Oh? . . . About an order?

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

FATHER Yes. About an order.

ALAN (*A little skeptical*) . . . Did . . . did we get one?

FATHER Yes . . . We got one.

ALAN . . . How much?

FATHER How much?—guess.

ALAN Well, Dad I—

FATHER Guess! Guess how much we got from Meltzer.

ALAN . . . Nothing?

FATHER Bingo! Right on the button! . . . Bum!

ALAN Dad, wait a minute . . .

FATHER Did you have a nice weekend, bum? Do you know
what it costs to go skiing for four days? Three thousand
dollars a day? Bum!

ALAN I tried to call him. I couldn't get a line through.

FATHER On skis you tried to call him? You should be in the
Olympics.

ALAN (*Crossing to phone*) I'll call him right back. I'll explain
everything. -

FATHER Where you gonna call him?

ALAN In Atlantic City.

FATHER Who're you going to talk to? The Boardwalk? He's
here!

ALAN In New York?

FATHER In the Hotel Croyden. For two days he's sitting waiting while you're playing in the snow.

ALAN Dad, I promise you. I won't lose the account.

FATHER Why? This would be the first one you ever lost? You want to see the list? You could ski (*gestures*) down your cancellations.

ALAN I couldn't get back in time, Dad. Skiing had nothing to do with it.

FATHER I'm sorry. I forgot. I left out golf and sailing and sleeping and drinking and women. You're terrific. If I was in the bum business I would want ten like you.

ALAN That's not true. I put in plenty of time in the business.

FATHER Two years. In six years you put in two years. I had my bookkeeper figure it out.

ALAN Thank you.

FATHER My own son. I get more help from my competitors.

(*Starts to sit*)

ALAN Well, why not? You treat me like one.

FATHER (*Jumping up*) I treat you? Do I wander in at eleven o'clock in the morning? Do I take three hours for lunch . . . in night clubs? . . . When are you there?

ALAN What do you mean, when?

FATHER When? When? You take off legal holidays, Jewish holidays, Catholic holidays . . . Last year you took off Hallowe'en.

ALAN I was sick.

FATHER When you came back to work you were sick. When you were sick you were dancing.

ALAN In the first place, it's not true. And in the second place, what good does it do coming in? You don't need me. You never ask my advice about the business, do you?

FATHER What does a skier know about wax fruit?

ALAN You see? You see? You won't even listen.

FATHER (*He sits*) Come in early. I'll listen.

ALAN I did. For three years. Only then I was "too young" to have anything to say. And now that I've got my own apartment, I'm too much of a "bum" to have anything to say. Admit it, Dad. You don't give me the same respect you give the night watchman.

29

FATHER At least I know where he is at night.

COME BLOW

ALAN . . . You know where I am, too. Having fun. What's wrong with it? I think what I do at night should be my business.

YOUR HORN

FATHER Not when it's nighttime four days in a row. Listen, what do I care? (*He rises and crosses right*) Do whatever you want. Go ahead and live like a bum.

ALAN Why am I a bum?

FATHER Are you married?

ALAN No.

FATHER Then you're a bum!

ALAN Give me a chance. I'll get married.

FATHER I heard that for years. When you were twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight, even twenty-nine, you were a bachelor. But now you're over thirty and you're still not married, so you're a bum and that's all there is to it.

(*Turns away*)

ALAN Who made thirty the closing date? All I want to do is have a little fun out of life like any other healthy, normal American boy.

FATHER Healthy you are, American you are, normal you're not.

ALAN What do you mean?

FATHER Look at your brother, that's what I mean. That's normal. He'll be something, that kid. He'll never be like you. Not in a million years.

ALAN Really? He might surprise you.

FATHER That I'll bet my life on. He's in the plant the first thing in the morning, he puts in a whole day's work. No, that's one son I'll never have to worry about.

ALAN Have you read your mail lately?

FATHER What?

ALAN Nothing.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

FATHER All right, I don't want to discuss anything more. I want to see you in the office tomorrow morning at eight o'clock.

ALAN Eight o'clock? There's no one there then.

FATHER You'll be there. And you'll be there two nights a week and Saturdays, holidays, birthdays, and vacations. I'm sick and tired of being the father. From now on I'm the boss.

ALAN All right, Dad, but eight o'clock is silly. I have nothing to do until nine.

FATHER (*Crossing up to foyer*) You play solitaire all day anyway. You can get in three more games.

ALAN Okay. Okay, I'll be there.

FATHER With the Meltzer account. If you haven't got it signed and in your pocket . . . you can ski (*gesturing*) right into the unemployment office.

ALAN I'll try, Dad. I'll really do my best.

FATHER With your best, we're in trouble. From you I need a miracle. (*ALAN sits downstage right center chair*) Eight o'clock with the Meltzer account . . .

ALAN Yes, Dad.

FATHER The day your brother becomes like you, I throw myself in front of an airplane.

(*And with that he exits. As front door slams, BUDDY comes rushing out of the bedroom door in a state of shock*)

BUDDY Did you hear that? I told you, Alan. I told you what he'd do.

ALAN (*Crosses to phone*) What hotel did he say, the Croyden?

BUDDY Wait'll he reads that letter. He'll kill himself. He'll kill all of us. Like those stories in the *Daily News*. Alan, give me the phone.

(ALAN *dials 411*)

ALAN Take it easy, will you. I've got to call Meltzer.

31

BUDDY Meltzer? We've got to get to Mom before he gets home. She's got to tear up that letter.

COME BLOW

ALAN Will you relax. He's not going to kill anyone until he's had his supper . . . I'll straighten everything out.

YOUR HORN

BUDDY How?

ALAN All I've got to do is get Meltzer to sign. (*Into phone*) I'd like the number of the Hotel Croyden please.

BUDDY Suppose you don't?

ALAN There's no problem. He came to New York because I promised him a party . . . (*Into phone*) What was that? Thank you.

(*Dials number*)

BUDDY I sure picked a rotten time to leave. It's going to be murder up there. (*Starts to go*) I'm going home.

ALAN You walk out that door, I don't want you back.

BUDDY (*Coming back*) Alan, why don't you help me?

ALAN (*Into phone*) Mr. Martin Meltzer, please . . . Thank you. (*To BUDDY*) I'm doing more than helping you. I'm saving you. It took you two years to get this far. Next time it'll take you five. (*Into phone and rises*) Hello? Mr. Meltzer? Hi? Alan Baker! . . . Where was I? . . . I'm too embarrassed to tell you . . . You ready? . . . Atlantic City . . . Yes. I thought you wanted me to come *there* . . . I just didn't think . . . Sure, I had the girls with me . . .

BUDDY You're a lunatic!

ALAN (*Covers phone quickly*) Will you shut up? (*Back into phone*) What? . . . Well, can't you take the morning train back? . . . Can I still get in touch with the girls? . . . They're here with me right now.

ALAN (*Covers phone again quickly*) I'll shove you in the closet. (*Back into phone*) What was that? . . . Yes . . . That was one of the girls you heard . . . Pretty? (*He laughs. Turns head slightly from phone*) Honey, he wants to know if you're pretty . . . Mr. Meltzer, did you ever see an ugly girl in the Copacabana line? . . . No, they're off this week . . . Yes, they're dying to . . . Your hotel. Room 326 . . . Half hour? You have the drinks ready, I'll bring the drinkers. (*He laughs a phony laugh into the phone and hangs up*) I hate myself.

(*He picks up book and thumbs through it quickly*)

BUDDY I never saw anyone like you. Is it like this every night?

ALAN Well, it's always slow before Christmas. (*Reading from book*) "Married . . . Married . . . Europe . . . Pregnant . . ." (*Finds something in book*) Ahhh, here we are. Chickie Parker.

(*He dials*)

BUDDY Chickie Parker?

ALAN And she looks just like she sounds. (*Into phone*) Hello? . . . Chickie? Don't you know you could be arrested for having such a sexy voice? . . . Alan . . . How could I? I just got in from Europe an hour ago . . . Switzerland . . . A specialist there told me if I don't see you within a half an hour, I'll die . . . Yes, tonight . . . A friend of mine is having a little party . . . Wonderful guy . . . Hundred laughs . . . Hey, Chickie, is your roommate free? The French girl? . . . Wonderful. Yes. Bring her . . . No, I can't. I've got to get the pretzels. Can you meet me there? The Hotel Croyden, Room 326, Marty Meltzer . . . A half hour . . . Marvelous. I just love you . . . What? . . . Yes, Alan Baker. (*He hangs up*) Voilà!

BUDDY (*He's flabbergasted*) And it took me three months to get a date for my prom.

ALAN I'd better get going. (*He starts for bedroom when the buzzer rings. He stops*) Now what? (*He crosses quickly to intercom and speaks into it*) . . . Hello? . . . Who? (*Big surprise*) Connie!! . . . What are you doing here? . . . No, honey, no

. . . Now? . . . Well, sure . . . sure, come on. (*He bangs up*) Of all the nights.

BUDDY Who's that?

ALAN A girl.

BUDDY Another one? Is she coming up?
(*ALAN nods*)

ALAN (*Half to himself*) She wasn't due back in town till tomorrow. What a time to show up.

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

BUDDY Then why are you seeing her?

ALAN Oh, I can't give this girl the brush.

BUDDY I thought that part would be easy.

ALAN You don't understand. This girl is different. She's not like . . . well, she's different.

BUDDY You mean this one's for serious?

ALAN Who said serious? I just said different.

BUDDY Oh boy, would that solve everything at home if you got married. You know Mom's had an open line to the caterers for three years now.

ALAN Married? Me? With all this? Are you crazy?

BUDDY Well, I just thought—since she's a *nice* girl . . .

ALAN She's the *nicest* . . . but I'm working on it . . . Listen, you'd better blow. I want to see her alone.

(*Doorbell rings*)

BUDDY Okay.

(*He starts for the door*)

ALAN Oh! Hey, go out the service entrance in the kitchen . . . Come back in a few minutes.

BUDDY (*He nods and goes to kitchen door*) Boy, no wonder you come in at eleven o'clock in the morning!

(*He exits*)

(*ALAN crosses quickly to the door and opens it about an inch and says aloud:*)

ALAN And my third wish, O Geni, is that when I open my eyes, the most beautiful girl in the world will be standing there.

(He opens door, turns and looks)

(CONNIE is standing there, holding an octagonal hat box)

(ALAN crossing downstage right)

O Joy! My third wish has been granted. Enter, beautiful lady.

(CONNIE enters)

34

Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

CONNIE Well, I guess it's safe as long as you've used up the other two wishes.

ALAN How are you, Connie?

CONNIE Fine . . . now that I'm back.

ALAN (He embraces her) Mmm. How does a girl get to smell like that?

CONNIE She washes occasionally.

(Holding package between them)

ALAN Come here. I've been thinking about this moment for two whole weeks. (He tries to get closer) Will you put down that package.

CONNIE (She presents it to him) After you open it.

ALAN (He takes it) What is it?

CONNIE A present.

ALAN For me? Why?

CONNIE (She shrugs) I like you! . . . And I missed you.

ALAN Well, I did too, but I didn't get you a present.

CONNIE Well, don't get upset about it. I just like you six dollars and ninety-eight cents more than you like me . . . Open it.

(Unbuttons jacket)

(He opens it)

ALAN (He looks in box. He is overwhelmed) Connie! . . . My ski hat!

(He takes it out of box)

CONNIE It's like the one you lost, isn't it?

ALAN (*He is really quite thrilled with it*) It's the same thing.
(*He looks inside at the label*) It's the identical one I bought
in Switzerland. I've looked all over New York for this.
Where (*Puts box on fireplace chair*) did you ever get it?

CONNIE In Montreal . . . It wasn't hard. Up there the news-
stand dealers wear (*He puts hat on—She puts jacket on sofa*)
them.

35

C O M E B L O W

ALAN It even fits. How did you know my head size?

Y O U R H O R N

CONNIE I've got an imprint on my neck.

ALAN (*Throws hat on sofa*) Connie, you're wonderful. Only
you would think of a thing like this.

CONNIE Well, I *thought* of a watch, but I could afford this
better.

ALAN Come here you.

(*He takes her in his arms*)

CONNIE (*Coyly*) Ah, the pay-off.

ALAN Thank you very much.

(*He kisses her*)

CONNIE You're welcome—very much.

(*ALAN moves to embrace her. She backs away*)

CONNIE Alan relax.

ALAN I'm not through yet.

(*She crosses left*)

CONNIE I've just come eight hundred miles in a prehistoric
train and I'm tired, hungry, and too weak to be chased
around the sofa.

ALAN (*Crosses to Connie*) I'll carry you. We'll save lots of
time and energy.

(*He moves after*)

CONNIE Alan, please don't take advantage. I've got enough
handicaps as it is.

ALAN Like what?

CONNIE (*Wilting*) Like being on your side. (*He grabs her and she swings around right of him*) It isn't fair. You and me against me is not fair. What is it you've got?

ALAN I don't know. Am I terribly good-looking?

CONNIE Oh, God, no. You've got just enough things wrong with your face to make you very attractive . . . It's something else. Some strange power you have over me. But beware. The day I find out what it is, I'll have a gypsy destroy the spell with a dead chicken.

ALAN You little fool. Nothing can stop the Phantom Lover.

(*He starts after her*)

CONNIE Alan, no!

(*Backs right*)

ALAN (*Stalking her*) One kiss. If it leaves you cold, I'll stop. But if it gets you all crazy, we play house rules.

CONNIE (*Moves so chair right is between them*) Now, Alan, play fair.

ALAN I'll keep my hands behind my back. I'll spot you a five-point lead. I'll only be permitted to use my upper lip.

(*Steps up on chair*)

CONNIE Alan, not now. Please. I haven't got the strength to put up an interesting fight. I just wanted to see you before I fell into bed for the next week and a half.

ALAN Okay. (*He pecks her*) A rough tour, heh?

(*ALAN gets down off chair*)

CONNIE This was the roughest.

(*Sits on right arm of chair*)

ALAN (*He laugh*) You poor kid. When does the show go out again?

CONNIE They leave in two weeks.

ALAN They? . . . Not you?

CONNIE (*Smiles*) Not me.

ALAN Why not?

CONNIE I just suddenly decided to quit.

ALAN Oh. Well, have you got another show lined up?

CONNIE Well . . . it's not just the show I quit . . . It's show business.

ALAN (*He looks at her*) . . . Are you serious?

37

CONNIE (*She nods. She doesn't want to make a big thing of it now*) I'll tell you all about it tomorrow. (*Starts left*) Will you call me, darling? . . . In the afternoon?

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

ALAN Wait a minute. I want to hear about this.

CONNIE There's nothing to tell.

ALAN Nothing to tell? You're giving up your career and there's nothing to tell?

CONNIE (*She laughs*) Oh, Alan, darling . . . what career?

ALAN What do you mean, what career? You're a singer, aren't you?

CONNIE Well, I wouldn't invest in it.

ALAN I don't get it. Things are going so well for you . . . All those musicals you do.

CONNIE (*Sits sofa*) They're not musicals. They're industrial shows. Two-hour commercials completely uninterrupted by entertainment.

ALAN (*Sits sofa and puts hat on table behind sofa*) I'm serious.

CONNIE I'm dead serious. This past month we did a show for the Consolidated Meat Packers. Have you any idea what it's like singing "Why not take all of me"?* dressed as a sausage?

ALAN (*He smiles*) It sounds funny.

CONNIE Maybe to you. But I've seen butchers sit there and cry.

ALAN All right, so it's not *My Fair Lady*. You don't expect it to come easy, do you?

*Line from "All of Me" by Seymour Simons and Gerald Marks. © Copyright 1931 Bourne, Inc., New York, N.Y. Copyright renewed. Used by permission.

CONNIE I don't expect it to come at all. Not now. Alan . . . (*Breaks left*) I'd work my throat to the bone if I thought I had a chance . . . or if I wanted it that much. But somehow lately I don't care any more . . . I guess it started when I met you.

(*Sits left arm*)

38

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ALAN Honey, everyone gets discouraged. But you don't suddenly throw away a promising career.

CONNIE Promising? Even you once said I was a lousy singer.

ALAN No, I didn't. I said you had a lousy voice. There's a big difference.

CONNIE There is?

ALAN Of course. You've got looks, personality. That's all you need in the music business today. Hockey players are making albums.

CONNIE It's *not* enough, Alan. You've got to have talent too.

ALAN Only if you want to be good. Not if you want to be a star.

CONNIE Well, it's pretty evident I'm not going to be either.

ALAN I just don't understand your attitude.

CONNIE I don't understand *yours*. The world isn't losing one of its great artists.

ALAN What suddenly brought all this on?

CONNIE (*Sits left of him*) It's very simple. I just got tired of being away from you so long.

ALAN (*Withdrawing slightly*) . . . Oh! . . . Well . . . if that's what you want.

CONNIE That's it. No more traveling. No more buses and trains and long-distance phone calls. (*She moves closer*) I don't want to be more than a thirty-five cent taxi ride away from you.

ALAN (*Getting a little jittery*) You . . . seem to have made up your mind.

CONNIE Yes. And what a relief it is.

ALAN Well . . . What will you do now?

CONNIE I'll manage. (ALAN rises—drifts right of center) Girls are doing it every day. I'll maybe do a little modeling or become a secretary . . . or . . . a housewife.

39

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

ALAN (*Turns to face her*) What?

CONNIE Housewife. You know . . . sleep-in maids.

ALAN (*Serious*) What do you mean?

CONNIE It was a joke . . . You didn't get it.

ALAN (*Deadpan*) Yeah, I get it . . . It's funny. (*Looks at his watch*) Holy mackerel, look at the time. (*Starts upstage left*) Honey, I'm awfully sorry but I've got an important business appointment. Can I call you later?

CONNIE No. I want to finish talking.

ALAN About what?

CONNIE Housewives.

ALAN What about them?

CONNIE You act as if you never heard of them.

ALAN Sure I did. My mother's a housewife. Connie, sweetheart . . . This is serious talk. Let's set aside a whole night for it. But right now I've really got to run.

(*Holds her jacket out for her*)

CONNIE How far?

ALAN What?

CONNIE I must have touched a nerve or something.

ALAN That's not true. We've discussed marriage before, haven't we?

CONNIE Yes. On this very couch. Or were they just campaign promises?

ALAN What difference did it make? I didn't win the election, did I?

CONNIE The returns aren't all in yet.

ALAN (*He looks at his watch nervously*) Connie, honey. You're tired and I've got a business appointment . . .
(*Holds jacket out again*)

CONNIE At seven o'clock?

ALAN It won't take long. I can be through by ten.

CONNIE I'll bet you can.

ALAN What do you mean?

CONNIE Oh, Alan, I'm a big girl. You've got a date.

ALAN It's a business appointment . . . And besides, I didn't expect you back until tomorrow.

CONNIE You know, something just occurred to me. (*Rises*) A few minutes ago I couldn't understand why you were fighting so hard to keep me in show business. It's suddenly very clear.

ALAN What is?

CONNIE It's not *my* career you're worried about. It's *yours!*

ALAN *My* career??

CONNIE As a lover. (*Grabs jacket and crosses right center*) That's why you want me to stay out on the road.

ALAN Why? I'm crazy about you.

CONNIE Yes . . . when I'm here. The minute I leave . . . substitution. Oh, it's beautiful. A bachelor's dream. The two-platoon system.

(*Putting on jacket*)

ALAN What are you talking about?

CONNIE You'll never grow stale, Alan. Or bored. Not as long as you keep rotating the crops every two weeks.

ALAN You're not being fair. (*Crossing downstage left*) I never said I didn't want to get married. But you come in here and make it sound like an emergency.

CONNIE For some strange reason I thought you felt the same as I did. These past six months were . . .

ALAN They were wonderful. That's why I hate to see them end.

CONNIE END! Getting married is the end?

41

ALAN I didn't mean it that way. Connie, you've got to understand, in a way a thirty-three-year-old guy is a lot younger than a twenty-four-year-old girl. That is, he may not be ready for marriage yet.

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

CONNIE Let's leave the third person out of this. You mean you.

ALAN The point is, I didn't actually start my bachelor fling until late in life. And to tell the truth, I don't know if I'm flung out yet.

CONNIE You would be if you were in love with me.

ALAN I am. Very much in love . . . only . . . I don't know. I'm like a kid with a few chocolates left in the box. I want to finish them first.

CONNIE Will you stop twisting thoughts. Now you're making it sound as if I'm taking candy from a baby.

(Crosses right and sits)

ALAN No, I'm not. I'm leveling with you. Sure I see other girls. I'm only human but (*Crossing toward bar*) you must admit although these past six months were wonderful and exciting, I *have* made certain sacrifices that go against the very nature of man. (*Turns to her*) And you know from whence I speak.

CONNIE The subject hasn't exactly been taboo.

ALAN (*Crosses left*) True it was discussed. But it never got off the drawing board. If it were another girl, I'd be in Tahiti painting by now. But here I am. Still battling it out.

CONNIE The war would be over if I knew just what it was we were fighting for.

ALAN I don't think I follow that.

CONNIE All right, then, Alan, let's have the truth. Either you've said to yourself, "I'm going to marry this girl," or, "I'm going to have an affair with her." All I ask is that you let me in on your decision. If marriage is out just say so. I won't run. I'll stay and fight for my honor the way a girl who's been properly brought up should. And I can truthfully tell you I'll lose the battle before long, because, damn it, I'm in love with you. But if you're really in love with me, you've got to tell me and be prepared to back it up with the rest of your life. (*Rises*) Well, which is it going to be, Alan? Do we march down the aisle or into the bedroom?

ALAN (*He stares at her unbelievingly a few seconds*) That's the lousiest thing I ever heard . . . What am I supposed to say?

(*Starts right*)

CONNIE Say what you really feel.

ALAN You mean if I want to make love to you all I have to do is speak up?

CONNIE Loud and clear.

ALAN You're a nut. (*Breaks left*) A sweet, beautiful nut!

CONNIE I'm waiting, Alan.

ALAN (*Turning to her*) For what? If I say I want you, you're mine. If I say I love you, I'm yours.

CONNIE It's that simple.

ALAN Well, I'm not going to play. (*Crosses left*) It's more dangerous than Russian roulette.

CONNIE It's just being honest with each other, Alan. That's what you're afraid of. You won't even be honest with yourself.

ALAN How can I be? I don't know what I want yet.

CONNIE I didn't say you *had* to love me. I just want to know if you do.

ALAN (*Crossing right to center*) If I want you I don't have to love you, but if I love you I shouldn't want you—I . . . I don't know. You've got to be an I.B.M. machine to figure out this affair.

CONNIE I guess so. I forgot to make room for human failing.

ALAN Boy oh boy, for an innocent little girl you sure play rough.

CONNIE I didn't choose the game, Alan.
(She starts to go)

43

ALAN Where are you going?
(He stops her)

COME BLOW

CONNIE I'd say you needed a chance to think.

YOUR HORN

ALAN No, I don't.

CONNIE You mean you've made up your mind?

ALAN Yes . . . Yes, I've made up my mind.

CONNIE . . . Well?

ALAN You mean, no matter what I say, you'll go along with it?

CONNIE To the letter.

ALAN Okay . . . Okay, then . . . We march into the bedroom.

CONNIE (Stares at him) That's the lousiest thing I ever heard.

ALAN Uh huh. You see. You see. It's not so much fun when the dentist is sitting in the chair is it? You don't like it when I hold the drill.

CONNIE I'm not complaining, Alan. I asked for it.

ALAN Oh, that you did. And I called your little bluff, didn't I?

CONNIE You certainly did.
(She goes up to door)

ALAN Where are you going?

CONNIE Back to my hotel.

ALAN (Crossing up left of her) All right, wait a second, Connie. The joke is over. You're embarrassed because I made you lose face. I'm sorry. But when you pushed me into a corner like that I had no choice.

CONNIE Oh, my face is still all there, Alan. I just figure if I'm going into business here I might as well get the rest of my merchandise.

(She goes blowing him a kiss. ALAN stares after her)

ALAN ... No... Never happen... Not her... (The doorbell rings. ALAN rushes to it. He opens it expectantly. It's BUDDY)
Oh, it's you.

44 *Collected Plays* BUDDY Hey, was that her?

of Neil Simon ALAN Where'd you go?

BUDDY Downstairs for a sandwich. Now that's what I call a pretty girl.

(ALAN gets coat from closet)

ALAN You stay away from that kind. They're nothing but trouble.

BUDDY How did it go?

ALAN Oh, fine. Fine.

BUDDY I thought maybe the other girl walked in.

ALAN What other girl?

BUDDY The one you were expecting. From upstairs. Didn't you call her?

ALAN Peggy! O, my gosh, I forgot.

(He crosses quickly to telephone. Throwing coat over sofa back)

BUDDY (Crosses downstage right center) You ought to get one of those maps with the stick pins so you know where they are all the time.

ALAN (Dialing) I don't know what I'm doing tonight. What's that number again?

BUDDY Is she as pretty as the one that just left?

ALAN Peggy? Prettier. With none of the disadvantages.

BUDDY Boy, what a great place to live. And all for thirty bucks a month.

(Sits right center chair)

ALAN (*Hangs up*) Hey, that's right. I forgot we're sharing everything. How would you like to meet her?

BUDDY Who?

ALAN Peggy. From upstairs.

BUDDY (*Jumps up*) Me? Are you kidding?

45

ALAN Why? She's coming down anyway. No sense in sending her home empty-handed.

COME BLOW

BUDDY But she's expecting you.

YOUR HORN

ALAN Turn the lights down low. She won't figure it out till she's going back up in the elevator.

BUDDY You're crazy.

ALAN No. That's how I met her. She rang the wrong bell one night. There's some poor guy in this building waiting for her since last July.

BUDDY You're not serious, Alan. She probably baby-sits for boys like me.

ALAN No. She's only twenty-two.

BUDDY I'm talking about experience, not age. I didn't realize it until I got here tonight, but I've been living in a convent all my life.

ALAN Buddy, trust me. She'll be crazy about you.

BUDDY (*Crossing away left*) No, she won't. I don't want to meet her, Alan.

ALAN (*Crossing to him*) I don't get you. Where's your spirit of adventure? You sound like an old man.

BUDDY An old man? -

ALAN Sure, look at the way you dress. Why does a young boy like you wear a black suit?

BUDDY It's not black. It's charcoal gray.

ALAN Whatever it is, you look like Herbert Hoover.

BUDDY I'm sorry. I'll buy an all-white suit tomorrow.

ALAN Buddy, I don't do this for everyone. Just brothers I love.

BUDDY I'd like to, Alan, but gee, I had other plans.
(Break away left)

ALAN What other plans?

46

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BUDDY They've got that emergency UN meeting on television tonight, I'd really like to see it.

ALAN *(Crossing to him)* The UN? Buddy, if I offered this to the Security Council, the meeting would be off tonight.

BUDDY Look, maybe you're not interested in what's going on in the world, but I am.

ALAN I'm interested in what's going on with you. What is it? Are you afraid?

BUDDY Yes—I mean, no.

ALAN You mean, yes.

BUDDY No, I don't.

ALAN You know, something just occurred to me. Is it possible that—

BUDDY You're going to be late, Alan.

ALAN I figured you were in the Army, overseas. Paris. I took it for granted—

BUDDY *(Crosses up left of sofa)* I got around.

ALAN Where? In a sightseeing bus?

BUDDY What are you making such a fuss about? What's so damn important about it, anyway?

ALAN *(Crosses upstage right of sofa)* It's plenty important.

BUDDY *(Evades bim crossing downstage right)* I'll get around to it soon enough.

ALAN Buddy, baby, why didn't you tell me? *(Crosses right to BUDDY)* That's what big brothers are for. This is the answer to your problem.

BUDDY I haven't got a problem.

ALAN You haven't, huh?

BUDDY Look, there's a big difference between the way you and I operate. If I get a handshake from a girl I figure I had a good night.

ALAN With Peggy, all you have to do is say "Hello." From there on it's downhill.

BUDDY It can't be that easy. I know. I've tried.

ALAN Look kid, I wanted to get you a birthday present anyway. Now I found something you haven't got.

BUDDY I don't want it. I'm happy the way I am.

ALAN Buddy, please. If not for your sake, then for mine.

BUDDY For yours?

ALAN Ever since I moved out, I felt I haven't really been looking after you . . . the way a big brother should. I want to make it up to you, kid.

BUDDY I'm not complaining. You've been fine.

ALAN It would really give me pleasure, Buddy, to do this for you . . . It's something a father could never do.

BUDDY I'll say.

ALAN But brothers, well, it's different, Buddy . . . I feel that it's my duty and privilege to help you at this very important time of your life. What do you say, Buddy? . . . Please!

BUDDY Well . . . if it'll make you happy, all right.

ALAN Thanks, kid. (**BUDDY** shrugs. **ALAN** crosses to phone and dials—**BUDDY** crosses right) You'll see. This'll be set up so perfectly, you won't even have to say a word to her . . .
(Hums "*In a Little Spanish Town*")
(Into phone)

Hello? Peggy? . . . Yeah . . . No, no, wait a minute . . .
(He rises) I have good and bad news . . . First the bad news. I've got to go out . . . No, most of the evening. Important business . . . You ready for the good news? . . . He's here . . . Manheim!

BUDDY Who?

ALAN (Into phone) Oscar Manheim, the producer from M-G-M.

BUDDY (*Runs left of center*) *What?????*

ALAN Just as you left . . . He's staying in my apartment tonight . . . He wants to meet you.

BUDDY I gotta get out of here.

(*He starts to go*)

48

ALAN (*Into phone*) Yes, now . . . I told him all about you.

Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

BUDDY Please, Alan.

ALAN (*Into phone*) Ten minutes? . . . Fine . . . Oh, don't dare thank me, honey. I'm really doing *him* the favor. (*He hangs up*) The ball's over the fence, kid. All you've got to do now is run the bases.

BUDDY Are you out of your mind? Me? A producer?

ALAN You want to be a director? I'll call her back.

(*Motions to phone*)

BUDDY But why did you tell her that?

ALAN Just to make it easier for you.

BUDDY Easier?

ALAN Now the pressure's off you. It's all on her.

BUDDY What are you talking about?

ALAN She's got a bug about getting into pictures. Now's her chance to prove how really talented she is.

BUDDY How would I know?

ALAN Because you're a big producer from M-G-M, Oscar Manheim.

BUDDY Doesn't she know what he looks like?

ALAN No. I made him up. Sounds real, huh?

BUDDY Made it up? But she could call M-G-M and check.

ALAN *She doesn't know how to dial.* Look. She's been auditioning for years without making a picture. She's got more money than M-G-M. She's having too much fun being discovered.

BUDDY What am I supposed to do, make her a star?

ALAN No. Just give her a small part in the picture.

BUDDY *What picture??*

ALAN *I Was a Teen-age Producer.* I don't know. Can't you make up a picture?

BUDDY (*Breaking away right*) No. Right now I can't even think of my own name.

ALAN (*Gets ready to leave*) You're my brother. When the chips are down, you'll come through.

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

BUDDY A twenty-one-year-old movie producer. Holy cow!
(*Crosses left to sofa*)

ALAN Well, I'd better get going.

BUDDY Wait a minute. When is she going to be here?

ALAN Ten minutes. She just lives upstairs.

BUDDY Ten minutes? I don't feel so good.

ALAN Look, if you're really too scared I'll call her back and cancel it.

BUDDY No. No, never mind.

ALAN You won't admit it, but you're glad I called. Is there anything you need?

BUDDY Yeah. A drink.

ALAN Here you are.

(*Hands drink to him. Then picks up trench coat*)

BUDDY Well, here's to Oscar Wilhelm.

ALAN Manheim.

BUDDY Oh, jeez.

(*He drinks it all quickly*)

ALAN Hey, take it easy with that stuff.

(*Crossing up to foyer; puts on trench coat*)

BUDDY Can you imagine if I drop dead and she calls the police. They'll bury me in Hollywood.

ALAN It's going to be the greatest night of your life. You'll thank me for it some day.

(*He's at the door*)

BUDDY Alan!

ALAN Yes?

BUDDY Will you call before you come home?

ALAN I'll call, I'll ring the doorbell and I'll cough loud as soon as I'm within two blocks of the house. (*He opens the door*) So long, kid. And happy birthday! (*And he's gone*)

(BUDDY stares after him a minute)

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

BUDDY Happy birthday! . . . Why couldn't he get me a tie like everyone else? . . . How'd I get talked into this? (*He rubs his stomach as he apparently just got a twinge of nervousness. He picks up both glasses and puts them on bar. Starts right, gets a thought, looks at his own jacket. Runs up to hall closet, takes out jacket, looks at it, puts it back. Then he takes out a bright blue smoking jacket, runs down to sofa, takes off his jacket, throws it on sofa, throws banger on sofa table and puts on smoking jacket. Picks up cigarette holder from coffee table, inserts cigarette and starts to light it. As he does so doorbell rings. He stands paralyzed with fear. Screams*) Oh! . . . Just a sec . . . (*He looks around in a panic. He starts upstage, sees his jacket on sofa and throws it under back of sofa. Then he runs to the door and stops quickly to compose himself. He straightens himself up. Hell, he's going to go through with it. He opens the door. A small, rather harassed woman in her late fifties stands there*) (Yells) Mom!

WOMAN (*Curtain falls as she speaks crossing downstage right*)
Oh, darling, I'm so glad you're here.

BUDDY (*Follows—in a state of shock*) Mom! . . .

Curtain

Act Two

51

The same.

COME BLOW

At Rise: BUDDY is frantically pacing back and forth. Buddy is about to have his first experience and here sits his mother.

YOUR HORN

MRS. BAKER is a woman who has managed to find a little misery in the best of things. Sorrow and trouble are the only things that can make her happy. She was born in this country, dresses in fine fashion and in general her speech and appearance are definitely American. But she thinks Old World. Superstitions, beliefs, customs still cling to her. Or rather she clings to them. Because of this, we can't take her hysterics too seriously.

BUDDY Mom, are you feeling all right?

MOTHER Darling, can I have a cold glass of water? I almost fainted on the subway.

BUDDY Mom, what are you doing here?

MOTHER I got such a dizzy spell. I never thought I'd get here.

BUDDY Mom . . . what did you want?

MOTHER A glass of water, sweetheart.

BUDDY No, I meant—

(But maybe the water would be quicker. He rushes to the bar and pours a glass of water)

MOTHER I've got no luck. I never had any and I never will.

BUDDY (Rushes back with glass) Here, Mom.

MOTHER (Takes a sip) That just makes me nauseous. (He takes glass and puts it on fireplace bench left) Let me catch my breath.

BUDDY Maybe you need some fresh air, Mom. Outside?

MOTHER (*Rises*) Just let me sit a few minutes . . . Where's Alan?

BUDDY Out. On business. Do you feel any better?

MOTHER When did I ever feel better?

52

BUDDY Mom, I hope you understand, but I've got this appointment tonight.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

MOTHER Did you have dinner yet?

BUDDY What? Dinner? Yes. Yes, I had a sandwich.

MOTHER A sandwich? For supper? That's how you start the minute you're away?

BUDDY I'm not hungry, Mom. You see, I've got this appointment . . .

MOTHER What'd you have, one of those greasy hamburgers?

BUDDY No. Roast beef. I had a big roast beef sandwich.

MOTHER That's not enough for you. Let me make you some eggs.

BUDDY I don't want any eggs.

MOTHER Look at this place. Look at the dirt.

BUDDY It's all right, Mom.

MOTHER Sure. Boys. I'll bet no one's been in here to clean in a year.

BUDDY (*He might as well tell her*) Mom, will you listen to me. I'm . . . I'm . . . I'm expecting a girl here in a few minutes.

MOTHER To clean?

BUDDY (*Exasperated*) No, not to clean . . . She's a friend of mine.

MOTHER From our neighborhood?

BUDDY No, you don't know her. She's . . . er . . . a girl I knew in school. We're writing a story together.

MOTHER Then let me make you some appetizers.

BUDDY We don't want any appetizers.

MOTHER Buddy, I've got to talk to you about your father.

BUDDY Can't we do it tomorrow? She's going to be here any second.

53

MOTHER What's the matter? She's more important than me?

COME BLOW

BUDDY Mom, no one's more important than you.

YOUR HORN

MOTHER How can you say that when you worry me like this? I know you. You won't eat unless the food's in front of you.

BUDDY No one eats unless the food's in front of them. Mom, I haven't got time . . .

MOTHER (*Hurt*) You want me to go, I'll go.

BUDDY Mom, please don't be hurt. I didn't want to have this meeting. It came up unexpectedly. But I have to go through with it.

MOTHER Buddy, your father's going to be home in a few minutes. You should have heard him on the phone before about Alan. If the operator was listening, there'll be a man there in the morning to rip it off the wall.

BUDDY I can't discuss this with you now.

MOTHER No, but for girls you've got time.

(Sits right center chair)

BUDDY It's not a girl. It's . . . a . . . meeting. About a story we're writing. It may go on till two o'clock in the morning.

MOTHER Without appetizers?

BUDDY We don't need appetizers!

MOTHER (*Crosses to him*) Wait'll he reads that letter. Wait'll he finds out you're gone. Remember what he did when Alan left?

BUDDY I know, Mom. He was very upset.

MOTHER Upset? I'll never forget it. He came home from work at three o'clock, went into his room, put on his pajamas and got into bed to die . . . Four days he stayed in bed. He just laid there waiting to die.

BUDDY But he didn't die, Mom. He put on weight.

54

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

MOTHER Don't think he wasn't disappointed . . . He was plenty hurt by Alan leaving, believe me. He thought by now Alan would be married, have a grandchild. Who knows if he'll ever get married. And now you.

BUDDY Mom, please—

MOTHER I know what he's going to say tonight. He'll blame it all on me. He'll say I was too easy with the both of you. He'll say, "Because of you my sister Gussie has two grandchildren and all I've got is a bum and a letter" . . . I know him.

BUDDY Look, Mom. How about if I come home tomorrow night for dinner? And I'll have a long talk with Dad about everything. Okay?

MOTHER Tomorrow? By tomorrow he'll be in bed again writing out his will. He'll be on the phone saying good-by to his family.

BUDDY He won't, Mom. He just gets very dramatic sometimes.

MOTHER Maybe I am too easygoing. Maybe if I were like some mothers who forbid their children to do everything, I'd be better off today.

BUDDY No, Mom. You're the best mother I ever had . . . Do you feel any better?

MOTHER How do I know? I feel too sick to tell.

BUDDY Really, a good night's sleep and you'll feel wonderful. Take something before you go to bed. Some warm milk.

MOTHER Who buys milk now that you're not there.

BUDDY Then buy some.

MOTHER Maybe I'll be better off if I take a hot bath.

BUDDY That's the girl.

MOTHER I'll probably pass out right in the tub.

BUDDY No you won't. Why do you get so emotional all the time?

MOTHER I don't look for it, believe me, darling.

55

BUDDY Mom, everything's going to be all right. (*He half lifts her to her feet*) Sleep tight.
(*He kisses her forehead*)

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

MOTHER I feel better knowing at least you'll be there tomorrow.

BUDDY For dinner. I promise.
(*He starts upstage*)

MOTHER (*She stops*) . . . What'll I make?

BUDDY (*Coming down to her*) What?

MOTHER For dinner? What do you want to eat?

BUDDY Anything. I don't care. Good night, Mom.

MOTHER I want to make something you like now that you're not home.

BUDDY I like everything. Roast beef, okay?

MOTHER All right, good. (*He starts upstage. She starts, then stops*) You had roast beef tonight.
(*He comes back*)

BUDDY (*Beside himself with anxiety*) I can eat it again.

MOTHER I could get a turkey. A big turkey.

BUDDY Okay! Turkey! Wonderful!

MOTHER It doesn't really pay for one night.

BUDDY (*He can't take it any more. He practically screams*) Mom, for Pete's sakes, it doesn't matter.

MOTHER (*Near tears*) What are you yelling? I'm only trying to make you happy. Who do I cook for, myself? I haven't eaten anything besides coffee for ten years.

BUDDY I'm sorry, Mom.

MOTHER Oh, I've got that stick in the heart again.

(*Sits right center chair*)

BUDDY You're just upset.

MOTHER No. I ate lamb chops tonight. They never agree with me.

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BUDDY Oh, boy.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

MOTHER Darling, do you have an Alka-Seltzer?

BUDDY Alka-Seltzer? I don't know . . . Wait a minute. I'll look in the kitchen.

(*He rushes off madly to the kitchen right*)

MOTHER (*She rubs her stomach*) She wished it on me. His sister Gussie wished it on me.

(*BUDDY comes running back out*)

BUDDY There isn't any here.

MOTHER Sure. Boys. You wouldn't have water if you didn't have a faucet.

BUDDY Mom, make anything you want. Turkey. Roast beef. I'll be home tomorrow night. Now why don't you go home and relax. Take a cab.

MOTHER It's starting to rain. Where am I going to get a cab?

BUDDY I'll get you one, okay?

MOTHER All right. Let me sit a few minutes.

BUDDY A few minutes? (*He can't wait any longer*) Mom, I'll get the doorman to get you a cab. (*Runs up to door*) Do you want to wait in the lobby?

MOTHER You don't have to run out.

BUDDY I'll be right back. In two minutes.

(*And he is gone in a flash*)

MOTHER Don't get overheated . . . Who am I talking to? (*She looks around the apartment and shakes her head disapprovingly. Puts bag on chair, unbuttons coat . . . She gets up, crosses to the coffee table, empties one ash tray into the other. Then starts to cross with the refuse into the kitchen when the phone rings. She*

*turns and goes to the phone) (Into phone) Hello? . . . Who? . . . No, he isn't. To whom am I speaking to, please? Meltzer? Martin Meltzer . . . No, this is Alan's mother . . . What? . . . Why should I kid about a thing like that? . . . No, I'm positive he's not here . . . A message? . . . Wait. I'll get a pencil. (She looks for a pencil. There is none on the table, so she runs quickly to the left cabinet, then upstage cabinet, sofa, table and looks frantically for a pencil. There is none to be found. She runs back quickly to the phone) Go on, I'll remember. Talk fast so I could write it down as soon as you're finished . . . "Extremely important. Your wife just came in unexpectedly from Atlantic City and is on her way to the Hotel Croyden so Alan should be sure *not* to come with those certain parties." Yes, I have it . . . I do . . . I can't repeat it to you, I'm trying to remember it . . . Mr. Meltzer, Hotel Croyden . . . Yes . . . Don't talk any more, I'm going to write it down quick. Good-by. (She hangs up) Some message. That's a book, not a message. (She starts to look for a pencil again) Where's a pencil? They don't have Alka-Seltzer, they're gonna have a pencil? (She crosses right toward counter) (The phone rings) Suddenly I'm an answering service. (She answers phone) Hello? . . . No, he isn't . . . This is Alan's mother . . . Why should I kid about a thing like that? . . . To whom am I speaking to please? . . . Who? . . . Chickie? . . . That's a name? . . . Chickie Parker . . . You forgot whose hotel? . . . Mr. Meltzer's? Where do I know that name from? . . . Oh, for God sakes, he just called. With a message to Alan. Something about Atlantic City. I think he said Alan shouldn't go there . . . I don't know what it means either. I'm not a secretary. I'm a mother . . . without a pencil . . . The hotel? . . . Yes, he did mention it . . . I think it was the Parker . . . Oh, that's *your* name . . . Wait. Oh, yes. The Croyden . . . A message for Alan? I can only try, darling . . . "Chickie was detained but she's on her way to the Croyden now." Yes. You're welcome. Good-by. (She hangs up. She crosses upstage to desk area, looking for a pencil) There must be some carrying on here. Their father should only know . . . A businessman and a college boy and they don't have a pencil. (She starts right and the phone rings again) Oh, for God's sakes. (The phone rings again) All right, all right, what do you want from me? (She rushes quickly to the phone and picks it up) Yes? . . . Who? . . . Who did you want, please? . . .*

No, he's out. This is Alan's mother . . . Listen, don't start that with me . . . Who is this? . . . Connie what? . . . Again with a message . . . Miss, can't you write it down, I don't have a pencil . . . You what? . . . Yes . . . Yes . . . Yes . . . You're welcome . . . Good-by. (*She hangs up*) Good-by, go home, good luck, who knows what she said. (*Sits sofa and cries*) Who tells him to have so many phone calls? . . . It's disgusting. (*The phone rings. She screams*) What do you want from my life? (*She just stares at the phone. It continues to ring*) I wouldn't pick it up now if it stood on its head. (*It continues to ring*) Oh, I'm so nauseous. (*She can't stand it any longer. She picks it up, but she yells at it angrily*) Hello? . . . What do you want? . . . Who is this? . . . Alan who? . . . Oh, Alan . . . (*She starts to cry*) It's Mother. (*She sits*) What am I doing here? . . . I'm answering your phone calls . . . He's outside getting me a subway . . . I mean a taxi . . . No, there's no one else here . . . Who called? . . . The whole world called . . . First a man called . . . Meltzer? . . . No, it didn't sound like that . . .

(*The door opens and BUDDY rushes in*)

BUDDY Okay, Mom.

MOTHER (*Into phone*) Oh, I've got to go now. Buddy is here with the cab. Talk to Buddy.

BUDDY I've got the cab. It's waiting outside.

MOTHER Here.

(*Hands him phone*)

BUDDY Who is that?

MOTHER Alan. (*She gets up and hands phone to BUDDY and crosses right to get bag*) Here!

BUDDY (*Taking phone*) Hello, Alan? . . . What's wrong? I don't know who called, I was outside. (*To MOTHER*) Mom, did someone call?

MOTHER I gave all the messages to Alan. I don't want to keep the taxi waiting. Good-by, sweetheart.

(*She starts to door*)

BUDDY Mom, who called? A girl?

MOTHER Yes, darling. Good-by.

BUDDY What did she say?

MOTHER I don't remember.

(She opens door)

BUDDY Why didn't you write it down? 59

MOTHER Don't you start with me . . . This must be costing a fortune. I only hope I don't pass out in the taxi!

(She goes)

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

BUDDY Mom, wait . . . (Into phone) Hello, Alan . . . I don't know. I can't make head or tail out of her . . . Where are you? . . . No, she didn't get here yet . . . Lousy, that's how I feel . . . I already had a drink. It doesn't help . . . Hey, wait a minute. Who am I again? . . . Oscar Wolheim? . . . Manheim! Oscar Manheim . . . Oh, boy . . . Look, Alan. I changed my mind. I can't go through with it. I'm going out. Yes. Now. Well . . . I'll leave her a note from you . . . I'm sorry. Good-by. (He hangs up) That's it. I'll leave her a note. That's all. (He quickly starts to search for a pencil and paper. He looks in the shelves under downstage left cabinet and takes out container with two dozen pencils) Eight thousand pencils and no paper. (He crosses to table behind sofa and finds piece of paper. He sits on sofa and starts to write and repeats aloud) "Dear Peggy . . . More bad news . . . Paul . . . (Momentarily forgets name) Manheim . . . is . . . dead! . . . Love . . . Alan"

(He puts down pencil, then crosses to door. Reads letter again as he bends down to leave it under door. The front bell rings. He gasps. The bell rings again. He throws up his hands in despair and then opens door. PEGGY stands there ravishingly dressed. She looks utterly fantastic)

PEGGY Hi. I'm Peggy Evans. (She walks in. He closes door) I'm not disturbing you or anything, am I?

BUDDY (He looks at her, overwhelmed by her pulchritude, follows her downstage) No . . . not at all.

(He is in a state of semi-shock)

PEGGY (Sitting on sofa) Alan said you wanted to meet me. I hope you forgive the way I look. I've been in a car all day . . . I must be a mess.

BUDDY No . . . You look . . . very neat.

(*He tears up the note and puts pieces in his pocket*)

PEGGY Thanks . . . Coming from you, that's something.
(*She crosses to him*) It's a shame you couldn't get up to the
ski lodge.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BUDDY What ski lodge?

PEGGY In New Hampshire. Or Vermont. I'm not very
good at names. In fact, I'm afraid I've forgotten yours.

BUDDY Oh . . . It's . . . *Manheim*.

PEGGY That's right. Mr. *Manheim*.

BUDDY Jack Man—heim . . . No, not Jack.

PEGGY That's right, Jack.

BUDDY Yes, Jack . . . won't you sit down?

(*Indicating right center chair*)

PEGGY Thank you . . . (*She sits on sofa*) I understand you had
some problem at the studio.

BUDDY Oh, yes . . . we did.

PEGGY What was it?

(*She takes a cigarette and lights it*)

BUDDY It was . . . er . . . (*He sees flame*) Er . . . we had a . . . fire.

PEGGY Who?

BUDDY I beg your pardon?

PEGGY Who did you have to fire?

BUDDY No, no. *A* fire. Part of the studio burned down.

PEGGY Oh? Was anyone hurt?

BUDDY No . . . just a few extras . . . Say, would you like a
drink?

PEGGY Oooh, like a transfusion. I don't mind admitting it,
but I'm nervous.

BUDDY You're nervous? What would you like?

PEGGY What are you having?

BUDDY (*This one is easy. He tosses it off grandly*) Oh . . . scotch and ginger ale.

PEGGY Oh, that's cute. I mean what are you *really* having?

BUDDY (*Embarrassed*) I don't know. What are you having?

PEGGY Grand Marnier.

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BUDDY Grandma who?

PEGGY Grand Marnier. It's French. You know, a liquoor.

BUDDY Oh . . . (*He crosses up to bar and looks for it. He picks up a scotch bottle*) No, I don't see any.

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

PEGGY Oh, scotch'll be fine. (*He pours drinks*) I suppose you've heard it before, but you look awfully young for a producer.

BUDDY (*Crossing left of her*) Oh, do I?

PEGGY To look at you I'd say you were only about twenty-six, but I bet I'm way off.

BUDDY Oh, way off. (*Hands her drink and sits left of her*) Well, here we are.

PEGGY What should we drink to?

BUDDY Anything you like.

PEGGY Let's make a silent toast.

BUDDY Okay.

(*They both close their eyes, take a beat, she opens hers, nudges him, he opens his eyes, clink glasses and drink*)

PEGGY (*Makes herself comfortable, puts down glass and snuffs out cigarette*) Well, now . . . down to business.

BUDDY Huh?

PEGGY I suppose you want to know what I've done.

BUDDY Not necessarily.

PEGGY I'll be perfectly frank with you. I've never been in a picture before.

BUDDY Is that so?

PEGGY But I'm not totally inexperienced.

BUDDY So Alan told me.

PEGGY Last summer when I was on the Coast I did an "Untouchables."

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BUDDY No kidding?

PEGGY I was a dead body. They fished me out of the river.

BUDDY I think I saw that.

PEGGY Lots of people did. I got loads of work from it. But it's not what I really want to do. That's why I'm taking acting class. With Felix Ungar. He lives in this building. Right under this apartment. In fact *that's* how I met Alan. (*She puts her hand on his right knee*) I rang the wrong bell one night.

(BUDDY looks down at his knee and laughs almost hysterically)

BUDDY How about that?

PEGGY And look how it turned out. Through a silly mistake, I'm being auditioned by one of the biggest producers (*taking hand off knee*) in the business. Life is funny, isn't it?

BUDDY (*Puts drink down and rises crossing right*) Hysterical.

PEGGY (*Rises—crosses below coffee table*) Well, is there anything you'd like me to do?

BUDDY What?

PEGGY Do. Read a scene? Or kind of take on a character like in class. Or is just talking like this enough?

BUDDY Oh, it's plenty. To tell the truth, I'm a little tired. (*Sits right center chair*)

PEGGY Oh, from the trip. Would you like me to massage your think muscle?

BUDDY Huh?

PEGGY Here! (*She indicates her temple. She goes to where he's sitting, and stands over him*) Just close your eyes and put your head back.

BUDDY I don't think . . .

PEGGY I'm very good at this. Now just relax . . . (*He does*) . . . and try and forget about the picture business. (*She massages*) No, I can feel it. You're still thinking about the studio.

BUDDY No, I'm not. I swear I'm not.

(*The phone rings. He jumps up*)

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PEGGY Are you expecting anyone?

COME BLOW

YOUR HORN

BUDDY Me? No! No! (*It rings again, angrily*) No, I'll get it. I'll get it. (*He crosses to phone quickly and picks it up. Into phone*) Hello! . . . Dad!!! . . . I'm sorry. I didn't mean to yell . . . What? . . . now? . . . Look, Dad, I'll come downstairs, okay? . . . Dad? . . . Dad? . . . Oh, boy!

(*He hangs up*)

PEGGY Is anything wrong?

BUDDY What? Oh, yeah . . . It's . . . it's someone I don't want to see . . . A writer. . .

PEGGY Dad? It sounded like it was your father.

BUDDY Oh! Oh, no. That's just a nickname. Dad. You know, like Ernest Hemingway is Poppa.

PEGGY Oh! Is Dad coming up?

BUDDY Yeah, Dad's coming up . . . Look would you do me a big, big favor? I've got to be alone with him for a few minutes . . . To talk about script changes.

PEGGY I understand. I could go up and get that bottle of Grand Marnier.

BUDDY (*That's inspirational*) That's it. Would you do that?

PEGGY Of course.

(*She starts for the door*)

BUDDY (*He stops her*) Not that way!

PEGGY What?

BUDDY I don't want him to know I'm auditioning someone else. He's already got someone in mind.

PEGGY Oh, I appreciate that. Thanks an awful lot, Mr. Manheim.

(She kisses him and exits through the kitchen door. He starts right to make sure she has gone. He looks at his jacket, unbuttons it, takes it off, throws it into bedroom and closes door. He runs downstage grabs the two glasses from coffee table and puts them on bar. He starts right, stops, looks at glasses. Picks one up and examines it for lipstick, takes out his handkerchief, wipes lipstick off, puts glass on bar. As he wipes his own mouth with handkerchief, doorbell rings. He frantically tries to jam handkerchief into pocket and can't. Doorbell rings again. Panicky, he throws handkerchief out window left. He grabs a large book from upstage bookshelf, opens it, goes to door, book in hand, composes himself as if he had been reading all evening and opens door. There stands his FATHER, with the letter in his hand)

BUDDY Hello, Dad. (The FATHER walks in, holds up the letter to BUDDY's face, to indicate he got it, then he walks into the apartment. BUDDY follows left of him) Are you all right, Dad? . . . Is anything wrong? (The FATHER stares ahead speechless. He has taken letter out of envelope and now holds it in front of BUDDY's face) I—I didn't think you'd be coming down tonight . . . I was going to have a long talk with you in the morning . . . at the plant . . . and then I told Mother I'd be home for dinner tomorrow night . . . so you and I could sit down and talk some more . . . and I could explain how I . . . Dad, you're angry, aren't you? . . .

FATHER Me? Angry. Why should I be angry?

BUDDY About the letter.

FATHER (Looks at him) What letter?

BUDDY This letter. The letter I wrote you.

FATHER No, no. You didn't write this letter. Someone I don't know wrote this letter. Not you. You, I know. This person I never met.

BUDDY Dad, don't you think it would be better if we waited until tomorrow, when we're both—calmer? Dad, I meant to have a long talk with you about this.

FATHER Talk? What's there to talk about? (*He still holds up letter*) It's signed, sealed and delivered. The Declaration of Independence . . . What's there to talk about?

BUDDY Dad, I think you're too upset now to discuss this logically.

FATHER Oh, I expected it. (*Puts letter in envelope*) You hang around your brother long enough it was bound to happen. So what's the windup. My sister Gussie has two grandchildren and I have a bum and a letter.

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COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

BUDDY Dad, this didn't suddenly happen. I tried to explain how I felt the other night. But you wouldn't listen.

FATHER (*He starts to sit and jumps up*) Don't try and tell me I wouldn't listen. That's all I did was listen.

(*Crosses left*)

BUDDY But every time I would start to say something, you would walk out of the room.

FATHER If you showed me a little respect, then maybe I would listen.

BUDDY Dad, you're not making any sense.

FATHER I'm not making sense? Very nice. Very nice talk to a father.

BUDDY What do you want me to say?

FATHER I want to hear from your own lips . . . nicely . . . why such a young boy can't live at home with his parents.

BUDDY Young boy?

FATHER (*Holding up a warning finger*) Nicely!

BUDDY Dad, I'm twenty-one.

FATHER (*Noncommittal*) You're twenty-one.

BUDDY You say it as if you don't believe me. I was twenty-one yesterday, wasn't I?

FATHER (*Shrugs*) Whatever you say.

BUDDY What do you mean whatever I say?

FATHER (*Finger up again*) Nicely!

BUDDY All right. I say I was twenty-one. That's old enough to make your own decision in life. When *you* were twenty-one, you were already married, weren't you?

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FATHER You were there?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BUDDY No, I wasn't there. You told me yourself.

FATHER Those days were altogether different. (*Crosses away left*) I was working when I was eleven years old. (*Turns to him*) I didn't go to camp.

BUDDY *What's camp got to do with all this???*

FATHER (*Threatening*) I'll walk right out of here!

BUDDY Dad, all right. I don't mean to be disrespectful, but your answers never match my questions.

FATHER (*Crossing above and right of Buddy*) Oh, that too? I don't talk fancy enough for you like your brother and his show business friends.

BUDDY That's what I mean. Who said anything about show business?

FATHER Well, that's where he is all day, isn't he? Backstage at some burlesque house.

BUDDY They haven't had burlesque in New York in twenty years.

FATHER He hasn't put in a day's work in twenty years. And now I suppose I can expect that of you.

BUDDY No, Dad. I'll work there as long as you want me to . . . No matter how I feel about it.

FATHER What do you mean, no matter how you feel?

BUDDY Well, Dad, I never had a chance to try anything else. I had two years of college, then the Army, and then right into the business. Maybe it's not the right field for me.

FATHER Not the right field? (*He addresses an imaginary listener in right center chair*) I give the boy the biggest artificial fruit manufacturing house in the East, he tells me *not the right field*. Ha!

(*He sits right center chair*)

BUDDY I don't know if I've got any talent . . . but . . . I've always toyed with the idea of becoming a writer.

FATHER A writer? What kind of writer? Letters? (*He holds up letter*) Letters you write beautiful. I don't know who's going to buy them, but they're terrific.

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

BUDDY But supposing I'm good? I'm not even getting a chance to find out. Supposing I could write plays . . . for television or the theater?

FATHER Plays can close. (*Crossing to him*) Television you turn off. Wax fruit lays in the bowl till you're a hundred.

BUDDY But business doesn't stimulate me, Dad. I don't have fun.

FATHER You don't have fun? I'll put in music, you can dance while you work.

BUDDY Dad, forget about the business for now. I'll stay. All I want now is your permission for me to live here on my own.

FATHER (*Puts letter in coat pocket*) All right, let me ask you a question. If you were in my place, if you were my father, with conditions in the world as they are today, with juvenile delinquency, with the stories you read in the papers about the crazy parties that go on, the drinking and whatnot . . . would you let *your son* leave home?

BUDDY Yes!

FATHER That's no answer!

BUDDY Dad, it just doesn't seem as if we're ever going to understand each other.

FATHER How can we? You listen to your brother more than you listen to me. . .

BUDDY That's not true.

FATHER Do you deny that he's the one who put this bug in your mouth about leaving home?

BUDDY In your ear, Dad.

FATHER What?

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BUDDY Bug in your ear.

FATHER Excuse my ignorance, Mr. Writer.

BUDDY I wasn't making fun of you.

FATHER Why not? Your brother does.

BUDDY No, he doesn't.

FATHER He doesn't, heh? I can imagine the things he must tell you. You'll learn plenty from him, believe me, plenty. At least you I had hopes for. Alan I could never talk to. But you, you were always good. I could take you anywhere. I could take you visiting, you would sit on a chair for three hours, you wouldn't hear a peep out of you. I remember I used to say, give Aunt Gussie a kiss. You'd go right over and give Aunt Gussie a kiss. But the older one. I chased him all over Brooklyn one day because he wouldn't give Aunt Gussie a kiss . . . What was so terrible to give Aunt Gussie a kiss?

BUDDY I guess it was that hat she wore. You always had to kiss her through a veil.

FATHER You see how you take his side.

BUDDY I wasn't taking his side.

FATHER No, heh? What's the use talking to you. You'll do what he says in the end anyway. If you want to become a bum like him, that's your affair.

BUDDY Why is Alan a bum?

FATHER Is he married?

BUDDY No.

FATHER Then he's a bum!

BUDDY Dad, you really never had any problems with me before, have you? Won't you trust me now?

FATHER (*He sighs*) All right, you want trust. I'll give you trust.

BUDDY What do you mean?

FATHER There's a disagreement here. A dispute. We'll arbitrate.

BUDDY That's all I've been asking of you.

FATHER I've heard your side. You've heard my side. If you want, we'll give it a six-month trial period. Fairer than that, I can't be.

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

BUDDY I think that's very fair, Dad. Six months is fine.

(*Crossing left*)

FATHER Then it's settled. You'll come home and live for six months . . .

BUDDY Come home? (*Shouts, crossing to him*) You don't want to give me a trial. You don't want to be fair . . . You just —just—

FATHER (*Rises and shakes upstage hand*) Don't you raise your voice. You're not too big to get a good slap across the face.

BUDDY I'm sorry, Dad.

FATHER I never thought I'd live to see this day. That a son would talk to his father like this. I've been some terrible father to you, haven't I?

BUDDY No, Dad. You've been a wonderful father. Just meet me halfway. Please . . . What do you say?

FATHER (*Crosses left of him*) I'll . . . I'll let you know.

BUDDY What do you mean, you'll let me know?

FATHER I'm not rushing into any decision pell mell . . . I'll go home and think about it. If you want, you can stay here tonight, I won't argue. But tomorrow, you'll come home for dinner and we'll see what we'll see.

BUDDY All right, that'll be fine. Good night, Dad.

(*He starts upstage*)

FATHER You need any money?

BUDDY No, I've got plenty.

(Comes back)

FATHER Where are you going to sleep?

BUDDY On the sofa.

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FATHER That's some place to sleep.

Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

BUDDY Dad, I'll be all right. I'll see you tomorrow. I promise.

FATHER You don't have to promise. You say you'll be there, I trust you.

BUDDY Thanks, Dad. Good night.

(Starts up again)

FATHER (Just about to leave, when he stops and turns) Oh, wait a minute.

BUDDY What's the matter?

FATHER I want to call your mother. Tell her everything's all right. I know she's worried.

(He crosses to phone)

BUDDY (Crossing and sits down center chair) Oh, boy!

(The FATHER dials, sighing, in BUDDY's direction)

FATHER (Into phone) Hello? . . . Jezebel? . . . Is Mrs. Baker home? . . . Oh! I wonder where she is? . . . Listen, Jezebel, before you go home, I want you to write down a message for her . . . All right, get a pencil . . .

(Suddenly PEGGY comes out from the kitchen. She wears a topcoat. BUDDY rises as she enters)

PEGGY Excuse me, but I'm all out of Grand Marnier too, I'll run down to the liquor store and get some. (To FATHER) Hello, Dad!

(She goes back out kitchen door)

(The FATHER stares after her dumfounded. BUDDY is in a state of shock. The FATHER turns slowly back to the phone)

FATHER Hello, Jezebel? . . . Tell Mrs. Baker I'm with the bum! . . . The twenty-one-year-old bum! (He slams the phone down, turns and points an accusing finger at BUDDY) Bum!

BUDDY Dad . . .

FATHER Bum!

BUDDY Let me explain . . .

FATHER Bum!

BUDDY Please . . .

FATHER Twenty-one years old! You're a bigger bum than your brother is right now and you've still got twelve years to go!

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

BUDDY Dad, please.

(*The front door suddenly opens. ALAN walks in and sees the FATHER.*)

ALAN Dad!!

FATHER Ah, the other bum. Come on in. We're having a party.

ALAN What are you doing here?

FATHER I was invited to dinner. That's some cook you have in there.

ALAN Where?

BUDDY (*Defeated*) In the kitchen.

ALAN What? . . . (*To BUDDY*) Well, didn't you explain? That she was waiting for me?

FATHER I don't need you to make up stories. (*Crosses to BUDDY*) I've got Tennessee Williams for that.

(*The phone rings. FATHER starts out*)

ALAN Dad, wait. I want to talk to you.

(*He crosses quickly to the phone*)

FATHER I've heard enough.

(*He starts to go*)

ALAN (*Into phone*) Hello? . . . Oh, Mr. Meltzer.

FATHER (*Stops*) Meltzer? What does he want?

ALAN (*Into phone*) Now, please. Calm down. I tried to explain. There was a mixup somewhere.

FATHER What's wrong?

ALAN Nothing, Dad. Nothing. (*Into phone*) What? . . . Well, how should I know your wife was coming in? . . . I didn't get any message from my mother.

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Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

FATHER (*Crosses to him*) What are you talking about?

ALAN (*Into phone*) If I can just talk to your wife . . . Mr. Meltzer, there's no need for a lawsuit.

FATHER Lawsuit? What lawsuit?

ALAN Dad, wait a minute . . . (*Into phone*) Mr. Meltzer . . .

FATHER Give me that phone. (*Grabs phone and brightly says*) Hello? Meltzer? This is Mr. Baker, senior. What's the trouble?

ALAN He's hysterical, Dad. Don't listen to him.

FATHER Your wife and *who* rang the doorbell together? What French girl? . . . But who arranged such a thing? . . . I see . . . (*Turns to ALAN*) I see . . . Good-by.

(*He hands phone to ALAN, who hangs up, and starts for door. ALAN follows*)

ALAN Dad, if you'd just listen for five minutes . . . Dad!!!! Dad, Dad . . . please say something!

(*The FATHER crosses past them in silence. He turns on raised foyer and speaks calmly*)

FATHER May you and your brother live and be well. God bless you, all the luck in the world, you should know nothing but happiness. If I ever speak to either one of you again, my tongue should fall out!

(*He opens the door and goes*)

(*The two brothers stand there looking at each other helplessly*)

BUDDY (*Crosses right to fireplace*) I knew it. I knew this would happen.

ALAN (*Concerned*) Do you think he means it?

(*ALAN takes off coat and puts it on left handrail*)

BUDDY Means it? In ten minutes he'll be home, giving the rest of my clothes to the janitor.

ALAN (*Crosses downstage right of sofa*) I never saw him this mad. (*Crossing down*) Not since the day he chased me all over Brooklyn when I wouldn't give Aunt Gussie a kiss.

BUDDY Oh, he's mad all right. And he means it. (*Crosses left to him*) We're fired.

ALAN (*Musing*) But how can he get along without us?

BUDDY And he was almost out the door. And then that fruitcake walks in and says, "Hello, Dad" . . . His mustache almost fell off.

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

ALAN (*Sits sofa*) I'm sorry, kid. I didn't mean to get you involved.

BUDDY It's not your fault.

ALAN I thought I was doing you a favor . . . Well, it's over with anyway.

BUDDY What's over? She's coming back with a French bottle to do silly little things.

ALAN She is?

BUDDY She gets me all crazy. Suppose I do something nutty, like signing her to a five-year contract? . . . (*Doorbell rings*) I can't face her again, Alan. Please.

ALAN All right, never mind. I'll take over. Go on out to a movie.

BUDDY (*Grabs his coat from under sofa*) That's a great idea. Maybe one of my pictures is playing around.

(*Doorbell rings again. He exits through kitchen right. ALAN opens door; CONNIE stands there with valise*)

ALAN Connie!

(*Closes door. She puts down case and gives Alan long kiss interrupting his "Wba . . ." then when she releases him*)

CONNIE Me no Connie. Me Jane. You Tarzan. Jane come to swing with Tarzan in tree.

ALAN What's in that suitcase?

CONNIE The rest of my merchandise.

(*She takes off her coat. Puts it on right handrail*)

ALAN You're drunk.
(Crossing away right)

CONNIE On one martini?

ALAN You get loaded just ordering one.

74

CONNIE Now, then, the bedroom. It's in that direction, isn't it?

(She picks up suitcase and starts for bedroom)

ALAN You stay out of there. What's come over you?

CONNIE Nothing, darling. I gave you a choice and you made it.

ALAN What?

CONNIE Wonderful service, isn't it? You don't even have to pick it up. We deliver.

ALAN You're not drunk. You're crazy.

CONNIE (Puts down suitcase and crosses right stalking him as he backs away) Just think of it, darling? We're going to live together, love together. Fun, fun, fun. Sin, sin, sin.

ALAN Connie, you're scaring the hell out of me.

CONNIE You don't even have to say you love me. And when you get bored, just kick me out and give me a letter of recommendation.

ALAN Will you cut it out? It's not funny any more.
(Breaks away left)

CONNIE I don't understand, Alan. Isn't this what you want? Isn't this what you asked for?

ALAN No.

CONNIE No?

ALAN That's right, no. I said I could see nothing wrong for two young people who were very fond of each other to have a healthy, normal relationship. But I see no reason to turn this affair into a . . . foreign art movie.

CONNIE Good heavens, sir. I must be in the wrong apartment.

ALAN Look, I told you before. I'm not denying anything.
Six nights a week I'm Leonard Lover. But with you . . .
well, you're different.

CONNIE Careful, Alan. You're on the brink of committing
yourself.

ALAN Who's keeping it a secret? I love you.

75

CONNIE You weren't very sure.

ALAN I am now. If I can turn down an offer like this with
a girl like you, I must be in love.

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

CONNIE Well, then . . . where does that leave us?

ALAN . . . I don't know.

CONNIE (*Sits right arm of right center chair*) You don't know?

ALAN (*Crossing to her*) Look honey, you've got to give me a
chance to think. A lot of things have happened tonight.
I just lost my job.

CONNIE I thought you worked for your father.

ALAN We must be in a hell of a recession. He just let two
sons go . . . Oh, Connie, don't you see . . .

CONNIE No, I don't see. You love me but you won't marry
me, and you love me too much to live with me.

ALAN (*Crosses around chair to right of it*) I know. I can't figure
it out either.

CONNIE (*Angry*) I see. Well, I'm sorry, Alan, but I can't
spend the rest of my life waiting in the hallway.

(*She gets up and crosses to center*)

ALAN Wait a minute.

CONNIE For what? Leither come in or go out. You want me
or you don't. Yes or no.

ALAN Why can't things be like they were before?

CONNIE It's too late. We've raised the stakes.

ALAN Who made you the dealer all of a sudden?

CONNIE If the game is too big, Alan, get out.

ALAN I see. A brilliant maneuver, General. You've got me cornered. Very well, I surrender.

CONNIE I don't take prisoners.
(She goes to foyer)

76

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

ALAN (Angry) I mean it. If that's what you want, I'll marry you.

CONNIE (Grabs coat. Puts over left arm) If that's the way you'll marry me, I don't want it.

ALAN (Crossing to her) Connie, wait. Where are you going?

CONNIE (Putting on coat) Right now I want to be about a thirty-five-dollar taxi ride away from you.

ALAN (Sincerely. Crossing to her) Connie, wait . . . I don't want you to leave.

CONNIE (She's made up her mind) I'm sorry.

ALAN You mean I won't see you again?

CONNIE I don't know. Maybe if you get lonely enough. (The phone rings) You probably won't have much chance tonight. Start in the morning.

(Phone rings again. Picks up suitcase)

ALAN Connie, wait.

CONNIE Answer your phone, Alan. It's the second platoon.
(Phone rings again)

ALAN (He picks up phone) Hello . . . Oh, Mom. (To CONNIE) Connie, it's my mother.

CONNIE Your mother? Oh, come on, Alan.
(She opens door)

ALAN Why should I kid about a thing like that?

CONNIE Good-by.
(And she's gone closing door behind her)

ALAN Connie . . . Connie, wait. (Back into phone. He sits) Hello, Mom? . . . What's wrong? Did Dad get home yet? . . . Aunt Gussie's? . . . Well, don't worry about it. He'll probably just sleep there tonight. He'll be home tomorrow when he calms down . . . Mom, please don't cry

. . . All right, look, I'll come up and sleep there tonight
. . . Yes, in my old room . . . I don't feel like being alone
either . . . What? . . . No, not yet . . . Mom, please, I'm very
upset . . . I've got a lot on my mind . . . I can't decide that
now . . . Mom, I don't care—lamb chops, turkey, chicken
salad, anything . . .

77

Curtain

C O M E B L O W

Y O U R H O R N

Act Three

78

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

Three weeks later.

At Rise: BUDDY has ALAN's sports jacket in his arms, one sleeve draped over his shoulder. The jacket is putting in extra duty as BUDDY's dancing partner.

This is a different BUDDY from the one we've seen before. In a few weeks he seems to have blossomed. He now has the assurance and self-confidence that comes with independence. He has a bounce and vitality we haven't seen before.

He dances and chants his own rhythm.

BUDDY . . . One, two, cha-cha-cha . . . Very good, cha-cha-cha . . . And turn, cha-cha-cha . . . (The telephone rings on "turn") Answer phone, cha-cha-cha . . . Very good, cha-cha-cha . . . (He places coat on sofa saying "Excuse me, my dear." He picks up phone) Hello? . . . Snow? (He sits on sofa) . . . Don't you know you could get arrested for having such a sexy voice . . . No . . . I'm still trying to get tickets for the Ionesco play that's opening tonight . . . They're supposed to call me. Then I thought we might go up to the Palladium . . . for a little . . . cha-cha-cha. Oh, say . . . could you pick me up here? It would be easier. Wonderful . . . 42 East 63rd Street. About seven? . . . Make it five to. I'm only human. Good-by. (He hangs up, slaps his hands, and gives a little giggle of joy. Then he resumes) Do it right, cha-cha-cha . . . Tonight's the night, cha-cha-cha . . . (The phone rings. He picks it up. Sits on upstage end of coffee table) Hello?

(At this moment, the door opens and ALAN enters. Or better, he drags in. This is not the ALAN of two weeks ago. He looks bedraggled. He seems to have lost a great deal of cockiness, his self-assurance. He hangs trench coat in closet and crosses downstage right to counter)

BUDDY Yes, it is . . . Yes? . . . Oh, wonderful . . . That's two tickets for tonight . . . Yes, I'll pick them up at the box

office . . . In Alan Baker's name . . . Thank you very much. Good-by. (*He hangs up. He sees ALAN*) Oh, hi, Aly. I didn't hear you come in. Gee, what a break. Your broker just got me two tickets for the Ionesco play tonight. I used your name. Is it all right?

ALAN (*Staring ahead*) Why not? I'm not using it any more.

79

(BUDDY gets up, picks up his dancing partner, and resumes)

BUDDY And again, cha-cha-cha . . . To the right, cha-cha-cha . . . (*He keeps on dancing*) Where were you today?

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

ALAN (*Staring ahead*) At the Polo Grounds waiting for the Giants to come back . . . Anyone call?

BUDDY (*He's still dancing*) Yeah . . . a Mr. Copeland . . . and a Mr. Sampler . . . cha-cha-cha . . .

ALAN (*Looks at him*) What'd they say?

BUDDY Nice and easy, cha-cha-cha . . .

ALAN (*Angry*) Hey, Pupi, I'm talking to you.

BUDDY (*He stops*) What's wrong?

ALAN I'd like to hear one sentence without the rhythm in it. What'd they say?

BUDDY Who?

ALAN (*Crossing to him*) Copeland and Sampler, cha-cha-cha!

BUDDY Nothing. They'll call back later. What's eating you, Alan?

(*Pats ALAN's shoulder and puts coat on sofa and sits*)

ALAN It's just a little annoying to have to wait until the dance is over to get my messages.

(*He takes coat off sofa, brushes it and hangs it in closet upstage*)

BUDDY Boy, you're jumpy lately. You've got a case of nerves, old boy.

ALAN (*Crossing downstage to right center chair*) Thank you, doctor, is my hour up?

BUDDY What do you do all day, anyway? You're gone from ten to six. You come home bushed. You keep getting strange calls all day. What's all the mystery?

ALAN There's no mystery.

BUDDY (*Accusingly*) Have you got a job?

ALAN No, I haven't got a job. Are you sure no one else called?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BUDDY You mean Connie?

ALAN (*Expectantly*) Connie? Why? Did she . . . ?

BUDDY No, but you talk about her in your sleep.

ALAN (*Sits right center chair*) Me? You're crazy.

BUDDY Last night you even walked in your sleep. You stretched out your arms and said, "Oh, Connie, darling" . . . I'm going to have to start locking my door.

ALAN Are you ribbing me?

BUDDY Why don't you call her, Alan?

ALAN What for? I'm not interested . . . Besides . . . she checked out of her hotel.

BUDDY Oh! Where'd she go?

ALAN How should I know. I didn't ask them.

BUDDY Maybe she left a forwarding address.

ALAN There's no forwarding address.

BUDDY How do you know?

ALAN I asked them . . . Look, will you forget about Connie.

BUDDY Subject closed. (*ALAN rises and BUDDY crosses to bar*) How about a drink?

ALAN I don't want a drink. (*BUDDY pours one. ALAN looks at him*) What are you drinking for?

BUDDY I like one at night now. Helps me unwind.
(*Crossing right of center. He drinks*)

ALAN What do you have to unwind from?

BUDDY Oh, the little everyday problems of life.

ALAN (*Rises and crosses to him*) Problems? You never had it so good. You sleep till twelve o'clock. Lounge around until two. You go out every night. How do you fill up the rest of the day?

81

BUDDY Well, that's one of the little problems I have to unwind from. (*ALAN turns away right disgustedly*) I'm just having a little fun. What's wrong, Alan?

C O M E B L O W
Y O U R H O R N

ALAN (*Changing his attitude. Turns upstage*) Nothing. Nothing, I'm sorry, kid. I don't know what's wrong with me lately. Listen, I don't feel like sitting in again tonight. You want to go to a movie? Just the two of us?

BUDDY (*Puts glass on sofa table*) Oh, gee, I'd like to, Alan, but I've got a date.

ALAN Again? That's four times this week. Who's on tonight?

BUDDY This one's a dancer. Modern jazz. Her name is Snow.

ALAN Snow?

BUDDY (*Crosses to ALAN*) Snow Eskanazi!

ALAN Sounds like an Italian Eskimo.

BUDDY She's a real weirdo. Wears that white flour on her face like the Japanese Kabuki dancers. But I've got a hunch underneath she's very pretty.

ALAN Take her out in a strong wind, maybe you'll find out . . . Where do you collect these girls, anyway?

BUDDY I met Snow at that party I went to in the Village last Saturday.

ALAN The one you took the Greek interpreter to?

BUDDY Yeah. Snow was with an Indian exchange student. I was sitting on the floor next to her and she leans over and gives me her phone number. Just like that.

ALAN How did Sabu feel about all this?

BUDDY He loaned her the pencil. Besides, he made a date with the Greek interpreter.

ALAN (*Sits right center chair*) No wonder they have emergency sessions at the UN.

82

BUDDY Like a jerk I went and left early. You know what I hear they played at three o'clock in the morning?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ALAN What?

BUDDY Strip Scrabble!

ALAN Strip Scrabble?? . . . I suddenly feel eight years old. Are you sure you're the same boy who was eating milk and cake over a sink three weeks ago?

BUDDY How about that, what's happened to me, Alan? You've given me a new lease on life. Three weeks here with no one telling me what to do and when to come home. Well, I'm a different person, aren't I?

ALAN Different? You're going to need identification before I let you in here again.

BUDDY That's why I hate to see you moping around like this. (*Crosses to him*) You're a different person too. It's not like you to let yourself go.

(*Pats his knee*)

ALAN (*Indignant*) What do you mean?

BUDDY Well, you've been sitting home every night, you haven't called a girl in three weeks, you're even getting to look seedy. Why don't you call Rocco tomorrow?

(*Crosses away left*)

ALAN Rocco?

BUDDY My barber.

ALAN (*Rises and crosses to him*) Your barber? What do you mean, *your* barber? I sent you there. He's *my* barber.

BUDDY I know. It was just a figure of speech. I didn't mean anything. You can have him back.

(*Fixes ALAN'S tie*)

ALAN I don't want him back. I just want it clear that you
only go there. But Rocco is *my* barber.

(Turns away right, unfixes his tie)

BUDDY Sure, Alan, sure . . . Anyway, cheer up. (*He pats ALAN's shoulder patronizingly*) Things'll get better. (*ALAN sits right center chair*) (*the doorbell rings*) That can't be Snow. It's too early. (*He hops over to door and opens it. It's PEGGY in another crazy outfit*) Oh, hello.

83

PEGGY Hello, Mr. Manheim.

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

BUDDY Come on in. You know Alan Baker.
(*He no longer fears the masquerade*)

PEGGY Oh, sure. Hi! (*Waves*) I heard you were back. Is everything all right in Hollywood?

BUDDY Oh, great. We're just about ready to roll on the picture.

PEGGY I never got a call. I guess you found someone else for my part.

BUDDY Not at all. We just have the male lead set. We're still looking for the girl.

PEGGY Oh? Who did you get?

BUDDY For what?

PEGGY The male lead.

BUDDY Oh. Someone new. An Italian actor.

ALAN Rocco La Barber.

PEGGY Oh, sure. I've heard of him.

BUDDY Well . . . if you'll excuse me, I've got to get dressed. I've got to look over some locations tonight.

PEGGY Of course.

BUDDY I'll call you. I'm still very interested. (*Looks at his watch and shoots his cuff*) Great Scot, it's nearly seven. (*Smiles at ALAN and prances into the bedroom*)

PEGGY So young and so brilliant.

ALAN Eight colleges are after his brain.

PEGGY (*Crosses above ALAN*) I can understand why *he* hasn't called. What's your excuse?

ALAN (*Rises and starts left*) No excuse. I've just been busy.

84

PEGGY (*Stepping downstage*) And I've been lonely, Alan . . . really lonely . . .

Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

ALAN I haven't been doing much either.

PEGGY (*Crosses to him*) You haven't called in nearly three weeks. You never answered my messages.

ALAN I'm sorry.

PEGGY (*Swings him around*) Prove it. Let's go to Connecticut this weekend.

ALAN What's in Connecticut?

PEGGY (*Putting arm around him*) The ski lodge.

ALAN It's Vermont.

PEGGY I don't care. As long as we're together. How about it?

ALAN (*Breaking left*) Well, Peggy . . . I'm not working any more. I don't have much time for skiing.

PEGGY (*Angry. Crosses stage up right of him*)

ALAN (*Stops her*) Peggy, wait. It's nothing personal. I'm still crazy about you . . . All right, look. We'll go this weekend.

PEGGY That's more like my Alan. (*She puts his arm around her*) Bite me on the neck.

ALAN What?

PEGGY Bite me on the neck like you used to.

ALAN Well, Peggy, I don't really feel . . .

PEGGY Oh, come on.

(ALAN *sbrugs and bites her*)

PEGGY Ow! You bit me. (*She breaks up to foyer, turns*) You really *must* be a vampire.

(She opens door and exits. ALAN crosses back down to sofa and sits)

(BUDDY returns wearing a sports jacket. It's one of those multicolored jobs that they advertise every Sunday in the Times but no one ever really buys)

BUDDY (He turns around, modeling it) Well? How do you like the sports jacket?

ALAN I like the lining. What's the jacket like?

COME BLOW

BUDDY How do you think this will go at Sardi's?

YOUR HORN

ALAN What are you doing, going to Sardi's?

BUDDY I thought I'd make an impression on Snow. Hey, that reminds me. I'd better make a reservation.

(BUDDY picks up phone, and dials)

ALAN (Exaggeratively swings legs on sofa out of BUDDY's way) You certainly have blossomed into the Young Man about Town. The theater, the latest styles, Sardi's. I've created an Ivy League Frankenstein.

BUDDY (Into phone) Hello? I'd like to reserve a table for two for tonight, please. Seven-thirty . . . Oh, you are? (He covers phone with his hand) He says they're all booked up. (He snaps his fingers, back into phone) Are you sure you don't have a reservation for me? Manheim? I'm with M-G-M.

(ALAN throws up his hands)

BUDDY (Into phone) Yes, it was probably an oversight . . . Would you? I'd appreciate that . . . Thanks, so much. Good-by! (He hangs up) Voilà!

ALAN (Looks up to heaven) What have I done?

BUDDY (Starts upstage and stops) You think he believed me?

ALAN Why not? I did.

BUDDY I'd better get moving. (Starts for foyer and stops and comes downstage right of ALAN) Oh, by the way, Alan. What are you doing about eleven-thirty tonight?

ALAN I'll be sitting in a shawl reading the Bible. Why?

BUDDY I hear there's a great picture at the Paris. Why don't you catch the last show. I think it lets out about one.

ALAN I don't want to be let out about one.

BUDDY Well, you see, I thought later on I might drop back here with Snow . . . for a nightcap.

ALAN You what?

86

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BUDDY I hate to ask you, Alan, but this may be my night to conquer Mount Everest. You don't mind going to a movie, do you?

ALAN (*Rises. Seething*) You're damned right I mind!

BUDDY What's wrong, Alan? That was our arrangement, wasn't it? If one fellow had a girl—

ALAN That was *my* arrangement. I did the arranging and *you* went to the movies. Where do you get this *our* stuff?

BUDDY (*Quite innocently*) I thought we were splitting everything fifty-fifty?

ALAN We were, until you got all the fifties. (*Crosses right of him and turns*) Boy, what nerve. We're not splitting anything any more. Is that understood?

BUDDY Sure, Alan.

ALAN Except the rent. From now on your rent is a hundred forty-two dollars a month.

BUDDY Okay.

ALAN (*Crosses right to counter*) I think I've been bighearted long enough.

BUDDY Alan, I never . . .

ALAN And buy your own food too. I'm sick and tired of bringing home cookies and watching you finish them reading *my* magazines and watching *my* television.

BUDDY You're kidding!

ALAN (*Picks up box and shakes it at him*) The hell I am. Just keep away from my Fig Newtons!

BUDDY (*Half chuckles at the ridiculousness of the situation*) I don't understand. I always give you some of my Yankee Doodles.

ALAN (*But he's not kidding. Crossing to him*) And stop eating them all over the rug with your crumbs. I never saw anything like it. Clothes lying all over the place. It's disgusting.

BUDDY Alan, what's eating you? Is it because of this girl?

ALAN (*Crossing upstage left*) Connie? She's got nothing to do with this.

87

BUDDY (*Sits sofa*) Well, something's bothering you. I'd like to know what.

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

ALAN Oh, you would, heh? Well, there's plenty bothering me. I happen to think you're pretty ungrateful.

BUDDY Ungrateful!

ALAN (*Crossing right of BUDDY behind sofa*) Yes, ungrateful. I took you in here, taught you how to dress and walk and talk. Now look at you. You're a big man.

BUDDY What's wrong, Alan? You said youself I should grow up and become a man.

ALAN I said become a man. (*Points to himself*) Not this man. Don't take my place in life.

BUDDY How have I taken your place?

ALAN I run the water for a bath and five minutes later I hear you splashing in there. You're using my barber, my restaurants, my ticket broker, my apartment, and my socks. How's it going, kid, am I having fun?

BUDDY You're the one who suggested I do all these things. You said I should start having some fun.

ALAN I said fun. Have a good time. I didn't say anything about carrying on like this.

(*Crosses right of center*)

BUDDY Like what?

ALAN (*Turns*) Like a bum!

BUDDY (*Jumps up*) A bum???.

ALAN You heard me. What kind of crows are you running around with? (*Crosses to him*) Intellectual delinquents . . .

Strip Scrabble! . . . You're lucky Interpol didn't rush in there and raid the joint.

BUDDY What kind of girls do you know? When did that kook upstairs get out of the Girl Scouts?

ALAN I'm talking to *you!* Where were you until four o'clock the other morning?

BUDDY What's the difference?

ALAN (*Crosses and sits right center chair*) I want to know where you were until four o'clock in the morning?

BUDDY Cock-a-doddle-doo! What's with you?

ALAN (*Jumps up*) Don't cocka-doddle-doo me.

BUDDY When did you suddenly switch sides? (*Crosses to him*) When I moved in here you were carrying on like every night was New Year's Eve.

ALAN We're not talking about a thirty-three-year-old bum. We're talking about a twenty-one-year-old bum.

BUDDY Oh, you mean it's all right for you.

ALAN I mean, it's not all right for you. (*Crosses left to coffee table*) Three weeks ago you came in here heartsick over the fate of the world. When was the last time you picked up a newspaper or a book without a phone number in it? What happened to our young hope for a brave new world? We're losing half of South America and you're doing the cha-cha.

BUDDY What's dancing got to do with it?

ALAN (*Crosses to him*) And what about looking for a job?

BUDDY I have been.

ALAN Since when is the employment office in an espresso joint in the Village? You're nothing but a clean-shaven beatnik.

BUDDY I haven't asked you for anything.

ALAN You'd have starved to death if Mom hadn't been smuggling pot-roast sandwiches through the enemy lines.

BUDDY I didn't notice you throwing yours in the garbage can.

ALAN At least I call her now and then. You're too busy to worry about her. And have you thought once of how Dad is getting along with the business without either of us there now?

89

BUDDY What brought all this on?

ALAN I'm seeing you for the first time.

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

BUDDY You mean you're seeing yourself for the first time. I'm just a carbon copy of you.

ALAN Well, whoever it is, I don't like it.

BUDDY Why do I get the blame? You go around committing murder and I get the chair.

ALAN (*He raises his arm threateningly*) Don't get smart with me. You're not too big yet to get a good slap across the face.

BUDDY Holy mackerel, I got two fathers!

ALAN Cut that out. I'm nothing like him. Nothing at all.
(*Turns away left*)

BUDDY Well, you certainly don't sound like yourself.

ALAN (*Turns to him*) How can I? You're myself now.

BUDDY Well, maybe there's one too many of you around here.

ALAN Maybe there is. Which one of me is leaving?

BUDDY It's your apartment. In the meantime, I've got to shave. (*Crosses to bedroom door and ALAN crosses downstage center as BUDDY goes up to door. BUDDY stops and turns*) By the way, which is my water, the hot or the cold?
(*He stalks out of the room*)

ALAN How do you like the nerve of that kid? Well, we'll see how big an operator he is without me to supply him with everything. (*Crossing left to bar and pours himself a drink. Tips glass to his mouth and realizes there's nothing in it. He picks up bottle and sees it's empty*) A whole bottle of scotch! (*He*

takes empty bottle, crosses angrily to bedroom door, waves empty bottle and shouts) Bum! (He starts to bar and the doorbell rings. Puts bottle on sofa table) Ah, that must be Nanook of the North! . . . This I've got to see. (He crosses to door and opens it. The MOTHER stands there with a heavy valise) Mom! Mom, what are you doing here?

90

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

MOTHER (*She trudges into the room*) I'm lucky I'm here at all. Six blocks I had to lug this from the subway. You'd think a stranger would help a woman.

(*She puts down valise and flops in a chair*)

ALAN (*Follows left of her*) Mom, what are you doing with a suitcase? Where are you going?

MOTHER I'm not going any more. I'm here.

ALAN Here? Why?

MOTHER For the same reason Buddy's here . . . I've run away from home.

ALAN Mom, you're not serious?

MOTHER Don't think I'm not ashamed. A woman of my age running away from home. I was so humiliated. A woman from my building saw me in the subway with the suitcase. I had to lie to her. I said I was going to visit my brother in California. Then at 125th Street I had to change to a local to come here. She's not so dumb. For California you don't change at 125th Street. I should worry. My life is over anyway.

ALAN Why, Mom? What happened?

MOTHER What happened? Ask America what happened? In Alaska they must have heard how that man has been carrying on with me. For three weeks now. Three weeks.

ALAN All right, Mom, he's very upset. But he'll get over it. He always does.

MOTHER No, not this time. This time it's different. There's no making up now. I thought maybe there was a chance this morning. I was going to show him I could be bigger than he was. I wanted to show him I didn't forget.

ALAN Forget what?

MOTHER Today. It's our thirty-seventh anniversary.

ALAN (*Kneels left of her*) Oh, that's right. Happy anniversary, Mom.
(*He kisses her*)

MOTHER Thank you, darling. Anyway, I went over to him. I swear to you, I had a big smile on my face, like this: (*She gives a big smile. Then goes back to her sorrow*) And then as nice as I could possibly say it, I said, "Happy Anniversary, darling. I wish you all the happiness in the world." (*She sobs*) And what do you think he said to me?

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COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

ALAN What?

MOTHER "Thank you . . . and I wish you what you wish me." (*She sobs*) For what? What did I do he should say such a thing?

ALAN But how do you know he meant anything wrong by that?

MOTHER Because he knows what I was wishing him.
(*She cries*)

ALAN (*Throws up his hands in futility. Crossing up right of her*) Oh, boy!

MOTHER All because of you two. He keeps blaming me.
"Your bums. Your two bums!"

(BUDDY comes out of the bedroom)

BUDDY (*Crosses to left of MOTHER; leaves jacket on desk*) Mom?
What are you doing here?

MOTHER (*Crosses right to BUDDY. She starts right in on him*) I'm lucky I'm here at all. Six blocks I had to lug this from the subway.

BUDDY Whose suitcase is that?

ALAN My new roommate's! . . . Mom, will you listen to me. You're just being emotional. You know you can't live here.

BUDDY Here?

MOTHER Where else have I got to go? A hotel? Maybe I should move in with his sister Gussie? I'll join the Army first.

ALAN Mom, it's not that I don't want you. But you wouldn't be comfortable here. It's a small bachelor apartment.

MOTHER So what am I now? I'm a bachelor too. (*She feels terribly sorry for herself*) A bachelor with two grown sons.
(*The doorbell rings*)

BUDDY (*Runs up to door*) Oh, that's probably Snow.

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

MOTHER You're expecting company? (*She picks up suitcase and starts to bedroom*) I won't be in your way. I'll go in the bedroom with my sewing.

ALAN Mom, you don't have to do that.

MOTHER You wouldn't hear me. I'll be like a dead person.

ALAN Mom, you don't need your suitcase.

MOTHER (*Stopping at bedroom right door and turns*) It's all right. I want to unpack my Alka-Seltzer. Oh, I'm so nauseous.

(*She holds her stomach and goes into the bedroom.*
The doorbell rings again twice)

ALAN (*Crossing to counter right. To BUDDY*) Well, answer it, lover.

(*BUDDY crosses to door quickly and opens it. The FATHER stands there, steaming*)

BUDDY Dad!

FATHER (*He storms in on foyer. To BUDDY*) Where is she? I know she's here. (*To ALAN*) Where's their mother?

ALAN (*Weakly*) In the bedroom.

FATHER Oh, they're hiding them in the bedroom now. What's the matter, the kitchen's being painted? (*He crosses to bedroom and opens door. He looks in*) Very nice. Very nice for a mother.

(*BUDDY crosses downstage and sits on sofa*)

MOTHER (*From off stage*) What do you want?

FATHER What is she doing in there?

MOTHER (*Off stage*) She's drinking Alka-Seltzer.

FATHER (*Crossing downstage below coffee table. Turns away*) I thought I'd find her in here.

(*The MOTHER comes out with a glass in her hand. Crossing downstage center*)

MOTHER Where else should I be? They're still my children.

FATHER She should be home. I'm still her husband.

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MOTHER Not when you treat your own children the way you do.

COME BLOW

FATHER This is something I will not discuss in front of strangers.

YOUR HORN

MOTHER They're your sons.

FATHER (*Crossing right center*) They're *your* sons! They're my strangers! . . . Is she coming home?

MOTHER She's home. This is where she lives now.

FATHER This is where she lives? With bums?

MOTHER That's right. So that makes me a bum too. All right? Now you're happy? Now you've got three bums.

ALAN Dad, can I say something?

FATHER Who's he talking to? I'm not even here.

BUDDY (*Crossing downstage left of FATHER*) Can I say something?

FATHER Write it in a play. I'll be there opening night.

ALAN All right, Dad, please calm down. Will you talk to me for one minute?

FATHER (*Crossing left below coffee table*) Is she coming?

ALAN Dad, please. It's important.

FATHER Did the woman hear what I said?

ALAN All right, don't answer me directly. If you understand, blink your eyes once for "yes" and twice for "no."

FATHER (*To MOTHER*) Did she listen to that? If I were here, I'd slap him in the mouth . . . Is she coming?

BUDDY Dad, we can't go on like this forever.

FATHER Forever is over. They'll have no more parents to bother them. They should be very happy.

ALAN (*Crosses left*) What do you mean, no more parents?

FATHER (*To MOTHER*) Tell him. Four months we'll be gone. I've got the tickets in my pocket.

94

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

MOTHER You bought the tickets? I told you, I'm not going. Not until everything is all right with you and the boys.

ALAN Going where?

FATHER Around the world. (*Crosses right center*) Tell him around the world we're going. Ask him if that's far enough?

MOTHER I'm not going around any worlds.

FATHER She's going. I've got the tickets in my pocket.

ALAN Do you mean it? Are you really going?

FATHER (*Takes ticket out of pocket and holds it up*) Here! In three weeks we'll be in China. They'll be here bumming around in peace, and we'll be in China . . . in the middle of a revolution. They'll worry a lot.

ALAN (*One step to FATHER*) But how can you leave for four months? Who's going to take care of the business?

FATHER What business? Tell him? Is she coming around the world . . . (*Crossing left below coffee table*) or do I take my sister Gussie?

MOTHER I told you, I'm not going pleasure cruising with aggravation still on my heart.

ALAN (*Crosses left to center*) Dad, what about the business???

FATHER Is she coming?

MOTHER Answer him!

FATHER I answered him. Tomorrow there'll be no business. I'm selling the business. Is that an answer?

ALAN Selling the business?

BUDDY Are you serious?

FATHER Look who's suddenly so shocked. The skier and the Pulitzer Prize winner.

ALAN (*Crossing left to him*) Why are you selling it?

FATHER Who should I save it for, his children?

BUDDY But who did you sell it to, Dad? 95

FATHER Who? To Chiang Kai-shek. That's why I'm going to China.

(Crosses right to counter)

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

ALAN (*Following*) Why, Dad. Are you selling because of us?

FATHER You? You think I need you two? I did bigger business in the three weeks you were gone than in the six years you were there.

(*The doorbell rings*)

BUDDY Oh, boy!

FATHER (*To MOTHER*) I'm not waiting any more. If she wants, I'll meet her in Hong Kong.

ALAN Dad, wait. I've got to talk to you about this.

(*Doorbell rings*)

BUDDY (*Looking upstage anxiously*) Can't you talk later?

(*The doorbell rings again*)

MOTHER Buddy, the doorbell.

BUDDY Alan, what'll I do?

ALAN Will you take that girl and get out of here?

(BUDDY starts upstage)

FATHER (*Crossing to BUDDY*) Girl? What girl??

BUDDY Just a girl, Dad. Do you think you could finish this conversation in the bedroom?

FATHER (*He can't take any more*) The bedroom? I'll break every bone in his body.

(*He raises his arm to hit BUDDY*)

MOTHER (*Crossing downstage left*) Harry!

FATHER (*Follows imitating*) Harry, Harry.

BUDDY (*Backing away*) Dad, wait . . .
(*Suddenly the door opens and CONNIE enters*)

CONNIE (*On foyer*) Oh, hello!

ALAN (*Crosses upstage to right of CONNIE. Stunned*) Connie!

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

MOTHER Harry, please, don't say anything.

FATHER Don't say anything? No, I'll sit here and applaud.

ALAN Connie, where have you been?

CONNIE Cincinnati.

ALAN Cincinnati?

CONNIE (*Crossing downstage right to counter*) With the Electrical Appliance Dealers of America.

(*ALAN follows her*)

FATHER I don't have to listen to this kind of talk.

(*He starts for door left above sofa. BUDDY stops him*)

BUDDY Dad, wait a minute, please.

ALAN You mean you did another industrial show?

CONNIE I was Miss Automatic Toaster. I popped up and sang . . . And after the show three salesmen tried to butter me.

ALAN But why did you take the job? You said you were quitting.

CONNIE You changed my mind for me. Look, Alan, this doesn't seem to be the time to discuss this . . .

ALAN No, no. This is only my mother and father.

FATHER Only??

CONNIE (*Looks at her and says to MOTHER*) Oh, hello.

MOTHER (*Sweetly*) How do you do?

FATHER (*Crossing to left of her below sofa. To MOTHER*) Are you crazy, "How do you do?"

ALAN What do you mean, I changed your mind?

CONNIE You were right, Alan. I'm much too talented to quit. Besides, I'm beginning to enjoy my work.

ALAN What work?

FATHER What do you think, what work? (*To MOTHER*) You're going to stay here while this is going on?

BUDDY (*Takes his arm*) Dad, you don't know what you're saying.

FATHER (*Lifts arm from shoulder exaggerating movement*) Pushing? A father you're pushing?

MOTHER (*Starts upstage behind sofa table*) Harry, come in the bedroom.

CONNIE (*Moves as if to go*) Alan, call me later.

ALAN (*Stops her*) No, tell me what you're talking about.

CONNIE Well, I really came to say good-by.

ALAN Good-by?

CONNIE The Electrical Dealers want me to go to Europe. With all expenses paid.

FATHER (*Shrugs*) She's not ashamed to say it.

CONNIE (*BUDDY and FATHER exchange places*) It's a wonderful opportunity, Alan. And after all, it's about time I had a "fling."

ALAN A fling??

CONNIE You know how it is with a twenty-four-year-old girl. She's really not ready to settle down yet.

ALAN Connie, listen to me.

(*The phone rings*)

FATHER (*Points to phone. Says to MOTHER*) You hear? That's the cook. She'll be coming to work soon.
(*Phone rings*)

CONNIE I don't leave until Thursday. Call me, Alan.

BUDDY (*Grabs FATHER's arm*) Dad, please come inside and talk to me.

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

FATHER Again he's pushing.
(*The phone keeps ringing*)

ALAN Connie, you can't go to Europe. I won't let you.
(*Phone rings*)

MOTHER Alan, your phone.

CONNIE You won't let me?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ALAN Connie, I need you. (*Phone rings*) I didn't realize it until you were out of my life for three weeks. I couldn't stand it. I love (*phone rings*) you, sweetheart.

MOTHER (*Crosses to right of center*) Alan, your phone.

CONNIE Alan, we've been through those words before.

ALAN I didn't really feel (*phone rings*) this way before. You've got to believe me. It's all over. I have flung!
(*Ring*)

MOTHER (*Crosses left to coffee table*) Buddy, the phone.

BUDDY Dad . . .

FATHER (*To BUDDY*) If he pushes me once more, he'll bleed from the nose.

BUDDY I wasn't pushing you.
(*The phone rings*)

MOTHER Maybe I'm crazy. No one hears a phone.
(*She picks it up*)

CONNIE Alan, are you sure?

MOTHER (*Into phone*) Hello?

CONNIE Are you really sure?

ALAN I was never so sure of anything in my life.

MOTHER Alan, it's for you.

ALAN I'm busy, Mom. Take a message.

MOTHER Again with a message.

BUDDY Who is it, Mom?

MOTHER Do I know? Do I have a pencil?

BUDDY All right, don't get excited.

FATHER That's right. Yell at your mother. Push *her!*

BUDDY (*Crosses upstage above sofa table*) I wasn't pushing!

MOTHER Alan, it's a Mr. Kaplan or Koplon . . . Oh, I'm so nauseous.

99

FATHER Copeland? From Begley's Department Store in Texas? . . . Give me that.

(*He grabs phone*)

COME BLOW
YOUR HORN

ALAN (*Crossing left*) No, Dad—

FATHER (*Into phone*) Hello? . . . Mr. Copeland of Texas? . . . How do you do, sir . . . To what do I owe the honor of this phone call? . . . Order? What order? . . . Yes, of course it's Mr. Baker . . . No, his father . . . Oh . . . just a minute. (*He is bewildered. He looks front but hands him phone*) It's for him.

ALAN (*Into phone*) Hello, Mr. Copeland . . . You what? . . . Oh, wonderful . . . The same order we talked about today? . . . Yes, I've got it. You'll have the shipment the first of the month . . . Not at all . . . Have a nice trip back . . . and thank you . . . Good-by.

(*He hangs up*)

FATHER (*Stares at him*) How does he come to know Copeland of Texas?

ALAN I heard he was in town. I called him and took him out to lunch a few times . . . alone. (*He takes out paper from his pocket*) I guess you'd better take care of this order, Dad.

(**FATHER** *takes paper and looks at it in disbelief*)

FATHER Four years I'm after Copeland of Texas.

BUDDY (*Crosses downstage right of ALAN*) So that's what you've been doing every day. Working. And all those phone calls from Copeland and Sampler.

FATHER Sampler too? . . . I just got a telegram for a big order tonight. For transparent grapes.

ALAN I thought I owed you that much, Dad.

FATHER (*To ALAN*) Owed me? (*Then crosses left*) He owes me nothing. I don't need his orders.

(*Puts invoice in pocket*)

ALAN (*Crosses left to him*) Dad, please. Even if you don't want me to work for you, can't we at least be friends?

100

FATHER (*Angry. Away from ALAN*) I don't need a bum for a friend.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ALAN Why am I bum?

FATHER Is he married?

ALAN Yes!

FATHER Then he's a bu— (*He stops short and turns to ALAN*) What????

ALAN That is . . . I will be if Connie says yes. (*He crosses right to CONNIE who steps to him*) Connie, I'll wake up a judge tonight. I'll get down on both knees. I'll do anything, but please . . . won't you marry me?

CONNIE Oh, darling. (*They kiss*)

(*CONNIE nudges him*)

ALAN Huh! (*Turns to others*) Mom, I guess you can call the caterers . . . : This is Connie Dayton. The girl I'm going to marry.

BUDDY No kidding?

(*CONNIE crosses left to MOTHER. They meet right center*)

MOTHER Oh, darling.

(*She and CONNIE embrace*)

BUDDY (*Crosses to MOTHER*) Gee, congratulations.

(*They all look at ALAN who then looks for approval from the FATHER. They all turn and look at FATHER*)

ALAN Dad—

(*The FATHER turns away from them*)

MOTHER Harry, your son is going to get married.

FATHER No one tells me nothing. All I get is pushed.

ALAN (*Crosses left to FATHER*) Dad, I don't know how to say this to you . . . but . . . well, you were right about so many things. (*FATHER nods . . . bub . . . bub*) I was a bum. (*FATHER*

nods . . . bub . . . bub) I guess every boy's got to be a bum even for a little while. I just ran into overtime. (FATHER *nods . . . bub . . . bub*) There's a lot more I want to say to you, Dad, but not now. Look, why don't we all go out to celebrate? To a night club.

(Crosses right to CONNIE)

101

FATHER He hasn't got a job, he's going to night clubs.

MOTHER Harry, the children want to take us out.

COME BLOW

FATHER Let them save their money for furniture.

YOUR HORN

ALAN (*Afraid things are going to start all over again*) Oh, Dad, can't you just once—

CONNIE No, Alan, Alan. (*Leaping into the breach. Crosses left to FATHER*) Mr. Baker is right. It's impossible to talk in night clubs anyway. And tonight I'd like to talk. After all, I suddenly have a new family. (*To MR. BAKER, tenderly*) Please Mr. Baker . . . why don't we all have dinner together.

FATHER (*He turns slowly to see who this girl is. She looks "nice."* "Very nice." *And suddenly he has no more sons. Now he's got a daughter. He smiles. Removes hat and places it over his heart and bows*) Well . . . Maybe just for a cup of coffee.

ALAN (*Crosses left to CONNIE*) Thanks, Dad.

FATHER (*To ALAN . . . warning*) But we come home early. You've got to be at the plant eight o'clock in the morning and I don't want any excuses.

ALAN Do you mean that? Do you really want me back?

FATHER No, I'm going to put the night watchman in charge while I'm in China.

ALAN (*Laughs—starts upstage taking CONNIE*) Come on, everybody.

CONNIE (*On way up stops at BUDDY*) Good night, Buddy. (*She kisses him and continues to foyer*)

BUDDY Good night, Connie.

MOTHER (*Crosses to BUDDY*) Buddy, darling, you do whatever you want, sweetheart. You're not a baby any more.

BUDDY Thanks, Mom.

(*He kisses her*)

MOTHER But be up for dinner Friday night.

BUDDY I will.

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MOTHER And bring your laundry.

(*Crosses to bedroom to get valise and coat*)

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon* **BUDDY** (*As FATHER starts toward door*) Well, Dad, you still haven't said anything. Is it OK to leave home?

FATHER (*Stops*) No.

BUDDY Oh, Dad.

FATHER (*Crosses to BUDDY*) So what are you asking me? (*ALAN crosses left of FATHER behind sofa*) If I say "no" it's "yes" anyway. There was a time when my "no" was "no," but now you're twenty-one and "no" is "yes." So it's "yes" and forget the "no." (*ALAN and BUDDY exchange puzzled looks*)

(*He takes valise from MOTHER who has come out of bedroom and they all start out*)

BUDDY (*As FATHER goes off*) Thanks, Dad.

ALAN (*Has put on coat*) See you back here later? . . . About twelve?

BUDDY Make it one.

ALAN (*Smiles*) Right, Mr. Manheim. (*He goes to door and turns*) So long . . . bum! (*He exits*)

(*BUDDY looks after him, crosses to upstage left desk and gets jacket. Puts jacket on and looks around room. He crosses now to sofa and arranges pillows. Doorbell rings. BUDDY crosses to downstage left lamp and turns it out*)

BUDDY Coming, my Snowflake! (*He goes to door, composes himself, then opens it. A WOMAN in her fifties stands there*) Aunt Gussie!

(*Curtain starts down*)

WOMAN (*She walks into room as curtain falls*) I was in the neighborhood, so I thought I'd say hello.

Curtain

Barefoot *in the Park*



SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The entire action of the play takes place in the top-floor apartment in a brownstone on East Forty-eighth Street, New York City.

ACT I: About 5:30 on a cold February afternoon.

ACT II:

Scene 1: Four days later, about 7:00 P.M.

Scene 2: Later that night, about 2:00 A.M.

ACT III: The following day, about 5:00 P.M.

Act One

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A large one-room apartment on the top floor of an old brownstone on East Forty-eighth Street off Third Avenue. The room is barren. A ladder, a canvas drop cloth, and a couple of empty paint cans stand forlornly in the center of the room. There is a huge skylight which pours the bright February sunshine glaringly into the room. Through the skylight we can see the roofs and windows of brownstones across the street and the framework of a large building under construction. Crests of clinging snow can be seen in the two windows under the skylight. At stage right, there is the entrance door, a step below the apartment itself. At stage left, four steps lead to a raised area from which two doors open, the upstage one leading to a bathroom, the other to the bedroom. We will soon learn that the latter is not really a bedroom, but a small dressing room. The bathroom has only a shower and a sink and what-have-you. On another raised section up right is the kitchen. It's not really a kitchen, but just an old stove, an older refrigerator, and a chipped sink standing nakedly between them. Upstage left of this area is another platform on which stand a steamer trunk and a few suitcases. The room has just been freshly painted—not carefully, maybe not professionally, but painted. There is a small Franklin stove downstage left below the platform, and an open closet downstage right. Completing the furnishings of the room are a railing that runs downstage of the entrance wall, and a radiator that sits high on the upstage left wall. For all the room's drabness and coldness, there is great promise here. Someone with taste, imagination, and personality can make this that perfect love nest we all dream about. That person is now putting the key in the door.

It opens and CORIE BRATTER enters. She is lovely, young, and full of hope for the future. She enters the apartment, looks around, and sighs as though the world were just beginning. For her, it is. She is wearing Levis and a yellow top under a large, shaggy white fur coat; she carries a bouquet of flowers. After rapturously examining

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

the room, she takes the small paint can, fills it with water, and puts in the flowers, throwing the wrapping on the floor. The first bit of color in the room. As she crosses to put the "vase" on top of the Franklin stove, the doorbell buzzes. She puts the flowers down, crosses to the door, buzzes back, and then opens the door and shouts down:

106

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

CORIE Hello?

(From the depths, possibly from the bottom of the earth we hear a voice shout up)

VOICE Bratter?

CORIE (Yelling back) Yes. Up here! . . . Top floor!
(She crosses to the suitcases, opens the medium-sized one and takes out a large bottle of champagne which she puts into the refrigerator)

VOICE (From below, this time a little closer) Hello?

CORIE (Rushes to the door again and shouts down) Up here! You have another floor to go.

(Crossing back to the open suitcase she takes out three small logs and carries them to the Franklin stove. As she drops them in front of the stove, the owner of the voice appears at the door: a tall, heavy-set man in his mid-thirties, in a plaid wool jacket and baseball cap. He is breathing very, very hard)

TELEPHONE MAN Tel—(He tries to catch his breath)—
Telephone Company.

CORIE Oh, the phone. Good. Come on in.

(He steps in, carrying a black leather repair kit)

TELEPHONE MAN That's quite a—(Gasp, gasp)—quite a climb.

CORIE Yes, it's five flights. If you don't count the front stoop.

TELEPHONE MAN I counted the front stoop. (Gasp, gasp . . . he looks at his notebook) Paul Bratter, right?

CORIE Mrs. Paul Bratter.

TELEPHONE MAN (*Still checking the book*) Princess phone?

CORIE The little one? That lights up? In beige?

TELEPHONE MAN The little one . . . (*Gasp, gasp*) That lights up . . . (*Gasp, gasp*) In beige . . . (*Gasp, gasp*. He swallows hard)

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CORIE Would you like a glass of water?

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

TELEPHONE MAN (*Sucking for air, nods*) Please!

CORIE (*Crosses to the sink*) I'd offer you soda or a beer but we don't have anything yet.

TELEPHONE MAN A glass of water's fine.

CORIE (*Suddenly embarrassed*) Except I don't have a glass either.

TELEPHONE MAN Oh!

CORIE Nothing's arrived yet . . . You could put your head under and just schlurp.

TELEPHONE MAN No, I'm okay. Just a little out of shape. (*As he climbs stiffly up the step out of the well, he groans with pain. After looking about*) Where do you want the phone?

CORIE (*Looks around*) The phone . . . Let me see . . . Gee, I don't know. Do you have any ideas?

TELEPHONE MAN Well, it depends what you're gonna do with the room. You gonna have furniture in here?

CORIE Yes, it's on its way up.

TELEPHONE MAN (*He looks back at the stairs*) Heavy furniture?

CORIE I'll tell you what. (*She points to the telephone junction box on the wall left of the stairs*) Just put it

over there and give me a long extension cord. If I can't find a place, I'll just hang it out the window.

TELEPHONE MAN Fair enough. (*He crosses to the junction box, coughing and in pain*) Whoo!

108

CORIE Say, I'm awfully sorry about the stairs.

(*Taking the large suitcase, she starts to drag it into the bedroom*)

Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

TELEPHONE MAN (*On his knees; he opens his tool box*) You're really gonna live up here, heh? . . . I mean, every day?

CORIE Every day.

TELEPHONE MAN You don't mind it?

CORIE (*Stopping on the stairs*) Mind it? . . . I love this apartment . . . besides (*she continues into the bedroom*) it does discourage people.

TELEPHONE MAN What people?

CORIE (*Comes out of the bedroom and starts for the other suitcases*) Mothers, friends, relatives, mothers. I mean no one just pops in on you when they have to climb five flights.

TELEPHONE MAN You're a newlywed, right?

CORIE Six days. What gave me away?

TELEPHONE MAN I watch "What's My Line" a lot.
(*The doorbell buzzes*)

CORIE Oh! I hope that's the furniture.

TELEPHONE MAN I don't want to see this.

CORIE (*Presses the buzzer and yells down the stairs*) Helloooo! Bloomingdale's?
(*From below, a voice*)

VOICE Lord and Taylor.

CORIE Lord and Taylor? (*Shrugs and takes the now empty suitcase and puts it into the closet*) Probably another wedding gift . . . From my mother. She sends me wedding gifts twice a day . . .

109

TELEPHONE MAN I hope it's an electric heater.

(*He blows on his hands*)

BAREFOOT IN

CORIE (*Worried, she feels the steam pipe next to the closet*)

THE PARK

Really? Is it cold in here?

TELEPHONE MAN I can't grip the screwdriver. Maybe the steam is off.

CORIE Maybe that's it.

(*She gets up on the stairs and tests the radiator*)

TELEPHONE MAN Just turn it on. It'll come right up.

CORIE It is on. It's just not coming up.

TELEPHONE MAN Oh! . . . Well, that's these old brownstones for you.

(*He zips up his jacket*)

CORIE I prefer it this way. It's a medical fact, you know, that steam heat is very bad for you.

TELEPHONE MAN Yeah? In February?

(*Suddenly the DELIVERY MAN appears in the door, carrying three packages. He is in his early sixties and from the way he is breathing, it seems the end is very near. He gasps for air*)

CORIE (*Crossing to him*) Oh, hi . . . Just put it down . . . anywhere.

(*The DELIVERY MAN puts the packages down, panting. He wants to talk but can't. He extends his hand to the TELEPHONE MAN for a bit of compassion*)

TELEPHONE MAN I know. I know.

CORIE I'm awfully sorry about the stairs. (*The DELIVERY MAN takes out a pad and pencil and holds them out limply toward CORIE*) What's this?

110

TELEPHONE MAN I think he wants you to sign it.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CORIE Oh, yes. (*She signs it quickly*) Wait, just a minute. (*She picks up her bag from where she had left it in the kitchen area and takes out some change*) Here you go . . . (*She puts it in his hand. He nods weakly and turns to go*) Will you be all right? . . . (*And for the first time he gets out some words. They are: "Argh, argh."* He exits)

CORIE (*Closes the door behind him*) It's a shame, isn't it? Giving such hard work to an old man.

(*She takes two of the packages and puts them with the remaining suitcases*)

TELEPHONE MAN He's probably only twenty-five. They age fast on this route. (*He dials the phone and then talks into it*) Hello, Ed? Yeah . . . On . . . er . . . Eldorado five, eight, one, nine, one . . . Give me a straight check.

CORIE (*Moving to TELEPHONE MAN*) Is that my number? Eldorado five, eight, one, nine, one (*The TELEPHONE MAN nods*) It has a nice sound, hasn't it?

TELEPHONE MAN (*Why fool with a romantic*) Yeah, it's a beautiful number. (*The phone rings. He answers it, disguising his voice*) Hello? . . . (*He chuckles over his joke*) Good work, Mr. Bell, you've done it again. (*He hangs up, and turns to CORIE*) Well, you've got your phone. As my mother would say, may your first call be from the Sweepstakes.

CORIE (*Takes the phone*) My very own phone . . . Gives you a sense of power, doesn't it? Can I make a call yet?

TELEPHONE MAN (*Putting the cover back on the junction box*) Your bill started two minutes ago.

CORIE Who can I call? . . . I know.

(She starts to dial)

TELEPHONE MAN Oh, by the way. My name is Harry Pepper. And if you ever have any trouble with this phone, please, do me a favor, don't ask for Harry Pepper.
(CORIE hangs up, a look of disappointment on her face)
What's the matter, bad news?

111

CORIE (Like a telephone operator) It is going to be cloudy tonight with a light snow.

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

TELEPHONE MAN (He looks up at the skylight) And just think, you'll be the first one in the city to see it fall.

(The doorbell buzzes. CORIE puts down the phone, and rushes to the door)

CORIE Oh, please, let that be the furniture and not Paul so Paul can see the apartment with furniture. (She buzzes, opens the door, and yells downstairs) Yes?

VOICE FROM BELOW It's me!

CORIE (Unhappily) Oh, hi, Paul. (She turns into the room) Well, I guess he sees the apartment without the furniture.

(She takes the remaining package and places it with the others on the landing under the windows)

TELEPHONE MAN (Gathering up his tools) How long d'ja say you were married?

CORIE Six days.

TELEPHONE MAN He won't notice the place is empty until June. (He crosses to the door) Well, Eldorado five, eight, one, nine, one . . . Have a nice marriage . . . (He turns back into the room) And may you soon have many extensions. (He turns and looks at the climb down he has to make and moans) Ooohh!

(He is gone. CORIE quickly starts to prepare the room for PAUL's entrance. She gathers up the canvas drop cloth and throws it into the closet)

PAUL'S VOICE Corie? . . . Where are you?

CORIE (*Rushes back to the door and yells down*) Up here, hon . . . Top floor . . . (*The phone rings*) Oh, my goodness. The phone. (*She rushes to it and answers it*) Hello? . . . Yes? . . . Oh, yes, he is . . . I mean he's on his way up . . . Can you hold on for two more floors? (*She puts down the receiver and yells*) Paul. Hurry up, darling!

112

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

PAUL'S VOICE Okay. Okay.

CORIE (*Into the phone*) Hello. He'll be with you in one more flight. Thank you. (*She puts the phone on the floor and continues to get the apartment ready. Rushing up the stairs, she closes the bedroom and bathroom doors. Surveying the room, she sees the wrapping from the flowers on the floor of the kitchen and the wadded-up newspapers on top of the stove. Quickly gathering them up, she stuffs them into the nearest hiding place—the refrigerator. Then dashing into the hall and closing the door behind her, she re-enters to make one more survey of her apartment. Satisfied with what she sees, she turns back to the open door, and yells down*) Now honey, don't expect too much. The furniture didn't get here yet and the paint didn't come out exactly right, but I think it's going to be beautiful . . . Paul? . . . Paul, are you all right?

PAUL'S VOICE I'm coming. I'm coming.

CORIE (*Runs back to the phone and speaks into it*) He's coming. He's coming. (*She puts down the phone and looks at the door. PAUL falls in through the doorway and hangs on the rail at the entrance to the apartment. PAUL is twenty-six but breathes and dresses like fifty-six. He carries a heavy suitcase and an attaché case and all the dignity he can bear. He drops the attaché case at the railing*) Hi, sweetheart. (*She smothers him with kisses but all he can do is fight for air*) . . . Oh, Paul, darling. (*PAUL sucks for oxygen*) . . . Well? (*She steps back*) Say something.

PAUL (*Breathing with great difficulty, he looks back down the stairs*) It's six flights . . . Did you know it's six flights?

CORIE It isn't. It's five.

PAUL (*Staggers up the step into the room, and collapses on the suitcase*) What about that big thing hanging outside the building?

113

BAREFOOT IN

CORIE That's not a flight. It's a stoop.

THE PARK

PAUL It may look like a stoop but it climbs like a flight.
(*Gasp, gasp*)

CORIE Is that all you have to say?

PAUL (*Gasping*) I didn't think I'd get that much out.
(*He breathes heavily*) It didn't seem like six flights when I first saw the apartment. (*Gasp*) Why is that?

CORIE You didn't see the apartment. Don't you remember, the woman wasn't home. You saw the third-floor apartment.

PAUL Then that's why.

CORIE (*Crossing above PAUL*) You don't like it. You really don't like it.

PAUL I do like it. (*He squints around*) I'm just waiting for my eyes to clear first.

CORIE I expected you to walk in here and say, "Wow."
(*She takes his hand*)

PAUL I will. (*He takes a deep breath*) Okay. (*He looks around, then says without enthusiasm*) "Wow."

CORIE Oh, Paul. (*She throws herself onto PAUL's knee*)

It'll be beautiful, I promise you. You just came home too soon.

(She nuzzles him)

PAUL You know I missed you.

CORIE Did you really?

PAUL Right in the middle of the Monday morning conference I began to feel sexy.

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon
CORIE That's marvelous. (They kiss) Oh, boy. Let's take a cab back to the Plaza. We still have an hour before check-out time.

PAUL We can't. We took a towel and two ash trays. We're hot.

(He kisses her)

CORIE My gosh, you still love me.

PAUL After six days at the Plaza? What's the trick?

CORIE (Gets up and moves away) But that was a honeymoon. Now we're on a regular schedule. I thought you'd come home tonight, and we'd shake hands and start the marriage.

(She extends her hand to him)

PAUL (Rises) "How do you do? . . ."

(They shake hands. Then CORIE throws herself into his arms and kisses him)

CORIE My turn to say "Wow" . . . For a lawyer you're some good kisser.

PAUL (With hidden import) For a kisser I'm some good lawyer.

CORIE What does that mean? . . . Something's happened? . . . Something wonderful? . . . Well, for pete's sakes, what?

PAUL It's not positive yet. The office is supposed to call and let me know in five minutes.

CORIE (*Then she remembers*) Oh! They called!

PAUL What . . . ?

CORIE I mean they're calling.

PAUL When . . . ?

115

CORIE Now . . . They're on the phone now.

BAREFOOT IN

PAUL (*Looking around*) Where . . . ?

THE PARK

CORIE (*Points to the phone*) There . . .

PAUL (*Rushes to the phone*) Why didn't you tell me?

CORIE I forgot. You kissed me and got me all crazy.

PAUL (*Into the phone*) Frank? . . . Yeah! . . . Listen, what did—oh, very funny. (*Looks to CORIE*) "For a lawyer, I'm some good kisser" . . . Come on, come, tell me? . . . Well? . . . (*A big grin. CORIE feeling left out, sneaks over and tries to tickle him*) You're kidding? The whole thing? Oh, Frank, baby. I love you . . . What do you mean, nervous? . . . I passed the bar, didn't I? . . . Yes, I'll go over everything tonight. (*CORIE reacts to "tonight" and slowly moves to the ladder*) I'll meet you in Schrafft's at eight o'clock in the morning. We'll go over the briefs . . . Hey, what kind of a tie do I wear? I don't know. I thought maybe something flowing like Oliver Wendell Holmes . . . Right. (*He stands up. He is bubbling with joy. CORIE has now climbed up the ladder*) Did you hear? . . . Did you hear?

(*He moves up the ladder to CORIE*)

CORIE What about tonight?

PAUL I've got to be in court tomorrow morning . . . I've got my first case!

CORIE What about tonight?

PAUL I'll have to go over the briefs. Marshall has to be in Washington tomorrow and he wants me to take over

. . . with Frank . . . but it's really my case. (*He hugs CORIE*) Oh, Corie, baby, I'm going to be a lawyer.

CORIE That's wonderful . . . I just thought we were going to spend tonight together.

116

Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

PAUL We'll spend tomorrow night together. (*He crosses to railing and gets his attaché case*) I hope I brought those affidavits.

CORIE I brought a black lace nightgown.
(*She crosses to the small suitcase*)

PAUL (*Looks through affidavits from the case; his mind has now turned completely legal*) Marshall had everything laid out when I was at the office . . . It looks simple enough. A furrier is suing a woman for nonpayment of bills.

CORIE (*Taking the nightgown out of the suitcase*) I was going to cook you spaghetti with the white clam sauce . . . in a bikini.

PAUL We're representing the furrier. He made four specially tailored coats for this woman on Park Avenue. Now she doesn't want the coats.

CORIE (*Takes off her sweatshirt, and slipping her arms through the nightgown straps, she drapes it over her*) Then I found this great thing on Eighth Street. It's a crossword puzzle with dirty words.

PAUL But the furrier can't get rid of the coats. She's only four-foot-eight. He'd have to sell them to a rich little girl.

CORIE . . . then I was going to put on a record and do an authentic Cambodian fertility dance.

PAUL The only trouble is, he didn't have a signed contract . . . (*CORIE begins her "fertility dance" and ends up collapsing on the bottom step of the ladder*) What are you doing?

CORIE I'm trying to get you all hot and bothered and you're summing up for the jury. The whole marriage is over.

PAUL (*Moves to CORIE*) Oh, Corie, honey, I'm sorry. (*He puts his arms around her*) I guess I'm pretty excited. You want me to be rich and famous, don't you?

117

CORIE During the day. At night I want you to be here and sexy.

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

PAUL I will. Just as soon as Birnbaum versus Gump is over . . . I'll tell you what. Tomorrow night is your night. We'll do whatever you want.

CORIE Something wild, insane, and crazy?

PAUL I promise.

CORIE (*Her eyes wide open*) Like what?

PAUL Well . . . I'll come home early and we'll wallpaper each other.

CORIE Oh, Paul, how wonderful . . . Can't we do it tonight?

PAUL No, we can't do it tonight, because tonight I've got to work. (*He rises, and looks around*) Except where do I sit?

CORIE The furniture will be here by five. They promised.

PAUL (*Drops the affidavits into the attaché case, and looks at his watch*) Five? . . . It's five-thirty. (*He crosses to the bedroom stairs*) What do we do, sleep in Bloomingdale's tonight?

CORIE They'll be here, Paul. They're probably stuck in traffic.

PAUL (*Crossing up to the bedroom*) And what about to-

night? I've got a case in court tomorrow. Maybe we should check into a hotel?

(*He looks into the bedroom*)

CORIE (*Rises and moves toward PAUL*) We just checked out of a hotel. I don't care if the furniture doesn't come. I'm sleeping in my apartment tonight.

PAUL Where? Where? (*He looks into the bathroom, closes the door, and starts to come back down the steps*) There's only room for one in the bathtub. (*He suddenly turns, goes back up the steps and opens the door to the bathroom*) Where's the bathtub?

CORIE (*Hesitantly*) There is no bathtub.

PAUL No bathtub?

CORIE There's a shower . . .

PAUL How am I going to take a bath?

CORIE You won't take a bath. You'll take a shower.

PAUL I don't like showers. I like baths. Corie, how am I going to take a bath?

CORIE You'll lie down in the shower and hang your feet over the sink . . . I'm sorry there's no bathtub, Paul.

PAUL (*Closes the door, and crosses down into the room*) Hmm . . . Boy, of all the nights . . . (*He suddenly shivers*) It's freezing in here. (*He rubs his hands*) Isn't there any heat?

CORIE Of course there's heat. We have a radiator.

PAUL (*Gets up on the steps and feels the radiator*) The radiator's the coldest thing in the room.

CORIE It's probably the boiler. It's probably off in the whole building.

PAUL (*Putting on his gloves*) No, it was warm coming up the stairs. (*He goes out the door into the hall*) See . . . It's nice and warm out here.

CORIE Maybe it's because the apartment is empty.

PAUL The *hall* is empty too, but it's warm out here.

119

CORIE (*Moves to the stove*) It'll be all right once I get a fire going.

BAREFOOT IN

THE PARK

PAUL (*Goes to the phone*) A fire? You'd have to keep the flame going night and day . . . I'll call the landlord.

CORIE (*Putting a log into the stove*) He's not home.

PAUL Where is he?

CORIE In Florida! . . . There's a handyman that comes Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays.

PAUL You mean we freeze on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays?

CORIE He'll be here in the morning.

PAUL (*Moving to the windows*) And what'll we do tonight? I've got a case in court in the morning.

CORIE (*Moves to PAUL*) Will you stop saying it like you always have a case in court in the morning. This is your first one.

PAUL Well, what'll we do?

CORIE The furniture will be here. In the meantime I can light the stove and you can sit over the fire with your law books and a shawl like Abraham Lincoln.

(*She crosses to the Franklin stove and gets matches from the top of it*)

PAUL Is that supposed to be funny?

(*He begins to investigate the small windows*)

CORIE No. It was supposed to be nasty. It just came out funny. (*She strikes a match and attempts to light the log in the stove. PAUL tries the windows*) What are you doing?

(*She gives up attempting to light the log*)

120

PAUL I'm checking to see if the windows are closed.

CORIE They're closed. I looked.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

PAUL Then why is it windy in here?

CORIE (*Moves toward PAUL*) I don't feel a draft.

PAUL (*Moves away from the windows*) I didn't say draft. I said wind . . . There's a brisk northeasterly wind blowing in this room.

CORIE You don't have to get sarcastic.

PAUL (*Moving up into the kitchen area*) I'm not getting sarcastic, I'm getting chapped lips. (*Looking up, he glimpses the hole in the skylight*)

CORIE How could there be wind in a closed room?

PAUL How's this for an answer? There's a hole in the skylight.

(*He points up*)

CORIE (*Looks up, sees it, and is obviously embarrassed by it*) Gee, I didn't see that before. Did you?

PAUL (*Moves to the ladder*) I didn't see the apartment before.

CORIE (*Defensively. She crosses to the railing and gets her coat*) All right, Paul, don't get upset. I'm sure it'll be fixed. We could plug it up with something for tonight.

PAUL (*Gets up on the ladder*) How? How? That's twenty feet high. You'd have to fly over in a plane and drop something in.

CORIE (*Putting on her coat*) It's only for one night. And it's not that cold.

PAUL In February? Do you know what it's like at three o'clock in the morning? In February? Ice-cold freezing.

CORIE It's not going to be freezing. I called the Weather Bureau. It's going to be cloudy with a light s—
(*She catches herself and looks up*)

121

BAREFOOT IN

PAUL What? (*CORIE turns away*) What? . . . A light what?

THE PARK

CORIE Snow!

PAUL (*Coming down the ladder*) Snow?? . . . It's going to snow tonight? . . . In here?

CORIE They're wrong as often as they're right.

PAUL I'm going to be shoveling snow in my own living room.

CORIE It's a little hole.

PAUL With that wind it could blow six-foot drifts in the bathroom. Honestly, Corie, I don't see how you can be so calm about all this.

CORIE Well, what is it you want me to do?

PAUL Go to pieces, like me. It's only natural.

CORIE (*Goes to him and puts her arms around him*) I've got a better idea. I'll keep you warm . . . And there's no charge for electricity . . .
(*She kisses him*)

PAUL I can see I haven't got much of a law career ahead of me.

CORIE Good. I hope we starve. And they find us up here dead in each other's arms.

PAUL "Frozen skinny lovers found on Forty-eighth Street."

(They kiss)

CORIE Are we in love again?

PAUL We're in love again.

(They kiss again, a long passionate embrace. The doorbell buzzes)

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CORIE (Breaking away) The bed. I hope it's the bed.

(She buzzes back, and then opens the door and yells down) Helllooooo! Bloomingdale's? (From below, a female voice: Surprise! CORIE turns to PAUL) Oh, God.

PAUL What's wrong.

CORIE Please, let it be a woman delivering the furniture.

PAUL A woman?

VOICE Corie?

CORIE But it's my mother.

PAUL Your mother? Now?

CORIE (Taking off the nightgown and slipping into her top) She couldn't wait. Just one more day.

PAUL Corie, you've got to get rid of her. I've got a case in court tomorrow.

CORIE It's ugly in here without furniture, isn't it. She's just going to hate it, won't she?

VOICE Corie? Where are you?

CORIE (Crosses to the door and yells down the stairs) Up here, Mom. Top floor.

PAUL (Hides the attaché case in a corner to the left of the windows) How am I going to work tonight?

CORIE She'll think this is the way we're going to live.
Like gypsies in an empty store. (*Attempting to button her top*)

PAUL (*Throwing the nightgown and lingerie into a suitcase*) Maybe I ought to sleep in the office.

123

CORIE She'll freeze to death. She'll sit there in her fur coat and freeze to death.

BAREFOOT IN

THE PARK

PAUL (*Helps her button her top*) I don't get you, Corie. Five minutes ago this was the Garden of Eden. Now it's suddenly Cannery Row.

CORIE She doesn't understand, Paul. She has a different set of values. She's practical. She's not young like us.

PAUL (*Gathers up the suitcase with lingerie and takes it into the bedroom*) Well, I'm twenty-six and cold as hell.

VOICE (*Getting nearer*) Corie?

CORIE (*Yells down at the door*) One more flight, Mother . . . Paul, promise me one thing. Don't tell her about the rent. If she asks, tell her you're not quite sure yet.

PAUL (*Crossing to the door with his coat collar up around his face*) Not sure what my rent is? I have to know what my rent is. I'm a college graduate.

CORIE (*Stopping PAUL*) Can't you lie a little? For me?
You don't have to tell her it's a hundred and twenty-five.

PAUL All right. How much is it?

CORIE Sixty?

PAUL What?

CORIE Sixty-five?

PAUL Corie—

CORIE Seventy-five, all right? Seventy-five dollars and sixty-three cents a month. Including gas and electricity. She'll believe that, won't she?

124

PAUL Anyone would believe that. It's the hundred and twenty-five that's hard to swallow.

(*He combs his hair*)

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CORIE She's taking a long time. I hope she's all right.

PAUL I can't lie about the stairs. She's going to figure out it's six floors all by herself.

CORIE Shh. Shh, she's here.

(*She starts to open the door*)

PAUL (*Grabs her*) Just promise me one thing. Don't let her stay too long because I've got a . . .

CORIE (*With him*) . . . case in court in the morning . . . I know, I know . . . (*She opens the door and goes into the hall*) . . . Mother!

(*MOTHER shoots by her into the room and grabs the rail to keep from falling. She is in her late forties, pretty, but has not bothered to look after herself these past few years. She could use a permanent and a whole new wardrobe*)

PAUL (*Rushes to support her*) Hello, Mom.

(*MOTHER struggles for air*)

MOTHER Oh! . . . Oh! . . . I can't breathe.

CORIE Take it easy, Mom.

(*Holding her other arm*)

MOTHER I can't catch my breath.

PAUL You should have rested.

MOTHER I did . . . But there were always more stairs.

CORIE Paul, help her.

PAUL Come on, Mom. Watch the step.

(He starts to lead her up the step into the room)

125

MOTHER More stairs?

(She steps up and CORIE and PAUL lead her toward PAUL's suitcase, still standing near the wall)

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

CORIE You want some water?

MOTHER Later. I can't swallow yet.

PAUL Here, sit down.

(She sits on the suitcase)

MOTHER Oh, my.

CORIE It's not *that* high, Mother.

MOTHER I know, dear. It's not bad really . . . What is it, nine flights?

PAUL Five. We don't count the stoop.

MOTHER I didn't think I'd make it . . . If I'd known the people on the third floor I'd have gone to visit them . . .
(PAUL sits on the bottom step of the ladder)

CORIE This is a pleasant surprise, Mother.

MOTHER Well, I really had no intention of coming up, but I had a luncheon in Westchester and I thought, since it's on my way home, I might as well drop in for a few minutes . . .

CORIE On your way home to New Jersey?

MOTHER Yes. I just came over the Whitestone Bridge and down the Major Deegan highway and now I'll cut across town and onto the Henry Hudson Parkway and up to the George Washington Bridge. It's no extra trouble.

PAUL Sounds easy enough.

MOTHER Yes . . .

CORIE We were going to ask you over on Friday.

126

MOTHER Friday. Good. I'll be here Friday . . . I'm not going to stay now, I know you both must be busy.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

PAUL Well, as a matter of fact . . .

CORIE (*Stopping him*) No, we're not, are we, Paul?
(*He kills her with a glance*)

MOTHER Besides, Aunt Harriet is ringing the bell for me in ten minutes . . . Just one good look around, that's all. I'm not sure I'm coming back.

CORIE I wish you could have come an hour later. After the furniture arrived.

MOTHER (*Gets up, looks, and stops cold*) Don't worry. I've got a marvelous imagination.

CORIE Well . . . ?

MOTHER (*Stunned*) Oh, Corie . . . it's . . . beautiful.

CORIE You hate it . . .

MOTHER (*Moves toward windows*) No, no . . . It's a charming apartment. (*She trips over the platform*) I love it.

CORIE (*Rushes to her*) You can't really tell like this.

MOTHER I'm crazy about it.

CORIE It's not your kind of apartment. I knew you wouldn't like it.

MOTHER (*Moves down to PAUL*) I love it . . . Paul, didn't I say I loved it?
(*She takes his hand*)

PAUL She said she loved it.

MOTHER I knew I said it.

CORIE (*To mother*) Do you really, Mother? I mean are you absolutely crazy in love with it?

127

MOTHER Oh, yes. It's very cute . . . And there's so much you can do with it.

BAREFOOT IN

CORIE I told you she hated it.

THE PARK

MOTHER (*Moves toward the bedroom landing*) Corie, you don't give a person a chance. At least let me see the whole apartment.

PAUL This is the whole apartment.

MOTHER (*Cheerfully*) It's a nice, large room.

CORIE There's a bedroom.

MOTHER Where?

PAUL One flight up.

CORIE It's four little steps. (*She goes up the steps to the bedroom door*) See. One-two-three-four.

MOTHER (*To PAUL*) Oh. Split-level. (*She climbs the steps*) And where's the bedroom? Through there?

CORIE No. In there. That's the bedroom . . . It's really just a dressing room but I'm going to use it as a bedroom.

MOTHER (*At the bedroom door*) That's a wonderful idea. And you can just put a bed in there.

CORIE That's right.

MOTHER How?

(PAUL moves to the steps)

CORIE It'll fit. I measured the room.

MOTHER A double bed?

CORIE No, an oversized single.

MOTHER Oh, they're nice. And where will Paul sleep?

128

CORIE With me.

PAUL (*Moves up on the landing*) In an oversized single?

Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

MOTHER I'm sure you'll be comfortable.

CORIE I'm positive.

(PAUL moves back down the stairs and glumly surveys the room)

MOTHER It's a wonderful idea. Very clever . . .

CORIE Thank you.

MOTHER Except you can't get to the closet.

CORIE Yes you can.

MOTHER Without climbing over the bed?

CORIE No, you *have* to climb over the bed.

MOTHER That's a good idea.

CORIE (*Leaves the bedroom, crosses to the ladder, and climbs up*) Everything's just temporary. As they say in McCall's, it won't really take shape until the bride's own personality becomes more clearly defined.

MOTHER I think it's *you* right now. (*She turns to the other door*) What's in here? . . . (*She opens the door and looks in*) The bathroom . . . (*She closes the door*) No bathtub . . . You really have quite a lot here, for one room. (*She moves down the steps*) And where's the kitchen? (*She sees the stove and refrigerator, stops in horror, and then crosses toward the kitchen*) Whooh, there it is . . . Very cozy. I suppose you'll eat out a lot the first year.

CORIE We're never eating out. It's big enough to make spaghetti and things.

MOTHER What "things"?

CORIE It's a dish I make called "Things." Honestly, Mother, we won't starve.

129

MOTHER I know, dear. (*Under the skylight*) It's chilly in here. Do you feel a draft?

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

PAUL (*Looks up*) Uh, stand over here, Mom.

(*He moves her away from the hole to near the steam pipe next to the railing*)

CORIE What you need is a drink. Paul, why don't you run down and get some Scotch?

PAUL Now?

MOTHER (*Crossing toward the Franklin stove*) Oh, not for me. I'm leaving in a few minutes.

PAUL Oh. She's leaving in a few minutes.

CORIE She can stay for one drink.

(PAUL quietly argues with CORIE at the ladder)

MOTHER There's so much you can do in here. Lots of wall space. What color are you going to paint it?

CORIE It's painted.

MOTHER Very attractive.

PAUL (*Looks at his watch*) Wow. Nearly six.

MOTHER I've got to go.

CORIE Not until you have a drink . . . (*To PAUL*) Will you get the Scotch?

(*He continues to argue with her*)

MOTHER All right. I'll stay for just one drink.

PAUL Good. I'll get the Scotch.
(He starts for the door)

MOTHER Button up, dear. It's cold.

130

PAUL I've noticed that.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CORIE And get some cheese.
(PAUL is gone)

MOTHER Paul! (PAUL reappears at the door, and MOTHER extends her arms) I just want to give my fella a kiss. And wish him luck. (PAUL comes back in and crosses all the way over to MOTHER. She kisses him) Your new home is absolutely beautiful. It's a perfect little apartment.

PAUL Oh . . . thanks, Mom.

MOTHER Then you do like it?

PAUL Like it? (He looks at CORIE and starts to exit)
Where else can you find anything like this . . . for seventy-five sixty-three a month?

(He exits, leaving CORIE and MOTHER alone. CORIE climbs down the ladder, and looks for some sign of approval from MOTHER)

CORIE Well?

MOTHER Oh, Corie, I'm so excited for you.
(They embrace)

CORIE It's not exactly what you pictured, is it, Mother?

MOTHER Well, it is unusual—like you. (She crosses right)
I remember when you were a little girl you said you wanted to live on the moon. (She turns back to CORIE)
I thought you were joking . . . What about Paul? Is he happy with all this?

CORIE He's happy with me. I think it's the same thing.
Why?

MOTHER I worry about you two. You're so impulsive.
You jump into life. Paul is like me. He looks first.
(She sits down on the suitcase)

CORIE He doesn't look. He stares. That's the trouble with
both of you . . . (She places a paint can next to MOTHER
and sits on it) Oh, Mother, you don't know how I
dreaded your coming up here. I was sure you'd think I
was completely out of my mind.

131

BAREFOOT IN

MOTHER Why should you think that, dear?

THE PARK

CORIE Well, it's the first thing I've ever done on my own.
Without your help . . .

MOTHER If you wanted it, I'm sure you would have asked
for it . . . but you didn't. And I understand.

CORIE I hope you do, Mother. It's something I just had to
do all by myself.

MOTHER Corie, you mustn't think I'm hurt. I'm not hurt.

CORIE I'm so glad.

MOTHER You mustn't think I'm hurt. I don't get hurt
over things like that.

CORIE I didn't think you would.

MOTHER Other things hurt me, but not that . . .

CORIE Good . . . Hey, let's open my presents and see
what I've got. And you try to act surprised.
(She gets the presents and brings them to the paint
can)

MOTHER You won't let me buy you anything . . . Oh,
they're just a few little things.

CORIE (Sitting down and shaking the smallest box vigor-
ously) What's in here? It sounds expensive.

MOTHER Well, now I think it's a broken clock.

CORIE (*Opens the box, and throws wrappings and tissue paper on the floor*) I'll bet you cleaned out Saks' gift department. I think I'm a regular stop on the delivery route now.

(*She looks at the clock, replaces it in the box and puts it aside, and begins to open the largest box*)

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

MOTHER Aunt Harriet was with me when I picked it out.
(*She laughs*) She thinks I'm over here every day now.

CORIE You know you're welcome, Mother.

MOTHER I said, "Why, Harriet? Just because I'm alone now," I said. "I'm not afraid to live alone. In some ways it's better to live alone," I said. (*CORIE examines the blanket she finds in the package; then she closes the box, puts it aside, and begins to open the final package.*
MOTHER *picks up a piece of tissue paper and smoothes it out on her lap*) But, you can't tell her that. She thinks a woman living alone, way out in New Jersey, is the worst thing in the world . . . "It's not," I told her. "It's not the worst thing" . . .

CORIE (*She has opened the package and now takes out the dismantled parts of a coffee pot*) Hey, does this come with directions?

MOTHER If I knew about this kitchen, it would have come with hot coffee.

(*She laughs*)

CORIE (*Picks up the box with the clock and takes it with the parts of the coffee pot up into the kitchen*) Mother, you're an absolute angel. But you've got to stop buying things for me. It's getting embarrassing. (*She puts the clock on the refrigerator and the coffee pot on the sink*) If you keep it up I'm going to open a discount house . . .

(*She takes the blanket and places it with the suitcase near the windows*)

MOTHER It's my pleasure, Corie. (*She begins to gather up wrappings and tissue paper and place them in the*

box which contained the coffee pot) It's a mother's greatest joy to be able to buy gifts for her daughter when she gets married. You'll see someday. I just hope your child doesn't deprive *you* of that pleasure.

CORIE I'm not depriving you, Mother.

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MOTHER I didn't say you were.

CORIE (*Moves down to MOTHER*) Yes, you did.

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

MOTHER Then why are you?

CORIE Because I think you should spend the money on yourself, that's why.

MOTHER Myself? What does a woman like me need? Living all alone . . . Way out in New Jersey.

(She picks up the box with wrappings in it and places it outside the front door)

CORIE (*Follows MOTHER*) It's only been six days. And you're five minutes from the city.

MOTHER Who can get through that traffic in five minutes?

CORIE Then why don't you move into New York?

MOTHER Where . . . ? Where would I live?

CORIE Mother, I don't care where you live. The point is, you've got to start living for yourself now . . . (*MOTHER moves back into the room*) Mother, the whole world has just opened up to you. Why don't you travel? You've got the time, the luggage. All you need are the shots.

MOTHER (*Sits on the suitcase*) Travel! . . . You think it's so easy for a woman of my age to travel alone?

CORIE You'll meet people..

MOTHER I read a story in the *Times*. A middle-aged woman traveling alone fell off the deck of a ship. They never discovered it until they got to France.

CORIE (*Moves left and turns back to MOTHER*) I promise you, Mother, if you fell off a ship, *someone* would know about it.

MOTHER I thought I might get myself a job.

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CORIE (*Straws in the wind*) Hey, that's a great idea.
(*She sits on the paint can*)

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

MOTHER (*Shrugs, defeated*) What would I do?

CORIE I don't know what you would do. What would you like to do?

MOTHER (*Considers*) I'd like to be a grandmother. I think that would be nice.

CORIE A grandmother??? . . . What's your rush? You know, underneath that Army uniform, you're still a young, vital woman . . . Do you know what I think you *really* need?

MOTHER Yes, and I don't want to hear it.
(*She gets up and moves away*)

CORIE (*Goes to her*) Because you're afraid to hear the truth.

MOTHER It's not the truth I'm afraid to hear. It's the *word* you're going to use.

CORIE You're darn right I'm going to use that word . . . It's love!

MOTHER Oh . . . Thank you.

CORIE A week ago I didn't know what it meant. And then I checked into the Plaza Hotel. For six wonderful days . . . And do you know what happened to me there?

MOTHER I promised myself I wouldn't ask.

CORIE I found *love* . . . spiritual, emotional, and physical love. And I don't think anyone on earth should be without it.

MOTHER I'm not. I have you.

CORIE I don't mean *that* kind of love. (*She moves to the ladder and leans against it*) I'm talking about late at night in . . .

MOTHER (*Quickly*) I know what you're talking about.

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CORIE Don't you even want to discuss it?

BAREFOOT IN

MOTHER Not with *you* in the room.

THE PARK

CORIE Well, what are you going to do about it?

MOTHER I'm going back to New Jersey and give myself a Toni Home Permanent. Corie, sweetheart, I appreciate your concern, but I'm very happy the way I am.

CORIE I'll be the judge of who's happy.

(*They embrace. The door flies open and PAUL staggers in with the bottle of Scotch. He closes the door behind him and wearily leans his head against it, utterly exhausted*)

MOTHER Oh, Paul, you shouldn't have run . . . Just for me. (*The doorbell buzzes, AUNT HARRIET's special buzz*) . . . Ooh, and there's Harriet. I've got to go.

(*She picks up her purse from next to the suitcase*)

CORIE Some visit.

MOTHER Just a sneak preview. I'll see you on Friday for the World Première . . . (*To PAUL*) Good-bye, Paul . . . I'm so sorry . . . (*To CORIE*) Good-bye, love . . . I'll see you on Friday . . . (*PAUL opens the door for her*) Thank you . . . (*She glances out at the stairs*) Geronimo . . . !

(*She exits. PAUL shuts the door and, breathing hard, puts the bottle down at the foot of the ladder. He moves left, turns, and glares at CORIE*)

CORIE What is it? . . . The stairs? (*PAUL shakes his head "No"*) The hole? (*PAUL shakes his head "No"*) The bathtub? (*PAUL shakes his head "No"*) Something new? (*PAUL nods his head "Yes"*) Well, what? . . .

PAUL (*Leaning against the left wall*) Guess!

CORIE Paul, I can't guess. Tell me.

PAUL Oh, come on, Corie. Take a wild stab at it. Try something like, "All the neighbors are crazy."

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CORIE Are all the neighbors crazy?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

PAUL (*A pitchman's revelation*) I just had an interesting talk with the man down in the liquor store . . . Do you know we have some of the greatest weirdos in the country living right here, in this house?

CORIE Really? Like who?

(*She puts the bottle on the kitchen platform*)

PAUL (*Gathering his strength, he paces to the right*) Well, like to start with, in apartment One-C are the Boscos . . . Mr. and Mrs. J. Bosco.

CORIE (*Moving to the ladder*) Who are they?

PAUL (*Paces to the left*) Mr. and Mrs. J. Bosco are a lovely young couple who just happen to be of the same sex and no one knows which one that is . . . (*He moves up to left of the windows*) In apartment Three-C live Mr. and Mrs. Gonzales.

CORIE So?

PAUL (*Moves right above the ladder*) I'm not through. Mr. and Mrs. Gonzales, Mr. and Mrs. Armandariz, and Mr. Calhoun . . . (*He turns back to CORIE*) who must be the umpire. (*He moves left to left of the ladder, very secretively*) No one knows who lives in apartment Four-D. No one has come in or gone out in three years except every morning there are nine empty cans of tuna fish outside the door . . .

CORIE No kidding? Who do you think lives there?

PAUL Well, it sounds like a big cat with a can opener

. . . (*He gets his attaché case from the corner, and turns to CORIE*) Now there *are* one or two normal couples in the building, but at this rent *we're* not one of them.

CORIE Well, you've got to pay for all this color and charm.

PAUL Well, if you figure it that way, we're getting a bargain . . . (*He starts to go up the stairs, then turns back*) Oh, yes. I forgot. Mr. Velasco. Victor Velasco. He lives in apartment Six-A.

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BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

CORIE Where's Six-A? (*PAUL points straight up*) On the roof?

PAUL Attic . . . It's an attic. (*He crosses up onto the bedroom landing*) He also skis and climbs mountains. He's fifty-eight years old and he's known as "The Bluebeard of Forty-eighth Street."

CORIE (*Moves to the stairs*) What does that mean?

PAUL (*Turns back to CORIE*) Well, it either means that he's a practicing girl-attacker or else he's an old man with a blue beard. (*He moves to the bedroom*) I'll say this, Corie. It's not going to be a dull two years.

CORIE Where are you going?

PAUL (*Turns back at the bedroom door*) I'm going to stand in the bedroom and work. I've got to pay for all this color and charm. If anything comes up, like the furniture or the heat, let me know. Just let me know.

(*Bows off into the bedroom and slams the door*)

CORIE (*After a moment of thought, she begins to fold up the ladder and put it against the left wall*) Can't I come in and watch you? . . . Hey, Paul, I'm lonesome . . . (*There is a knock at the door*) . . . and scared!

(*As CORIE puts the ladder against the wall, VICTOR VELASCO, fifty-eight and not breathing very hard, opens the door and enters. It's not that he is in such good shape. He just doesn't think about getting tired. There are too many other things to do in the world. He wears no topcoat. Just a sport jacket, an*

ascot, and a Tyrolean hat. CORIE turns and is startled to find him in the room)

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VELASCO I beg your pardon. (*He sweeps off his hat*) I hope I'm not disturbing you. I don't usually do this sort of thing but I find myself in a rather embarrassing position and I could use your help. (*He discreetly catches his breath*) My name is Velasco . . . Victor Velasco.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CORIE (*Nervously*) Oh, yes . . . You live in the attic.

VELASCO Yes. That's right . . . Have we met?

CORIE (*Very nervously*) No, not yet.

VELASCO Oh. Well, you see, I want to use your bedroom.

CORIE My bedroom?

VELASCO Yes. You see, I can't get into my apartment and I wanted to use your window. I'll just crawl out along the ledge.

CORIE Oh, did you lose your key?

VELASCO No. I have my key. I lost my money. I'm four months behind in the rent.

CORIE Oh! . . . Gee, that's too bad. I mean it's right in the middle of winter . . .

VELASCO You'll learn, as time goes by in this middle-income prison camp, that we have a rat fink for a landlord . . . (*He looks about the room*) You don't have any hot coffee, do you? I'd be glad to pay you for it.

CORIE No. We just moved in.

VELASCO Really? (*He looks about the barren room*) What are you, a folksinger?

CORIE No. A wife . . . They didn't deliver our furniture yet.

VELASCO (*Moves toward CORIE*) You know, of course, that you're unbearably pretty. What's your name?

CORIE Corie . . . Mrs. Corie Bratter.

VELASCO (*Takes it in stride*) You're still unbearably pretty. I may fall in love with you by seven o'clock. (*Catching sight of the hole in the skylight*) I see the rat fink left the hole in the skylight.

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BAREFOOT IN

CORIE Yes, I just noticed that. (*She crosses right, and looks up at the hole*) But he'll fix it, won't he?

THE PARK

VELASCO I wouldn't count on it. My bathtub's been running since 1949 . . . (*He moves toward CORIE*) Does your husband work during the day?

CORIE Yes . . . Why? . . .

VELASCO It's just that I'm home during the day, and I like to find out what my odds are . . . (*He scrutinizes CORIE*) Am I making you nervous?

CORIE (*Moving away*) Very nervous.

VELASCO (*Highly pleased*) Good. Once a month, I try to make pretty young girls nervous just to keep my ego from going out. But, I'll save you a lot of anguish . . . I'm fifty-six years old and a thoroughly nice fellow.

CORIE Except I heard you were fifty-eight years old. And if you're knocking off two years, I'm nervous all over again.

VELASCO Not only pretty but bright. (*He sits down on the paint can*) I wish I were ten years older.

CORIE Older?

VELASCO Yes. Dirty old men seem to get away with a lot more. I'm still at the awkward stage . . . How long are you married?

CORIE Six days . . .

VELASCO In love? . . .

CORIE Very much . . .

VELASCO Damn . . .

CORIE What's wrong?

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

VELASCO Under my present state of financial duress, I was hoping to be invited down soon for a free meal. But, with newlyweds I could starve to death.

CORIE Oh. Well, we'd love to have you for dinner, as soon as we get set up.

VELASCO (*Gets up, and stepping over the suitcase, moves to CORIE*) I hate generalizations. When?

CORIE When? . . . Well, Friday? Is that all right?

VELASCO Perfect. I'll be famished. I hadn't planned on eating Thursday.

CORIE Oh, no . . . wait! On Friday night my mo— (*She thinks it over*) Yeah. Friday night will be fine.

VELASCO It's a date. I'll bring the wine. You can pay me for it when I get here . . . (*He moves to the stairs*) Which reminds me. You're invited to my cocktail party tonight. Ten o'clock . . . You do drink, don't you?

CORIE Yes, of course.

VELASCO Good. Bring liquor. (*He crosses to CORIE and takes her hand*) I'll see you tonight at ten.

CORIE (*Shivering*) If I don't freeze to death first.

VELASCO Oh, you don't know about the plumbing, do you? Everything in this museum works backward. (*Crosses to the radiator on the wall*) For instance, there's a little knob up there that says, "Important—Turn right" . . . So you turn left.

(*He tries to reach it but can't*)

CORIE Oh, can you give me a little boost? . . .

VELASCO With the greatest of physical pleasure. One, two, three . . . up . . . (*He puts his arms around her, and lifts her to the radiator*) Okay? . . .

CORIE (*Attempting to turn the knob*) I can't quite reach . . .

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PAUL (*Comes out of the bedroom with an affidavit in his hand and his coat up over his head. He crosses to the head of the stairs*) Hey, Corie, when are they going to get here with—

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

(*He stops as he sees CORIE in VELASCO's arms. VELASCO looks at him, stunned, while CORIE remains motionless in the air*)

VELASCO (*Puts CORIE down*) I thought you said he works during the day.

CORIE Oh, Paul! This is Mr. Velasco. He was just showing me how to work the radiator.

VELASCO (*Extending his hand*) Victor Velasco! I'm your upstairs neighbor. I'm fifty-eight years old and a thoroughly nice fellow.

PAUL (*Lowers his coat, and shakes hands weakly*) Hello . . .

CORIE Mr. Velasco was just telling me that all the plumbing works backwards.

VELASCO That's right. An important thing to remember is, you have to flush "up." (*He demonstrates*) With that choice bit of information, I'll make my departure. (*He crosses up onto the bedroom landing*) Don't forget. Tonight at ten.

PAUL (*Looks at CORIE*) What's tonight at ten?

CORIE (*Moves to the bottom of the stairs*) Oh, thanks, but I don't think so. We're expecting our furniture any minute . . . Maybe some other time.

PAUL What's tonight at ten?

VELASCO I'll arrange it all for you in the morning. I'm also a brilliant decorator. (*He pats PAUL on the shoulder*) I insist you come.

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CORIE Well, it's really very nice of you.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

VELASCO (*Crossing to the bedroom door*) I told you. I'm a very nice person. *À ce soir . . .*
(He exits into the bedroom)

PAUL (*To CORIE*) What's tonight at ten? . . . (*He suddenly realizes*) Where's he going? . . .
(He crosses to the bedroom)

CORIE (*Yelling after VELASCO*) Don't forget Friday . . .

PAUL (*To CORIE*) What's he doing in the bedroom? . . .
What about Friday?
(He goes into the bedroom)

CORIE (*Rushes to the phone and dials*) He's coming to dinner. (*Into the phone*) Hello, Operator?

PAUL (*Comes out of the bedroom*) That nut went out the window.
(He looks back into the bedroom)

CORIE I'm calling West Orange, New Jersey.

PAUL (*Crosses down the stairs to CORIE*) Corie, did you hear what I said? There's an old nut out on our ledge.

CORIE (*Into the phone*) Two, oh, one, seven, six, five, three, four, two, two.

PAUL Who are you calling?

CORIE My mother. On Friday night, she's going to have dinner with that old nut. (*VELASCO appears on the skylight, and carefully makes his way across. CORIE speaks*

into the phone) Hello, Jessie . . . Will you please tell my mother to call me just as soon as she gets in!

(PAUL turns and sees VELASCO. VELASCO cheerfully waves and continues on his way)

Curtain

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BAREFOOT IN

THE PARK

Act Two

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SCENE ONE

Four days later. Seven o'clock, Friday evening.

The apartment is no longer an empty room. It is now a home. It is almost completely furnished, and the room, although a potpourri of various periods, styles, and prices, is extremely tasteful and comfortable. No ultramodern, clinical interior for CORIE. Each piece was selected with loving care. Since CORIE's greatest aim in life is to spend as much time as possible alone with PAUL, she has designed the room to suit this purpose. A wrought-iron sofa stands in the middle of the room, upholstered in a bright striped fabric. It is flanked by two old-fashioned, unmatched arm-chairs, one with a romantically carved wooden back; the other, a bentwood chair with a black leather seat. A low, dark, wooden coffee table with carved legs is in front of the sofa, and to the right is a small, round bentwood end table, covered with green felt. Under the windows, a light-wood, Spanish-looking table serves as a desk, and in front of it is a bamboo, straight-backed chair. A large wicker basket functions as the wastebasket. A dark side table with lyre-shaped legs fills the wall under the radiator, and below the bedroom landing an open cane side table serves as a bar and telephone stand. To the right of the windows stands a breakfront with shelves above and drawers below. The kitchen area is now partially hidden by a four-fold bamboo screen that has been backed by fabric, and potted plants have been placed in front of the screen. Straight-backed bentwood chairs stand downstage right and left. The closet has been covered by a drapery, the small windows by café curtains, and the skylight by a large, striped Austrian curtain. Books now fill the bookcase left of the kitchen, pictures and decorations have been tastefully arranged on the walls, and lamps placed about the room. The bedroom landing is graced with a bentwood washstand complete with pitcher and basin which is filled with a

plant. In the bathroom a shower curtain and towels have been hung, and the bedroom boasts a bed.

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BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

AT RISE: There is no one on stage. The apartment is dark except for a crack of light under the bedroom door, and faint moonlight from the skylight. Suddenly the front door opens and CORIE rushes in, carrying a pastry box and a bag containing two bottles. After switching on the lights at the door, she puts her packages on the coffee table, and hangs her coat in the closet. CORIE wears a cocktail dress for the festivities planned for tonight, and she sings as she hurries to get everything ready. She is breathing heavily but she is getting accustomed to the stairs. As she takes a bottle of vermouth and a bottle of gin out of the bag, the doorbell buzzes. She buzzes back, opens the door, and yells down the stairs.

CORIE (Yells) Paul? (We hear some strange, incoherent sound from below) Hi, love . . . (She crosses back to the coffee table, and dumps hors d'oeuvres from the pastry box onto a tray) Hey, they sent the wrong lamps . . . but they go with the room so I'm keeping them. (She crosses to the bar, gets a martini pitcher and brings it back to the coffee table) . . . Oh, do you have an Aunt Fern? . . . Because she sent us a check . . . Anyway, you have a cheap Aunt Fern . . . How you doing? (We hear a mumble from below. CORIE opens both bottles and pours them simultaneously into the shaker so that she has martinis made with equal parts of gin and vermouth) . . . Oh, and your mother called from Philly . . . She and Dad will be up a week from Sunday . . . And your sister has a new boy friend. From Rutgers . . . He's got acne and they all hate him . . . including your sister. (She takes the shaker and while mixing the cocktails she crosses to the door) . . . Hey, lover, start puckering your lips 'cause you're gonna get kissed for five solid minutes and then . . . (She stops) Oh, hello, Mr. Munshin. I thought it was my husband. Sorry. (A door slams. She shrugs sheepishly and walks back into the room, closing the door behind her. As she goes up into the kitchen, the door opens and PAUL enters, gasping. He drops his attaché case at the railing, and collapses on the couch. CORIE comes out of the kitchen with

the shaker and ice bucket) It was you. I thought I heard your voice.

(She puts the ice bucket on the bookcase and the shaker on the end table)

PAUL (*Gasp, gasp*) Mr. Munshin and I came in together. (*CORIE jumps on him and flings her arms around his neck; he winces in pain*) Do you have to carry on—a whole personal conversation with me—on the stairs?

CORIE Well, there's so much I wanted to tell you . . . and I haven't seen you all day . . . and it takes you so long to get up.

PAUL Everyone knows the intimate details of our life . . . I ring the bell and suddenly we're on the air.

CORIE Tomorrow I'll yell, "Come on up, Harry, my husband isn't home." (*She takes the empty box and bag, and throws them in the garbage pail in the kitchen*) Hey, wouldn't that be a gas if everyone in the building thought I was having an affair with someone?

PAUL Mr. Munshin thinks it's *him* right now.

CORIE (*Crossing back to the couch*) Well?

PAUL Well what?

CORIE What happened in court today? Gump or Birnbaum?

PAUL Birnbaum!

CORIE (*Jumps on his lap again. He winces again*) Oh, Paul, you won. You won, darling. Oh, sweetheart, I'm so proud of you. (*She stops and looks at him*) Well, aren't you happy?

PAUL (*Glumly*) Birnbaum won the protection of his good name but no damages. We were awarded six cents.

CORIE Six cents?

PAUL That's the law. You have to be awarded something,
so the court made it six cents.

CORIE How much of that do you get?

PAUL Nothing. Birnbaum gets the whole six cents . . .
And I get a going-over in the office. From now on I get
all the cases that come in for a dime or under.

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CORIE (*Opening his collar and rubbing his neck*) Oh,
darling, you won. That's all that counts. You're a good
lawyer.

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

PAUL Some lawyer . . . So tomorrow I go back to sharpening pencils.

CORIE And tonight you're here with me. (*She kisses his neck*) Did you miss me today?

PAUL No.

CORIE (*Gets off his lap and sits on the couch*) Why not?

PAUL Because you called me eight times . . . I don't speak to you that much when I'm home.

CORIE (*Rearranging the canapés*) Oh, you're grouchy.
I want a divorce.

PAUL I'm not grouchy . . . I'm tired . . . I had a rotten day today . . . I'm a little irritable . . . and cold . . . and grouchy.

CORIE Okay, grouch. I'll fix you a drink. (*She crosses to the bar and brings back three glasses*)

PAUL (*Crosses to the closet, takes off his overcoat and jacket, and hangs them up*) I just couldn't think today. Couldn't think . . . Moving furniture until three o'clock in the morning.

CORIE Mr. Velasco moved. You complained.
(*She pours a drink*)

PAUL Mr. Velasco *pointed!* I moved! . . . He came in here, drank my liquor, made three telephone calls, and ordered me around like I was one of the Santini Brothers.

(*He takes the drink from CORIE, and crosses to the dictionary on the table under the radiator. He takes a gulp of his drink and reacts with horror. He looks at CORIE, who shrugs in reply*)

CORIE Temper, temper. We're supposed to be charming tonight.

PAUL (*Taking off his tie*) Yeah, well, I've got news for you. This thing tonight has "fiasco" written all over it.

CORIE (*Moves to the mirror on the washstand on the bedroom landing*) Why should it be a fiasco? It's just conceivable they may have something in common.

PAUL (*Folding his tie*) Your mother? That quiet, dainty little woman . . . and the Count of Monte Cristo? You must be kidding.

(*He puts the tie between the pages of the dictionary, and slams it shut*)

CORIE Why?

(*She puts on a necklace and earrings*)

PAUL (*Crosses to the closet and gets another tie*) You saw his apartment. He wears Japanese kimonos and sleeps on rugs. Your mother wears a hairnet and sleeps on a board.

CORIE What's that got to do with it?

PAUL (*Crossing back to the mirror under the radiator and fixing his tie*) Everything. He skis, climbs mountains, and the only way into his apartment is up a ladder or across a ledge. I don't really think he's looking for a good cook with a bad back.

CORIE The possibility of anything permanent never even occurred to me.

PAUL Permanent? We're lucky if we get past seven o'clock . . .

(*The doorbell buzzes and PAUL crosses to the door*)

CORIE That's her. Now you've got me worried . . . Paul, did I do something horrible?

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PAUL (*Buzzing downstairs*) Probably.

BAREFOOT IN

THE PARK

CORIE Well, do something. Don't answer the door. Maybe she'll go home.

PAUL Too late. I buzzed. I could put a few Nembutals in his drink. It won't stop him but it could slow him down. (*He opens the door and yells downstairs*) Mom?

MOTHER'S VOICE (*From far below*) Yes, dear . . .

PAUL (*Yelling through his hands*) Take your time. (*He turns back into the room*) She's at Camp Three. She'll try the final assault in a few minutes.

CORIE Paul, maybe we could help her.
(*She comes down the stairs*)

PAUL (*Getting his blazer out of the closet*) What do you mean?

CORIE (*Behind the couch*) A woman puts on rouge and powder to make her face more attractive. Maybe we can put some make-up on her personality.

PAUL (*Puts his attaché case on the bookcase*) I don't think I want to hear the rest of this.

CORIE All I'm saying is, we don't have to come right out and introduce her as "my dull fifty-year-old housewife mother."

PAUL (*Crosses to the bar and pours a drink of Scotch*) Well, that wasn't the wording I had planned. What did you have in mind?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CORIE (*Moves around the couch and sits on the right side of the couch*) Something a little more glamorous . . . A former actress.

PAUL Corie—

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CORIE Well, she was in *The Man Who Came to Dinner*.

PAUL Your mother? In *The Man Who Came to Dinner*? . . . Where, in the West Orange P.T.A. show?
(He moves to the couch)

CORIE No! . . . On Broadway . . . And she was in the original company of *Strange Interlude* and she had a small singing part in *Knickerbocker Holiday*.

PAUL Are you serious?

CORIE Honestly. Cross my heart.

PAUL Your mother? An actress?
(He sits next to CORIE)

CORIE Yes.

PAUL Why didn't you ever tell me?

CORIE I didn't think you'd be interested.

PAUL That's fascinating. I can't get over it.

CORIE You see. Now you're interested in her.

PAUL It's a lie?

CORIE The whole thing.

PAUL I'm going to control myself.
(He gets up and crosses back of the couch)

CORIE (*Gets up and crosses to him at right of the couch*) What do you say? Is she an actress?

PAUL No.

(He moves toward the door)

CORIE A fashion designer. The brains behind Ann Fogarty.

PAUL (Points to the door) She's on her way up.

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CORIE A mystery writer . . . under an assumed name.

BAREFOOT IN

THE PARK

PAUL Let's lend her my trench coat and say she's a private eye.

CORIE You're no help.

PAUL I didn't book this act.

CORIE (Moves to PAUL) Paul, who is she going to be?

PAUL She's going to be your mother . . . and the evening will eventually pass . . . It just means . . . that the Birdman of Forty-eighth Street, is not going to be your father. (He opens the door) Hello, Mom.

(MOTHER collapses in and PAUL and CORIE rush to support her. They quickly lead her to the armchair at right of the couch)

CORIE Hello, sweetheart, how are you? (She kisses MOTHER, who gasps for air) Are you all right? (MOTHER nods) You want some water?

(MOTHER shakes her head "No" as PAUL and CORIE lower her into the chair. She drops her pocketbook on the floor)

MOTHER Paul . . . in my pocketbook . . . are some pink pills.

PAUL (Picks up her bag, closes the door, and begins to look for the pills) Pink pills . . .

(CORIE helps MOTHER take off her coat)

MOTHER I'll be all right . . . Just a little out of breath . . .

(CORIE crosses to the coffee table and pours a drink) I had to park the car six blocks away . . . then it started to rain so I ran the last two blocks . . . then my heel got caught in the subway grating . . . so I pulled my foot out and stepped in a puddle . . . then a cab went by and splashed my stockings . . . if the hardware store downstairs was open . . . I was going to buy a knife and kill myself.

(PAUL gives her a pill, and CORIE gives her a drink)

CORIE Here, Mom. Drink this down.

PAUL Here's the pill . . .

(MOTHER takes the pill, drinks, and coughs)

MOTHER A martini? To wash down a pill?

CORIE It'll make you feel better.

MOTHER I had a martini at home. It made me sick . . . That's why I'm taking the pill . . .

(CORIE puts the drink down on the table)

PAUL (Sitting on the end table) You must be exhausted.

MOTHER I'd just like to crawl into bed and cry myself to sleep.

CORIE (Offering her the tray of hors d'oeuvres) Here, Mom, have an hors d'oeuvre.

MOTHER No, thank you, dear.

CORIE It's just blue cheese and sour cream.

MOTHER (Holds her stomach) I wish you hadn't said that.

PAUL She doesn't feel like it, Corie . . . (CORIE puts the tray down and sits on the couch. PAUL turns to MOTHER) Maybe you'd like to lie down?

CORIE (Panicky) Now? She can't lie down now.

MOTHER Corie's right. I can't lie down without my board

... (*She puts her gloves into a pocket of her coat*)
Right now all I want to do is see the apartment.

PAUL (*Sitting on the couch*) That's right. You haven't
seen it with its clothes on, have you?

MOTHER (*Rises and moves to the left*) Oh, Corie . . .
Corie . . .

CORIE She doesn't like it.

BAREFOOT IN

THE PARK

MOTHER (*Exhausted, she sinks into the armchair at left of the couch*) Like it? It's magnificent . . . and in less than a week. My goodness, how did you manage? Where did you get your ideas from?

PAUL We have a decorator who comes in through the window once a week.

CORIE (*Crossing to the bedroom*) Come take a look at the bedroom.

MOTHER (*Crossing to the bedroom*) Yes, that's what I want to do . . . look at the bedroom. Were you able to get the bed in? (*She looks into the room*) Oh, it just fits, doesn't it?

PAUL (*Moves to the stairs*) Just. We have to turn in unison.

MOTHER It looks very snug . . . and did you find a way to get to the closet?

CORIE Oh, we decided not to use the closet for a while.

MOTHER Really? Don't you need the space?

PAUL Not as much as we need the clothes. It flooded.

MOTHER The closet flooded?

CORIE It was an accident. Mr. Velasco left his bathtub running.

MOTHER (*Moving down the stairs*) Mr. Velasco . . . Oh,
the man upstairs . . .

PAUL (*Taking her arm*) Oh, then you know about Mr.
Velasco?

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MOTHER Oh, yes. Corie had me on the phone for two
hours.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

PAUL Did you know he's been married three times?

MOTHER Yes . . . (*She turns back to CORIE*) If I were
you, dear, I'd sleep with a gun. (*She sits in the bentwood
armchair*)

PAUL Well, there's just one thing I want to say about this
evening . . .

CORIE (*Quickly, as she crosses to the coffee table*) Er
. . . not before you have a drink. (*She hands MOTHER
the martini*) Come on, Mother. To toast our new home.

MOTHER (*Holding the glass*) Well, I can't refuse that.

CORIE (*Making a toast*) To the wonderful new life that's
ahead of us all.

PAUL (*Holds up his glass*) And to the best sport I've ever
seen. Your mother.

MOTHER (*Making a toast*) And to two very charming
people . . . that I'm so glad to be seeing again tonight
. . . your mother and father.

(CORIE sinks down on the sofa)

PAUL (*About to drink, stops*) My what?

MOTHER Your mother and father.

PAUL What about my mother and father?

MOTHER Well, we're having dinner with them tonight,
aren't we? . . . (*To CORIE*) Corie, isn't that what you
said?

PAUL (*Sits next to CORIE on the sofa*) Is that right, Corie?
Is that what you said?

CORIE (*Looks helpless, then plunges in*) Well, if I told
you it was a blind date with Mr. Velasco upstairs, I
couldn't have blasted you out of the house.

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MOTHER A blind date . . . (*She doesn't quite get it yet*)
With Mr. Velasco . . . (*Then the dawn*) The one that
. . . ? (*She points up, then panics*) Good God!
(*She takes a big gulp of her martini*)

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

PAUL (*To CORIE*) You didn't even tell your mother?

CORIE I was going to tell her the truth.

PAUL (*Looks at his watch*) It's one minute to seven.
That's cutting it pretty thin, isn't it?

MOTHER Corie, how could you do this to me? Of all the
people in the world . . .

CORIE (*Gets up and moves to MOTHER*) I don't see what
you're making such a fuss about. He's just a man.

MOTHER My *accountant's* just a man. You make him
sound like Douglas Fairbanks, Junior.

CORIE He looks *nothing* like Douglas Fairbanks, Junior,
. . . does he, Paul?

PAUL No . . . He just jumps like him.

MOTHER I'm not even dressed.

CORIE (*Brushing her MOTHER's clothes*) You look fine,
Mother.

MOTHER For Paul's parents I just wanted to look clean
. . . *He'll* think I'm a nurse.

CORIE Look, Mother, I promise you you'll have a good
time tonight. He's a sweet, charming, and intelligent

man. If you'll just relax I know you'll have a perfectly nice evening. (*There is a knock on the door*) Besides, it's too late. He's here.

MOTHER Oh, no . . .

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CORIE All right, now don't get excited.

MOTHER (*Gets up and puts her drink on the coffee table*) You could say I'm the cleaning woman . . . I'll dust the table. Give me five dollars and I'll leave.
(*She starts up the stairs to the bedroom*)

CORIE (*Stops MOTHER on the stairs*) You just stay here . . .

PAUL (*Going to MOTHER*) It's going to be fine, Mom.
(*He crosses to the door*)

CORIE (*Leads MOTHER back to the sofa*) And smile. You're irresistible when you do. And finish your martini.
(*She takes it from the table and hands it to MOTHER*)

MOTHER Do you have a lot of these?

CORIE As many as you need.

MOTHER I'm going to need a lot of these.
(*She downs a good belt*)

PAUL Can I open the door?

CORIE Paul, wait a minute . . . Mother . . . your hair . . . in the back . . .

MOTHER (*Stricken, she begins to fuss with her hair*) What? What's the matter with my hair?

CORIE (*Fixing MOTHER's hair*) It's all right now. I fixed it.

MOTHER (*Moves toward PAUL*) Is something wrong with my hair?

PAUL (*Impatient*) There's a man standing out there.

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

CORIE Wait a minute, Paul . . . (PAUL moves back into the room and leans against the back of the armchair. CORIE turns MOTHER to her) Now, Mother . . . The only thing I'd like to suggest is . . . well . . . just try and go along with everything.

MOTHER What do you mean? Where are we going?

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CORIE I don't know. But wherever it is . . . just relax . . . and be one of the fellows.

BAREFOOT IN

THE PARK

MOTHER One of what fellows?

CORIE I mean, don't worry about your stomach.
(There is another knock on the door)

MOTHER Oh, my stomach.

(She sinks down on the couch)

PAUL Can I open the door now? . . .

CORIE (Moving to the right of the couch) Okay, okay . . . open the door.

(PAUL nods gratefully, then opens the door. VELASCO stands there, looking quite natty in a double-breasted, pin-striped blue suit. He carries a small covered frying pan in a gloved hand)

PAUL Oh, sorry to keep you waiting, Mr. Velasco. Come on in . . .

VELASCO (Moving into the well, to PAUL) Ah! Ho si mah ling . . .

PAUL No, no . . . It's Paul.

VELASCO I know. I was just saying hello in Chinese . . .

PAUL Oh . . . hello.

VELASCO (To CORIE) Corie, rava-shing . . .

CORIE (Enthralled) Oh . . . What does that mean?

VELASCO Ravishing. That's English.

CORIE (*Taken aback*) Oh . . . Ah, Paul . . . Would you do the honors?

PAUL Yes, of course. Mr. Velasco, I'd like you to meet Corie's mother, Mrs. Banks . . . (*CORIE steps back, unveiling MOTHER with a gesture*) Mother, this is our new neighbor, Mr. Velasco . . .

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Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

MOTHER How do you do?

VELASCO (*Sweeps to MOTHER, takes her hand, and bows ever so slightly*) Mrs. Banks . . . I've been looking forward so to meeting you. I invite your daughter to my cocktail party and she spends the entire evening talking of nothing but you.

(*CORIE moves up to left of the couch, taking it all in with great pleasure*)

MOTHER Oh? . . . It must have been a dull party.

VELASCO Not in the least.

MOTHER I mean if she did nothing but talk about me . . . *That must have been dull. Not the party.*

(*PAUL moves behind the couch to the coffee table and gets his drink*)

VELASCO I understand.

MOTHER Thank you . . .

CORIE (*To the rescue*) Oh, is that for us?

VELASCO Yes . . . I couldn't get the wine . . . my credit stopped . . . so instead . . . (*He puts the pan down on the end table and with a flourish lifts the cover*) . . . Knichi!

MOTHER Knichi?

CORIE It's an hors d'oeuvre. Mr. Velasco makes them himself. He's a famous gourmet.

MOTHER A gourmet . . . Imagine!

VELASCO This won second prize last year at the Venice Food Festival.

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MOTHER Second prize . . .

BAREFOOT IN

CORIE Mr. Velasco once cooked for the King of Sweden, Mother.

THE PARK

MOTHER Really? Did you work for him?

VELASCO No . . . We belong to the same club.

MOTHER (*Embarrassed*) The same club . . . Of course.

VELASCO It's a Gourmet Society. There's a hundred and fifty of us.

MOTHER All gourmets . . .

VELASCO That includes the King, Prince Phillip, and Darryl Zanuck.

MOTHER Darryl Zanuck, too.

VELASCO We meet once every five years for a dinner that we cook ourselves. In 1987 they're supposed to come to my house. (*He looks at his watch*) We have another thirty seconds . . .

PAUL Until what?

VELASCO Until they're edible. (*He takes the cover off the pan, and puts it on the end table*) Now . . . the last fifteen seconds we just let them sit there and breathe . . .

CORIE (*Moves to the right*) Gee, they look marvelous.

VELASCO When you eat this, you take a bite into history. Knichi is over two thousand years old . . . Not this particular batch, of course.

(*He laughs, but MOTHER laughs too loud and too long*)

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Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

CORIE (*Again to the rescue*) Wow, what a great smell . . . (*To VELASCO*) Mr. Velasco, would you be a traitor to the Society if you told us what's in it?

VELASCO (*Secretively*) Well, if caught, it's punishable by a cold salad at the dinner . . . but since I'm among friends, it's bits of salted fish, grated olives, spices, and onion biscuits . . . (*MOTHER reacts unhappily to the list of ingredients. VELASCO looks at his watch once more*) Ah, ready . . . Five, four, three, two, one . . . (*He holds the pan out to MOTHER*) Mrs. Banks?

MOTHER (*Tentatively*) Oh . . . thank you.
(*She takes one and raises it slowly to her mouth*)

CORIE What kind of fish?

VELASCO Eel!

PAUL Eel?

MOTHER (*Crumples with distaste*) Eel??
(*She doesn't eat it*)

VELASCO That's why the time element is so essential. Eel spoils quickly. (*MOTHER crumples even more*) Mrs. Banks, you're not eating.

MOTHER My throat's a little dry. Maybe if I finish my martini first . . .

VELASCO No, no . . . That will never do. The temperature of the knichi is very important. It must be now. In five minutes we throw it away.

MOTHER Oh! . . . Well, I wouldn't want you to do that.
(*She looks at the knichi, then starts to take a nibble*)

VELASCO Pop it!

MOTHER I beg your pardon?

VELASCO (*Puts down the pan and takes off his cooking glove*) If you nibble at knichi, it tastes bitter. You must pop it. (*He takes a knichi, tosses it from hand to hand three or four times and then pops it into his mouth*) You see.

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BAREFOOT IN

MOTHER Oh, yes.

THE PARK

(*She tosses a knichi from hand to hand a few times and then tries to pop it into her mouth. But she misses and it flies over her shoulder. VELASCO quickly offers her another. Although this time she succeeds in getting it into her mouth, she chokes on it*)

CORIE (*Sitting next to her*) Mother, are you all right?

MOTHER (*Coughing*) I think I popped it back too far.

CORIE (*Takes PAUL's drink from him and hands it to MOTHER*) Here . . . Drink this.

MOTHER (*Drinks, gasps*) Ooh . . . Was that my martini?

PAUL (*Gets up and retrieves his drink*) No. My Scotch.

MOTHER Oh, my stomach.

VELASCO (*Moving left behind the couch*) The trick is to pop it right to the center of the tongue . . . Then it gets the benefit of the entire palate . . . Corie?

(*He offers her the dish*)

CORIE (*Takes one*) Well, here goes. (*She tosses it back and forth, then pops it perfectly*) How about that?

VELASCO Perfect. You're the prettiest epicurean I've ever seen . . . (*He offers the knichi to PAUL*) Paul?

PAUL Er, no thank you. I have a bad arm.

CORIE You can *try* it. You should try everything, right, Mr. Velasco?

VELASCO As the French say, "At least once" . . . (PAUL pulls up his sleeve, takes a knichi . . . then bites into it) Agh . . . Bitter, right?

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CORIE You know why, don't you?

PAUL I didn't pop! I nibbled!

CORIE Try another one and pop it.

PAUL I don't want to pop another one. Besides, I think we're over the five-minute limit now, anyway.

VELASCO (*Crossing to MOTHER behind the couch, he leans over to her very confidentially*) Taste is something that must be cultivated.

MOTHER (*Almost jumps*) Er, yes, I've often said that . . .

CORIE Well, are we ready to go out to dinner?

MOTHER (*Nervously*) You mean we're going out?

CORIE We had a fire in our stove.

MOTHER What happened?

PAUL Nothing. We just turned it on.

CORIE Mother, are you hungry?

MOTHER Not terribly . . . no.

CORIE Paul, you're the host. Suggest someplace.

PAUL Well . . . er . . . how about Marty's on Forty-seventh Street?

CORIE Marty's? That barn? You get a cow and a baked potato. What kind of a suggestion was that?

PAUL I'm sorry. I didn't know it was a trick question.

CORIE Tonight has to be something special. Mr. Velasco, you must know someplace different and unusual . . .

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VELASCO (*Leaning against the end table*) Unusual? Yes, I know a very unusual place. It's the best food in New York. But I'm somewhat hesitant to suggest . . .

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

CORIE Oh, please. (*To MOTHER*) What do you say, Mother? Do you feel adventurous?

MOTHER You know me, one of the fellows.

CORIE (*To VELASCO*) There you are. We place the evening in your hands.

VELASCO A delightful proposition . . . For dinner, we go to the Four Winds.

PAUL Oh! The Chinese Restaurant? On Fifty-third Street?

VELASCO No . . . The Albanian restaurant on Staten Island.

MOTHER (*Holds her stomach*) Staten Island?

CORIE Doesn't it sound wild, Mother?

MOTHER Yes . . . wild.

CORIE I love it already.

(*As she sweeps past PAUL on her way to the bedroom, she punches him on the shoulder*)

VELASCO (*Sitting next to MOTHER*) Don't expect anything lavish in the way of decor. But Uzu will take care of the atmosphere.

MOTHER Who's Uzu?

VELASCO It's a Greek liqueur . . . Deceptively powerful.
I'll only allow you one.

MOTHER Oh . . . thank you.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CORIE (*Coming out of the bedroom with her coat and purse*) It sounds perfect . . . Let's go.

PAUL It'll be murder getting a cab now.

VELASCO I'll worry about the transportation. All you have to do is pick up the check.

CORIE (*Back of the couch*) Mother has her car.

VELASCO (*Rises, and turns to PAUL*) You see? My job is done. Mrs. Banks . . .

(*He holds up her coat. PAUL crosses to the closet and gets his overcoat*)

MOTHER (*Putting on her coat*) Mr. Velasco, don't you wear a coat?

VELASCO Only in the winter.

MOTHER It's thirty-five.

VELASCO (*Taking a beret out of his pocket*) For twenty-five I wear a coat . . . For thirty-five . . . (*He puts the beret on, and crosses to the door taking a scarf out of his pocket with a great flair. PAUL watches with great distaste and then crosses into the bedroom and opens the door*) Ready? . . . My group stay close to me. If anyone gets lost, we'll meet at the United States Embassy.

(*He flings the scarf about his neck and exits. MOTHER desperately clutches CORIE's arm, but CORIE manages to push her out the door*)

CORIE (*Turning back for PAUL*) What are you looking for?

PAUL (*Comes out of the bedroom*) My gloves . . .

CORIE (*With disdain*) You don't need gloves. It's only thirty-five.

(She sweeps out)

PAUL That's right. I forgot. (*Mimicking VELASCO, he flings his scarf around his neck as he crosses to the door*) We're having a heat wave. (*He turns off the lights and slams the door shut*)

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BAREFOOT IN

THE PARK

Curtain

(*In the dark we hear the splash of waves and the melancholy toots of foghorns in the harbor sounding almost as sad as PAUL and MOTHER must be feeling at this moment*)

SCENE Two

About 2:00 A.M.

The apartment is still dark. We hear laughter on the stairs. The door opens and CORIE rushes in. She is breathless, hysterical, and wearing VELASCO's beret and scarf.

CORIE Whoo . . . I beat you . . . I won.

(She turns on the lights, crosses to the couch, and collapses on it. VELASCO rushes in after her, breathless and laughing)

VELASCO *(Sinking to the floor in front of the couch)*
It wasn't a fair race. You tickled me.

CORIE Ooh . . . Ooh, I feel good. Except my tongue keeps rolling up. And when I talk it rolls back out like a noise-maker.

VELASCO That's a good sign. It shows the food was seasoned properly.

CORIE Hey, tell me how to say it again.

VELASCO Say what?

CORIE "Waiter, there's a fly in my soup."

VELASCO Oh. "Poopla . . . sirca al mercoori."

CORIE That's right. "Sirca . . . poopla al mercoori."

VELASCO No, no. That's "Fly, I have a waiter in my soup."

CORIE Well, I did. He put in his hand to take out the fly.

(She rises to her knees) Boy, I like that singer . . .
(She sways back and forth as she sings) "Shama . . . shama . . . ela mal kemama" . . . (She flings her coat onto the couch. VELASCO rises to a sitting position, crosses his legs, and plays an imaginary flute) Hey, what am I singing, anyway?

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VELASCO (Stretches prone on the floor) It's an old Albanian folk song.

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

CORIE (Impressed with her own virtuosity) "Shama shama . . ."? No kidding? What does it mean?

VELASCO "Jimmy cracked corn and I don't care."

CORIE Well, I don't. (She feels her head) Oh, boy . . . How many Zuzus did I have? Three or four?

VELASCO Uzus! . . . Nine or ten.

CORIE Then it was ten 'cause I thought I had four . . . How is my head going to feel in the morning?

VELASCO Wonderful.

CORIE No headaches?

VELASCO No headache . . . But you won't be able to make a fist for three days.

(He raises his hands and demonstrates by not being able to make a fist)

CORIE (Holds out both hands and looks at them) Yeah. Look at that. Stiff as a board. (She climbs off the couch, and moves onto the floor next to VELASCO) What do they put in Uzu anyway?

VELASCO (Holding up stiff hands) I think it's starch.

CORIE (Looks at her two stiff hands) . . . Hey, how about a game of ping-pong? We can play doubles.

(CORIE swings her two stiff hands at an imaginary ball)

VELASCO Not now. (*He sits up*) We're supposed to do something important. What was it?

CORIE What was it? (*She ponders, then remembers*) Oh! . . . We're supposed to make coffee.

(CORIE places the shoes she has taken off under the sofa and moves toward the kitchen)

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

VELASCO (*Following her*) I'll make it. What kind do you have?

CORIE Instant Maxwell House.

VELASCO (*Crushed*) Instant coffee?

(*He holds his brow with his stiff hands. He and CORIE disappear behind the screened kitchen continuing their babbling. Suddenly we hear scuffling in the hallway and PAUL struggles in through the door carrying MOTHER in his arms. From PAUL's staggering we'd guess that MOTHER must now weigh about two thousand pounds. He makes it to the sofa, where he drops her, and then sinks in utter exhaustion to the floor below her. They both stare unseeing, and suck desperately for air. CORIE and VELASCO, who carries a coffee pot, emerge from the kitchen*)

CORIE (*Crosses to MOTHER*) Forgot the stove doesn't work. Upstairs, everyone . . . for coffee. (CORIE pulls MOTHER's coat but there is no reaction from MOTHER or PAUL) Don't you want coffee?

(PAUL and MOTHER shake their heads "No")

VELASCO (*Going to the door*) They'll drink it if we make it . . .

CORIE (*Following him*) Don't you two go away . . .

(CORIE and VELASCO exit, both singing "Shama, shama." PAUL and MOTHER stare silently ahead. They appear to be in shock, as if having gone through some terrible ordeal)

MOTHER (*Finally*) . . . I feel like we've died . . . and gone to heaven . . . only we had to climb up . . .

PAUL (*Gathering his strength*) . . . Struck down in the prime of life . . .

MOTHER . . . I don't really feel sick . . . Just kind of numb . . . and I can't make a fist . . .

(She holds up a stiff hand)

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PAUL You want to hear something frightening? . . . My teeth feel soft . . . It's funny . . . but the best thing we had all night was the knichi.

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

MOTHER Anyway, Corie had a good time . . . Don't you think Corie had a good time, Paul?

PAUL (*Struggling up onto the couch*) Wonderful . . . Poor kid . . . It isn't often we get out to Staten Island in February.

MOTHER She seems to get such a terrific kick out of living. You've got to admire that, don't you, Paul?

PAUL I admire anyone who has three portions of poofla-poo pie.

MOTHER (*Starts*) What's poofla-poo pie?

PAUL Don't you remember? That gook that came in a turban.

MOTHER I thought that was the waiter . . . I tried, Paul. But I just couldn't seem to work up an appetite the way they did.

PAUL (*Reassuring her*) No, no, Mom . . . You mustn't blame yourself . . . We're just not used to that kind of food . . . You just don't pick up your fork and dig into a brown salad . . . You've got to play around with it for a while.

MOTHER Maybe I am getting old . . . I don't mind telling you it's very discouraging . . . (*With great difficulty, she manages to rouse herself and get up from the couch*) Anyway, I don't think I could get through coffee . . . I'm all out of pink pills . . .

PAUL Where are you going?

MOTHER Home . . . I want to die in my own bed.
(Exhausted, she sinks into a chair)

PAUL Well, what'll I tell them?

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

MOTHER Oh, make up some clever little lie. *(She rallies herself and gets up)* Tell Corie I'm not really her mother. She'll probably never want to see me again anyway . . . Good night, dear. *(Just as MOTHER gets to the door, it opens and CORIE and VELASCO return)* Oh, coffee ready? *(She turns back into the room. VELASCO crosses to the bar as CORIE moves to behind the couch)*

CORIE I was whistling the Armenian National Anthem and I blew out the pilot light.

VELASCO *(Puts four brandy snifters he has brought in down on the bar, and taking a decanter from the bar begins to pour brandy)* Instead we're going to have flaming brandy . . . Corie, give everyone a match.

(CORIE moves to the side table)

MOTHER I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me, dear. It is a little late.

CORIE *(Moves toward MOTHER)* Mother, you're not going home. It's the shank of the evening.

MOTHER I know, but I've got a ten-o'clock dentist appointment . . . at nine o'clock . . . and it's been a very long evening . . . What I mean is it's late, but I've had a wonderful time . . . I don't know what I'm saying.

CORIE But, Mother . . .

MOTHER Darling, I'll call you in the morning. Good night, Paul . . . Good night, Mr. Velasco . . .

VELASCO *(Putting down the brandy, he crosses to CORIE)* Good night, Paul . . . Good night, Corie . . .

CORIE Mr. Velasco, you're not going, too?

VELASCO (*Taking his beret and scarf from CORIE and putting them on*) Of course. I'm driving Mrs. Banks home.

MOTHER (*Moves away in shock*) Oh, no! . . . (*She recovers herself and turns back*) I mean, oh, no, it's too late.

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BAREFOOT IN

VELASCO (*To MOTHER*) Too late for what?

THE PARK

MOTHER The buses. They stop running at two.. How will you get home?

VELASCO Why worry about it now? I'll meet that problem in New Jersey.

(*VELASCO moves to the door and CORIE in great jubilation flings herself over the back of the couch*)

MOTHER And it's such a long trip . . . (*She crosses to CORIE*) Corie, isn't it a long trip?

CORIE Not really. It's only about thirty minutes.

MOTHER But it's such an inconvenience. Really, Mr. Velasco, it's very sweet of you but—

VELASCO Victor!

MOTHER What?

VELASCO If we're going to spend the rest of the evening together, it must be Victor.

MOTHER Oh!

VELASCO And I insist the arrangement be reciprocal.
What is it?

MOTHER What is what?

CORIE Your name, Mother. (*To VELASCO*) It's Ethel.

MOTHER Oh, that's right. Ethel. My name is Ethel.

VELASCO That's better . . . Now . . . are we ready . . . Ethel?

MOTHER Well . . . if you insist, Walter.

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VELASCO Victor! It's Victor.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

MOTHER Yes. Victor!

VELASCO Good night, Paul . . . Shama shama, Corie.

CORIE Shama shama!

VELASCO (*Moves to the door*) If you don't hear from us in a week, we'll be at the Nacionál Hotel in Mexico City . . . Room seven-oh-three! . . . Let's go, Ethel!

(*And he goes out the door. MOTHER turns to CORIE and looks for help*)

MOTHER (*Frightened, she grabs CORIE's arm*) What does he mean by that?

CORIE I don't know, but I'm dying to find out. Will you call me in the morning?

MOTHER Yes . . . about six o'clock!
(*And in a panic, she exits*)

CORIE (*Takes a beat, closes the door, smiles, and turns to PAUL*) Well . . . how about that, Mr. "This is going to be a fiasco tonight"? . . . He's taking her all the way out to New Jersey . . . at two o'clock in the morning . . . That's what I call "The Complete Gentleman" . . . (*PAUL looks at her with disdain, rises and staggers up the stairs into the bedroom*) He hasn't even given a thought about how he's going to get home . . . Maybe he'll sleep over . . . Hey, Paul, do you think . . . ? No, not my mother . . . (*She jumps up onto the couch*) Then again anything can happen with Rupert of Henzau . . . Boy, what a night . . . Hey! I got a plan. Let's

take the bottle of Scotch downstairs, ring all the bells and yell "Police" . . . Just to see who comes out of whose apartment . . . (*There is no answer from the bedroom*) . . . Paul? . . . What's the matter, darling? . . . Don't you feel well?

173

PAUL (*Comes out of the bedroom, down the stairs, and crosses to the closet. He is taking his coat off and is angry*) What a rotten thing to do . . . To your own

BAREFOOT IN

mother.

THE PARK

CORIE What?

PAUL Do you have any idea how she felt just now? Do you know what kind of a night this was for her?

CORIE (*Impishly*) It's not over yet.

PAUL You didn't see her sitting here two minutes ago. You were upstairs with that Hungarian Duncan Hines . . . Well, she was miserable. Her face was longer than that trip we took tonight.

(*He hangs up his coat in the closet*)

CORIE She never said a thing to me.

PAUL (*Takes out a hanger and puts his jacket on it*) She's too good a sport. She went the whole cockeyed way . . . Boy, oh boy . . . dragging a woman like that all the way out to the middle of the harbor for a bowl of sheep dip.

(*He hangs his jacket up and crosses to the dictionary on the side table under the radiator. He takes his tie off and folds it neatly*)

CORIE (*Follows him to the table*) It was Greek bean soup. And at least *she* tasted it. She didn't jab at it with her knife, throwing cute little epigrams like, "Ho, ho, ho . . . I think there's someone in there."

PAUL (*Puts the tie between pages of the dictionary*) That's right. That's right. At least I was honest about it.

You ate two bowls because you were showing off for Al Capone at the next table.

(PAUL searches for his wallet unsuccessfully)

CORIE What are you so angry about, Paul?

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PAUL (Crossing to the closet) I just told you. I felt terrible for your mother.

(He gets the wallet out of his jacket pocket)

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

CORIE (Following after him to the front of the couch) Why? Where is she at this very minute? Alone with probably the most attractive man she's ever met. Don't tell me that doesn't beat hell out of hair curlers and the "Late Late Show."

PAUL (Crossing onto bedroom landing) Oh, I can just hear it now. What sparkling conversation. He's probably telling her about a chicken cacciatore he once cooked for the High Lama of Tibet and she's sitting there shoving pink pills in her mouth.

CORIE (Taking her coat from the couch and putting it on the armchair at right) You never can tell what people talk about when they're alone.

PAUL I don't understand how you can be so unconcerned about this.

(He goes into the bedroom)

CORIE (Moving to the stairs) Unconcerned . . . I'm plenty concerned. Do you think I'm going to get one wink of sleep until that phone rings tomorrow? I'm scared to death for my mother. But I'm grateful there's finally the opportunity for something to be scared about . . . (She moves right, then turns back) What I'm really concerned about is you!

PAUL (Bursts out of the bedroom, nearly slamming through the door) Me? Me?

CORIE I'm beginning to wonder if you're capable of *having* a good time.

PAUL Why? Because I like to wear my gloves in the winter?

CORIE No. Because there isn't the least bit of adventure in you. Do you know what you are? You're a Watcher. There are Watchers in this world and there are Do-ers. And the Watchers sit around watching the Do-ers do. Well, tonight you watched and I did.

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BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

PAUL (*Moves down the stairs to CORIE*) Yeah . . . Well, it was harder to watch what you did than it was for you to *do* what I was watching.

(*He goes back up the stairs to the landing*)

CORIE You won't let your hair down for a minute? You couldn't even relax for one night. Boy, Paul, sometimes you act like a . . . a . . .

(*She gets her shoes from under the couch*)

PAUL (*Stopping on the landing*) What . . . ? A stuffed shirt?

CORIE (*Drops the shoes on the couch*) I didn't say that.

PAUL That's what you're implying.

CORIE (*Moves to the right armchair and begins to take off her jewelry*) That's what you're anticipating. I didn't say you're a stuffed shirt. But you are extremely proper and dignified.

PAUL I'm proper and dignified? (*He moves to CORIE*) When . . . ? When was I proper and dignified?

CORIE (*Turns to PAUL*) All right. The other night. At Delfino's . . . You were drunk, right?

PAUL Right. I was stoned.

CORIE There you are. I didn't know it until you told me in the morning. (*She unzips her dress and takes it off*) You're a funny kind of drunk. You just sat there looking unhappy and watching your coat.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

PAUL I was watching my coat because I saw someone else watching my coat . . . Look, if you want, I'll get drunk for you sometime. I'll show you a slob, make your hair stand on end.

(*He unbuttons his shirt*)

CORIE (*Puts her dress on the chair*) It isn't necessary.

PAUL (*Starts to go, turns back*) Do you know . . . Do you know, in P. J. Clarke's last New Year's Eve, I punched an old woman . . . Don't tell me about drunks.

(*He starts to go*)

CORIE (*Taking down her hair*) All right, Paul.

PAUL (*Turns back and moves to behind the couch*) When else? When else was I proper and dignified?

CORIE Always. You're always dressed right, you always look right, you always say the right things. You're very close to being perfect.

PAUL (*Hurt to the quick*) That's . . . that's a *rotten* thing to say.

CORIE (*Moves to PAUL*) I have never seen you without a jacket. I always feel like such a slob compared to you. Before we were married I was sure you slept with a tie.

PAUL No, no. Just for very *formal* sleeps.

CORIE You can't even walk into a candy store and ask the lady for a Tootsie Roll. (*Playing the scene out, she moves down to right side of the couch*) You've got to walk up to the counter and point at it and say, "I'll have that thing in the brown and white wrapper."

PAUL (*Moving to the bedroom door*) That's ridiculous.

CORIE And you're not. That's just the trouble. (She crosses to the foot of the stairs) Like Thursday night. You wouldn't walk barefoot with me in Washington Square Park. Why not?

PAUL (Moving to the head of the stairs) Very simple answer. It was seventeen degrees.

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CORIE (Moves back to the chair and continues taking down her hair) Exactly. That's very sensible and logical. Except it isn't any fun.

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

PAUL (Moves down the stairs to the couch) You know maybe I am too proper and dignified for you. Maybe you would have been happier with someone a little more colorful and flamboyant . . . like the Geek!

(He starts back to the bedroom)

CORIE Well, he'd be a lot more laughs than a stuffed shirt.

PAUL (Turns back on the landing) Oh, oh . . . I thought you said I wasn't.

CORIE Well, you are now.

PAUL (Reflectively) I'm not going to listen to this . . . I'm not going to listen . . . (He starts for the bedroom) I've got a case in court in the morning.

CORIE (Moves left) Where are you going?

PAUL To sleep.

CORIE Now? How can you sleep now?

PAUL (Steps up on the bed and turns back, leaning on the door jamb) I'm going to close my eyes and count knichis. Good night!

CORIE You can't go to sleep now. We're having a fight.

PAUL You have the fight. When you're through, turn off the lights.

(He turns back into the bedroom)

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CORIE Ooh, that gets me insane. You can even control your emotions.

PAUL (*Storms out to the head of the stairs*) Look, I'm just as upset as you are . . . (*He controls himself*) But when I get hungry, I eat. And when I get tired, I sleep. You eat and sleep, too. Don't deny it, I've seen you . . .

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CORIE (*Moves right with a grand gesture*) Not in the middle of a crisis.

PAUL What crisis? We're just yelling a little.

CORIE You don't consider this a crisis? Our whole marriage hangs in the balance.

PAUL (*Sits on the steps*) It does? When did that happen?

CORIE Just now. It's suddenly very clear that you and I have absolutely *nothing* in common.

PAUL Why? Because I won't walk barefoot in the park in winter? You haven't got a case, Corie. Adultery, yes. Cold feet, no.

CORIE (*Seething*) Don't oversimplify this. I'm angry. Can't you see that?

PAUL (*Brings his hands to his eyes, peers at her through imaginary binoculars, and then looks at his watch*) Corie, it's two-fifteen. If I can fall asleep in about half an hour, I can get about five hours' sleep. I'll call you from court tomorrow and we can fight over the phone.
(*He gets up and moves to the bedroom*)

CORIE You will *not* go to sleep. You will stay here and fight to save our marriage.

PAUL (*In the doorway*) If our marriage hinges on breathing fish balls and poofla-poo pie, it's not worth saving . . . I am now going to crawl into our tiny, little, single bed. If you care to join me, we will be sleeping from left to right tonight.

(*He goes into the bedroom and slams the door*)

CORIE You won't discuss it . . . You're *afraid* to discuss
it . . . I married a coward!! . . .

(She takes a shoe from the couch and throws it at
the bedroom door)

PAUL (Opens the door) Corie, would you bring in a
pail? The closet's dripping.

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CORIE Ohh, I hate you! I hate you! I really, really hate
you!

BAREFOOT IN

THE PARK

PAUL (Storms to the head of the stairs) Corie, there is
one thing I learned in court. Be careful when you're
tired and angry. You might say something you will soon
regret. I-am-now-tired-and-angry.

CORIE And a coward.

PAUL (Comes down the stairs to her at right of the couch)
And I will now say something I will soon regret . . .
Okay, Corie, maybe you're right. Maybe we have nothing
in common. Maybe we rushed into this marriage a
little too fast. Maybe Love isn't enough. Maybe two
people should have to take more than a blood test.
Maybe they should be checked for common sense,
understanding, and emotional maturity.

CORIE (That hurt) All right . . . Why don't you get it
passed in the Supreme Court? Only those couples bearing
a letter from their psychiatrists proving they're well-
adjusted will be permitted to be married.

PAUL You're impossible.

CORIE You're unbearable.

PAUL You belong in a nursery school.

CORIE It's a lot more fun than the Home for the Fuddy
Duddies.

PAUL (Reaches out his hand to her) All right, Corie,
let's not get . . .

CORIE Don't you touch me . . . Don't you touch me . . .

(PAUL very deliberately reaches out and touches her. CORIE screams hysterically and runs across the room, away from him. Hysterically) I don't want you near me. Ever again.

PAUL (Moves toward her) Now wait a minute, Corie—

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CORIE No. (She turns away from him) I can't look at you. I can't even be in the same room with you now.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

PAUL Why?

CORIE I just can't, that's all. Not when you feel this way.

PAUL When I feel what way?

CORIE The way you feel about me.

PAUL Corie, you're hysterical.

CORIE (Even more hysterically) I am not hysterical. I know exactly what I'm saying. It's no good between us, Paul. It never will be again.

PAUL (Throwing up his hands and sinking to the couch) Holy cow.

CORIE I'm sorry, I— (She fights back tears) I don't want to cry.

PAUL Oh, for pete's sakes, cry. Go ahead and cry.

CORIE (At the height of fury) Don't you tell me when to cry. I'll cry when I want to cry. And I'm not going to have my cry until you're out of this apartment.

PAUL What do you mean, "out of this apartment"?

CORIE Well, you certainly don't think we're going to live here together, do you? After tonight?

PAUL Are you serious?

CORIE Of course I'm serious. *I want a divorce!*

PAUL (*Shocked, he jumps up*) A divorce? What?

CORIE (*Pulls herself together, and with great calm, begins to go up the stairs*) I'm sorry, Paul, I can't discuss it any more. Good night.

PAUL Where are you going?

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CORIE To bed.

(*She turns back to PAUL*)

BAREFOOT IN

THE PARK

PAUL You can't. Not now.

CORIE You did before.

PAUL That was in the middle of a fight. This is in the middle of a divorce.

CORIE I can't talk to you when you're hysterical. Good night.

(*She goes into the bedroom*)

PAUL Will you come here? . . . (*CORIE comes out on the landing*) I want to know why you want a divorce.

CORIE I told you why. Because you and I have absolutely nothing in common.

PAUL What about those six days at the Plaza?

CORIE (*Sagely*) Six days does not a week make.

PAUL (*Taken aback*) What does *that* mean?

CORIE I don't know what it means. I just want a divorce.

PAUL You know, I think you really mean it.

CORIE I do!

PAUL You mean, every time we have a little fight, you're going to want a divorce?

CORIE (*Reassuring*) There isn't going to be any more

little fights. This is it, Paul! This is the end. Good night.
(She goes into the bedroom and closes the door behind her)

PAUL Corie, do you mean to say— *(He yells)* Will you come down here?!

182

CORIE *(Yells from the bedroom)* Why?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

PAUL *(Screams back)* Because I don't want to yell. *(The door opens and CORIE comes out. She stands at the top of the stairs. He points to his feet)* All the way.

CORIE *(Seething, comes all the way down and stands where he pointed)* Afraid the crazy neighbors will hear us?

PAUL You're serious.

CORIE Dead serious.

PAUL You mean the whole thing? With signing papers and going to court, shaking hands, good-bye, finished, forever, divorced?

CORIE *(Nodding in agreement)* That's what I mean . . .

PAUL I see . . . Well . . . I guess there's nothing left to be said.

CORIE I guess not.

PAUL Right . . . Well, er . . . Good night, Corie.
(And he goes up the stairs)

CORIE Where are you going?

PAUL *(Turns back on the landing)* To bed.

CORIE Don't you want to talk about it?

PAUL At two-thirty in the morning?

CORIE I can't sleep until this thing is settled.
(She moves to the couch)

PAUL Well, it may take three months. Why don't you at least take a *nap*?

CORIE You don't have to get snippy.

183

PAUL Well, dammit, I'm sorry, but when I plan vacations I'm happy and when I plan divorces I'm snippy. (He crosses to the bookcase and grabs his attaché case) All right, you want to plan this thing, let's plan it. (He storms to the coffee table and sweeps everything there onto the floor with his hand) You want a quick divorce or a slow painful one?

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

CORIE (Horrified) I'm going to bed.
(She goes up the stairs)

PAUL (Shouts) You stay here or you get no divorce from me.

CORIE (Stops on the landing) You can try acting civilized.

PAUL (Putting down the attaché case) Okay, I'll be civilized. But charm you're not going to get. (He pushes a chair toward her) Now sit down! . . . Because there's a lot of legal and technical details to go through.
(He opens the attaché case)

CORIE Can't you do all that? I don't know anything about legal things.

PAUL (Wheels on her and in a great gesture points an accusing finger at her) Ah, haa . . . Now I'm the Do-er and you're the Watcher! (Relentlessly) Right, Corie? Heh? Right? Right? Isn't that right, Corie?

CORIE (With utmost disdain) . . . So this is what you're really like!

PAUL (Grimacing like the monster he is) Yes . . . Yes . . .

CORIE (Determined she's doing the right thing. She comes down the stairs, and sits, first carefully moving the chair away from PAUL) All right, what do I have to do?

PAUL First of all, what grounds?
(He sits on the couch)

184

CORIE (Not looking at **PAUL**) Grounds?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

PAUL (*Taking a legal pad and a pencil out of the case*) That's right. Grounds. What is your reason for divorcing me? And remember, my failure to appreciate knichis will only hold up in a Russian court.

CORIE You're a scream, Paul. Why weren't you funny when we were happy?

PAUL Okay . . . How about incompatible?

CORIE Fine. Are you through with me?

PAUL Not yet. What about the financial settlement?

CORIE I don't want a thing.

PAUL Oh, but you're entitled to it. Alimony, property? Supposing I just pay your rent. Seventy-five sixty-three a month, isn't it?

CORIE Ha-ha . . .

PAUL And you can have the furniture and the wedding gifts. I'd just like to keep my clothes.

CORIE (*Shocked, she turns to PAUL*) I hardly expected bitterness from you.

PAUL I'm not bitter. That's a statement of fact. You're always wearing my pajamas and slippers.

CORIE Only after you go to work.

PAUL Why?

CORIE Because I like the way they—never mind. It's stupid. (*She begins to sob, gets up and goes up the steps to the bedroom*) I'll sign over your pajamas and slippers.

PAUL If you'd like, you can visit them once a month.

CORIE (*Turns back on the landing*) That's bitter!

185

PAUL You're damned right it is.

BAREFOOT IN

CORIE (*Beginning to cry in earnest*) You have no right to be bitter.

THE PARK

PAUL Don't tell me when to be bitter.

CORIE Things just didn't work out.

PAUL They sure as hell didn't.

CORIE You can't say we didn't try.

PAUL Almost two whole weeks.

CORIE It's better than finding out in two years.

PAUL Or twenty.

CORIE Or fifty.

PAUL Lucky, aren't we?

CORIE We're the luckiest people in the whole world.

PAUL I thought you weren't going to cry.

CORIE Well, I am! I'm going to have the biggest cry I ever had in my life. And I'm going to enjoy it. (*PAUL drops the pencil and pad into the attaché case, and buries his head in a pillow from the couch*) Because I'm going to cry so loud, I'm going to keep you awake all night long. Good night, Paul! . . . I mean, good-bye!

(*She goes into the bedroom and slams the door, and we hear her crying. PAUL angrily slams his*

attaché case shut, gets up, and moves toward the stairs. At this moment, the bedroom door opens and CORIE throws out a blanket, sheet, and pillow which land at PAUL's feet. Then she slams the door shut again. Again we hear crying from the bedroom. PAUL picks them up and glares at the door)

186

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

PAUL (*Mimicking CORIE*) . . . all night long . . . work like a dog for a lousy six cents . . . (*Seething, PAUL throws the bedding on the end table, and begins to try to make up the sofa with the sheet and blanket, all the while mumbling through the whole argument they have just had. As he puts the blanket over the sofa, he suddenly bursts out*) . . . Six days does not a week make.

(*The phone rings. For a moment, PAUL attempts to ignore it, but it keeps on ringing and he finally storms over to it and rips the cord from the wall. Then, still mumbling to himself, he crosses to the light switch near the door and shuts off the lights. Moonlight from the skylight falls onto the sofa. PAUL gets into his makeshift bed and finally settles down. And then . . . it begins to snow. Through the hole in the skylight it falls, down onto PAUL's exposed head. He feels it and, after a quick moment, rises up on his knees and looks up at the hole. Soundlessly, he crumples into a heap*)

Curtain

Act Three

187

The following day. About 5:00 P.M.

CORIE is at the couch picking up the towels she has put down on the floor and the arm of the couch to soak up the water left by the previous night's snow. She picks up the towels with great distaste and uses one to rub off the arm. She looks up at the hole in the skylight, rolls the couch downstage so that it will not be under the skylight, and takes the towels up into the bathroom. As she disappears into the bathroom, the front door opens and PAUL comes in, collapsing over the railing. He looks haggard and drawn, not just from the stairs, but from a lack of sleep and peace of mind. Also, he has a cold, and as he leans there, he wearily blows his nose. He carries his attaché case and a newspaper. The doorbell buzzes, and as he presses the buzzer, CORIE comes out of the bathroom. They look silently at one another and then they both move, crossing each other wordlessly; PAUL goes up the steps to the bedroom and CORIE crosses up to the kitchen. Just before he gets to the bedroom door, PAUL sneezes.

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

CORIE (About to go behind the screen, coldly, without looking at him) God bless him!

(PAUL goes into the bedroom and slams the door. CORIE goes into the kitchen. She comes out with two plates, two knives and forks, and a napkin. Crossing to the table under the radiator, she puts down a plate with a knife and fork. Then putting the other setting down on the end table, she moves it all the way to the other side of the room. She goes back into the kitchen and emerges with two glasses. One she places on the side table and as she crosses toward the other table, our old friend Harry Pepper the TELEPHONE MAN, appears at the door. He is breathing as hard as ever. She sees him)

CORIE Oh, hi!

TELEPHONE MAN (*Not too thrilled*) Hello again.

CORIE How have you been?

TELEPHONE MAN Fine. Fine, thanks.

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CORIE Good . . . The telephone's out of order.

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon
TELEPHONE MAN I know. I wouldn't be here for a social call.

CORIE Come on in . . .

(*He steps up into the apartment. CORIE closes the door behind him, and goes up into the kitchen to fill her glass with water*)

TELEPHONE MAN (*Looking around*) Hey! . . . Not bad . . . Not bad at all . . . you did a very nice job.

CORIE (*Speaking from the kitchen*) Thanks. You know anyone who might want to rent it?

TELEPHONE MAN You movin' already?

CORIE (*Picking up the salt and pepper shakers*) I'm looking for a smaller place.

TELEPHONE MAN (*Looks around with disbelief*) Smaller than this? . . . They're not easy to find.

CORIE (*Coming out of the kitchen*) I'll find one.

(*She places the glass of water and the shakers on the end table*)

TELEPHONE MAN (*Moves to the phone*) Well, let's see what the trouble is. (*The TELEPHONE MAN picks up the receiver, jiggles the buttons, and listens, while CORIE moves the straight-backed bentwood chair to back of the end table. He puts down the receiver*) It's dead.

CORIE I know. My husband killed it.

(*She crosses to the side table under the radiator, and takes a candlestick and candle, and a small vase with a yellow rose*)

TELEPHONE MAN (Puzzled) Oh! (He looks down and notices that the wire has been pulled from the wall. He kneels down, opens his tool box, and cheerfully begins to replace the wire) So how do you like married life?

CORIE (Puts the candlestick and vase down on her table; blandly) Very interesting.

(She goes up into the kitchen)

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TELEPHONE MAN Well, after a couple of weeks, what's not interesting? Yeah, it's always nice to see two young kids getting started. With all the trouble today, you see a couple of newlyweds, you figure there's still hope for the world. (As CORIE comes out of the kitchen with a pot of food, a ladle, and a pot holder, PAUL, still in his overcoat and with his attaché case and newspaper, comes out of the bedroom and slams the door behind him. Both CORIE and the TELEPHONE MAN stop. PAUL goes into the bathroom and slams that door hard. CORIE grimaces and the TELEPHONE MAN is shocked. Puzzled) Who's that?

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

CORIE (Rising above it) Him!

TELEPHONE MAN Your husband?

CORIE (Going to the bathroom door) I suppose so. I wasn't looking. (She pounds on the door with the ladle, and yells) Dinnah—is served!

(She crosses to the side table and begins to ladle food onto the plate. The bathroom door opens, and PAUL comes out)

PAUL (Nods at the TELEPHONE MAN and then moves down the stairs to the couch) I have my own dinner, thank you.

(He sits on the couch, puts his attaché case on the table, and opens it)

CORIE (Ignoring PAUL, crosses to the TELEPHONE MAN and offers him the plate) . . . Would you like some goulash?

TELEPHONE MAN (Embarrassed, he looks at PAUL) Er,

no, thanks. We're not allowed to accept tips. (He laughs at his small joke. CORIE takes the plate to the kitchen and drops the goulash, plate and all, into the garbage can. She then moves to her table and ladles goulash onto her plate. PAUL, meantime, has taken a small bag out of his attaché case. It contains a small bunch of grapes which he carefully places on top of his case. CORIE places the pot on the floor, and taking a book of matches from her apron pocket, she lights the candle. While she does this she sings to herself . . . "Shama, shama" . . . PAUL buries himself in his paper and begins to eat his grapes.

TELEPHONE MAN (*Taking all this in*) I'll be out of here as fast as I can.

(*He dives back to his work*)

CORIE (*Sitting down to eat*) Take your time. No one's rushing you.

(*The TELEPHONE MAN begins a nervous, tuneless hum as he works. PAUL continues to eat and read wordlessly. There is a long pause*)

PAUL (*Without looking up*) Is there any beer in the house? (CORIE does not answer. The TELEPHONE MAN stops humming and looks at her, hoping she will . . . There is a pause . . . PAUL is still looking at his newspaper) I said, is there any beer in the house?

(*There is no answer*)

TELEPHONE MAN (*He can't stand it any longer*) Would you like me to look?

CORIE There is no beer in the house.

(*PAUL throws down his paper and storms toward the TELEPHONE MAN, who draws back in fright. PAUL stops at the bar and pours himself a drink*)

TELEPHONE MAN (*With great relief, and trying to make conversation because no one else will*) That's my trouble . . . beer . . . I can drink ten cans in a night . . . of beer.

(*PAUL goes back to the couch and his newspaper. Not having eased the tension any, the TELEPHONE*

MAN goes back to his work and again begins his nervous humming)

PAUL (*After another pause, still looking at his newspaper*)
Did my laundry come back today?

CORIE (*With food in her mouth, she takes her own sweet time in answering*) Hmph.

PAUL (*Looks at her*) What does that mean?

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BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

CORIE It meant your laundry came back today . . . They stuffed your shirts beautifully.

(Having watched this exchange, the TELEPHONE MAN desperately begins to whistle a pointless and innocuous tune)

PAUL (*Stung, takes a drink, then becoming aware of the TELEPHONE MAN*) Would you like a drink? (*There is no answer. The TELEPHONE MAN continues to work*) I said, would you like a drink?

TELEPHONE MAN (*Startled, he looks up from his work*) Who?

PAUL You!

TELEPHONE MAN Me?

PAUL Yes!

TELEPHONE MAN OH! . . . NO!

PAUL Right.

(He goes back to his newspaper)

TELEPHONE MAN (*Dives back to his work*) One more little screw should do it . . . There! (*Turns the screw, then says loud and elatedly*) I'm finished! I'm finished! (*He throws the tools quickly back into his kit*) That wasn't too long, was it?

CORIE No. Thank you very much.

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TELEPHONE MAN (*Getting up and crossing to the door*)

It's A. T. and T.'s pleasure.

(*He nearly drops the kit, and in a panic rushes to the door. He is anxious to leave this scene*)

CORIE (*Picks up the pot from the floor and moves to him at the door*) I'm sorry to keep bothering you like this.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

TELEPHONE MAN Oh, listen. Anytime.

CORIE (*Very confidingly*) I don't think we'll be needing you again.

TELEPHONE MAN Well, I wouldn't be too sure . . .
Phones keep breaking down now and then but er . . .
(*He looks at CORIE as if trying to get some secret and personal message across to cheer her up*) . . . somehow, they have a way of getting fixed. You know what I mean . . . (*He winks at her to indicate "Chin up." As he's winking, PAUL lowers his paper, turns around, and sees him. The TELEPHONE MAN is terribly embarrassed. So he winks at PAUL. Then, pulling himself together*) Well . . . 'bye.

(*And he rushes out of the door. CORIE closes the door behind him and goes up into the kitchen with the pot and ladle. As soon as she is safely behind the screen, PAUL puts down his paper and runs to her table, where he swipes a mouthful of goulash. Dashing back to the couch, he is once more hidden behind his newspaper when CORIE comes out of the kitchen. She is now carrying a plate on which rests a small iced cake. She sits down, and pushing her plate aside, begins to eat her cake*)

CORIE Are you going to stay here again tonight?

PAUL I haven't found a room yet.

CORIE You've had all day to look.

PAUL (*Using the nasal spray he had taken out of the attaché case with the bag of grapes*) I've been very busy. I work during the day, you know.

CORIE You could look during your lunch hour.

PAUL I eat during my lunch hour. I'll look during my looking hour.

(He puts down the spray and takes another drink)

CORIE You could look tonight.

193

PAUL I intended to. (He goes back to reading his paper) But I'm coming down with a cold. I thought I'd just take a couple of aspirins and get right into the sofa.

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

CORIE I'm sure you can find *some* place . . . Why don't you sleep at your club?

PAUL It's not *that* kind of a club. It's a locker room and a handball court . . . and to sleep there I'd have to keep winning the serve. (He looks at CORIE) Look, does it bother you if I stay here another couple of days?

CORIE It's your apartment, too. Get out whenever you want to get out. (The phone rings. When PAUL makes no move to answer it, CORIE, with great resignation, crosses to the phone and picks it up) Hello? . . . Who? . . . Yes, it is. (CORIE suddenly acts very feminine, in a somewhat lower, more provocative and confidential voice, even laughing at times as though she were sharing some private little joke. She seems to be doing this all for PAUL's benefit. Into the phone) . . . Oh, isn't that nice . . . Yes, I'm very interested . . . (Takes the phone and moves away from PAUL) Thursday night? . . . Well, I don't see why not . . .

PAUL (Doesn't like the sound of this) Who is that?

CORIE (Ignores him and laughs into the phone) . . . What's that? . . . Eight o'clock? . . . It sounds perfect.

PAUL Who are you talking to?

CORIE (Still ignoring him) . . . I see . . . But how did you get my number? . . . Oh, isn't that clever . . .

PAUL (*Crosses angrily and grabs the receiver*) Give me that phone.

CORIE (*Struggling with him for it*) I will not. Get away from here, Paul. It's for me.

194

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

PAUL I said give me that phone. (*Takes the receiver and its cradle from her. CORIE storms across to her table with great indignation, blows the candle out, and begins to take her setting into the kitchen. PAUL, into the phone*) Hello? . . . Who is this? . . . Who? . . . (*He looks at CORIE incredulously*) No, madam, we're not interested in Bossa Nova lessons. (*PAUL hangs up and stares at CORIE as she comes out of the kitchen. CORIE does not look at him as she finishes clearing the table and takes the plates into the kitchen. PAUL moves back to the couch and sits*) I'm glad we didn't have children . . . because you're a crazy lady.

CORIE (*Moves the chair back to the right, and carries the table back to the right of the couch*) I'll go where I want and do what I want. And I'm not going to stay in this house at nights as long as you're here.

PAUL (*Putting down the paper*) I see . . . Okay, Corie, when do you want me out?

CORIE I want you out now. Tonight.

PAUL (*Crossing to the closet*) Okay! Fine! (*He gets his suitcase and puts it on top of the end table*) I'll be out of here in five minutes. Is that soon enough for you?

CORIE Not if you can make it in two.

PAUL (*Opening the suitcase*) You can't wait, can you? You just can't wait till I'm gone and out of your life.

CORIE Right. When do I get it?

PAUL Get what?

CORIE My divorce. When do I get my divorce?

PAUL How should I know? They didn't even send us our marriage license yet.

CORIE I'll get your Jockey shorts.
(She goes up into the bedroom)

PAUL (*Moves to the coffee table and takes his drink*) You can leave the suits. I'll pick them up in the spring when they're dry.

195

BAREFOOT IN

CORIE (*In the bedroom*) You'd better ring the bell. 'Cause I'm buying a big dog tomorrow.

THE PARK

PAUL (*Finishing his drink*) A dog . . . Fine, fine . . . Now you'll have someone to walk barefoot in the park with. (*The phone rings. CORIE comes out of the bedroom with a pile of Jockey shorts which she throws on the couch. She crosses to answer the phone*) If that's Arthur Murray, say hello.

(He gathers up the Jockey shorts and puts them in the suitcase)

CORIE (*Picks up the phone*) Hello . . . Yes, Aunt Harriet . . . What? . . . No, mother's not with me . . . I'm positive . . . She left about two in the morning . . . What's wrong? . . . What?

PAUL (*Crossing to the closet and getting a pair of pants*) What is it?

CORIE (*Terribly frightened*) Mother??? . . . My Mother??? . . . Are you *sure*?

PAUL (*Putting the pants in the suitcase*) What is it?

CORIE (*Into the phone, now very nervous*) No, my phone's been out of order all day . . . (She gives PAUL a dirty look) No, I don't know what could have happened.

PAUL (*Blowing his nose*) What's the matter?

CORIE All right, Aunt Harriet, don't get excited . . . Yes . . . Yes, I'll call as soon as I hear.
(She hangs up)

PAUL (*Moves to CORIE*) What happened to your mother?

196

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CORIE She didn't come home last night. Her bed wasn't slept in. Maybe I should call the police.

(She starts to pick up the phone)

PAUL All right, take it easy, Corie . . .

CORIE (*Turns back to PAUL*) Don't you understand? Jessie looked. She was not in her bedroom this morning.

(She picks up the phone)

PAUL (*Groping*) Well . . . well, maybe her back was bothering her and she went to sleep on the ironing board.

CORIE You stupid idiot, didn't you hear what I said? My mother's been missing all night! . . . *My mother!*

PAUL (*The Chief of Police*) All right, let's not crack up.

CORIE (*Seething*) Will you go 'way. Get out of my life and go away! (*She slams the receiver down and crosses to the door*) I don't want to see you here when I get back.

PAUL Where are you going?

CORIE Upstairs to find out what happened to my mother.
(She opens the door) And don't be here when I get back!

(She goes out and slams the door. PAUL goes to the door)

PAUL Oh, yeah? . . . Well, I've got a big surprise for you . . . (*He opens the door and yells after her*) I'm not going to be here when you get back . . . (*Crossing to the dictionary on the side table*) Let's see how you like living alone . . . (*He pulls ties out of the dictionary*)

and throws them in the suitcase) A dog . . . Ha! That's a laugh . . . Wait till she tries to take him out for a walk . . . He'll get one look at those stairs and he'll go right for her throat. (*Crossing into the bedroom*) You might as well get a parakeet, too . . . So you can talk to him all night. (*Mimicking CORIE*) "How much can I spend for bird seeds, Polly? Is a nickel too much?" (*He comes out of the bedroom with shirts and pajamas*) Well, fortunately, I don't need anyone to protect me. (*Putting the clothes in the suitcase*) Because I am a man, sweetheart . . . An independent, mature, self-sufficient man. (*He sneezes as he closes the suitcase*) God bless me! (*Feeling sorry for himself, he feels his head*) I probably got the flu. (*Crossing to the bar, he takes a bottle and glass*) Yeah, I'm hot, cold, sweating, freezing. It's probably a twenty-four-hour virus. I'll be all right . . . (*He looks at his watch*) . . . tomorrow at a quarter to five. (*He pours another drink, puts down the bottle, and drinks. As he drinks, he notices the hole in the skylight. Stepping up onto the black leather armchair*) Oh! . . . Oh, thanks a lot, pal. (*He holds the glass up in toast fashion*) "And thus it was written, some shall die by pestilence, some by the plague . . . and one poor schnook is gonna get it from a hole in the ceiling." (*Getting down, he puts the drink on the side table*) Well, I guess that's it. (*He gets the bottle of Scotch from the bar, and glances at the bedroom*) Good-bye, leaky closet . . . (*To the bathroom*) Good-bye, no bathtub . . . (*Taking the attaché case from the coffee table, he looks up at the hole*) Good-bye, hole . . . (*Getting his suitcase*) Good-bye, six flights . . . (*As PAUL moves to the door, CORIE comes in. She holds her apron to her mouth, and is very disturbed*) Good-bye, Corie . . . (*PAUL stops in the doorway as CORIE wordlessly goes right by him and starts to go up the stairs to the bedroom*) Don't I get a good-bye? . . . According to law, I'm entitled to a good-bye!

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BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

CORIE (*Stops on the stairs and slowly turns back to PAUL, in a heart-rending wail*) Good-bye . . .

(*She goes into the bedroom and collapses on the bed*)

PAUL Corie . . . Now what is it? (*Alarmed, he drops the*

suitcase and attaché case, and puts the bottle on the end table) Is it your mother? . . . Was it an accident? . . . (He crosses to the bedroom) Corie, for pete's sakes, what happened to your mother?

(Suddenly MOTHER rushes in through the open door. She is now dressed in a man's bathrobe many sizes too big for her. Over-sized man's slippers flap on her bare feet. But she is holding her pocketbook. Desperately clutching the bathrobe, she crosses to the bedroom)

MOTHER Corie, please, listen! . . . It's not the way it looks at all!

PAUL (Looks at her in amazement) Mother???

MOTHER (Stops momentarily) Oh, good morning, Paul. (She goes up the stairs) Corie, you've got to talk to me. (CORIE slams the door to the bedroom shut) There's a perfectly good explanation. (Hysterical, in front of the closed door) Corie, please . . . You're not being fair . . . (She turns to PAUL) Paul, make her believe me.

PAUL (Goes up the stairs and pounds on the bedroom door) Now, you see . . . Now are you satisfied? . . . (He turns to MOTHER, being very forgiving) It's all right, Mother, I understand.

(He starts for his suitcase)

MOTHER (Shocked) No! . . . You don't understand!!! (She goes to PAUL) You don't understand at all!!! . . .

PAUL (Picking up the suitcase, attaché case, and bottle) As long as you're all right, Mother. (He looks at her, sadly shakes his head and exits)

MOTHER (Trying to stop him) No, Paul . . . You've got to believe me . . . (But PAUL is gone) Oh, this is awful . . . Somebody believe me.

(The bedroom door opens and CORIE comes out)

CORIE Paul! Where's Paul? . . .

MOTHER (*Putting her bag down on the end table*) Corie,
I'm going to explain everything. The bathrobe, the slippers . . . It's all just a big mistake.

CORIE (*Rushing to the front door*) Did he go? Did Paul leave?

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MOTHER (*Going to corie*) It happened last night . . .
when I left with Mr. Velasco . . .

BAREFOOT IN

CORIE (*Closing the door*) He was right . . . Paul was
right.

THE PARK

(She moves to the couch and sits)

MOTHER (*Following her*) It must have been the drinks.
I had a great deal to drink last night . . . (She sits next
to CORIE) I had Scotch, martinis, coffee, black bean
soup, and Uzus . . .

CORIE You don't have to explain a thing to me, Mother.

MOTHER (*Horrified*) But I want to explain . . . When I
got outside I suddenly felt dizzy . . . and I fainted . . .
Well, I passed out. In the slush.

CORIE I should have listened to him . . . It's all my fault.

MOTHER (*Desperately trying to make her see*) Then
Victor picked me up and carried me inside. I couldn't
walk because my shoes fell down the sewer.

CORIE (*Deep in her own misery*) You hear about these
things every day.

MOTHER He started to carry me up here but his beret fell
over his eyes, and he fell down the stairs . . . He fell
into apartment Three-C. I fell on his foot . . . They
had to carry us up.

CORIE I thought we'd have a nice sociable evening, that's
all.

MOTHER . . . Mr. Gonzales, Mr. Armandariz, and Mr. Calhoun . . . (*She sags in defeat*) They carried us up . . .

CORIE Just some drinks, dinner, and coffee . . . That's all . . .

200

MOTHER And then they put us down. On the rugs . . . Oh, he doesn't have beds . . . just thick rugs, and then I fell asleep . . .

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CORIE Paul was right. He was right about so many things . . .

MOTHER And then when I woke up, Victor was gone. But I was there . . . in his bathrobe. (*She pounds the couch with her fist*) I swear that's the truth, Corie.

CORIE (*Turns to MOTHER*) You don't have to swear, Mother.

MOTHER But I want you to believe me. I've told you everything.

CORIE Then where are your clothes?

MOTHER *That* I can't tell you.

CORIE Why not?

MOTHER Because you won't believe me.

CORIE I'll believe you.

MOTHER You won't.

CORIE I will. Where are your clothes?

MOTHER I don't know.

CORIE I don't believe you.

(*She gets up and moves toward MOTHER*)

MOTHER Didn't I say you wouldn't believe me? I just

don't know where they are . . . (*She gets up and moves to the right*) Oh, Corie, I've never been so humiliated in all my life . . .

CORIE Don't blame yourself . . . It's all my fault. I did it. I did this to you.

(*She leans on the bar, holding her head*)

201

MOTHER And I had horrible nightmares. I dreamt my fingers were falling off because I couldn't make a fist. (*She paces and catches sight of herself in the mirror*) Oh, God! I look like someone they woke up in the middle of the night on the *Andrea Doria*!

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

(*She breaks into hysterical laughter, and then there is a pounding on the door*)

VELASCO'S VOICE Hello. Anyone home? . . .

MOTHER (*Terror-stricken*) It's him . . . (*She rushes to CORIE*) Corie, don't let him in. I can't face him now . . . not in his bathrobe.

(*There is another pounding at the door*)

VELASCO'S VOICE Somebody, please!

CORIE (*Moving past MOTHER*) All right, Mother. I'll handle this. Go in the bedroom . . .

MOTHER (*Moving to the stairs*) Tell him I'm not here. Tell him anything.

(*The door opens and VELASCO steps in. He is now supporting himself with a cane and his foot is covered by a thick white stocking. As VELASCO enters, CORIE sinks into the armchair at right of the couch*)

VELASCO (*Hobbling up the step and moving to the couch*) I'm sorry but I need some aspirins desperately. (*He catches sight of MOTHER who is furtively trying to escape up the stairs to the bedroom*) Hello, Ethel.

MOTHER (*Caught, she stops and tries to cover her embarrassment*) Oh, hello, Victor . . . Mr. Victor . . . Mr. Velasco.

VELASCO (*To CORIE*) Did you hear what happened to us last night? (*To MOTHER*) Did you tell her what happened to us last night?

MOTHER (*Horrified*) Why . . . ? What happened to us last night? (*She composes herself*) Oh, you mean what happened to us last night. (*With great nonchalance, moving down the stairs*) Yes . . . Yes . . . I told her.

VELASCO (*At the couch*) Did you know my big toe is broken?

MOTHER (*Smiles*) Yes . . . (*She catches herself*) I mean no . . . Isn't that terrible?

VELASCO I'll have to wear a slipper for the next month . . . Only I can't find my slippers . . . (*He sees them on MOTHER's feet*) Oh, there they are . . .

MOTHER (*Looks down at her feet, as if surprised*) Oh, yes . . . There's your slippers.

VELASCO (*Sitting on the sofa and putting his foot up on the coffee table*) It took me forty minutes to walk up the stairs . . . I'll have to hire someone to pull me up the ladder. (*To CORIE*) Corie, could I please have about three hundred aspirins?

(*CORIE crosses to the stairs*)

MOTHER (*Appealing to CORIE*) A broken toe . . . Isn't that awful!

(*CORIE ignores her and goes into the bathroom*)

VELASCO That's not the worst of it. I just had a complete examination. Guess what else I have?

MOTHER What?

VELASCO An ulcer! From all the rich food . . . I have to take little pink pills like you.

MOTHER Oh, dear . . .

VELASCO You know something, Ethel . . . I don't think I'm as young as I think I am.

MOTHER Why do you say that?

VELASCO Isn't it obvious? Last night I couldn't carry you up the stairs. I can't eat rich foods any more . . . (*Very confidentially*) . . . and I dye my hair.

MOTHER (*Moves to the couch*) Oh . . . Well, it looks very nice.

VELASCO Thank you . . . So are you . . .

BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

MOTHER (*Sitting next to VELASCO*) Oh . . . Thank you.

VELASCO I mean it, Ethel. You're a very unusual woman.

MOTHER Unusual? . . . In what way?

VELASCO (*Reflectively*) It's funny, but I can hardly feel my big toe at all now.

MOTHER (*Insistent*) Unusual in what way?

VELASCO Well, I took a look at you last night . . . I took a long, close look at you . . . Do you know what you are, Ethel?

MOTHER (*Ready for the compliment*) What?

VELASCO A good sport.

MOTHER Oh . . . A good sport.

VELASCO To have gone through all you did last night. The trip to Staten Island, the strange food, the drinks, being carried up to my apartment like that. And you didn't say one word about it.

MOTHER Well, I didn't have much chance to . . . I did a lot of fainting.

VELASCO Yes . . . As a matter of fact, we both did . . . If you remember . . .

(*Remembering, he begins to laugh*)

MOTHER Yes . . . (*She joins in. It is a warm, hearty laugh*

shared by two friends. After the laugh gradually dies out, there is a moment of awkward silence and then with an attempt at renewed gaiety, MOTHER says) Mr. Velasco . . . Where are my clothes?

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VELASCO Your clothes . . . ? Oh, yes . . . (*He takes a piece of paper out of his pocket*) Here.
(*He gives it to her*)

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

MOTHER I'm sure I wore more than that.

VELASCO It's a cleaning ticket. They're sending them up at six o'clock.

MOTHER (*Taking the ticket*) Oh, they're at the cleaner's . . . (*After a moment's hesitation*) When did I take them off?

VELASCO You didn't . . . You were drenched and out cold. Gonzales took them off.

MOTHER (*Shocked*) Mr. Gonzales??

VELASCO Not Mister! . . . Doctor Gonzales!

MOTHER (*Relieved*) Doctor . . . Oh, Doctor Gonzales . . . Well, I suppose that's all right. How convenient to have an M.D. in the building.

VELASCO (*Laughing*) He's not an M.D. He's a Doctor of Philosophy.

MOTHER (*Joins in the laughter with great abandon*) Oh, no . . .

(*CORIE comes out of the bathroom with aspirin and a glass of water, and watches them laughing with bewilderment*)

CORIE (*Goes behind the couch*) Here's the aspirins.

VELASCO Thank you, but I'm feeling better now.

MOTHER I'll take them.

(*Takes an aspirin and a sip of water*)

VELASCO (*Gets up and hobbles to the door*) I have to go.

I'm supposed to soak my foot every hour . . .

MOTHER Oh, dear . . . Is there anything I can do?

VELASCO (*Turns back*) Yes . . . Yes, there is . . . Would you like to have dinner with me tonight?

205

MOTHER (*Surprised*) Me?

BAREFOOT IN

VELASCO (*Nods*) If you don't mind eating plain food.

THE PARK

MOTHER I love *plain* food.

VELASCO Good . . . I'll call the New York Hospital for a reservation . . . (*He opens the door*) Pick me up in a few minutes . . . We'll have a glass of buttermilk before we go.

(*He exits*)

MOTHER (*After a moment, she turns to CORIE on the stairs and giggles. Takes the grapes from the coffee table*) You know what? . . . I'll bet I'm the first woman ever asked to dinner wearing a size forty-eight bathrobe.

CORIE (*Lost in her own problem*) Mother, can I talk to you for a minute?

MOTHER (*Puts down the bunch of grapes, gets up, and moves right*) I just realized. I slept without a board . . . For the first time in years I slept without a board.

CORIE Mother, will you listen . . .

MOTHER (*Turns to CORIE*) You don't suppose Uzu is a Greek miracle drug, do you?

(*She flips a grape back and forth and pops it into her mouth like a knichi*)

CORIE Mother, before you go, there's something we've got to talk about.

MOTHER (*Moving to CORIE*) Oh, Corie, how sweet . . . You're worried about me.

CORIE I am *not* worried about you.

MOTHER (*Looks in the mirror*) Oh, dear. My hair. What am I going to do with my hair?

CORIE I don't care what you do with your hair.

206

MOTHER If he can dye it, why can't I? Do you think black would make me look too Mexican?

CORIE Mother, why won't you talk to me?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

MOTHER (*Moving back of the couch*) Now? . . . But Victor's waiting . . . (*She turns back to CORIE*) Why don't you and Paul come with us?

CORIE That's what I've been trying to tell you . . . Paul isn't coming back.

MOTHER What do you mean? Where'd he go?

CORIE I don't know. Reno. Texas. Wherever it is that men go to get divorced.

MOTHER *Divorced???*

CORIE That's right. Divorced. Paul and I have split up. For good.

MOTHER I don't believe it.

CORIE Why don't you believe it?

MOTHER You? And Paul?

CORIE Well, you just saw him leave here with his suitcase. What did you think he had in there?

MOTHER I don't know. I know how neat he is. I thought maybe the garbage.

CORIE Mother, I believe you. Why won't you believe me?

MOTHER (*Moves left to the bentwood chair and sits facing CORIE*) Because in my entire life I've never seen two people more in love than you and Paul.

CORIE (*Tearfully*) Well, it's not true. It may have been yesterday but it sure isn't today. It's all over, Mother. He's gone.

MOTHER You mean he just walked out? For no reason at all? . . .

207

CORIE He had a perfectly *good* reason. I *told* him to get out. I did it. Me and my big stupid mouth.

BAREFOOT IN

MOTHER It couldn't have been all your fault.

THE PARK

CORIE No? . . . No?? Because of me you're running around without your clothes and Paul is out there on the streets with a cold looking for a place to sleep. Who's fault is that?

MOTHER Yours! . . . But do you want to know something that may shock you? . . . I still love you.

CORIE You do? . . .

MOTHER Yes, and Paul loves you, too.

CORIE And I love him . . . Only I don't know what he wants. I don't know how to make him happy . . . Oh, Mom, what am I going to do?

MOTHER That's the first time you've asked my advice since you were ten. (*She gets up and moves to CORIE*) It's very simple. You've just got to give up a little of you for him. Don't make everything a game. Just late at night in that little room upstairs. But take care of him. And make him feel important. And if you can do that, you'll have a happy and wonderful marriage . . . Like two out of every ten couples . . . But you'll be one of the two, baby . . . (*She gently strokes CORIE's hair*) Now get your coat and go on out after him . . . I've got a date. (*She crosses to the coffee table and picks up her handbag*) Aunt Harriet isn't going to believe a word of this . . . (*Flourishing her bathrobe, she moves to the door and opens it*) I wish I had my Polaroid camera . . .

(She pauses, blows CORIE a kiss, and exits. CORIE thinks a moment, wipes her eyes, and then rushes to the closet for her coat. Without stopping to put it on, she rushes to the door and opens it. As the door opens, PAUL is revealed at the doorway. He greets CORIE with a loud sneeze. His clothes are disheveled, his overcoat is gone, and he is obviously drunk, but he still is carrying his suitcase)

CORIE Paul! . . . Paul, are you all right? . . .

PAUL (Very carefully crossing to the coffee table) Fine . . . Fine, thank you . . .
(He giggles)

CORIE (Moves to him) I was just going out to look for you.

PAUL (Puts the suitcase on the floor and starts to take out his clothes) Oh . . . ? Where were you going to look? . . .

CORIE I don't know. I was just going to look.

PAUL (Confidentially) Oh . . . ! Well, you'll never find me.

(He throws a handful of clothes into the closet.
He is apparently amused by some secret joke)

CORIE Paul, I've got so much to say to you, darling.

PAUL (Taking more clothes out of the suitcase) So, have I, Corie . . . I got all the way downstairs and suddenly it hit me. I saw everything clearly for the first time. (He moves up left to behind the couch) I said to myself, this is crazy . . . Crazy! . . . It's all wrong for me to run like this . . . (He turns to CORIE) And there's only one right thing to do, Corie.

CORIE (Moving to him) Really, Paul? . . . What? . . .

PAUL (Jubilantly) You get out!
(He breaks into hysterical laughter)

CORIE What? . . .

PAUL Why should I get out? I'm paying a hundred twenty-five a month . . . (*He looks about the apartment*) . . . for this . . . You get out.

(*He stuffs clothes into the dictionary*)

209

CORIE But I don't want to get out!

BAREFOOT IN

THE PARK

PAUL (*Crossing back to the suitcase and getting another handful of clothes*) I'm afraid you'll have to . . . The lease is in my name . . . (*He moves to the stairs*) I'll give you ten minutes to pack your goulash.

CORIE (*Moves to him*) Paul, your coat! . . . Where is your coat?

PAUL (*Draws himself up in indignation*) Coat? . . . I don't need a coat . . . It's only two degrees . . .

(*He starts to go up the stairs, slips and falls*)

CORIE (*Rushing to him*) Paul, are you all right? . . .

PAUL (*Struggling up*) You're dawdling, Corie . . . I want you out of here in exactly ten minutes . . .

CORIE (*Holding him*) Paul, you're ice cold . . . You're freezing! . . . What have you been doing?

PAUL (*Pulls away from her and moves to a chair*) What do you think I've been doing? (*He puts his foot up on the seat*) I've been walking barefoot in the God-damn park.

CORIE (*Pulls up his pants leg, revealing his stockingless foot*) Where's your socks? . . . Are you crazy?

PAUL No . . . No . . . But guess what I am.

CORIE (*Looks at him*) You're drunk!

PAUL (*In great triumph, he moves right*) Ah . . . ! You finally noticed!!

CORIE Lousy, stinkin' drunk!

PAUL Ah, gee . . . Thanks . . .

CORIE (*Moves to him and feels his forehead*) You're burning up with fever.

210

PAUL How about that?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CORIE You'll get pneumonia!

PAUL If that's what you want, that is what I'll get.

CORIE (*Leads him to the couch*) I want you to get those shoes off . . . They're soaking wet . . .

(*She pushes him down onto the couch*)

PAUL I can't . . . My feet have swollen . . .

CORIE (*Pulling his shoes off*) I never should have let you out of here. I knew you had a cold.

(*She puts the shoes on the side table*)

PAUL (*Getting up and moving to the doorway*) Hey! Hey, Corie . . . Let's do that thing you said before . . . Let's wake up the police and see if all the rooms come out of the crazy neighbors . . . (*He opens the door and shouts into the hall*) All right, everybody up . . .

CORIE (*Runs to him and pulls him back into the room*) Will you shut up and get into bed . . . (*As she struggles with him, she tickles him, and PAUL falls to the floor behind the couch. CORIE closes the door behind her*) Get into bed . . .

PAUL You get in first.

CORIE You're sick.

PAUL Not *that* sick . . .

(*He lunges for her and she backs away against the door*)

CORIE Stop it, Paul . . .

PAUL Come on, Corie. Let's break my fever . . .
(He grabs her)

CORIE I said stop it! *(Struggling to get away)* I mean it,
damn you . . . Stop it!

*(She gives him an elbow in the stomach and dodges
away through the kitchen)*

211

BAREFOOT IN

PAUL Gee, you're pretty when you're mean and rotten.

THE PARK

CORIE Keep away from me, Paul . . . *(PAUL moves toward her)* I'm warning you . . . I'll scream.

(CORIE keeps the couch between her and PAUL)

PAUL *(Stops)* Shh . . . ! There's snow on the roof. We'll have an avalanche! . . .

CORIE *(Dodging behind the chair)* You shouldn't be walking around like this. You've got a fever . . .

PAUL *(Moving to the chair)* Stand still! The both of you!

CORIE *(Running up the stairs to the bathroom)* No, Paul . . . ! I don't like you when you're like this.
(She barricades herself in the bathroom)

PAUL *(Chasing her and pounding on the door)* Open this door!

CORIE *(From the bathroom)* I can't . . . I'm scared.

PAUL Of me?

CORIE Yes.

PAUL Why?

CORIE Because it's not you anymore . . . I want the old Paul back.

PAUL That fuddy duddy?

212

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CORIE He's not a fuddy duddy. He's dependable and he's strong and he takes care of me and tells me how much I can spend and protects me from people like you . . . (**PAUL** suddenly has a brain storm and with great glee sneaks off into the bedroom) And I just want him to know how much I love him . . . And that I'm going to make everything here exactly the way he wants it . . . I'm going to fix the hole in the skylight . . . and the leak in the closet . . . And I'm going to put in a bathtub and if he wants I'll even carry him up the stairs every night . . . Because I want him to know how much I love him . . . (Slowly and cautiously opening the door) Can you hear me, darling? . . . Paul? . . . (**PAUL** appears on the skylight. He is crawling drunkenly along the ledge. **CORIE**, having gotten no answer, comes out of the bathroom and goes into the bedroom searching for **PAUL**) Paul, are you all right?

(She comes out of the bedroom and crosses toward the front door. When she is beneath him, **PAUL** taps on the skylight and stands up. **CORIE**, looking up, sees him and screams)

CORIE (Screams) Paul . . . You idiot . . . Come down . . . You'll kill yourself.

PAUL (Teetering on the ledge, yelling through the skylight) I want to be a nut like everyone else in this building.

CORIE (Up on her knees on the couch, yelling back) No! No, Paul! . . . I don't want you to be a nut. I want you to come down.

PAUL I'll come down when you've said it again . . . Loud and clear.

CORIE What? . . . Anything, Paul . . . Anything!

PAUL My husband . . .

CORIE "My husband . . ."

PAUL Paul Bratter . . .

CORIE "Paul Bratter . . ."

PAUL . . . rising young attorney . . .
(He nearly falls off the ledge)

213

CORIE (*Screaming in fright*) ". . . rising young attorney . . ."

BAREFOOT IN

PAUL . . . is a lousy stinkin' drunk . . .

THE PARK

CORIE ". . . is a lousy stinkin' drunk." . . . And I love him.

PAUL And I love you, Corie. Even when I didn't like you, I loved you.

CORIE (*Crossing to PAUL*) Then please, darling . . . Please, come down.

PAUL I . . . I can't . . . Not now.

CORIE Why not?

PAUL I'm going to be sick . . .
(He looks around as if to find a place to be sick)

CORIE Oh, no!

PAUL Oh, yes!

CORIE (*Paces back and forth*) Paul . . . Paul . . . Don't move! I'll come out and get you.

PAUL (*Holding on desperately*) Would you do that, Corie? Because I'm getting panicky!

CORIE Yes . . . Yes, darling, I'm coming . . .
(She runs off into the bedroom)

PAUL Corie . . . Corie . . .

CORIE (*Dashing out of the bedroom and down the stairs*)
What, Paul? . . . What???

PAUL Don't leave me . . .

214

CORIE You'll be all right, darling. Just hold on tight. And
try to be calm . . .

Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

PAUL How? What should I do?

CORIE (*Ponders*) What should he do? (*To PAUL*) Sing,
Paul!

PAUL Sing??

CORIE Sing . . . Keep singing as loud as you can until I
come out there. Promise me you'll keep singing, Paul . . .

PAUL Yes, yes . . . I promise . . . I'll keep singing . . .

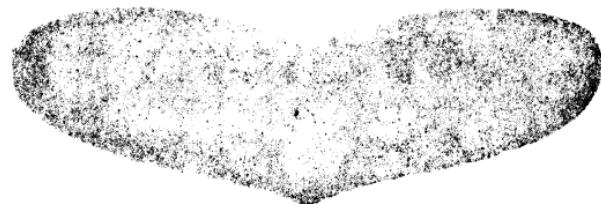
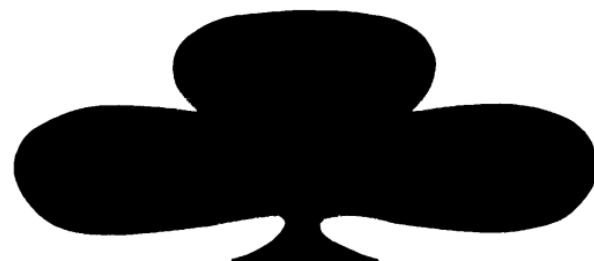
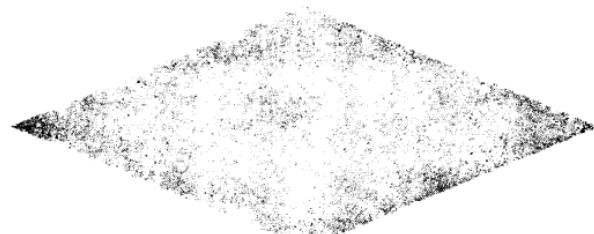
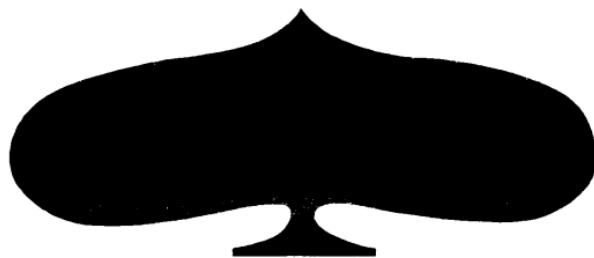
CORIE (*Moving to the stairs*) But don't stop until I come
out . . . I love you, darling . . . Keep singing, Paul
. . . Keep singing!

(She runs off into the bedroom)

PAUL (*Calling after her in desperation*) Corie, Corie,
what song should I sing?? . . . Oh, God . . . (*He pulls
himself together*) "Shama, shama. . . ."

Curtain

The Odd Couple



SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action takes place in an apartment on Riverside Drive in New York City.

ACT I: A hot summer night.

ACT II:

Scene 1: Two weeks later, about eleven at night.

Scene 2: A few days later, about eight P.M.

ACT III: The next evening, about seven-thirty.

Act One

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THE ODD
COUPLE

It is a warm summer night in OSCAR MADISON's apartment. This is one of those large eight-room affairs on Riverside Drive in the upper eighties. The building is about thirty-five years old and still has vestiges of its glorious past —high ceilings, walk-in closets and thick walls. We are in the living room with doors leading off to the kitchen, a bedroom and a bathroom, and a hallway to the other bedrooms.

Although the furnishings have been chosen with extreme good taste, the room itself, without the touch and care of a woman these past few months, is now a study in slovenliness. Dirty dishes, discarded clothes, old newspapers, empty bottles, glasses filled and unfilled, opened and unopened laundry packages, mail and disarrayed furniture abound. The only cheerful note left in this room is the lovely view of the New Jersey Palisades through its twelfth-floor window. Three months ago this was a lovely apartment.

As the curtain rises, the room is filled with smoke. A poker game is in progress. There are six chairs around the table but only four men are sitting. They are MURRAY, ROY, SPEED and VINNIE. VINNIE, with the largest stack of chips in front of him, is nervously tapping his foot; he keeps checking his watch. ROY is watching SPEED and SPEED is glaring at MURRAY with incredulity and utter fascination. MURRAY is the dealer. He slowly and methodically tries to shuffle. It is a ponderous and painful business. SPEED shakes his head in disbelief. This is all done wordlessly.

SPEED (*Cups his chin in his hand and looks at MURRAY*)

Tell me, Mr. Maverick, is this your first time on the riverboat?

MURRAY (*With utter disregard*) You don't like it, get a machine.

(*He continues to deal slowly*)

ROY Geez, it stinks in here.

VINNIE (*Looks at his watch*) What time is it?

SPEED Again what time is it?

VINNIE (*Whining*) My watch is slow. I'd like to know what time it is.

SPEED (*Glares at him*) You're winning ninety-five dollars, that's what time it is. Where the hell are you running?

VINNIE I'm not running anywhere. I just asked what time it was. Who said anything about running?

ROY (*Looks at his watch*) It's ten-thirty.

(*There is a pause. MURRAY continues to shuffle*)

VINNIE (*After the pause*) I got to leave by twelve.

SPEED (*Looks up in despair*) Oh, Christ!

VINNIE I told you that when I sat down. I got to leave by twelve. Murray, didn't I say that when I sat down? I said I got to leave by twelve.

SPEED All right, don't talk to him. He's dealing. (To MURRAY) Murray, you wanna rest for a while? Go lie down, sweetheart.

MURRAY You want speed or accuracy, make up your mind.

(*He begins to deal slowly. SPEED puffs on his cigar angrily*)

ROY Hey, you want to do me a really big favor? Smoke toward New Jersey.

(SPEED blows smoke at ROY)

MURRAY No kidding, I'm really worried about Felix.

(*Points to an empty chair*) He's never been this late before. Maybe somebody should call. (Yells off) Hey, Oscar, why don't you call Felix?

ROY (*Waves his hand through the smoke*) Listen, why don't we chip in three dollars apiece and buy another window. How the hell can you breathe in here?

MURRAY How many cards you got, four?

SPEED Yes, Murray, we all have four cards. When you give us one more, we'll all have five. If you were to give us two more, we'd have six. Understand how it works now?

ROY (Yells off) Hey, Oscar, what do you say? In or out?
(From offstage we hear OSCAR's voice)

OSCAR (Offstage) Out, pussycat, out!
(SPEED opens and the others bet)

VINNIE I told my wife I'd be home by one the latest.
We're making an eight o'clock plane to Florida. I told
you that when I sat down.

SPEED Don't cry, Vinnie. You're forty-two years old. It's
embarrassing. Give me two . . .

(He discards)

ROY Why doesn't he fix the air conditioner? It's ninety-
eight degrees, and it sits there sweating like everyone
else. I'm out.

(He goes to the window and looks out)

MURRAY Who goes to Florida in July?

VINNIE It's off-season. There's no crowds and you get the
best room for one-tenth the price. No cards . . .

SPEED Some vacation. Six cheap people in an empty
hotel.

MURRAY Dealer takes four . . . Hey, you think maybe
Felix is sick? (He points to the empty chair) I mean
he's never been this late before.

ROY (Takes a laundry bag from an armchair and sits) You
know, it's the same garbage from last week's game. I'm
beginning to recognize things.

MURRAY (Throwing his cards down) I'm out . . .

SPEED (Showing his hand) Two kings . . .

VINNIE Straight . . .

(He shows his hand and takes in the pot)

MURRAY Hey, maybe he's in his office locked in the john
again. Did you know Felix was once locked in the john
overnight. He wrote out his entire will on a half a roll
of toilet paper! Heee, what a nut!

(VINNIE is playing with his chips)

SPEED (Glares at him as he shuffles the cards) Don't
play with your chips. I'm asking you nice; don't play
with your chips.

VINNIE (*To SPEED*) I'm not playing. I'm counting. Leave me alone. What are you picking on me for? How much do you think I'm winning? Fifteen dollars!

SPEED Fifteen dollars? You dropped more than that in your cuffs!

(*SPEED deals a game of draw poker*)

MURRAY (*Yells off*) Hey, Oscar, what do you say?

OSCAR (*Enters carrying a tray with beer, sandwiches, a can of peanuts, and opened bags of pretzels and Fritos*) I'm in! I'm in! Go ahead. Deal!

(*OSCAR MADISON is forty-three. He is a pleasant, appealing man who seems to enjoy life to the fullest. He enjoys his weekly poker game, his friends, his excessive drinking and his cigars. He is also one of those lucky creatures in life who even enjoys his work—he's a sports-writer for the New York Post. His carefree attitude is evident in the sloppiness of his household, but it seems to bother others more than it does OSCAR. This is not to say that OSCAR is without cares or worries. He just doesn't seem to have any*)

VINNIE Aren't you going to look at your cards?

OSCAR (*Sets the tray on a side chair*) What for? I'm gonna bluff anyway. (*Opens a bottle of Coke*) Who gets the Coke?

MURRAY I get a Coke.

OSCAR My friend Murray the policeman gets a warm Coke.

(*He gives him the bottle*)

ROY (*Opens the betting*) You still didn't fix the refrigerator? It's been two weeks now. No wonder it stinks in here.

OSCAR (*Picks up his cards*) Temper, temper. If I wanted nagging I'd go back with my wife. (*Throws them down*) I'm out. Who wants food?

MURRAY What have you got?

OSCAR (*Looks under the bread*) I got brown sandwiches and green sandwiches. Well, what do you say?

MURRAY What's the green?

OSCAR It's either very new cheese or very old meat.

MURRAY I'll take the brown.

(**OSCAR gives MURRAY a sandwich**)

ROY (*Glares at MURRAY*) Are you crazy? You're not going to eat that, are you?

MURRAY I'm hungry.

ROY His refrigerator's been broken for two weeks. I saw milk standing in there that wasn't even in the bottle.

OSCAR (*To ROY*) What are you, some kind of a health nut? Eat, Murray, eat!

ROY I've got six cards . . .

SPEED That figures—I've got three aces. Misdeal.

(*They all throw their cards in. SPEED begins to shuffle*)

VINNIE You know who makes very good sandwiches? Felix. Did you ever taste his cream cheese and pimento on date-nut bread?

SPEED (*To VINNIE*) All right, make up your mind poker or menus. (*OSCAR opens a can of beer, which sprays in a geyser over the players and the table. There is a hubbub as they all yell at OSCAR. He hands ROY the overflowing can and pushes the puddle of beer under the chair. The players start to go back to the game only to be sprayed again as OSCAR opens another beer can. There is another outraged cry as they try to stop OSCAR and mop up the beer on the table with a towel which was hanging on the standing lamp. OSCAR, undisturbed, gives them the beer and the bags of refreshments, and they finally sit back in their chairs. OSCAR wipes his hands on the sleeve of ROY's jacket which is hanging on the back of the chair*) Hey, Vinnie, tell Oscar what time you're leaving.

VINNIE (*Like a trained dog*) Twelve o'clock.

SPEED (*To the others*) You hear? We got ten minutes before the next announcement. All right, this game is five card stud. (*He deals and ad libs calling the cards, ending with MURRAY's card*) . . . And a bullet for the policeman. All right, Murray, it's your bet. (*No answer*) Do something, huh.

OSCAR (*Getting a drink at the bar*) Don't yell at my friend Murray.

MURRAY (*Throwing in a coin*) I'm in for a quarter.

OSCAR (*Proudly looks in MURRAY's eyes*) Beautiful, baby, beautiful.

(*He sits down and begins to open the can of peanuts*)

222

ROY Hey, Oscar, let's make a rule. Every six months you have to buy fresh potato chips. How can you live like this? Don't you have a maid?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

OSCAR (*Shakes his head*) She quit after my wife and kids left. The work got to be too much for her. (*He looks on the table*) The pot's shy. Who didn't put in a quarter?

MURRAY (*To OSCAR*) You didn't.

OSCAR (*Puts in money*) You got a big mouth, Murray. Just for that, lend me twenty dollars.

(*SPEED deals another round*)

MURRAY I just loaned you twenty dollars ten minutes ago.

(*They all join in a round of betting*)

OSCAR You loaned me ten dollars twenty minutes ago. Learn to count, pussycat.

MURRAY Learn to play poker, chicken licken! Borrow from somebody else. I keep winning my own money back.

ROY (*To OSCAR*) You owe everybody in the game. If you don't have it, you shouldn't play.

OSCAR All right, I'm through being the nice one. You owe me six dollars apiece for the buffet.

SPEED (*Dealing another round of cards*) Buffet? Hot beer and two sandwiches left over from when you went to high school?

OSCAR What do you want at a poker game, a tomato surprise? Murray, lend me twenty dollars or I'll call your wife and tell her you're in Central Park wearing a dress.

MURRAY You want money, ask Felix.

OSCAR He's not here.

MURRAY Neither am I.

ROY (*Gives him money*) All right, here. You're on the books for another twenty.

OSCAR How many times are you gonna keep saying it?
(He takes the money)

MURRAY When are you gonna call Felix?

OSCAR When are we gonna play poker?

MURRAY Aren't you even worried? It's the first game he's missed in over two years.

223

OSCAR The record is fifteen years set by Lou Gehrig in 1939! I'll call! I'll call!

ROY How can you be so lazy?
(The phone rings)

OSCAR *(Throwing his cards in)* Call me irresponsible, I'm funny that way.
(He goes to the phone)

SPEED Pair of sixes . . .

VINNIE Three deuces . . .

SPEED *(Throws up his hands in despair)* This is my last week. I get all the aggravation I need at home.
(OSCAR picks up the phone)

OSCAR Hello! Oscar the Poker Player!

VINNIE *(To OSCAR)* If it's my wife tell her I'm leaving at twelve.

SPEED *(To VINNIE)* You look at your watch once more and you get the peanuts in your face. *(To ROY)* Deal the cards!

(The game continues during OSCAR's phone conversation, with ROY dealing a game of stud)

OSCAR *(Into the phone)* Who? Who did you want, please? Dabby? Dabby who? No, there's no Dabby here. Oh, Daddy! *(To the others)* For crise sakes, it's my kid. *(Back into the phone, he speaks with great love and affection)* Brucey, hello, baby. Yes, it's Daddy! *(There is a general outburst of ad libbing from the poker players. To the others)* Hey, come on, give me a break, willya? My five-year-old kid is calling from California. It must be costing him a fortune. *(Back into the phone)* How've you been, sweetheart? Yes, I finally got your letter. It took three weeks. Yes, but next time you tell Mommy to give you a stamp. I know, but you're not supposed to draw it on. *(He laughs. To the others)* You hear?

THE ODD
COUPLE

SPEED We hear. We hear. We're all thrilled.

OSCAR (*Into the phone*) What's that, darling? What goldfish? Oh, in your room! Oh, sure. Sure, I'm taking care of them. (*He holds the phone over his chest*) Oh, God, I killed my kid's goldfish! (*Back into the phone*) Yes, I feed them every day.

224

ROY Murderer!

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

OSCAR Mommy wants to speak to me? Right. Take care of yourself, soldier. I love you.

VINNIE (*Beginning to deal a game of stud*) Ante a dollar . . .

SPEED (*To OSCAR*) Cost you a dollar to play. You got a dollar?

OSCAR Not after I get through talking to this lady. (*Into the phone with false cheerfulness*) Hello, Blanche. How are you? Err, yes, I have a pretty good idea why you're calling. I'm a week behind with the check, right? Four weeks? That's not possible. Because it's not possible. Blanche, I keep a record of every check and I know I'm only three weeks behind! Blanche, I'm trying the best I can. Blanche, don't threaten me with jail because it's not a threat. With my expenses and my alimony, a prisoner takes home more pay than I do! Very nice, in front of the kids. Blanche, don't tell me you're going to have my salary attached, just say goodbye! Goodbye! (*He hangs up. To the players*) I'm eight hundred dollars behind in alimony so let's up the stakes.

(*He gets his drink from the poker table*)

ROY She can do it, you know.

OSCAR What?

ROY Throw you in jail. For nonsupport of the kids.

OSCAR Never. If she can't call me once a week to aggravate me, she's not happy.

(*He crosses to the bar*)

MURRAY It doesn't bother you? That you can go to jail? Or that maybe your kids don't have enough clothes or enough to eat?

OSCAR Murray, Poland could live for a year on what my kids leave over from lunch! Can we play cards?

(*He refills his drink*)

ROY But that's the point. You shouldn't *be* in this kind of trouble. It's because you don't know how to manage anything. I should know; I'm your accountant.

OSCAR (*Crossing to the table*) If you're my accountant, how come I need money?

ROY If you need money, how come you play poker?

225

OSCAR Because I need money.

ROY But you always lose.

OSCAR That's why I need the money! Listen, *I'm* not complaining. *You're* complaining. I get along all right. I'm living.

ROY Alone? In eight dirty rooms?

OSCAR If I win tonight, I'll buy a broom.

(MURRAY and SPEED *buy chips from VINNIE*. and MURRAY begins to shuffle the deck for a game of draw)

ROY That's not what you need. What you need is a wife.

OSCAR How can I afford a wife when I can't afford a broom?

ROY Then don't play poker.

OSCAR (*Puts down his drink, rushes to ROY and they struggle over the bag of potato chips, which rips, showering everyone. They all begin to yell at one another*) Then don't come to my house and eat my potato chips!

MURRAY What are you yelling about? We're playing a friendly game.

SPEED Who's *playing*? We've been sitting here talking since eight o'clock.

VINNIE Since *seven*. That's why I said I was going to quit at *twelve*.

SPEED How'd you like a stale banana right in the mouth?

MURRAY (*The peacemaker*) All right, all right, let's calm down. Take it easy. I'm a cop, you know. I could arrest the whole lousy game. (*He finishes dealing the cards*) Four . . .

OSCAR (*Sitting at the table*) My friend Murray the Cop is right. Let's just play cards. And please hold them up; I can't see where I marked them.

THE ODD
COUPLE

MURRAY You're worse than the kids from the PAL.

OSCAR But you still love me, Roy, sweetie, right?

ROY (*Petulant*) Yeah, yeah.

OSCAR That's not good enough: Come on, say it. In front of the whole poker game. "I love you, Oscar Madison."

226

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ROY You don't take any of this seriously, do you? You owe money to your wife, your government, your friends . . .

OSCAR (*Throws his cards down*) What do you want me to do, Roy, jump in the garbage disposal and grind myself to death? (*The phone rings. He goes to answer it*) Life goes on even for those of us who are divorced, broke and sloppy. (*Into the phone*) Hello? Divorced, Broke and Sloppy. Oh, hello, sweetheart. (*He becomes very seductive, pulls the phone to the side and talks low, but he is still audible to the others, who turn and listen*) I told you not to call me during the game. I can't talk to you now. You know I do, darling. All right, just a minute. (*He turns*) Murray, it's your wife.

(*He puts the phone on the table and sits on the sofa*)

MURRAY (*Nods disgustedly as he crosses to the phone*) I wish you were having an affair with her. Then she wouldn't bother me all the time. (*He picks up the phone*) Hello, Mimi, what's wrong?

(*SPEED gets up, stretches and goes into the bathroom*)

OSCAR (*In a woman's voice, imitating MIMI*) What time are you coming home? (*Then imitating MURRAY*) I don't know, about twelve, twelve-thirty.

MURRAY (*Into the phone*) I don't know, about twelve, twelve-thirty! (*ROY gets up and stretches*) Why, what did you want, Mimi? "A corned beef sandwich and a strawberry malted!"

OSCAR Is she pregnant again?

MURRAY (*Holds the phone over his chest*) No, just fat! (*There is the sound of a toilet flushing, and after SPEED comes out of the bathroom, VINNIE goes in. Into the phone again*) What? How could you hear that? I had the phone over my chest. Who? Felix? No, he didn't

show up tonight. What's wrong? You're kidding! How should I know? All right, all right, goodbye. (*The toilet flushes again, and after VINNIE comes out of the bathroom, ROY goes in*) Goodbye, Mimi. Goodbye. (*He hangs up. To the others*) Well, what did I tell you? I knew it!

ROY What's the matter?

227

MURRAY (*Pacing by the couch*) Felix is missing!

OSCAR Who?

THE ODD

C O U P L E

MURRAY Felix! Felix Ungar! The man who sits in that chair every week and cleans ashtrays. I told you something was up.

SPEED (*At the table*) What do you mean, missing?

MURRAY He didn't show up for work today. He didn't come home tonight. No one knows where he is. Mimi just spoke to his wife.

VINNIE (*In his chair at the poker table*) Felix?

MURRAY They looked everywhere. I'm telling you he's missing.

OSCAR Wait a minute. No one is missing for one day.

VINNIE That's right. You've got to be missing for forty-eight hours before you're missing. The worst he could be is lost.

MURRAY How could he be lost? He's forty-four years old and lives on West End Avenue. What's the matter with you?

ROY (*Sitting in an armchair*) Maybe he had an accident.

OSCAR They would have heard.

ROY If he's laying in a gutter somewhere? Who would know who he is?

OSCAR He's got ninety-two credit cards in his wallet. The minute something happens to him, America lights up.

VINNIE Maybe he went to a movie. You know how long those pictures are today.

SPEED (*Looks at VINNIE contemptuously*) No wonder you're going to Florida in July! Dumb, dumb, dumb!

ROY Maybe he was mugged?

OSCAR For thirty-six hours? How much money could he have on him?

ROY Maybe they took his clothes. I knew a guy who was mugged in a doctor's office. He had to go home in a nurse's uniform.

(OSCAR throws a pillow from the couch at ROY)

SPEED Murray, you're a cop. What do you think?

MURRAY I think it's something real bad.

SPEED How do you know?

MURRAY I can feel it in my bones.

SPEED (To the others) You hear? Bulldog Drummond.

ROY Maybe he's drunk. Does he drink?

OSCAR Felix? On New Year's Eve he has Pepto-Bismal. What are we guessing? I'll call his wife.

(He picks up the phone)

SPEED Wait a minute! Don't start anything yet. Just 'cause we don't know where he is doesn't mean somebody else doesn't. Does he have a girl?

VINNIE A what?

SPEED A girl? You know. Like when you're through work early.

MURRAY Felix? Playing around? Are you crazy? He wears a vest and galoshes.

SPEED (Gets up and moves toward MURRAY) You mean you automatically know who has and who hasn't got a girl on the side?

MURRAY (Moves to SPEED) Yes, I automatically know.

SPEED All right, you're so smart. Have I got a girl?

MURRAY No, you haven't got a girl. What you've got is what I've got. What you *wish* you got and what you *got* is a whole different civilization! Oscar maybe has a girl on the side.

SPEED That's different. He's divorced. That's not on the side. That's in the middle.

(He moves to the table)

OSCAR (To them both as he starts to dial) You through? 'Cause one of our poker players is missing. I'd like to find out about him.

VINNIE I thought he looked edgy the last couple of weeks.

(To SPEED) Didn't you think he looked edgy?

SPEED No. As a matter of fact, I thought *you* looked edgy.
(He moves down to the right)

OSCAR (Into the phone) Hello? Frances? Oscar. I just heard.

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ROY Tell her not to worry. She's probably hysterical.

MURRAY Yeah, you know women.

(He sits down on the couch)

OSCAR (Into the phone) Listen, Frances, the most important thing is not to worry. Oh! (To the others) She's not worried.

THE ODD
COUPLE

MURRAY Sure.

OSCAR (Into the phone) Frances, do you have *any* idea where he could be? He what? You're kidding? Why? No, I didn't know. Gee, that's too bad. All right, listen, Frances, you just sit tight and the minute I hear anything I'll let you know. Right. G'bye.

(He hangs up. They all look at him expectantly.
He gets up wordlessly and crosses to the table,
thinking. They all watch him a second, not being
able to stand it any longer)

MURRAY Ya gonna tell us or do we hire a private detective?

OSCAR They broke up!

ROY Who?

OSCAR Felix and Frances! They broke up! The entire marriage is through.

VINNIE You're kidding!

ROY I don't believe it.

SPEED After twelve years?

(OSCAR sits down at the table)

VINNIE They were such a happy couple.

MURRAY Twelve years doesn't mean you're a *happy* couple. It just means you're a *long* couple.

SPEED Go figure it. Felix and Frances.

ROY What are you surprised at? He used to sit there every Friday night and tell us how they were fighting.

SPEED I know. But who believes Felix?

VINNIE What happened?

OSCAR She wants out, that's all.

MURRAY He'll go to pieces. I know Felix. He's going to try something crazy.

SPEED That's all he ever used to talk about. "My beautiful wife. My wonderful wife." What happened?

OSCAR His beautiful, wonderful wife can't stand him, that's what happened.

MURRAY He'll kill himself. You hear what I'm saying? He's going to go out and try to kill himself.

SPEED (*To MURRAY*) Will you shut up, Murray? Stop being a cop for two minutes. (*To OSCAR*) Where'd he go, Oscar?

OSCAR He went out to kill himself.

MURRAY What did I tell you?

ROY (*To OSCAR*) Are you serious?

OSCAR That's what she said. He was going out to kill himself. He didn't want to do it at home 'cause the kids were sleeping.

VINNIE Why?

OSCAR Why? Because that's Felix, that's why. (*He goes to the bar and refills his drink*) You know what he's like. He sleeps on the window sill. "Love me or I'll jump." 'Cause he's a nut, that's why.

MURRAY That's right. Remember he tried something like that in the army? She wanted to break off the engagement so he started cleaning guns in his mouth.

SPEED I don't believe it. Talk! That's all Felix is, talk.

VINNIE (*Worried*) But is that what he said? In those words? "I'm going to kill myself?"

OSCAR (*Pacing about the table*) I don't know in what words. She didn't read it to me.

ROY You mean he left her a note?

OSCAR No, he sent a telegram.

MURRAY A *suicide telegram*? Who sends a suicide telegram?

OSCAR Felix, the nut, that's who! Can you imagine getting a thing like that? She even has to tip the kid a quarter.

ROY I don't get it. If he wants to kill himself, why does he send a telegram?

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OSCAR Don't you see how his mind works? If he sends a note, she might not get it till Monday and he'd have no excuse for not being dead. This way, for a dollar ten, he's got a chance to be saved.

THE ODD COUPLE

VINNIE You mean he really doesn't want to kill himself? He just wants sympathy.

OSCAR What he'd really like is to go to the funeral and sit in the back. He'd be the biggest crier there.

MURRAY He's right.

OSCAR Sure I'm right.

MURRAY We get these cases every day. All they want is attention. We got a guy who calls us every Saturday afternoon from the George Washington Bridge.

ROY I don't know. You never can tell what a guy'll do when he's hysterical.

MURRAY Nahhh. Nine out of ten times they don't jump.

ROY What about the tenth time?

MURRAY They jump. He's right. There's a possibility.

OSCAR Not with Felix. I know him. He's too nervous to kill himself. He wears his seatbelt in a drive-in movie.

VINNIE Isn't there someplace we could look for him?

SPEED Where? Where would you look? Who knows where he is?

(*The doorbell rings. They all look at OSCAR*)

OSCAR Of course! If you're going to kill yourself, where's the safest place to do it? With your friends!

(*VINNIE starts for the door*)

MURRAY (*Stopping him*) Wait a minute! The guy may be hysterical. Let's play it nice and easy. If we're calm, maybe he'll be calm.

ROY (*Getting up and joining them*) That's right. That's how they do it with those guys out on the ledge. You talk nice and soft.

(SPEED rushes over to them, and joins in the frenzied discussion)

232

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

VINNIE What'll we say to him?

MURRAY We don't say nothin'. Like we never heard a thing.

OSCAR (*Trying to get their attention*) You through with this discussion? Because he already could have hung himself out in the hall. (To VINNIE) Vinnie, open the door!

MURRAY Remember! Like we don't know nothin'.

(They all rush back to their seats and grab up cards, which they concentrate on with the greatest intensity. VINNIE opens the door. FELIX UNGAR is there. He's about forty-four. His clothes are rumpled as if he had slept in them, and he needs a shave. Although he tries to act matter-of-fact, there is an air of great tension and nervousness about him)

FELIX (*Softly*) Hi, Vin! (VINNIE quickly goes back to his seat and studies his cards. FELIX has his hands in his pockets, trying to be very nonchalant. With controlled calm) Hi, fellas. (They all mumble hello, but do not look at him. He puts his coat over the railing and crosses to the table) How's the game going? (They all mumble appropriate remarks, and continue staring at their cards) Good! Good! Sorry I'm late. (FELIX looks a little disappointed that no one asks "What?" He starts to pick up a sandwich, changes his mind and makes a gesture of dis-taste. He vaguely looks around) Any Coke left?

OSCAR (*Looking up from his cards*) Coke? Gee, I don't think so. I got a Seven-Up!

FELIX (*Bravely*) No, I felt like a Coke. I just don't feel like Seven-Up tonight!

(He stands watching the game)

OSCAR What's the bet?

SPEED You bet a quarter. It's up to Murray. Murray, what do you say? (MURRAY is staring at FELIX) Murray! Murray!

ROY (*To VINNIE*) Tap his shoulder.

VINNIE (*Taps MURRAY's shoulder*) Murray!

MURRAY (*Startled*) What? What?

SPEED It's up to you.

MURRAY Why is it always up to me?

SPEED It's not always up to you. It's up to you now. What do you do?

233

MURRAY I'm in. I'm in.

(*He throws in a quarter*)

THE ODD

COUPLER

FELIX (*Moves to the bookcase*) Anyone call about me?

OSCAR Er, not that I can remember. (*To the others*) Did anyone call for Felix? (*They all shrug and ad lib "No"*) Why? Were you expecting a call?

FELIX (*Looking at the books on the shelf*) No! No! Just asking.

(*He opens a book and examines it*)

ROY Er, I'll see his bet and raise it a dollar.

FELIX (*Without looking up from the book*) I just thought someone might have called.

SPEED It costs me a dollar and a quarter to play, right?

OSCAR Right!

FELIX (*Still looking at the book, in a sing-song*) But, if no one called, no one called.

(*He slams the book shut and puts it back. They all jump at the noise*)

SPEED (*Getting nervous*) What does it cost me to play again?

MURRAY (*Angry*) A dollar and a quarter! *A dollar and a quarter!* Pay attention, for crise sakes!

ROY All right, take it easy. Take it easy.

OSCAR Let's calm down, everyone, heh?

MURRAY I'm sorry. I can't help it. (*Points to SPEED*) He makes me nervous.

SPEED I make *you* nervous. You make *me* nervous. You make *everyone* nervous.

MURRAY (*Sarcastic*) I'm sorry. Forgive me. I'll kill myself.

OSCAR Murray!

(*He motions with his head to FELIX*)

MURRAY (*Realizes his error*) Oh! Sorry.

(SPEED glares at him. They all sit in silence a moment, until VINNIE catches sight of FELIX, who is now staring out an upstage window. He quickly calls the others' attention to FELIX)

234

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

FELIX (*Looking back at them from the window*) Gee, it's a pretty view from here. What is it, twelve floors?

OSCAR (*Quickly crossing to the window and closing it*)

No. It's only eleven. That's all. Eleven. It says twelve but it's really only eleven. (He then turns and closes the other window as FELIX watches him. OSCAR shivers slightly) Chilly in here. (To the others) Isn't it chilly in here?

(*He crosses back to the table*)

ROY Yeah, that's much better.

OSCAR (*To FELIX*) Want to sit down and play? It's still early.

VINNIE Sure. We're in no rush. We'll be here till three, four in the morning.

FELIX (*Shrugs*) I don't know; I just don't feel much like playing now.

OSCAR (*Sitting at the table*) Oh! Well, what do you feel like doing?

FELIX (*Shrugs*) I'll find something. (He starts to walk toward the other room) Don't worry about me.

OSCAR Where are you going?

FELIX (*Stops in the doorway. He looks at the others who are all staring at him*) To the john.

OSCAR (*Looks at the others, worried, then at FELIX*) Alone?

FELIX (*Nods*) I always go alone! Why?

OSCAR (*Shrugs*) No reason. You gonna be in there long?

FELIX (*Shrugs, then says meaningfully, like a martyr*) As long as it takes.

(Then he goes into the bathroom and slams the door shut behind him. Immediately they all jump up and crowd about the bathroom door, whispering in frenzied anxiety)

MURRAY Are you crazy? Letting him go to the john alone?

235

OSCAR What did you want me to do?

ROY Stop him! Go in with him!

OSCAR Suppose he just has to go to the john?

MURRAY Supposing he does? He's better off being embarrassed than dead!

THE ODD
COUPLE

OSCAR How's he going to kill himself in the john?

SPEED What do you mean, how? Razor blades, pills. Anything that's in there.

OSCAR That's the kids' bathroom. The worst he could do is brush his teeth to death.

ROY He could jump.

VINNIE That's right. Isn't there a window in there?

OSCAR It's only six inches wide.

MURRAY He could break the glass. He could cut his wrists.

OSCAR He could also flush himself into the East River.
I'm telling you he's not going to try anything!

(He moves to the table)

ROY (Goes to the doorway) Shhh! Listen! He's crying.
(There is a pause as all listen as FELIX sobs) You hear that. He's crying.

MURRAY Isn't that terrible? For God's sakes, Oscar, do something! Say something!

OSCAR What? What do you say to a man who's crying in your bathroom?

(There is the sound of the toilet flushing and ROY makes a mad dash back to his chair)

ROY He's coming!

(They all scramble back to their places. MURRAY gets mixed up with Vinnie and they quickly straighten it out. FELIX comes back into the room. But he seems calm and collected, with no evident sign of having cried)

FELIX I guess I'll be running along.
(He starts for the door. OSCAR jumps up. So do the others)

OSCAR Felix, wait a second.

FELIX No! No! I can't talk to you. I can't talk to anyone.
(They all try to grab him, stopping him near the stairs)

MURRAY Felix, please. We're your friends. Don't run out like this.

(FELIX struggles to pull away)

OSCAR Felix, sit down. Just for a minute. Talk to us.

FELIX There's nothing to talk about. There's nothing to say. It's over. Over. Everything is over. Let me go!

(He breaks away from them and dashes into the stage-right bedroom. They start to chase him and he dodges from the bedroom through the adjoining door into the bathroom)

ROY Stop him! Grab him!

FELIX *(Looking for an exit)* Let me out! I've got to get out of here!

OSCAR Felix, you're hysterical.

FELIX Please let me out of here!

MURRAY The john! Don't let him get in the john!

FELIX *(Comes out of the bathroom with ROY hanging onto him, and the others trailing behind)* Leave me alone. Why doesn't everyone leave me alone?

OSCAR All right, Felix, I'm warning you. Now cut it out!
(He throws a half-filled glass of water, which he has picked up from the bookcase, into FELIX's face)

FELIX It's my problem. I'll work it out. Leave me alone. Oh, my stomach.

(He collapses in ROY's arms)

MURRAY What's the matter with your stomach?

VINNIE He looks sick. Look at his face.

(They all try to hold him as they lead him over to the couch)

FELIX I'm not sick. I'm all right. I didn't take anything, I swear. Ohh, my stomach.

OSCAR What do you mean you didn't take anything?
What did you take?

FELIX (*Sitting on the couch*) Nothing! Nothing! I didn't take anything. Don't tell Frances what I did, please!
Oohh, my stomach.

MURRAY He took something! I'm telling you he took something.

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OSCAR What, Felix? *What?*

THE ODD
COUPLE

FELIX Nothing! I didn't take anything.

OSCAR Pills? Did you take pills?

FELIX No! No!

OSCAR (*Grabbing FELIX*) Don't lie to me, Felix. Did you take pills?

FELIX No, I didn't. I didn't take anything.

MURRAY Thank God he didn't take pills.

(*They all relax and take a breath of relief*)

FELIX Just a few, that's all.

(*They all react in alarm and concern over the pills*)

OSCAR He took pills.

MURRAY How many pills?

OSCAR What kind of pills?

FELIX I don't know what kind. Little green ones. I just grabbed anything out of her medicine cabinet. I must have been crazy.

OSCAR Didn't you look? Didn't you see what kind?

FELIX I couldn't see. The light's broken. Don't call Frances. Don't tell her. I'm so ashamed. So ashamed.

OSCAR Felix, how many pills did you take?

FELIX I don't know. I can't remember.

OSCAR I'm calling Frances.

FELIX (*Grabs him*) No! Don't call her. Don't call her. If she hears I took a whole bottle of pills . . .

MURRAY A whole bottle? A whole bottle of pills? (*He turns to VINNIE*) My God, call an ambulance!
(*VINNIE runs to the front door*)

OSCAR (*To MURRAY*) You don't even know what *kind!*
MURRAY What's the difference? He took a whole bottle!
OSCAR Maybe they were vitamins. He could be the healthiest one in the room! Take it easy, will you?

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

FELIX Don't call Frances. Promise me you won't call Frances.

MURRAY Open his collar. Open the window. Give him some air.

SPEED Walk him around. Don't let him go to sleep.
(*SPEED and MURRAY pick FELIX up and walk him around, while ROY rubs his wrists*)

ROY Rub his wrists. Keep his circulation going.

VINNIE (*Running to the bathroom to get a compress*) A cold compress. Put a cold compress on his neck.

(*They sit FELIX in the armchair, still chattering in alarm*)

OSCAR One doctor at a time, heh? All the interns shut the hell up!

FELIX I'm all right. I'll be all right. (*To OSCAR urgently*) You didn't call Frances, did you?

MURRAY (*To the others*) You just gonna stand here? No one's gonna do anything? I'm calling a doctor.
(*He crosses to the phone*)

FELIX No! No doctor.

MURRAY You gotta have a doctor.

FELIX I don't need a doctor.

MURRAY You gotta get the pills out.

FELIX I got them out. I threw up before! (*He sits back weakly. MURRAY hangs up the phone*) Don't you have a root beer or a ginger ale?

(*VINNIE gives the compress to SPEED*)

ROY (*To VINNIE*) Get him a drink.

OSCAR (*Glares angrily at FELIX*) He threw them up!

VINNIE Which would you rather have, Felix, the root beer or the ginger ale?

SPEED (*To VINNIE*) Get him the drink! Just get him the drink.

(VINNIE runs into the kitchen as SPEED puts the compress on FELIX's head)

FELIX Twelve years. Twelve years we were married. Did you know we were married twelve years, Roy?

ROY (Comforting him) Yes, Felix. I knew.

FELIX (With great emotion in his voice) And now it's over. Like that, it's over. That's hysterical, isn't it?

SPEED Maybe it was just a fight. You've had fights before, Felix.

239
THE ODD
COUPLE

FELIX No, it's over. She's getting a lawyer tomorrow. My cousin. She's using my cousin! (He sobs) Who am I going to get?

(VINNIE comes out of the kitchen with a glass of root beer)

MURRAY (Patting his shoulder) It's okay, Felix. Come on. Take it easy.

VINNIE (Gives the glass to FELIX) Here's the root beer.

FELIX I'm all right, honestly. I'm just crying.

(He puts his head down. They all look at him helplessly)

MURRAY All right, let's not stand around looking at him.

(Pushes SPEED and VINNIE away) Let's break it up, heh?

FELIX Yes, don't stand there looking at me. Please.

OSCAR (To the others) Come on, he's all right. Let's call it a night.

(MURRAY, SPEED and ROY turn in their chips at the poker table, get their coats and get ready to go)

FELIX I'm so ashamed. Please, fellas, forgive me.

VINNIE (Bending to FELIX) Oh, Felix, we—we understand.

FELIX Don't say anything about this to anyone, Vinnie. Will you promise me?

VINNIE I'm going to Florida tomorrow.

FELIX Oh, that's nice. Have a good time.

VINNIE Thanks.

FELIX (Turns away and sighs in despair) We were going to go to Florida next winter. (He laughs, but it's a sob)

Without the kids! Now they'll go without me.

(VINNIE gets his coat and OSCAR ushers them all to the door)

MURRAY (*Stopping at the door*) Maybe one of us should stay?

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OSCAR It's all right, Murray.

MURRAY Suppose he tries something again?

OSCAR He won't try anything again.

MURRAY How do you know he won't try anything again?

FELIX (*Turns to MURRAY*) I won't try anything again. I'm very tired.

OSCAR (*To MURRAY*) You hear? He's very tired. He had a busy night. Good night, fellows.

(*They all ad lib goodbyes and leave. The door closes, but opens immediately and ROY comes back in*)

ROY If anything happens, Oscar, just call me.

(*He exits, and as the door starts to close, it reopens and SPEED comes in*)

SPEED I'm three blocks away. I could be here in five minutes.

(*He exits, and as the door starts to close, it reopens and VINNIE comes back in*)

VINNIE If you need me I'll be at the Meridian Motel in Miami Beach.

OSCAR You'll be the first one I'll call, Vinnie.

(*VINNIE exits. The door closes and then reopens as MURRAY comes back*)

MURRAY (*To OSCAR*) You're sure?

OSCAR I'm sure.

MURRAY (*Loudly to FELIX, as he gestures to OSCAR to come to the door*) Good night, Felix. Try to get a good night's sleep. I guarantee you things are going to look a lot brighter in the morning. (*To OSCAR, sotto voce*) Take away his belt and his shoe laces.

(*He nods and exits. OSCAR turns and looks at FELIX sitting in the armchair and slowly moves across the room. There is a moment's silence*)

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

OSCAR (*He looks at FELIX and sighs*) Ohh, Felix, Felix,
Felix, Felix!

FELIX (*Sits with his head buried in his hands. He doesn't look up*) I know, I know, I know, I know! What am I going to do, Oscar?

OSCAR You're gonna wash down the pills with some hot, black coffee. (*He starts for the kitchen, then stops*) Do you think I could leave you alone for two minutes?

FELIX No, I don't think so! Stay with me, Oscar. Talk to me.

OSCAR A cup of black coffee. It'll be good for you. Come on in the kitchen. I'll sit on you.

FELIX Oscar, the terrible thing is, I think I still love her. It's a lousy marriage but I still love her. I didn't want this divorce.

OSCAR (*Sitting on the arm of the couch*) How about some Ovaltine? You like Ovaltine? With a couple of fig newtons or chocolate mallomars?

FELIX All right, so we didn't get along. But we had two wonderful kids, and a beautiful home. Didn't we, Oscar?

OSCAR How about vanilla wafers? Or Vienna fingers? I got everything.

FELIX What more does she want? What does *any* woman want?

OSCAR I want to know what *you* want. Ovaltine, coffee or tea. Then we'll get to the divorce.

FELIX It's not fair, damn it! It's just not fair! (*He bangs his fist on the arm of the chair angrily, then suddenly winces in great pain and grabs his neck*) Oh! Ohh, my neck. My neck!

OSCAR What? What?

FELIX (*He gets up and paces in pain. He is holding his twisted neck*) It's a nerve spasm. I get it in the neck. Oh! Ohh, that hurts.

OSCAR (*Rushing to help*) Where? Where does it hurt?

FELIX (*Stretches out an arm like a halfback*) Don't touch me! Don't touch me!

OSCAR I just want to see where it hurts.

FELIX It'll go away. Just let me alone a few minutes. Ohh!
Ohh!

OSCAR (*Moving to the couch*) Lie down; I'll rub it. It'll ease the pain.

FELIX (*In wild contortions*) You don't know how. It's a special way. Only Frances knows how to rub me.

242

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

OSCAR You want me to ask her to come over and rub you?

FELIX (*Yells*) No! No! We're getting divorced. She wouldn't want to rub me anymore. It's tension. I get it from tension. I must be tense.

OSCAR I wouldn't be surprised. How long does it last?

FELIX Sometimes a minute, sometimes hours. I once got it while I was driving. I crashed into a liquor store. Ohhh! Ohhh!

(*He sits down, painfully, on the couch*)

OSCAR (*Getting behind him*) You want to suffer or do you want me to rub your stupid neck?

(*He starts to massage it*)

FELIX Easy! Easy!

OSCAR (*Yells*) Relax, damn it: relax!

FELIX (*Yells back*) Don't yell at me! (*Then quietly*) What should I do? Tell me nicely.

OSCAR (*Rubbing the neck*) Think of warm jello!

FELIX Isn't that terrible? I can't do it. I can't relax. I sleep in one position all night. Frances says when I die on my tombstone it's going to say, "Here Stands Felix Ungar." (*He winces*) Oh! Ohh!

OSCAR (*Stops rubbing*) Does that hurt?

FELIX No, it feels good.

OSCAR Then say so. You make the same sound for pain or happiness.

(*Starts to massage his neck again*)

FELIX I know. I know. Oscar—I think I'm crazy.

OSCAR Well, if it'll make you feel any better, I think so too.

FELIX I mean it. Why else do I go to pieces like this?

Coming up here, scaring you to death. Trying to kill myself. What is that?

OSCAR That's panic. You're a panicky person. You have a low threshold for composure.

(He stops rubbing)

FELIX Don't stop. It feels good.

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OSCAR If you don't relax I'll break my fingers. (*Touches his hair*) Look at this. The only man in the world with clenched hair.

THE ODD COUPLE

FELIX I do terrible things, Oscar. You know I'm a cry baby.

OSCAR Bend over.

(*FELIX bends over and OSCAR begins to massage his back*)

FELIX (*Head down*) I tell the whole world my problems.

OSCAR (*Massaging hard*) Listen, if this hurts just tell me, because I don't know what the hell I'm doing.

FELIX It just isn't nice, Oscar, running up here like this, carrying on like a nut.

OSCAR (*Finishes massaging*) How does your neck feel?

FELIX (*Twists his neck*) Better. Only my back hurts. (*He gets up and paces, rubbing his back*)

OSCAR What you need is a drink.

(*He starts for the bar*)

FELIX I can't drink. It makes me sick. I tried drinking last night.

OSCAR (*At the bar*) Where were you last night?

FELIX Nowhere. I just walked.

OSCAR All night?

FELIX All night.

OSCAR In the rain?

FELIX No. In a hotel. I couldn't sleep. I walked around the room all night. It was over near Times Square. A dirty, depressing room. Then I found myself looking out the window. And suddenly, I began to think about jumping.

OSCAR (*He has two glasses filled and crosses to FELIX*)
What changed your mind?

FELIX Nothing. I'm still thinking about it.

OSCAR Drink this.

(*He hands him a glass, crosses to the couch and sits*)

FELIX I don't want to get divorced, Oscar. I don't want to suddenly change my whole life. (*He moves to the couch and sits next to OSCAR*) Talk to me, Oscar. What am I going to do? What am I going to do?

OSCAR You're going to pull yourself together. And then you're going to drink that Scotch, and then you and I are going to figure out a whole new life for you.

FELIX Without Frances? Without the kids?

OSCAR It's been done before.

FELIX (*Paces around*) You don't understand, Oscar. I'm nothing without them. I'm—*nothing!*

OSCAR What do you mean, nothing? You're something!

(*FELIX sits in the armchair*) A person! You're flesh and blood and bones and hair and nails and ears. You're not a fish. You're not a buffalo. You're *you!* You walk and talk and cry and complain and eat little green pills and send suicide telegrams. No one else does that, Felix. I'm telling you, *you're the only one of its kind in the world!* (*He goes to the bar*) Now drink that.

FELIX Oscar, you've been through it yourself. What did you do? How did you get through those first few nights?

OSCAR (*Pours a drink*) I did exactly what you're doing.

FELIX Getting hysterical!

OSCAR No, drinking! *Drinking!* (*He comes back to the couch with the bottle and sits*) I drank for four days and four nights. And then I fell through a window. I was bleeding but I was forgetting.

(*He drinks again*)

FELIX How can you forget your kids? How can you wipe out twelve years of marriage?

OSCAR You can't. When you walk into eight empty rooms every night it hits you in the face like a wet glove. But

those are the facts, Felix. You've got to face it. You can't spend the rest of your life crying. It annoys people in the movies! Be a good boy and drink your Scotch.

(He stretches out on the couch with his head near FELIX)

FELIX I can imagine what Frances must be going through.

OSCAR What do you mean, what *she's* going through?

FELIX It's much harder on the woman, Oscar. She's all alone with the kids. Stuck there in the house. She can't get out like me. I mean where is she going to find someone now at her age? With two kids. Where?

OSCAR I don't know. Maybe someone'll come to the door!

Felix, there's a hundred thousand divorces a year. There must be *something* nice about it. (FELIX suddenly puts both his hands over his ears and hums quietly) What's the matter now?

(He sits up)

FELIX My ears are closing up. I get it from the sinus. It must be the dust in here. I'm allergic to dust.

(He hums. Then he gets up and tries to clear his ears by hopping first on one leg then the other as he goes to the window and opens it)

OSCAR (Jumping up) What are you doing?

FELIX I'm not going to jump. I'm just going to breathe.

(He takes deep breaths) I used to drive Frances crazy with my allergies. I'm allergic to perfume. For a while the only thing she could wear was my after-shave lotion. I was impossible to live with. It's a wonder she took it this long.

(He suddenly bellows like a moose. He makes this strange sound another time. OSCAR looks at him dumbfounded)

OSCAR What are you doing?

FELIX I'm trying to clear my ears. You create a pressure inside and then it opens it up.

(He bellows again)

OSCAR Did it open up?

FELIX A little bit. (He rubs his neck) I think I strained my throat.

(He paces about the room)

OSCAR Felix, why don't you leave yourself alone? Don't tinker.

FELIX 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 her. It's impossible to be married to me.

OSCAR It takes two to make a rotten marriage.
(He lies back down on the couch)

FELIX You don't know what I was like at home. I bought her a book and made her write down every penny we spent. Thirty-eight cents for cigarettes; ten cents for a paper. Everything had to go in the book. And then we had a big fight because I said she forgot to write down how much the book was. Who could live with anyone like that?

OSCAR An accountant! What do I know? We're not perfect. We all have faults.

FELIX Faults? Heh! Faults. We have a maid who comes in to clean three times a week. And on the other days, Frances does the cleaning. And at night, after they've both cleaned up, I go in and clean the whole place again. I can't help it. I like things clean. Blame it on my mother. I was toilet-trained at five months old.

OSCAR How do you remember things like that?

FELIX I loused up the marriage. Nothing was ever right. I used to recook everything. The minute she walked out of the kitchen I would add salt or pepper. It's not that I didn't trust her, it's just that I was a better cook. Well, I cooked myself out of a marriage. *(He bangs his head with the palm of his hand three times)* God damned idiot!

(He sinks down in the armchair)

OSCAR Don't do that; you'll get a headache.

FELIX I can't stand it, Oscar. I hate me. Oh, boy, do I hate me.

OSCAR You don't hate you. You love you. You think no one has problems like you.

FELIX Don't give me that analyst jazz. I happen to know I hate my guts.

OSCAR Come on, Felix; I've never *seen* anyone so in love.

FELIX (*Hurt*) I thought you were my friend.

OSCAR That's why I can talk to you like this. Because I love you almost as much as *you* do.

FELIX Then help me.

OSCAR (*Up on one elbow*) How can I help you when I can't help myself? You think *you're* impossible to live with? Blanche used to say, "What time do you want dinner?" And I'd say, "I don't know. I'm not hungry." Then at three o'clock in the morning I'd wake her up and say, "Now!" I've been one of the highest paid sports-writers in the East for the past fourteen years, and we saved eight and a half dollars—in pennies! I'm never home, I gamble, I burn cigar holes in the furniture, drink like a fish and lie to her every chance I get. And for our tenth wedding anniversary, I took her to see the New York Rangers-Detroit Red Wings hockey game where she got hit with a puck. And I still can't understand why she left me. That's how impossible *I* am!

FELIX I'm not like you, Oscar. I couldn't take it living all alone. I don't know how I'm going to work. They've got to fire me. How am I going to make a living?

OSCAR You'll go on street corners and cry. They'll throw nickels at you! You'll work, Felix; you'll work.

(*He lies back down*)

FELIX You think I ought to call Frances?

OSCAR (*About to explode*) What for?

(*He sits up*)

FELIX Well, talk it out again.

OSCAR You've *talked* it all out. There are no words left in your entire marriage. When are you going to face up to it?

FELIX I can't help it, Oscar; I don't know what to do.

OSCAR Then listen to me. Tonight you're going to sleep here. And tomorrow you're going to get your clothes and your electric toothbrush and you'll move in with me.

FELIX No, no. It's your apartment. I'll be in the way.

OSCAR There's eight rooms. We could go for a year without seeing each other. Don't you understand? I want you to move in.

FELIX Why? I'm a pest.

OSCAR I know you're a pest. You don't have to keep telling me.

FELIX Then why do you want me to live with you?

OSCAR Because I can't stand living alone, that's why! For crying out loud, I'm proposing to you. What do you want, a ring?

FELIX (*Moves to OSCAR*) Well, Oscar, if you really mean it, there's a lot I can do around here. I'm very handy around the house. I can fix things.

OSCAR You don't have to fix things.

FELIX I want to do *something*, Oscar. Let me do something.

OSCAR (*Nods*) All right, you can take my wife's initials off the towels. Anything you want.

FELIX (*Beginning to tidy up*) I can cook. I'm a terrific cook.

OSCAR You don't have to cook. I eat cold cuts for breakfast.

FELIX Two meals a day at home, we'll save a fortune. We've got to pay alimony, you know.

OSCAR (*Happy to see FELIX's new optimism*) All right, you can cook.

(*He throws a pillow at him*)

FELIX (*Throws the pillow back*) Do you like leg of lamb?

OSCAR Yes, I like leg of lamb.

FELIX I'll make it tomorrow night. I'll have to call Frances. She has my big pot.

OSCAR Will you forget Frances! We'll get our own pots. Don't drive me crazy before you move in. (*The phone rings. OSCAR picks it up quickly*) Hello? Oh, hello,

Frances!

FELIX (*Stops cleaning and starts to wave his arms wildly. He whispers screamingly*) I'm not here! I'm not here!

You didn't see me. You don't know where I am. I didn't call. I'm not here. I'm not here.

OSCAR (*Into the phone*) Yes, he's here.

FELIX (*Pacing back and forth*) How does she sound? Is

she worried? Is she crying? What is she saying? Does she want to speak to me? I don't want to speak to her.

OSCAR (*Into the phone*) Yes, he is!

FELIX You can tell her I'm not coming back. I've made up my mind. I've had it there. I've taken just as much as she has. You can tell her for me if she thinks I'm coming back she's got another think coming. Tell her. Tell her.

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OSCAR (*Into the phone*) Yes! Yes, he's fine.

FELIX Don't tell her I'm fine! You heard me carrying on before. What are you telling her that for? I'm not fine.

THE ODD COUPLE

OSCAR (*Into the phone*) Yes, I understand, Frances.

FELIX (*Sits down next to OSCAR*) Does she want to speak to me? Ask her if she wants to speak to me?

OSCAR (*Into the phone*) Do you want to speak to him?

FELIX (*Reaches for the phone*) Give me the phone. I'll speak to her.

OSCAR (*Into the phone*) Oh. You don't want to speak to him.

FELIX She doesn't want to speak to me?

OSCAR (*Into the phone*) Yeah, I see. Right. Well, good-bye.

(*He hangs up*)

FELIX She didn't want to speak to me?

OSCAR No!

FELIX Why did she call?

OSCAR She wants to know when you're coming over for your clothes. She wants to have the room repainted.

FELIX Oh!

OSCAR (*Pats FELIX on the shoulder*) Listen, Felix, it's almost one o'clock.

(*He gets up*)

FELIX Didn't want to speak to me, huh?

OSCAR I'm going to bed. Do you want a cup of tea with Fruitanos or Raisinettos?

FELIX She'll paint it pink. She always wanted it pink.

OSCAR I'll get you a pair of pajamas. You like stripes, dots, or animals?

(*He goes into the bedroom*)

FELIX She's really heartbroken, isn't she? I want to kill myself, and she's picking out colors.

OSCAR (*In the bedroom*) Which bedroom do you want? I'm lousy with bedrooms.

FELIX (*Gets up and moves toward the bedroom*) You know, I'm glad. Because she finally made me realize—it's over. It didn't sink in until just this minute.

OSCAR (*Comes back with pillow, pillowcase, and pajamas*) Felix, I want you to go to bed.

FELIX I don't think I believed her until just now. My marriage is *really* over.

OSCAR Felix, go to bed.

FELIX Somehow it doesn't seem so bad now. I mean, I think I can live with this thing.

OSCAR Live with it tomorrow. Go to bed tonight.

FELIX In a little while. I've got to think. I've got to start rearranging my life. Do you have a pencil and paper?

OSCAR Not in a little while. Now! It's my house; I make up the bedtime.

(*He throws the pajamas to him*)

FELIX Oscar, please. I have to be alone for a few minutes. I've got to get organized. Go on, you go to bed. I'll—I'll clean up.

(*He begins picking up debris from the floor*)

OSCAR (*Putting the pillow into the pillowcase*) You don't have to clean up. I pay a dollar fifty an hour to clean up.

FELIX It's all right, Oscar. I wouldn't be able to sleep with all this dirt around anyway. Go to bed. I'll see you in the morning.

(*He puts the dishes on the tray*)

OSCAR You're not going to do anything big, are you, like rolling up the rugs?

FELIX Ten minutes, that's all I'll be.

OSCAR You're sure?

FELIX (*Smiles*) I'm sure.

OSCAR No monkey business?

FELIX No monkey business. I'll do the dishes and go right to bed.

OSCAR Yeah.

(Crosses up to his bedroom, throwing the pillow into the downstage bedroom as he passes. He closes his bedroom door behind him)

FELIX (Calls him) Oscar! (OSCAR anxiously comes out of his bedroom and crosses to FELIX) I'm going to be all right! It's going to take me a couple of days, but I'm going to be all right.

OSCAR (Smiles) Good! Well, good night, Felix.

(He turns to go toward the bedroom as FELIX begins to plump up a pillow from the couch)

FELIX Good night, Frances.

(OSCAR stops dead. FELIX, unaware of his error, plumps another pillow as OSCAR turns and stares at FELIX with a troubled expression)

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THE ODD
COUPLE

Curtain

Act Two

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SCENE 1

Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

Two weeks later, about eleven at night. The poker game is in session again. VINNIE, ROY, SPEED, MURRAY and OSCAR are all seated at the table. FELIX's chair is empty.

There is one major difference between this scene and the opening poker-game scene. It is the appearance of the room. It is immaculately clean. No, not clean. Sterile! Spotless! Not a speck of dirt can be seen under the ten coats of Johnson's Glo-Coat that have been applied to the floor in the last three weeks. No laundry bags, no dirty dishes, no half-filled glasses.

Suddenly FELIX appears from the kitchen. He carries a tray with glasses and food—and napkins. After putting the tray down, he takes the napkins one at a time, flicks them out to full length and hands one to every player. They take them with grumbling and put them on their laps. He picks up a can of beer and very carefully pours it into a tall glass, measuring it perfectly so that not a drop spills or overflows. With a flourish he puts the can down.

FELIX (*Moves to MURRAY*) An ice-cold glass of beer for Murray.

(*MURRAY reaches up for it*)

MURRAY Thank you, Felix.

FELIX (*Holds the glass back*) Where's your coaster?

MURRAY My what?

FELIX Your coaster. The little round thing that goes under the glass.

MURRAY (*Looks around on the table*) I think I bet it.

OSCAR (*Picks it up and hands it to MURRAY*) I knew I was winning too much. Here!

FELIX Always try to use your coasters, fellows. (*He picks*

*up another drink from the tray) Scotch and a little bit
of water?*

SPEED (*Raises his hand*) Scotch and a little bit of water.

(*Proudly*) And I have my coaster.

(*He holds it up for inspection*)

FELIX (*Hands him the drink*) I hate to be a pest but
you know what wet glasses do?

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(*He goes back to the tray and picks up and wipes
a clean ashtray*)

THE ODD
COUPLE

OSCAR (*Coldly and deliberately*) They leave little rings
on the table.

FELIX (*Nods*) Ruins the finish. Eats right through the
polish.

OSCAR (*To the others*) So let's watch those little rings,
huh?

FELIX (*Takes an ashtray and a plate with a sandwich from
the tray and crosses to the table*) And we have a clean
ashtray for Roy (*Handing roy the ashtray*) Aaaaand—a
sandwich for Vinnie.

(*Like a doting headwaiter, he skillfully places the
sandwich in front of VINNIE*)

VINNIE (*Looks at FELIX, then at the sandwich*) Gee, it
smells good. What is it?

FELIX Bacon, lettuce and tomato with mayonnaise on
pumpernickel toast.

VINNIE (*Unbelievingly*) Where'd you get it?

FELIX (*Puzzled*) I made it. In the kitchen.

VINNIE You mean you put in toast and cooked bacon?
Just for me?

OSCAR If you don't like it, he'll make you a meat loaf.
Takes him five minutes.

FELIX It's no trouble. Honest. I love to cook. Try to eat
over the dish. I just vacuumed the rug. (*He goes back
to the tray, then stops*) Oscar!

OSCAR (*Quickly*) Yes, sir?

FELIX I forgot what you wanted. What did you ask me
for?

OSCAR Two three-and-a-half-minute eggs and some petit
fours.

FELIX (Points to him) A double gin and tonic. I'll be right back. (**FELIX starts out, then stops at a little box on the bar**) Who turned off the Pure-A-Tron?

MURRAY The what?

FELIX The Pure-A-Tron! (*He snaps it back on*) Don't play with this, fellows. I'm trying to get some of the grime out of the air.

(*He looks at them and shakes his head disapprovingly, then exits. They all sit in silence a few seconds*)

OSCAR Murray, I'll give you two hundred dollars for your gun.

SPEED (*Throws his cards on the table and gets up angrily*) I can't take it any more. (*With his hand on his neck*) I've had it up to here. In the last three hours we played four minutes of poker. I'm not giving up my Friday nights to watch cooking and housekeeping.

ROY (*Slumped in his chair, head hanging down*) I can't breathe. (*He points to the Pure-A-Tron*) That lousy machine is sucking everything out of the air.

VINNIE (*Chewing*) Gee, this is delicious. Who wants a bite?

MURRAY Is the toast warm?

VINNIE Perfect. And not too much mayonnaise. It's really a well-made sandwich.

MURRAY Cut me off a little piece.

VINNIE Give me your napkin. I don't want to drop any crumbs.

SPEED (*Watches them, horrified, as Vinnie carefully breaks the sandwich over Murray's napkin. Then he turns to OSCAR*) Are you listening to this? Martha and Gertrude at the Automat. (*Almost crying in despair*) What the hell happened to our poker game?

ROY (*Still choking*) I'm telling you that thing could kill us. They'll find us here in the morning with our tongues on the floor.

SPEED (*Yells at OSCAR*) Do something! Get him back in the game.

OSCAR (*Rises, containing his anger*) Don't bother me with your petty little problems. You get this one stinkin' night a week. I'm cooped up here with Dione Lucas twenty-four hours a day.

(*He moves to the window*)

ROY It was better before. With the garbage and the smoke, it was better before.

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VINNIE (*To MURRAY*) Did you notice what he does with the bread?

THE ODD
COUPLE

MURRAY What?

VINNIE He cuts off the crusts. That's why the sandwich is so light.

MURRAY And then he only uses the soft, green part of the lettuce. (*Chewing*) It's really delicious.

SPEED (*Reacts in amazement and disgust*) I'm going out of my mind.

OSCAR (*Yells toward the kitchen*) Felix! Damn it, Felix!

SPEED (*Takes the kitty box from the bookcase, puts it on the table, and puts the money in*) Forget it. I'm going home.

OSCAR Sit down!

SPEED I'll buy a book and I'll start to read again.

OSCAR Siddown! Will you siddown! (*Yells*) Felix!

SPEED Oscar, it's all over. The day his marriage busted up was the end of our poker game. (*He takes his jacket from the back of the chair and crosses to the door*) If you find some real players next week, call me.

OSCAR (*Following him*) You can't run out now. I'm a big loser.

SPEED (*With the door open*) You got no one to blame but yourself. It's all your fault. You're the one who stopped him from killing himself.

(*He exits and slams the door*)

OSCAR (*Stares at the door*) He's right! The man is absolutely right.

(*He moves to the table*)

MURRAY (*To VINNIE*) Are you going to eat that pickle?

VINNIE I wasn't thinking of it. Why? Do you want it?

MURRAY Unless you want it. It's your pickle.

VINNIE No, no. Take it. I don't usually eat pickle.

(VINNIE holds the plate with the pickle out to MURRAY. OSCAR slaps the plate, which sends the pickle flying through the air)

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OSCAR Deal the cards!

MURRAY What did you do that for?

OSCAR Just deal the cards. You want to play poker, deal the cards. You want to eat, go to Schrafft's. (To VINNIE) Keep your sandwich and your pickles to yourself. I'm losing ninety-two dollars and everybody's getting fat! (He screams) Felix!

(FELIX appears in the kitchen doorway)

FELIX What?

OSCAR Close the kitchen and sit down. It's a quarter to twelve. I still got an hour and a half to win this month's alimony.

ROY (Sniffs) What is that smell? Disinfectant! (He smells the cards) It's the cards. He washed the cards!

(He throws down the cards, takes his jacket from the chair and moves past the table to put his money into the kitty box)

FELIX (Comes to the table with OSCAR's drink, which he puts down; then he sits in his own seat) Okay. What's the bet?

OSCAR (Hurrying to his seat) I can't believe it. We're gonna play cards again. (He sits) It's up to Roy. Roy, baby, what are you gonna do?

ROY I'm going to get in a cab and go to Central Park. If I don't get some fresh air, you got yourself a dead accountant.

(He moves toward the door)

OSCAR (Follows him) What do you mean? It's not even twelve o'clock.

ROY (Turns back to OSCAR) Look, I've been sitting here breathing Lysol and ammonia for four hours! Nature didn't intend for poker to be played like that. (He crosses to the door) If you wanna have a game next week

(He points to FELIX) either Louis Pasteur cleans up after we've gone, or we play in the Hotel Dixie! Good night!

(He goes and slams the door. There is a moment's silence. OSCAR goes back to the table and sits)

OSCAR We got just enough for handball!

FELIX Gee, I'm sorry. Is it my fault?

VINNIE No, I guess no one feels like playing much lately.

MURRAY Yeah. I don't know what it is, but something's happening to the old gang.

(He goes to a side chair, sits and puts on his shoes)

OSCAR Don't you know what's happening to the old gang?

It's breaking up. Everyone's getting divorced. I swear, we used to have better games when we couldn't get out at night.

VINNIE (Getting up and putting on his jacket) Well, I guess I'll be going too. Bebe and I are driving to Asbury Park for the weekend.

FELIX Just the two of you, heh? Gee, that's nice! You always do things like that together, don't you?

VINNIE (Shrugs) We have to. I don't know how to drive!

(He takes all the money from the kitty box and moves to the door) You coming, Murray?

MURRAY (Gets up, takes his jacket and moves toward the door) Yeah, why not? If I'm not home by one o'clock with a hero sandwich and a frozen éclair, she'll have an all-points out on me. Ahhh, you guys got the life.

FELIX Who?

MURRAY (Turns back) Who? You! The Marx Brothers! Laugh, laugh, laugh. What have you got to worry about? If you suddenly want to go to the Playboy Club to hunt Bunnies, who's gonna stop you?

FELIX I don't belong to the Playboy Club.

MURRAY I know you don't, Felix, it's just a figure of speech. Anyway, it's not such a bad idea. Why don't you join?

FELIX Why?

MURRAY Why! Because for twenty-five dollars they give

you a key—and you walk into Paradise. My keys cost thirty cents—and you walk into corned beef and cabbage. (He winks at him) Listen to me.

(He moves to the door)

FELIX What are you talking about, Murray? You're a happily married man.

MURRAY (Turns back on the landing) I'm not talking about my situation. (He puts on his jacket) I'm talking about yours! Fate has just played a cruel and rotten trick on you, so enjoy it! (He turns to go, revealing "PAL" letters sewn on the back of his jacket) C'mon, Vinnie. (VINNIE waves goodbye and they both exit)

FELIX (Staring at the door) That's funny, isn't it, Oscar? They think we're happy. They really think we're enjoying this. (He gets up and begins to straighten up the chairs) They don't know, Oscar. They don't know what it's like.

(He gives a short, ironic laugh, tucks the napkins under his arm and starts to pick up the dishes from the table)

OSCAR I'd be immensely grateful to you, Felix, if you didn't clean up just now.

FELIX (Puts dishes on the tray) It's only a few things. (He stops and looks back at the door) I can't get over what Murray just said. You know I think they really envy us. (He clears more stuff from the table)

OSCAR Felix, leave everything alone. I'm not through dirtying-up for the night.

(He drops some poker chips on the floor)

FELIX (Putting stuff on the tray) But don't you see the irony of it? Don't you see it, Oscar?

OSCAR (Sighs heavily) Yes, I see it.

FELIX (Clearing the table) No, you don't. I really don't think you do.

OSCAR Felix, I'm telling you I see the irony of it.

FELIX (Pauses) Then tell me. What is it? What's the irony?

OSCAR (Deep breath) The irony is—unless we can come

to some other arrangement, I'm gonna kill you! That's the irony.

FELIX What's wrong?

(*He crosses back to the tray and puts down all the glasses and other things*)

OSCAR There's something wrong with this system, that's what's wrong. I don't think that two single men living alone in a big eight-room apartment should have a cleaner house than my mother.

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THE ODD
COUPLE

FELIX (*Gets the rest of the dishes, glasses and coasters from the table*) What are you talking about? I'm just going to put the dishes in the sink. You want me to leave them here all night?

OSCAR (*Takes his glass, which FELIX has put on the tray, and crosses to the bar for a refill*) I don't care if you take them to bed with you. You can play Mr. Clean all you want. But don't make *me* feel guilty.

FELIX (*Takes the tray into the kitchen, leaving the swinging door open*) I'm not asking you to do it, Oscar. You don't have to clean up.

OSCAR (*Moves up to the door*) That's why you make me feel guilty. You're always in my bathroom hanging up my towels. Whenever I smoke you follow me around with an ashtray. Last night I found you washing the kitchen floor, shaking your head and moaning, "Footprints, footprints!"

(*He paces around the room*)

FELIX (*Comes back to the table with a silent butler. He dumps the ashtrays, then wipes them carefully*) I didn't say they were yours.

OSCAR (*Angrily sits down in the wing chair*) Well, they *were* mine, damn it. I have feet and they make prints. What do you want me to do, climb across the cabinets?

FELIX No! I want you to walk on the floor.

OSCAR I appreciate that! I really do.

FELIX (*Crosses to the telephone table and cleans the ashtray there*) I'm just trying to keep the place livable. I didn't realize I irritated you that much.

OSCAR I just feel I should have the right to decide when my bathtub needs a going over with Dutch Cleanser. It's the democratic way!

FELIX (*Puts the silent butler and his rag down on the coffee table and sits down glumly on the couch*) I was wondering how long it would take.

OSCAR How long *what* would take?

FELIX Before I got on your nerves.

OSCAR I didn't say you get on my nerves.

FELIX Well, it's the same thing. You said I irritated you.

OSCAR You said you irritated me. I didn't say it.

FELIX Then what *did* you say?

OSCAR I don't know *what* I said. What's the difference what I said?

FELIX It doesn't make any difference. I was just repeating what I thought you said.

OSCAR Well, don't repeat what you *thought* I said. Repeat what I *said!* My God, that's irritating!

FELIX You see! You *did* say it!

OSCAR I don't believe this whole conversation.

(*He gets up and paces by the table*)

FELIX (*Pawing with a cup*) Oscar, I'm—I'm sorry. I don't know what's wrong with me.

OSCAR (*Still pacing*) And don't pout. If you want to fight, we'll fight. But don't pout! Fighting I win. Pouting *you* win!

FELIX You're right. Everything you say about me is absolutely right.

OSCAR (*Really angry, turns to FELIX*) And don't give in so easily. I'm *not* always right. Sometimes *you're* right.

FELIX You're right. I do that. I always figure I'm in the wrong.

OSCAR Only this time you *are* wrong. And I'm right.

FELIX Oh, leave me alone.

OSCAR And don't sulk. That's the same as pouting.

FELIX I know. I know. (*He squeezes his cup with anger*)

Damn me, why can't I do one lousy thing right?

(He suddenly stands up and cocks his arm back,
about to hurl the cup angrily against the front door.
Then he thinks better of it, puts the cup down and
sits)

OSCAR (Watching this) Why didn't you throw it?

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FELIX I almost did. I get so insane with myself sometimes.

OSCAR Then why don't you throw the cup?

FELIX Because I'm trying to control myself.

OSCAR Why?

FELIX What do you mean, why?

OSCAR Why do you have to control yourself? You're angry, you felt like throwing the cup, why don't you throw it?

FELIX Because there's no point to it. I'd still be angry and I'd have a broken cup.

OSCAR How do you *know* how you'd feel? Maybe you'd feel *wonderful*. Why do you have to control every single thought in your head? Why don't you let loose *once* in your life? Do something that you *feel* like doing—and not what you *think* you're supposed to do. Stop keeping books, Felix. Relax. Get drunk. Get angry. C'mon, *break the goddamned cup!*

(FELIX suddenly stands up and hurls the cup against the door, smashing it to pieces. Then he grabs his shoulder in pain)

FELIX Oww! I hurt my arm!

(He sinks down on the couch, massaging his arm)

OSCAR (Throws up his hands) You're hopeless! You're a hopeless mental case!

(He paces around the table)

FELIX (Grimacing with pain) I'm not supposed to throw with that arm. What a stupid thing to do.

OSCAR Why don't you live in a closet? I'll leave your meals outside the door and slide in the papers. Is that safe enough?

FELIX (Rubbing his arm) I used to have bursitis in this arm. I had to give up golf. Do you have a heating pad?

THE ODD
COUPLE

OSCAR How can you hurt your arm throwing a cup? If it had coffee in it, that's one thing. But an empty cup . . .
(He sits in the wing chair)

FELIX All right, cut it out, Oscar. That's the way I am. I get hurt easily. I can't help it.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

OSCAR You're not going to cry, are you? I think all those tears dripping on the arm is what gave you bursitis.

FELIX (*Holding his arm*) I once got it just from combing my hair.

OSCAR (*Shaking his head*) A world full of room-mates and I pick myself the Tin Man. (*He sighs*) Oh, well, I suppose I could have done worse.

FELIX (*Moves the rag and silent butler to the bar. Then he takes the chip box from the bar and crosses to the table*) You're darn right, you could have. A lot worse.

OSCAR How?

FELIX What do you mean, how? How'd you like to live with ten-thumbs Murray or Speed and his complaining?
(He gets down on his knees, picks up the chips and puts them into the box) Don't forget I cook and clean and take care of this house. I save us a lot of money, don't I?

OSCAR Yeah, but then you keep me up all night counting it.

FELIX (*Goes to the table and sweeps the chips and cards into the box*) Now wait a minute. We're not always going at each other. We have some fun too, don't we?

OSCAR (*Crosses to the couch*) Fun? Felix, getting a clear picture on Channel Two isn't my idea of whoopee.

FELIX What are you talking about?

OSCAR All right, what do you and I do every night?
(He takes off his sneakers and drops them on the floor)

FELIX What do we do? You mean after dinner?

OSCAR That's right. After we've had your halibut steak and the dishes are done and the sink has been Brillo'd and the pans have been S.O.S.'d and the leftovers have been Saran-Wrapped—what do we do?

FELIX (*Finishes clearing the table and puts everything on top of the bookcase*) Well, we read, we talk . . .

OSCAR (*Takes off his pants and throws them on the floor*)

No, no. I read and *you* talk! I try to work and you talk. I take a bath and you talk. I go to sleep and you talk. We've got your life arranged pretty good but I'm still looking for a little entertainment.

FELIX (*Pulling the kitchen chairs away from the table*)

What are you saying? That I talk too much?

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OSCAR (*Sits on the couch*) No, no. I'm not complaining.

You have a lot to say. What's worrying me is that I'm beginning to listen.

THE ODD
COUPLE

FELIX (*Pulls the table into the alcove*) Oscar, I told you a hundred times, just tell me to shut up. I'm not sensitive.

(*He pulls the love seat down into the room, and centers the table between the windows in the alcove*)

OSCAR I don't think you're getting my point. For a husky man, I think I've spent enough evenings discussing tomorrow's menu. The night was made for other things.

FELIX Like what?

(*He puts two dining chairs neatly on one side of the table*)

OSCAR Like unless I get to touch something soft in the next two weeks, I'm in big trouble.

FELIX You mean women?

(*He puts the two other dining chairs neatly on the other side of the table*)

OSCAR If you want to give it a name, all right, women!

FELIX (*Picks up the two kitchen chairs and starts toward the landing*) That's funny. You know I haven't even thought about women in weeks.

OSCAR I fail to see the humor.

FELIX (*Stops*) No, that's really strange. I mean when Frances and I were happy, I don't think there was a girl on the street I didn't stare at for ten minutes. (*He crosses to the kitchen door and pushes it open with his back*) I used to take the wrong subway home just following a pair of legs. But since we broke up, I don't even know what a woman looks like.

(*He takes the chairs into the kitchen*)

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

OSCAR Well, either I could go downstairs and buy a couple of magazines—or I could make a phone call.

FELIX (*From the kitchen, as he washes the dishes*) What are you saying?

OSCAR (*Crosses to a humidor on a small table and takes out a cigar*) I'm saying let's spend one night talking to someone with higher voices than us.

FELIX You mean go out on a date?

OSCAR Yah . . .

FELIX Oh, well, I—I can't.

OSCAR Why not?

FELIX Well, it's all right for you. But I'm still married.

OSCAR (*Paces toward the kitchen door*) You can cheat until the divorce comes through!

FELIX It's not that. It's just that I have no—no *feeling* for it. I can't explain it.

OSCAR Try!

FELIX (*Comes to the doorway with a brush and dish in his hand*) Listen, I intend to go out. I get lonely too. But I'm just separated a few weeks. Give me a little time.
(*He goes back to the sink*)

OSCAR There isn't any time left. I saw *TV Guide* and there's nothing on this week! (*He paces into and through the kitchen and out the kitchen door onto the landing*) What am I asking you? All I want to do is have dinner with a couple of girls. You just have to eat and talk. It's not hard. You've eaten and talked before.

FELIX Why do you need me? Can't you go out yourself?

OSCAR Because I may want to come back here. And if we walk in and find you washing the windows, it puts a damper on things.

(*He sits down*)

FELIX (*Pokes his head out of the kitchen*) I'll take a pill and go to sleep.

(*He goes back into the kitchen*)

OSCAR Why take a pill when you can take a girl?

FELIX (*Comes out with an aerosol bomb held high over his head and circles around the room, spraying it*) Because

I'd feel guilty, that's why. Maybe it doesn't make any sense to you, but that's the way I feel.

(He puts the bomb on the bar and takes the silent butler and rag into the kitchen. He places them on the sink and busily begins to wipe the refrigerator)

OSCAR Look, for all I care you can take her in the kitchen and make a blueberry pie. But I think it's a lot healthier than sitting up in your bed every night writing Frances' name all through the crossword puzzles. Just for one night, talk to another girl.

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THE ODD COUPLE

FELIX (Pushes the love seat carefully into position and sits, weakening) But who would I call? The only single girl I know is my secretary and I don't think she likes me.

OSCAR (Jumps up and crouches next to FELIX) Leave that to me. There's two sisters who live in this building. English girls. One's a widow; the other's a divorcée. They're a barrel of laughs.

FELIX How do you know?

OSCAR I was trapped in the elevator with them last week. (Runs to the telephone table, puts the directory on the floor, and gets down on his knees to look for the number) I've been meaning to call them but I didn't know which one to take out. This'll be perfect.

FELIX What do they look like?

OSCAR Don't worry. Yours is very pretty.

FELIX I'm not worried. Which one is mine?

OSCAR (Looking in the book) The divorcée.

FELIX (Goes to OSCAR) Why do I get the divorcée?

OSCAR I don't care. You want the widow?

(He circles a number on the page with a crayon)

FELIX (Sitting on the couch) No, I don't want the widow. I don't even want the divorcée. I'm just doing this for you.

OSCAR Look, take whoever you want. When they come in the door, point to the sister of your choice. (Tears the page out of the book, runs to the bookcase and hangs it up) I don't care. I just want to have some laughs.

FELIX All right. All right.

OSCAR (*Crosses to the couch and sits next to FELIX*) Don't say all right. I want you to promise me you're going to try to have a good time. Please, Felix. It's important. Say, "I promise."

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FELIX (*Nods*) I promise.

OSCAR Again!

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

FELIX I promise!

OSCAR And no writing in the book, a dollar thirty for the cab.

FELIX No writing in the book.

OSCAR No one is to be called Frances. It's Gwendolyn and Cecily.

FELIX No Frances.

OSCAR No crying, sighing, moaning or groaning.

FELIX I'll smile from seven to twelve.

OSCAR And this above all, no talk of the past. Only the present.

FELIX And the future.

OSCAR That's the new Felix I've been waiting for. (*Leaps up and prances around*) Oh, is this going to be a night. Hey, where do you want to go?

FELIX For what?

OSCAR For dinner. Where'll we eat?

FELIX You mean a restaurant? For the four of us? It'll cost a fortune.

OSCAR We'll cut down on laundry. We won't wear socks on Thursdays.

FELIX But that's throwing away money. We can't afford it, Oscar.

OSCAR We have to eat.

FELIX (*Moves to OSCAR*) We'll have dinner here.

OSCAR Here?

FELIX I'll cook. We'll save thirty, forty dollars.

(*He goes to the couch, sits and picks up the phone*)

OSCAR What kind of a double date is that? You'll be in the kitchen all night.

FELIX No, I won't. I'll put it up in the afternoon. Once
I get my potatoes in, I'll have all the time in the world.
(He starts to dial)

OSCAR *(Pacing back and forth)* What happened to the
new Felix? Who are you calling?

FELIX Frances. I want to get her recipe for London broil.
The girls'll be crazy about it.

(He dials as OSCAR storms off toward his bedroom)

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Curtain

THE ODD

COUPLE

SCENE 2

268

Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

It is a few days later, about eight o'clock.

No one is on stage. The dining table looks like a page out of House and Garden. It is set for dinner for four, complete with linen tablecloth, candles and wine glasses. There is a floral centerpiece and flowers about the room, and crackers and dip on the coffee table. There are sounds of activity in the kitchen.

The front door opens and OSCAR enters with a bottle of wine in a brown paper bag, his jacket over his arm. He looks about gleefully as he listens to the sounds from the kitchen. He puts the bag on the table and his jacket over a chair.

OSCAR (*Calls out in a playful mood*) I'm home, dear! (*He goes into his bedroom, taking off his shirt, and comes skipping out shaving with a cordless razor, with a clean shirt and a tie over his arm. He is joyfully singing as he admires the table*) Beautiful! Just beautiful! (*He sniffs, obviously catching the aroma from the kitchen*) Oh, yeah. Something wonderful is going on in that kitchen. (*He rubs his hands gleefully*) No, sir. There's no doubt about it. I'm the luckiest man on earth. (*He puts the razor into his pocket and begins to put on the shirt. FELIX enters slowly from the kitchen. He's wearing a small dish towel as an apron. He has a ladle in one hand. He looks silently and glumly at OSCAR, crosses to the armchair and sits*) I got the wine. (*He takes the bottle out of the bag and puts it on the table*) Batard Montrachet. Six and a quarter. You don't mind, do you, pussycat? We'll walk to work this week. (*FELIX sits glumly and silently*) Hey, no kidding, Felix, you did a great job. One little suggestion? Let's come down a little with the lights (*He switches off the wall brackets*) —and up very softly with the music. (*He crosses to the*

stereo set in the bookcase and picks up some record albums) What do you think goes better with London broil, Mancini or Sinatra? (*FELIX just stares ahead*) Felix? What's the matter? (*He puts the albums down*) Something's wrong. I can tell by your conversation. (*He goes into the bathroom, gets a bottle of after-shave lotion and comes out putting it on*) All right, Felix, what is it?

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FELIX (*Without looking at him*) What is it? Let's start with what time do you think it is?

THE ODD COUPLE

OSCAR What time? I don't know. Seven thirty?

FELIX Seven thirty? Try eight o'clock.

OSCAR (*Puts the lotion down on the small table*) All right, so it's eight o'clock. So?

(*He begins to fix his tie*)

FELIX So? You said you'd be home at seven.

OSCAR Is that what I said?

FELIX (*Nods*) That's what you said. "I will be home at seven" is what you said.

OSCAR Okay, I said I'd be home at seven. And it's eight. So what's the problem?

FELIX If you knew you were going to be late, why didn't you call me?

OSCAR (*Pauses while making the knot in his tie*) I couldn't call you. I was busy.

FELIX Too busy to pick up a phone? Where were you?

OSCAR I was in the office, working.

FELIX Working? Ha!

OSCAR Yes. Working!

FELIX I called your office at seven o'clock. You were gone.

OSCAR (*Tucking in his shirt*) It took me an hour to get home. I couldn't get a cab.

FELIX Since when do they have cabs in Hannigan's Bar?

OSCAR Wait a minute. I want to get this down on a tape recorder, because no one'll believe me. You mean now I have to call you if I'm coming home late for dinner?

FELIX (*Crosses to OSCAR*) Not *any* dinner. Just the ones I've been slaving over since two o'clock this afternoon—to help save *you* money to pay your wife's alimony.

OSCAR (*Controlling himself*) Felix, this is no time to have a domestic quarrel. We have two girls coming down any minute.

FELIX You mean you told them to be here at eight o'clock?

OSCAR (*Takes his jacket and crosses to the couch, then sits and takes some dip from the coffee table*) I don't remember what I said. Seven thirty, eight o'clock. What difference does it make?

FELIX (*Follows OSCAR*) I'll tell you what difference. You told me they were coming at seven thirty. You were going to be here at seven to help me with the hors d'oeuvres. At seven thirty they arrive and we have cocktails. At eight o'clock we have dinner. It is now eight o'clock. *My London broil is finished!* If we don't eat now the whole damned thing'll be *dried out*!

OSCAR Oh, God, help me.

FELIX Never mind helping *you*. Tell Him to save the meat. Because we got nine dollars and thirty-four cents worth drying up in there right now.

OSCAR Can't you keep it warm?

FELIX (*Pacing*) What do you think I am, the Magic Chef? I'm lucky I got it to come out at eight o'clock. What am I going to do?

OSCAR I don't know. Keep pouring gravy on it.

FELIX What gravy?

OSCAR Don't you have any gravy?

FELIX (*Storms over to OSCAR*) Where the hell am I going to get gravy at eight o'clock?

OSCAR (*Getting up*) I thought it comes when you cook the meat.

FELIX (*Follows him*) When you *cook the meat*? You don't know the first thing you're talking about. You have to make gravy. It doesn't come!

OSCAR You asked my advice, I'm giving it to you.

(*He puts on his jacket*)

FELIX Advice? (*He waves the ladle in his face*) You didn't know where the kitchen was till I came here and showed you.

OSCAR You wanna talk to me, put down the spoon.

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FELIX (*Exploding in rage, again waving the ladle in his face*) Spoon? You dumb ignoramus. It's a ladle. You don't even know it's a ladle.

THE ODD
COUPLE

OSCAR All right, Felix, get a hold of yourself.

FELIX (*Pulls himself together and sits on the love seat*) You think it's so easy? Go on. The kitchen's all yours. Go make a London broil for four people who come a half hour late.

OSCAR (*To no one in particular*) Listen to me. I'm arguing with him over gravy.

(*The bell rings*)

FELIX (*Jumps up*) Well, they're here. Our dinner guests. I'll get a saw and cut the meat.

(*He starts for the kitchen*)

OSCAR (*Stopping him*) Stay where you are!

FELIX I'm not taking the blame for this dinner.

OSCAR Who's blaming you? Who even *cares* about the dinner?

FELIX (*Moves to OSCAR*) I care. I take *pride* in what I do. And you're going to explain to them exactly what happened.

OSCAR All right, you can take a Polaroid picture of me coming in at eight o'clock! Now take off that stupid apron because I'm opening the door.

(*He rips the towel off FELIX and goes to the door*)

FELIX (*Takes his jacket from a dining chair and puts it on*) I just want to get one thing clear. This is the last time I ever cook for you. Because people like you don't even appreciate a decent meal. That's why they have TV dinners.

OSCAR You through?

FELIX I'm through!

OSCAR Then smile. (OSCAR smiles and opens the door.
The girls poke their heads through the door. They are
in their young thirties and somewhat attractive. They
are undoubtedly British) Well, hello.

272

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

- GWENDOLYN (To OSCAR) Hallo!

CECILY (To OSCAR) Hallo.

GWENDOLYN I do hope we're not late.

OSCAR No, no. You timed it perfectly. Come on in. (He
points to them as they enter) Er, Felix, I'd like you to
meet two very good friends of mine, Gwendolyn and
Cecily . . .

CECILY (Pointing out his mistake) Cecily and Gwen-
dolyn.

OSCAR Oh, yes. Cecily and Gwendolyn . . . er (Trying
to remember their last name) Er . . . Don't tell me.
Robin? No, no. Cardinal?

GWENDOLYN Wrong both times. It's Pigeon!

OSCAR Pigeon. Right. Cecily and Gwendolyn Pigeon.

GWENDOLYN (To FELIX) You don't spell it like Walter
Pidgeon. You spell it like "Coo-Coo" Pigeon.

OSCAR We'll remember that if it comes up. Cecily and
Gwendolyn, I'd like you to meet my room-mate, and
our chef for the evening, Felix Ungar.

CECILY (Holding her hand out) Heh d'yew dew?

FELIX (Moving to her and shaking her hand) How do
you do?

GWENDOLYN (Holding her hand out) Heh d'yew dew?

FELIX (Stepping up on the landing and shaking her hand)
How do you do you?

(This puts him nose to nose with OSCAR, and there
is an awkward pause as they look at each other)

OSCAR Well, we did that beautifully. Why don't we sit
down and make ourselves comfortable?

(FELIX steps aside and ushers the girls down into
the room. There is ad libbing and a bit of confusion
and milling about as they all squeeze between the
armchair and the couch, and the PIGEONS finally

seat themselves on the couch. OSCAR sits in the arm-chair, and FELIX sneaks past him to the love seat. Finally all have settled down)

CECILY This is ever so nice, isn't it, Gwen?

GWENDOLYN (*Looking around*) Lovely. And much nicer than our flat. Do you have help?

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OSCAR Er, yes. I have a man who comes in every night.

CECILY Aren't you the lucky one?

(CECILY, GWENDOLYN and OSCAR all laugh at her joke. OSCAR looks over at FELIX but there is no response)

OSCAR (*Rubs his hands together*) Well, isn't this nice? I was telling Felix yesterday about how we happened to meet.

GWENDOLYN Oh? Who's Felix?

OSCAR (*A little embarrassed, he points to FELIX*) He is!

GWENDOLYN Oh, yes, of course. I'm so sorry.

(FELIX nods that it's all right)

CECILY You know it happened to us again this morning.

OSCAR What did?

GWENDOLYN Stuck in the elevator again.

OSCAR Really? Just the two of you?

CECILY And poor old Mr. Kessler from the third floor. We were in there half an hour.

OSCAR No kidding? What happened?

GWENDOLYN Nothing much, I'm afraid.

(CECILY and GWENDOLYN both laugh at her latest joke, joined by OSCAR. He once again looks over at FELIX, but there is no response)

OSCAR (*Rubs his hands again*) Well, this really is nice.

CECILY And ever so much cooler than our place.

GWENDOLYN It's like equatorial Africa on our side of the building.

CECILY Last night it was so bad Gwen and I sat there in nature's own cooling ourselves in front of the open fridge. Can you imagine such a thing?

OSCAR Er, I'm working on it.

THE ODD

COUPLE

GWENDOLYN Actually, it's impossible to get a night's sleep. Cec and I really don't know what to do.

OSCAR Why don't you sleep with an air conditioner?

GWENDOLYN We haven't got one.

OSCAR I know. But we have.

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GWENDOLYN Oh, you! I told you about that one, didn't I, Cec?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

FELIX They say it may rain Friday.

(*They all stare at FELIX*)

GWENDOLYN Oh?

CECILY That should cool things off a bit.

OSCAR I wouldn't be surprised.

FELIX Although sometimes it gets hotter after it rains.

GWENDOLYN Yes, it does, doesn't it?

(*They continue to stare at FELIX*)

FELIX (*Jumps up and, picking up the ladle, starts for the kitchen*) Dinner is served!

OSCAR (*Stopping him*) No, it isn't!

FELIX Yes, it is!

OSCAR No, it isn't! I'm sure the girls would like a cocktail first. (*To the girls*) Wouldn't you, girls?

GWENDOLYN Well, I wouldn't put up a struggle.

OSCAR There you are. (*To CECILY*) What would you like?

CECILY Oh, I really don't know. (*To OSCAR*) What have you got?

FELIX London broil.

OSCAR (*To FELIX*) She means to drink. (*To CECILY*) We have everything. And what we don't have, I mix in the medicine cabinet. What'll it be?

(*He crouches next to her*)

CECILY Oh, a double vodka.

GWENDOLYN Cecily, not before dinner.

CECILY (*To the men*) My sister. She watches over me like a mother hen. (*To OSCAR*) Make it a *small* double vodka.

OSCAR A small double vodka! And for the beautiful mother hen?

GWENDOLYN Oh, I'd like something cool. I think I would like to have a double Drambuie with some crushed ice, unless you don't have the crushed ice.

OSCAR I was up all night with a sledge hammer. I shall return!

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(He goes to the bar and gets bottles of vodka and Drambuie)

THE ODD COUPLE

FELIX (Going to him) Where are you going?

OSCAR To get the refreshments.

FELIX (Starting to panic) Inside? What'll I do?

OSCAR You can finish the weather report.

(He exits into the kitchen)

FELIX (Calls after him) Don't forget to look at my meat!

(He turns and faces the girls. He crosses to a chair and sits. He crosses his legs nonchalantly. But he is ill at ease and he crosses them again. He is becoming aware of the silence and he can no longer get away with just smiling) Er, Oscar tells me you're sisters.

CECILY Yes. That's right.

(She looks at GWENDOLYN)

FELIX From England.

GWENDOLYN Yes. That's right.

(She looks at CECILY)

FELIX I see. (Silence. Then, his little joke) We're not brothers.

CECILY Yes. We know.

FELIX Although I am a brother. I have a brother who's a doctor. He lives in Buffalo. That's upstate in New York.

GWENDOLYN (Taking a cigarette from her purse) Yes, we know.

FELIX You know my brother?

GWENDOLYN No. We know that Buffalo is upstate in New York.

FELIX Oh!

(He gets up, takes a cigarette lighter from the side table and moves to light GWENDOLYN's cigarette)

CECILY We've been there! Have you?

FELIX No! Is it nice?

CECILY Lovely.

(FELIX closes the lighter on GWENDOLYN's cigarette and turns to go back to his chair, taking the cigarette, now caught in the lighter, with him. He notices the cigarette and hastily gives it back to GWENDOLYN, stopping to light it once again. He puts the lighter back on the table and sits down nervously. There is a pause)

FELIX Isn't that interesting? How long have you been in the United States of America?

CECILY Almost four years now.

FELIX (Nods) Uh huh. Just visiting?

GWENDOLYN (Looks at CECILY) No! We live here.

FELIX And you work here too, do you?

CECILY Yes. We're secretaries for Slenderama.

GWENDOLYN You know. The health club.

CECILY People bring us their bodies and we do wonderful things with them.

GWENDOLYN Actually, if you're interested, we can get you ten per cent off.

CECILY Off the price, not off your body.

FELIX Yes, I see. (He laughs. They all laugh. Suddenly he shouts toward the kitchen) Oscar, where's the drinks?

OSCAR (Offstage) Coming! Coming!

CECILY What field of endeavor are you engaged in?

FELIX I write the news for CBS.

CECILY Oh! Fascinating!

GWENDOLYN Where do you get your ideas from?

FELIX (He looks at her as though she's a Martian) From the news.

GWENDOLYN Oh, yes, of course. Silly me . . .

CECILY Maybe you can mention Gwen and I in one of your news reports.

FELIX Well, if you do something spectacular, maybe I will.

CECILY Oh, we've done spectacular things but I don't think we'd want it spread all over the telly, do you, Gwen?

(They both laugh)

FELIX (He laughs too, then cries out almost for help) Oscar!

OSCAR (Offstage) Yeah, yeah!

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FELIX (To the girls) It's such a large apartment, sometimes you have to shout.

THE ODD

COUPLER

GWENDOLYN Just you two baches live here?

FELIX Baches? Oh, bachelors! We're not bachelors. We're divorced. That is, Oscar's divorced. I'm getting divorced.

CECILY Oh. Small world. We've cut the dinghy loose too, as they say.

GWENDOLYN Well, you couldn't have a *better* matched foursome, could you?

FELIX (Smiles weakly) No, I suppose not.

GWENDOLYN Although technically I'm a widow. I was divorcing my husband, but he died before the final papers came through.

FELIX Oh, I'm awfully sorry. (Sighs) It's a terrible thing, isn't it? Divorce.

GWENDOLYN It can be—if you haven't got the right solicitor.

CECILY That's true. Sometimes they can drag it out for months. I was lucky. Snip, cut and I was free.

FELIX I mean it's terrible what it can do to people. After all, what is divorce? It's taking two happy people and tearing their lives completely apart. It's inhuman, don't you think so?

CECILY Yes, it can be an awful bother.

GWENDOLYN But of course, that's all water under the bridge now, eh? Er, I'm terribly sorry, but I think I've forgotten your name.

FELIX Felix.

GWENDOLYN Oh, yes. Felix.

CECILY Like the cat.

(FELIX takes his wallet from his jacket pocket)

GWENDOLYN Well, the Pigeons will have to beware of the cat, won't they?
(She laughs)

CECILY (*Nibbles on a nut from the dish*) Mmm, cashews. Lovely.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

FELIX (*Takes a snapshot out of his wallet*) This is the worst part of breaking up.

(He hands the picture to CECILY)

CECILY (*Looks at it*) Childhood sweethearts, were you?

FELIX No, no. That's my little boy and girl. (*CECILY gives the picture to GWENDOLYN, takes a pair of glasses from her purse and puts them on*) He's seven, she's five.

CECILY (*Looks again*) Oh! Sweet.

FELIX They live with their mother.

GWENDOLYN I imagine you must miss them terribly.

FELIX (*Takes back the picture and looks at it longingly*) I can't stand being away from them. (*Shrugs*) But—that's what happens with divorce.

CECILY When do you get to see them?

FELIX Every night. I stop there on my way home! Then I take them on the weekends, and I get them on holidays and July and August.

CECILY Oh! Well, when is it that you miss them?

FELIX Whenever I'm not there. If they didn't have to go to school so early, I'd go over and make them breakfast. They love my French toast.

GWENDOLYN You're certainly a devoted father.

FELIX It's Frances who's the wonderful one.

CECILY She's the little girl?

FELIX No. She's the mother. My wife.

GWENDOLYN The one you're divorcing?

FELIX (*Nods*) Mm! She's done a terrific job bringing them up. They always look so nice. They're so polite. Speak beautifully. Never, "Yeah." Always, "Yes." They're such good kids. And she did it all. She's the kind of woman who— Ah, what am I saying? You don't want to hear any of this.

(He puts the picture back in his wallet)

CECILY Nonsense. You have a right to be proud. You have two beautiful children and a wonderful ex-wife.

FELIX (*Containing his emotions*) I know. I know. (*He hands CECILY another snapshot*) That's her. Frances.

GWENDOLYN (*Looking at the picture*) Oh, she's pretty. Isn't she pretty, Cecy?

CECILY Oh, yes. Pretty. A pretty girl. Very pretty.

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FELIX (*Takes the picture back*) Thank you. (*Shows them another snapshot*) Isn't this nice?

GWENDOLYN (*Looks*) There's no one in the picture.

THE ODD
COUPLE

FELIX I know. It's a picture of our living room. We had a beautiful apartment.

GWENDOLYN Oh, yes. Pretty. Very pretty.

CECILY Those are lovely lamps.

FELIX Thank you! (*Takes the picture*) We bought them in Mexico on our honeymoon. (*He looks at the picture again*) I used to love to come home at night. (*He's beginning to break*) That was my whole life. My wife, my kids—and my apartment.

(*He breaks down and sobs*)

CECILY Does she have the lamps now too?

FELIX (*Nods*) I gave her everything. It'll never be like that again. Never! I—I— (*He turns his head away*) I'm sorry. (*He takes out a handkerchief and dabs his eyes*. **GWENDOLYN** and **CECILY** look at each other with compassion) Please forgive me. I didn't mean to get emotional. (*Trying to pull himself together, he picks up a bowl from the side table and offers it to the girls*) Would you like some potato chips?

(*CECILY takes the bowl*)

GWENDOLYN You mustn't be ashamed. I think it's a rare quality in a man to be able to cry.

FELIX (*Puts a hand over his eyes*) Please. Let's not talk about it.

CECILY I think it's sweet. Terribly, terribly sweet.

(*She takes a potato chip*)

FELIX You're just making it worse.

GWENDOLYN (*Teary-eyed*) It's so refreshing to hear a

man speak so highly of the woman he's divorcing! Oh, dear. (*She takes out her handkerchief*) Now you've got me thinking about poor Sydney.

CECILY Oh, Gwen. Please don't.

(*She puts the bowl down*)

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

GWENDOLYN It was a good marriage at first. Everyone said so. Didn't they, Cecily? Not like you and George.

CECILY (*The past returns as she comforts GWENDOLYN*) That's right. George and I were never happy. Not for one single, solitary day.

(*She remembers her unhappiness, grabs her handkerchief and dabs her eyes. All three are now sitting with handkerchiefs at their eyes*)

FELIX Isn't this ridiculous?

GWENDOLYN I don't know what brought this on. I was feeling so good a few minutes ago.

CECILY I haven't cried since I was fourteen.

FELIX Just let it pour out. It'll make you feel much better. I always do.

GWENDOLYN Oh, dear; oh, dear; oh, dear.

(*All three sit sobbing into their handkerchiefs. Suddenly OSCAR bursts happily into the room with a tray full of drinks. He is all smiles*)

OSCAR (*Like a corny M.C.*) Is ev-rybuddy happy? (*Then he sees the maudlin scene. FELIX and the girls quickly try to pull themselves together*) What the hell happened?

FELIX Nothing! Nothing!

(*He quickly puts his handkerchief away*)

OSCAR What do you mean, nothing? I'm gone three minutes and I walk into a funeral parlor. What did you say to them?

FELIX I didn't say anything. Don't start in again, Oscar.

OSCAR I can't leave you alone for five seconds. Well, if you really want to cry, go inside and look at your London broil.

FELIX (*He rushes madly into the kitchen*) Oh, my gosh! Why didn't you call me? I told you to call me.

OSCAR (*Giving a drink to CECILY*) I'm sorry, girls. I forgot to warn you about Felix. He's a walking soap opera.

GWENDOLYN I think he's the dearest thing I ever met.

CECILY (*Taking the glass*) He's so sensitive. So fragile. I just want to bundle him up in my arms and take care of him.

OSCAR (*Holds out GWENDOLYN's drink. At this, he puts it back down on the tray and takes a swallow from his own drink*) Well, I think when he comes out of that kitchen you may have to.

(*Sure enough, FELIX comes out of the kitchen onto the landing looking like a wounded puppy. With a protective kitchen glove, he holds a pan with the exposed London broil. Black is the color of his true love*)

FELIX (*Very calmly*) I'm going down to the delicatessen. I'll be right back.

OSCAR (*Going to him*) Wait a minute. Maybe it's not so bad. Let's see it.

FELIX (*Shows him*) Here! Look! Nine dollars and thirty-four cents worth of ashes! (*Pulls the pan away. To the girls*) I'll get some corned beef sandwiches.

OSCAR (*Trying to get a look at it*) Give it to me! Maybe we can save some of it.

FELIX (*Holding it away from OSCAR*) There's nothing to save. It's all black meat. Nobody likes black meat!

OSCAR Can't I even look at it?

FELIX No, you can't look at it!

OSCAR Why can't I look at it?

FELIX If you looked at your watch before, you wouldn't have to look at the black meat now! Leave it alone! (*He turns to go back into the kitchen*)

GWENDOLYN (*Going to him*) Felix! Can we look at it?

CECILY (*Turning to him, kneeling on the couch*) Please? (*FELIX stops in the kitchen doorway. He hesitates for a moment. He likes them. Then he turns and wordlessly holds the pan out to them. GWENDOLYN and CECILY inspect it wordlessly, and then turn away sobbing quietly. To OSCAR*) How about Chinese food?

OSCAR A wonderful idea.

GWENDOLYN I've got a better idea. Why don't we just make pot luck in the kitchen?

OSCAR A much better idea.

FELIX I used up all the pots!

(*He crosses to the love seat and sits, still holding the pan*)

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CECILY Well, then we can eat up in *our* place. We have tons of Horn and Hardart's.

OSCAR (*Gleefully*) That's the best idea I ever heard.

GWENDOLYN Of course it's awfully hot up there. You'll have to take off your jackets.

OSCAR (*Smiling*) We can always open up a refrigerator.

CECILY (*Gets her purse from the couch*) Give us five minutes to get into our cooking things.

(*GWENDOLYN gets her purse from the couch*)

OSCAR Can't you make it four? I'm suddenly starving to death.

(*The girls are crossing to the door*)

GWENDOLYN Don't forget the wine.

OSCAR How could I forget the wine?

CECILY And a corkscrew.

OSCAR And a corkscrew.

GWENDOLYN And Felix.

OSCAR No, I won't forget Felix.

CECILY Ta, ta!

OSCAR Ta, ta!

GWENDOLYN Ta, ta!

(*The girls exit*)

OSCAR (*Throws a kiss at the closed door*) You bet your sweet little crumpets, "Ta, Ta!" (*He wheels around beaming and quickly gathers up the corkscrew from the bar, and picks up the wine and the records*) Felix, I love you. You've just overcooked us into one hell of a night. Come on, get the ice bucket. Ready or not, here we come.

(*He runs to the door*)

FELIX (*Sitting motionless*) I'm not going!

OSCAR What?

FELIX I said I'm not going.

OSCAR (*Crossing to FELIX*) Are you out of your mind? Do you know what's waiting for us up there? You've just been invited to spend the evening in a two-bedroom hot-house with the Coo-Coo Pigeon Sisters! What do you mean you're not going?

FELIX I don't know how to talk to them. I don't know what to say. I already told them about my brother in Buffalo. I've used up my conversation.

OSCAR Felix, they're crazy about you. They told me! One of them wants to wrap you up and make a bundle out of you. You're doing better than I am! Get the ice bucket.

(*He starts for the door*)

FELIX Don't you understand? I cried! I cried in front of two women.

OSCAR (*Stops*) And they loved it! I'm thinking of getting hysterical. (*Goes to the door*) Will you get the ice bucket?

FELIX But why did I cry? Because I felt guilty. Emotionally I'm still tied to Frances and the kids.

OSCAR Well, untie the knot just for tonight, will you!

FELIX I don't want to discuss it any more. (*Starts for the kitchen*) I'm going to scrub the pots and wash my hair.
(*He goes into the kitchen and puts the pan in the sink*)

OSCAR (*Yelling*) Your greasy pots and your greasy hair can wait. You're coming upstairs with me!

FELIX (*In the kitchen*) I'm not! I'm not!

OSCAR What am I going to do with two girls? Felix, don't do this to me. I'll never forgive you!

FELIX I'm not going!

OSCAR (*Screams*) All right, damn you, I'll go without you! (*And he storms out the door and slams it. Then it opens and he comes in again*) Are you coming?

FELIX (*Comes out of the kitchen looking at a magazine*)
No.

OSCAR You mean you're not going to make any effort to change? This is the person you're going to be—until the day you die?

FELIX (*Sitting on the couch*) We are what we are.

OSCAR (*Nods, then crosses to a window, pulls back the drapes and opens the window wide. Then he starts back to the door*) It's twelve floors, not eleven.

(*He walks out as FELIX stares at the open windows*)

Curtain

Act Three

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THE ODD
COUPLE

The next evening about 7:30 P.M. The room is once again set up for the poker game, with the dining table pulled down, the chairs set about it, and the love seat moved back beneath the windows in the alcove. FELIX appears from the bedroom with a vacuum cleaner. He is doing a thorough job on the rug. As he vacuums around the table, the door opens and OSCAR comes in wearing a summer hat and carrying a newspaper. He glares at FELIX, who is still vacuuming, and shakes his head contemptuously. He crosses behind FELIX, leaving his hat on the side table next to the armchair, and goes into his bedroom. FELIX is not aware of his presence. Then suddenly the power stops on the vacuum, as OSCAR has obviously pulled the plug in the bedroom. FELIX tries switching the button on and off a few times, then turns to go back into the bedroom. He stops and realizes what's happened as OSCAR comes back into the room. OSCAR takes a cigar out of his pocket and as he crosses in front of FELIX to the couch, he unwraps it and drops the wrappings carelessly on the floor. He then steps up on the couch and walks back and forth mashing down the pillows. Stepping down, he plants one foot on the arm-chair and then sits on the couch, taking a wooden match from the coffee table and striking it on the table to light his cigar. He flips the used match onto the rug and settles back to read his newspaper. FELIX has watched this all in silence, and now carefully picks up the cigar wrappings and the match and drops them into OSCAR's hat. He then dusts his hands and takes the vacuum cleaner into the kitchen, pulling the cord in after him. OSCAR takes the wrappings from the hat and puts them in the butt-filled ashtray on the coffee table. Then he takes the ashtray and dumps it on the floor. As he once more settles down with his newspaper, FELIX comes out of the kitchen carrying a tray with a steaming dish of spaghetti. As he crosses behind OSCAR to the table, he indicates that it smells delicious and passes it close to OSCAR to make sure OSCAR smells the fantastic dish he's missing. As FELIX sits and begins to eat, OSCAR takes a can of aerosol spray from the bar, and circling the table, sprays all around FELIX, then puts the can down next to him and goes back to his newspaper.

FELIX (*Pushing the spaghetti away*) All right, how much longer is this gonna go on?

OSCAR (*Reading his paper*) Are you talking to me?

FELIX That's right, I'm talking to you.

OSCAR What do you want to know?

FELIX I want to know if you're going to spend the rest of your life not talking to me. Because if you are, I'm going to buy a radio. (*No reply*) Well? (*No reply*) I see. You're not going to talk to me. (*No reply*) All right. Two can play at this game. (*Pause*) If you're not going to talk to me, I'm not going to talk to you. (*No reply*) I can act childish too, you know. (*No reply*) I can go on without talking just as long as you can.

OSCAR Then why the hell don't you shut up?

FELIX Are you talking to me?

OSCAR You had your chance to talk last night. I begged you to come upstairs with me. From now on I never want to hear a word from that shampooed head as long as you live. That's a warning, Felix.

FELIX (*Stares at him*) I stand warned. Over and out!

OSCAR (*Gets up, takes a key out of his pocket and slams it on the table*) There's a key to the back door. If you stick to the hallway and your room, you won't get hurt.

(*He sits back down on the couch*)

FELIX I don't think I gather the entire meaning of that remark.

OSCAR Then I'll explain it to you. Stay out of my way.

FELIX (*Picks up the key and moves to the couch*) I think you're serious. I think you're really serious. Are you serious?

OSCAR This is my apartment. Everything in my apartment is mine. The only thing here that's yours is you. Just stay in your room and speak softly.

FELIX Yeah, you're serious. Well, let me remind you that I pay half the rent and I'll go into any room I want.

(*He gets up angrily and starts toward the hallway*)

OSCAR Where are you going?

FELIX I'm going to walk around your bedroom.

OSCAR (*Slams down his newspaper*) You stay out of there.

FELIX (*Steaming*) Don't tell me where to go. I pay a hundred and twenty dollars a month.

OSCAR That was off-season. Starting tomorrow the rates are twelve dollars a day.

FELIX All right. (*He takes some bills out of his pocket and slams them down on the table*) There you are. I'm paid up for today. Now I'm going to walk in your bedroom.

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THE ODD COUPLE

(*He starts to storm off*)

OSCAR Stay out of there! Stay out of my room!

(*He chases after him. FELIX dodges around the table as OSCAR blocks the hallway*)

FELIX (*Backing away, keeping the table between them*) Watch yourself! Just watch yourself, Oscar!

OSCAR (*With a pointing finger*) I'm warning you. You want to live here, I don't want to see you, I don't want to hear you and I don't want to smell your cooking. Now get this spaghetti off my poker table.

FELIX Ha! Ha, ha!

OSCAR What the hell's so funny?

FELIX It's not spaghetti. It's linguini!

(*OSCAR picks up the plate of linguini, crosses to the doorway and hurls it into the kitchen*)

OSCAR Now it's garbage!

(*He paces by the couch*)

FELIX (*Looks at OSCAR unbelievably: what an insane thing to do*) You are crazy! I'm a neurotic nut but you are crazy!

OSCAR I'm crazy, heh? That's really funny coming from a fruitcake like you.

FELIX (*Goes to the kitchen door and looks in at the mess. Turns back to OSCAR*) I'm not cleaning that up.

OSCAR Is that a promise?

FELIX Did you hear what I said? I'm not cleaning it up.

It's your mess. (*Looking into the kitchen again*) Look at it. Hanging all over the walls.

OSCAR (*Crosses to the landing and looks in the kitchen door*) I like it.

(*He closes the door and paces around*)

FELIX (*Fumes*) You'd just let it lie there, wouldn't you? Until it turns hard and brown and . . . Yich, it's disgusting. I'm cleaning it up.

(*He goes into the kitchen. OSCAR chases after him.*
There is the sound of a struggle and falling pots)

OSCAR Leave it alone! You touch one strand of that lin-guini—and I'm gonna punch you right in your sinuses.

FELIX (*Dashes out of the kitchen with OSCAR in pursuit.*
He stops and tries to calm OSCAR down) Oscar, I'd like you to take a couple of phenobarbital.

OSCAR (*Points*) Go to your room! Did you hear what I said? *Go to your room!*

FELIX All right, let's everybody just settle down, heh?
(*He puts his hand on OSCAR's shoulder to calm him but OSCAR pulls away violently from his touch*)

OSCAR If you want to live through this night, you'd better tie me up and lock your doors and windows.

FELIX (*Sits at the table with a great pretense of calm*) All right, Oscar, I'd like to know what's happened.

OSCAR (*Moves toward him*) What's happened?

FELIX (*Hurriedly slides over to the next chair*) That's right. Something must have caused you to go off the deep end like this. What is it? Something I said? Something I did? Heh? What?

OSCAR (*Pacing*) It's nothing you said. It's nothing you did. It's you!

FELIX I see. Well, that's plain enough.

OSCAR I could make it plainer but I don't want to hurt you.

FELIX What is it, the cooking? The cleaning? The crying?

OSCAR (*Moving toward him*) I'll tell you exactly what it is. It's the cooking, cleaning and crying. It's the talking

in your sleep, it's the moose calls that open your ears at two o'clock in the morning. I can't take it any more, Felix. I'm crackin' up. Everything you do irritates me. And when you're not here, the things I know you're gonna do when you come in irritate me. You leave me little notes on my pillow. I told you a hundred times, I can't stand little notes on my pillow. "We're all out of Corn Flakes. F.U." It took me three hours to figure out that F.U. was Felix Ungar. It's not your fault, Felix. It's a rotten combination.

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THE ODD
COUPLE

FELIX I get the picture.

OSCAR That's just the frame. The picture I haven't even painted yet. I got a typewritten list in my office of the "Ten Most Aggravating Things You Do That Drive Me Berserk." But last night was the topper. Oh, that was the topper. Oh, that was the ever-loving lulu of all times.

FELIX What are you talking about, the London broil?

OSCAR No, not the London broil. I'm talking about those two lamb chops. (*He points upstairs*) I had it all set up with that English Betty Boop and her sister, and I wind up drinking tea all night and telling them *your* life story.

FELIX (*Jumps up*) Oho! So that's what's bothering you. That I loused up your evening!

OSCAR After the mood you put them in, I'm surprised they didn't go out to Rockaway and swim back to England.

FELIX Don't blame me. I warned you not to make the date in the first place.

(*He makes his point by shaking his finger in OSCAR's face*)

OSCAR Don't point that finger at me unless you intend to use it!

FELIX (*Moves in nose to nose with OSCAR*) All right, Oscar, get off my back. Get off! Off!

(*Startled by his own actions, FELIX jumps back from OSCAR, warily circles him, crosses to the couch and sits*)

OSCAR What's this? A display of temper? I haven't seen you really angry since the day I dropped my cigar in your pancake batter.

(*He starts toward the hallway*)

FELIX (*Threateningly*) Oscar, you're asking to hear something I don't want to say. But if I say it, I think you'd better hear it.

OSCAR (*Comes back to the table, places both hands on it and leans toward FELIX*) If you've got anything on your chest besides your chin, you'd better get it off.

FELIX (*Strides to the table, places both hands on it and leans toward OSCAR. They are nose to nose*) All right, I warned you. You're a wonderful guy, Oscar. You've done everything for me. If it weren't for you, I don't know what would have happened to me. You took me in here, gave me a place to live and something to live for. I'll never forget you for that. You're tops with me, Oscar.

OSCAR (*Motionless*) If I've just been told off, I think I may have missed it.

FELIX It's coming now! You're also one of the biggest slobs in the world.

OSCAR I see.

FELIX And completely unreliable.

OSCAR Finished?

FELIX Undependable.

OSCAR Is that it?

FELIX And irresponsible.

OSCAR Keep going. I think you're hot.

FELIX That's it. I'm finished. Now you've been told off. How do you like that?

(*He crosses to the couch*)

OSCAR (*Straightening up*) Good. Because now I'm going to tell you off. For six months I lived alone in this apartment. All alone in eight rooms. I was dejected, despondent and disgusted. Then you moved in—my dearest and closest friend. And after three weeks of close, personal contact—I am about to have a nervous breakdown! Do me a favor. Move into the kitchen. Live with your pots, your pans, your ladle and your meat thermometer. When you want to come out, ring a bell and I'll run into the bedroom. (*Almost breaking down*) I'm asking you nicely, Felix—as a friend. Stay out of my way!

(*And he goes into the bedroom*)

FELIX (*Is hurt by this, then remembers something. He calls after him*) Walk on the paper, will you? The floors are wet. (*OSCAR comes out of the door. He is glaring maniacally, as he slowly strides back down the hallway. FELIX quickly puts the couch between him and OSCAR*) Awright, keep away. Keep away from me.

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OSCAR (*Chasing him around the couch*) Come on. Let me get in one shot. You pick it. Head, stomach or kidneys.

THE ODD
COUPLE

FELIX (*Dodging about the room*) You're gonna find yourself in one sweet law suit, Oscar.

OSCAR It's no use running, Felix. There's only eight rooms and I know the short cuts.

(*They are now poised at opposite ends of the couch. FELIX picks up a lamp for protection*)

FELIX Is this how you settle your problems, Oscar? Like an animal?

OSCAR All right. You wanna see how I settle my problems. I'll show you. (*Storms off into FELIX's bedroom. There is the sound of falling objects and he returns with a suitcase*) I'll show you how I settle them. (*Throws the suitcase on the table*) There! That's how I settle them!

FELIX (*Bewildered, looks at the suitcase*) Where are you going?

OSCAR (*Exploding*) Not me, you idiot! You. You're the one who's going. I want you out of here. Now! Tonight! (He opens the suitcase)

FELIX What are you talking about?

OSCAR It's all over, Felix. The whole marriage. We're getting an annulment! Don't you understand? I don't want to live with you any more. I want you to pack your things, tie it up with your Saran Wrap and get out of here.

FELIX You mean actually move out?

OSCAR Actually, physically and immediately. I don't care where you go. Move into the Museum of Natural History. (*Goes into the kitchen. There is the crash of falling pots and pans*) I'm sure you'll be very comfortable there. You can dust around the Egyptian mummies to your heart's content. But I'm a human, living

person. (*Comes out with a stack of cooking utensils which he throws into the open suitcase*) All I want is my freedom Is that too much to ask for? (*Closes it*) There, you're all packed.

FELIX You know, I've got a good mind to really leave.

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OSCAR (*Looking to the heavens*) Why doesn't he ever listen to what I say? Why doesn't he hear me? I know I'm talking—I recognize my voice.

COLLECTED PLAYS OF NEIL SIMON FELIX (*Indignantly*) Because if you really want me to go, I'll go.

OSCAR Then go. I want you to go, so go. When are you going?

FELIX When am I going, huh? Boy, you're in a bigger hurry than Frances was.

OSCAR Take as much time as she gave you. I want you to follow your usual routine.

FELIX In other words, you're throwing me out.

OSCAR Not in other words. Those are the perfect ones. (*Picks up the suitcase and holds it out to FELIX*) I am throwing you out.

FELIX All right, I just wanted to get the record straight. Let it be on *your* conscience.

(*He goes into his bedroom*)

OSCAR What? What? (*Follows him to the bedroom doorway*) Let what be on my conscience?

FELIX (*Comes out putting on his jacket and passes by OSCAR*) That you're throwing me out. (*Stops and turns back to him*) I'm perfectly willing to stay and clear the air of our differences. But you refuse, right?

OSCAR (*Still holding the suitcase*) Right! I'm sick and tired of you clearing the air. That's why I want you to leave!

FELIX Okay, as long as I heard you say the words, "Get out of the house." Fine. But remember, what happens to me is your responsibility. Let it be on *your* head. (*He crosses to the door*)

OSCAR (*Follows him to the door and screams*) Wait a minute, damn it! Why can't you be thrown out like a decent human being? Why do you have to say things

like, "Let it be on your head"? I don't want it on my head. I just want you out of the house.

FELIX What's the matter, Oscar? Can't cope with a little guilt feelings?

OSCAR (*Pounding the railing in frustration*) Damn you. I've been looking forward to throwing you out all day long, and now you even take the pleasure out of that.

FELIX Forgive me for spoiling your fun. I'm leaving now—according to your wishes and desires.

(*He starts to open the door*)

OSCAR (*Pushes by FELIX and slams the door shut. He stands between FELIX and the door*) You're not leaving here until you take it back.

FELIX Take what back?

OSCAR "Let it be on your head." What the hell is that, the Curse of the Cat People?

FELIX Get out of my way, please.

OSCAR Is this how you left that night with Frances? No wonder she wanted to have the room repainted right away. (*Points to FELIX's bedroom*) I'm gonna have yours dipped in bronze.

FELIX (*Sits on the back of the couch with his back to OSCAR*) How can I leave if you're blocking the door?

OSCAR (*Very calmly*) Felix, we've been friends a long time. For the sake of that friendship, please say, "Oscar, we can't stand each other; let's break up."

FELIX I'll let you know what to do about my clothes. Either I'll call—or someone else will. (*Controlling great emotion*) I'd like to leave now.

(*OSCAR, resigned, moves out of the way. FELIX opens the door*)

OSCAR Where will you go?

FELIX (*Turns in the doorway and looks at him*) Where? (*He smiles*) Oh, come on, Oscar. You're not really interested, are you?

(*He exits. OSCAR looks as though he's about to burst with frustration. He calls after FELIX*)

OSCAR All right, Felix, you win. (*Goes out into the hall*) We'll try to iron it out. Anything you want. Come

back, Felix. Felix? Felix? Don't leave me like this—you louse! (But FELIX is gone. OSCAR comes back into the room closing the door. He is limp. He searches for something to ease his enormous frustration. He throws a pillow at the door, and then paces about like a caged lion) All right, Oscar, get a hold of yourself! He's gone! Keep saying that over and over. He's gone. He's really gone! (He holds his head in pain) He did it. He put a curse on me. It's on my head. I don't know what it is, but something's on my head. (The doorbell rings and he looks up hopefully) Please let it be him. Let it be Felix. Please give me one more chance to kill him.

(Putting the suitcase on the sofa, he rushes to the door and opens it. MURRAY comes in with VINNIE)

MURRAY (Putting his jacket on a chair at the table) Hey, what's the matter with Felix? He walked right by me with that "human sacrifice" look on his face again.

(He takes off his shoes)

VINNIE (Laying his jacket on the love seat) What's with him? I asked him where he's going and he said, "Only Oscar knows. Only Oscar knows." Where's he going, Oscar?

OSCAR (Sitting at the table) How the hell should I know? All right, let's get the game started, heh? Come on, get your chips.

MURRAY I have to get something to eat. I'm starving. Mmm, I think I smell spaghetti.

(He goes into the kitchen)

VINNIE Isn't he playing tonight?

(He takes two chairs from the dining alcove and puts them at the table)

OSCAR I don't want to discuss it. I don't even want to hear his name.

VINNIE Who? Felix?

OSCAR I told you not to mention his name.

VINNIE I didn't know what name you meant.

(He clears the table and places what's left of FELIX's dinner on the bookcase)

MURRAY (Comes out of the kitchen) Hey, did you know there's spaghetti all over the kitchen?

OSCAR Yes, I know, and it's not spaghetti; it's linguini.

MURRAY Oh. I thought it was spaghetti.

(He goes back into the kitchen)

VINNIE (Taking the poker stuff from the bookcase and putting it on the table) Why shouldn't I mention his name?

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OSCAR Who?

VINNIE Felix. What's happened? Has something happened?

THE ODD COUPLE

(SPEED and ROY come in the open door)

SPEED Yeah, what's the matter with Felix?

(SPEED puts his jacket over a chair at the table. ROY sits in the armchair. MURRAY comes out of the kitchen with a six-pack of beer and bags of pretzels and chips. They all stare at OSCAR waiting for an answer. There is a long pause and then he stands up)

OSCAR We broke up! I kicked him out. It was my decision. I threw him out of the house. All right? I admit it. Let it be on my head.

VINNIE Let what be on your head?

OSCAR How should I know? *Felix put it there!* Ask him! (He paces around to the right)

MURRAY He'll go to pieces. I know Felix. He's gonna try something crazy.

OSCAR (Turns to the boys) Why do you think I did it? (MURRAY makes a gesture of disbelief and moves to the couch, putting down the beer and the bags. OSCAR moves to him) You think I'm just selfish? That I wanted to be cruel? I did it for you—I did it for all of us.

ROY What are you talking about?

OSCAR (Crosses to ROY) All right, we've all been through the napkins and the ashtrays and the bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwiches. But that was just the beginning. Just the beginning. Do you know what he was planning for next Friday night's poker game? As a change of pace. Do you have any idea?

VINNIE What?

OSCAR A Luau! An Hawaiian Luau! Spareribs, roast pork and fried rice. They don't play poker like that in Honolulu.

MURRAY One thing has nothing to do with the other. We all know he's impossible, but he's still our friend, and he's still out on the street, and I'm still worried about him.

OSCAR (*Going to MURRAY*) And I'm not, heh? I'm not concerned? I'm not worried? Who do you think sent him out there in the first place?

MURRAY Frances!

OSCAR What?

MURRAY Frances sent him out in the first place. You sent him out in the second place. And whoever he lives with next will send him out in the third place. Don't you understand? It's Felix. He does it to himself.

OSCAR Why?

MURRAY I don't know why. He doesn't know why. There are people like that. There's a whole tribe in Africa who hit themselves on the head all day long.

(*He sums it all up with an eloquent gesture of resignation*)

OSCAR (*A slow realization of a whole new reason to be angry*) I'm not going to worry about him. Why should I? He's not worrying about me. He's somewhere out on the streets sulking and crying and having a wonderful time. If he had a spark of human decency he would leave us all alone and go back to Blanche.

(*He sits down at the table*)

VINNIE Why should he?

OSCAR (*Picks up a deck of cards*) Because it's his wife.

VINNIE No, Blanche is your wife. His wife is Frances.

OSCAR (*Stares at him*) What are you, some kind of wise guy?

VINNIE What did I say?

OSCAR (*Throws the cards in the air*) All right, the poker game is over. I don't want to play any more.

(*He paces around on the right*)

SPEED Who's playing? We didn't even start.

OSCAR (*Turns on him*) Is that all you can do is complain?
 Have you given one single thought to where Felix might be?

SPEED I thought you said you're not worried about him.

OSCAR (*Screams*) I'm not worried, damn it! I'm not worried. (*The doorbell rings. A gleeful look passes over OSCAR's face*) It's him. I bet it's him! (*The boys start to go for the door. OSCAR stops them*) Don't let him in; he's not welcome in this house.

MURRAY (*Moves toward the door*) Oscar, don't be childish. We've got to let him in.

OSCAR (*Stopping him and leading him to the table*) I won't give him the satisfaction of knowing we've been worrying about him. Sit down. Play cards. Like nothing happened.

MURRAY But, Oscar . . .

OSCAR Sit down. Everybody. Come on, sit down and play poker.

(*They sit and SPEED begins to deal out cards*)

VINNIE (*Crossing to the door*) Oscar . . .

OSCAR All right, Vinnie, open the door.

(*VINNIE opens the door. It is GWENDOLYN standing there*)

VINNIE (*Surprised*) Oh, hello. (*To OSCAR*) It's not him, Oscar.

GWENDOLYN How do you do.

(*She walks into the room*)

OSCAR (*Crosses to her*) Oh, hello, Cecily. Boys, I'd like you to meet Cecily Pigeon.

GWENDOLYN Gwendolyn Pigeon. Please don't get up. (*To OSCAR*) May I see you for a moment, Mr. Madison?

OSCAR Certainly, Gwen. What's the matter?

GWENDOLYN I think you know. I've come for Felix's things.

(*OSCAR looks at her in shock and disbelief. He looks at the boys, then back at GWENDOLYN*)

OSCAR Felix? My Felix?

GWENDOLYN Yes. Felix Ungar. That sweet, tortured man

who's in my flat at this moment pouring his heart out to my sister.

OSCAR (*Turns to the boys*) You hear? I'm worried to death and he's up there getting tea and sympathy.

(*CECILY rushes in dragging a reluctant FELIX with her*)

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CECILY Gwen, Felix doesn't want to stay. Please tell him to stay.

FELIX Really, girls, this is very embarrassing. I can go to a hotel. (*To the boys*) Hello, fellas.

GWENDOLYN (*Overriding his objections*) Nonsense. I told you, we've plenty of room, and it's a very comfortable sofa. Isn't it, Cecy?

CECILY (*Joining in*) Enormous. And we've rented an air conditioner.

GWENDOLYN And we just don't like the idea of you wandering the streets looking for a place to live.

FELIX But I'd be in the way. Wouldn't I be in the way?

GWENDOLYN How could you possibly be in anyone's way?

OSCAR You want to see a typewritten list?

GWENDOLYN (*Turning on him*) Haven't you said enough already, Mr. Madison? (*To FELIX*) I won't take no for an answer. Just for a few days, Felix.

CECILY Until you get settled.

GWENDOLYN Please. Please say, "Yes," Felix.

CECILY Oh, please—we'd be so happy.

FELIX (*Considers*) Well, maybe just for a few days.

GWENDOLYN (*Jumping with joy*) Oh, wonderful.

CECILY (*Ecstatic*) Marvelous!

GWENDOLYN (*Crosses to the door*) You get your things and come right up.

CECILY And come hungry. We're making dinner.

GWENDOLYN (*To the boys*) Good night, gentlemen; sorry to interrupt your bridge game.

CECILY (*To FELIX*) If you'd like, you can invite your friends to play in our flat.

GWENDOLYN (*To FELIX*) Don't be late. Cocktails in fifteen minutes.

FELIX I won't.

GWENDOLYN Ta, ta.

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CECILY Ta, ta.

FELIX Ta, ta.

THE ODD
COUPLE

(*The girls leave. FELIX turns and looks at the fellows and smiles as he crosses the room into the bedroom. The five men stare dumbfounded at the door without moving. Finally MURRAY crosses to the door*)

SPEED (*To the others*) I told you. It's always the quiet guys.

MURRAY Gee, what nice girls.

(*He closes the door. FELIX comes out of the bedroom carrying two suits in a plastic cleaner's bag*)

ROY Hey, Felix, are you really gonna move in with them?

FELIX (*Turns back to them*) Just for a few days. Until I find my own place. Well, so long, fellows. You can drop your crumbs on the rug again.

(*He starts toward the door*)

OSCAR Hey, Felix. Aren't you going to thank me?

FELIX (*Stopping on the landing*) For what?

OSCAR For the two greatest things I ever did for you. Taking you in and throwing you out.

FELIX (*Lays his suits over the railing and goes to OSCAR*) You're right, Oscar. Thanks a lot. Getting kicked out twice is enough for any man. In gratitude, I remove the curse.

OSCAR (*Smiles*) Oh, bless you and thank you, Wicked Witch of the North.

(*They shake hands. The phone rings*)

FELIX Ah, that must be the girls.

MURRAY (*Picking up the phone*) Hello?

FELIX They hate it so when I'm late for cocktails. (*Turning to the boys*) Well, so long.

MURRAY It's your wife.

FELIX (*Turning to MURRAY*) Oh? Well, do me a favor, Murray. Tell her I can't speak to her now. But tell her I'll be calling her in a few days, because she and I have a lot to talk about. And tell her if I sound different to her, it's because I'm not the same man she kicked out three weeks ago. Tell her, Murray; tell her.

MURRAY I will when I see her. This is Oscar's wife.

FELIX Oh!

MURRAY (*Into the phone*) Just a minute, Blanche.

(OSCAR crosses to the phone and sits on the arm of the couch)

FELIX Well, so long, fellows.

(He shakes hands with the boys, takes his suits and moves to the door)

OSCAR (*Into the phone*) Hello? Yeah, Blanche. I got a pretty good idea why you're calling. You got my checks, right? Good. (FELIX stops at the door, caught by OSCAR's conversation. He slowly comes back into the room to listen, putting his suits on the railing, and sitting down on the arm of the armchair) So now I'm all paid up. No, no, I didn't win at the track. I've just been able to save a little money. I've been eating home a lot. (Takes a pillow from the couch and throws it at FELIX) Listen, Blanche, you don't have to thank me. I'm just doing what's right. Well, that's nice of you too. The apartment? No, I think you'd be shocked. It's in surprisingly good shape. (FELIX throws the pillow back at OSCAR) Say, Blanche, did Brucey get the goldfish I sent him? Yeah, well, I'll speak to you again soon, huh? Whenever you want. I don't go out much any more.

FELIX (*Gets up, takes his suits from the railing and goes to the door*) Well, good night, Mr. Madison. If you need me again, I get a dollar-fifty an hour.

OSCAR (*Makes a gesture to stop FELIX as he talks on the phone*) Well, kiss the kids for me. Good night, Blanche. (*Hangs up and turns to FELIX*) Felix?

FELIX (*At the opened door*) Yeah?

OSCAR How about next Friday night? You're not going to break up the game, are you?

FELIX Me? Never! Marriages may come and go, but the game must go on. So long, Frances.

(He exits, closing the door)

OSCAR (Yelling after him) So long, Blanche. (The boys all look at OSCAR a moment) All right, are we just gonna sit around or are we gonna play poker?

ROY We're gonna play poker.

(There is a general hubbub as they pass out the beer, deal the cards and settle around the table)

OSCAR (Standing up) Then let's play poker. (Sharply, to the boys) And watch your cigarettes, will you? This is my house, not a pig sty.

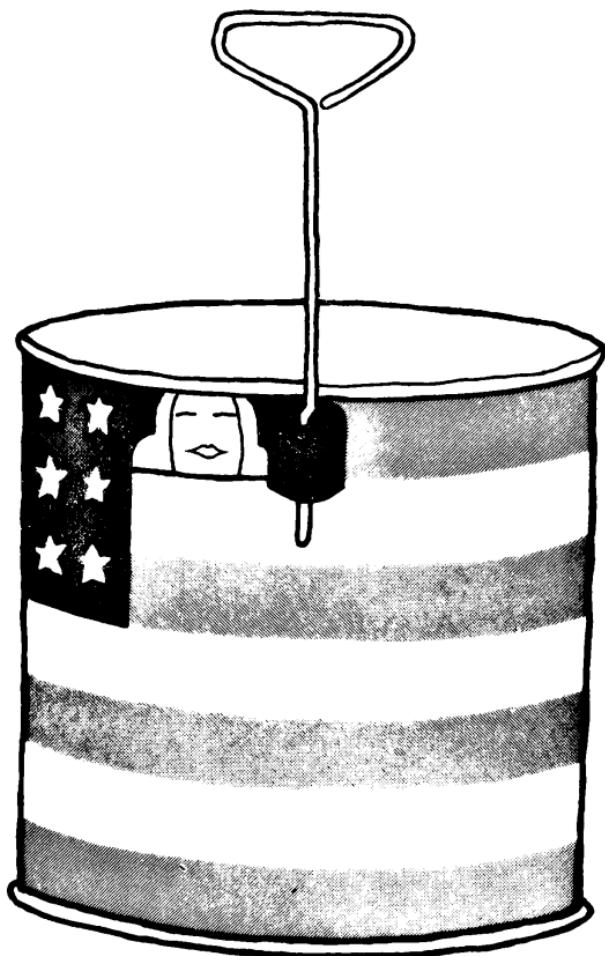
(He takes the ashtray from the side table next to the armchair, bends down and begins to pick up the butts. The boys settle down to play poker)

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THE ODD
COUPLE

Curtain

The Star-Spangled Girl



SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The entire action of the play takes place in a duplex studio apartment in San Francisco.

Act I:

SCENE 1: It's late afternoon, in early summer.

SCENE 2: Three days later.

Act II:

SCENE 1: The next day, about 5 P.M.

SCENE 2: A few days later.

Act III: The next day. Early afternoon.

Act One

SCENE I

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The curtains open on a duplex studio apartment overlooking the bay in San Francisco—it's not as nice as it sounds. It's a wood-shingled building about fifty years old. It was probably once the large Victorian home of a wealthy family, and in due course fell to its present state, an apartment and furnished-room multiple dwelling. Still, it's not without its charm.

The apartment is shared by two young men, ANDY HOBART and NORMAN CORNELL. However, at first glance, one can see that their "home" has a double function. It also serves as their place of business, the offices of their small magazine Fallout. On the first level the entrance to the apartment is stage center, at the top of three stairs. Stage right center is a long kitchen bar.

It's late afternoon, in early summer. The door opens and ANDY HOBART enters. He is about twenty-six, but has the worried look of a man twice his age. ANDY is a dedicated, idealistic cynic charged with the energy of an angry generation. He wears an old tan sports jacket over his khaki trousers, a checked shirt and no tie. He carries a briefcase that has seen better days. As he enters, he looks over at the desk and seems amazed and annoyed not to see anyone sitting there.

ANDY Norman . . . ? You home? I take it by your silence that you're not home . . . (*He crosses to a tape recorder on the desk*) So where are you?

(He turns the machine on, and puts his briefcase down)

NORMAN'S VOICE (Offstage) I'm up on the roof stealing laundry . . . You may be wearing a pink housecoat tomorrow, but at least it'll be clean. How about those finished pages on the desk? (*ANDY picks them up and looks through them*) I've been pounding the typewriter for

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

nine straight hours. I am now capable of committing the perfect crime because I no longer have fingerprints . . . Mr. Franklyn telephoned five times. I repeat, five times. He said we owe him six hundred dollars in printing bills and fifty cents for five telephone calls. He also said if he doesn't get his money by Saturday, he's going to send over his two sons to break our four legs. I told him I'm just a writer and *you* take care of all bills, so they're going to break your legs and just sprain my ankles. I am now finished talking so please turn me off.

(ANDY turns off the tape recorder as the telephone rings. He answers it)

ANDY *Fallout magazine . . . Who's calling, please? Mr. Franklyn? One moment, Mr. Franklyn, I'll give you our billing department . . . (He presses a button and uses a Titus Moody voice. He sits on the pole table) Billing department . . . Yes . . . ? Oh, Mr. Franklyn. Yes, I got your five messages . . . You mean you haven't received our check . . . ? I can't understand that . . . Why just yesterday . . . (He presses down on the receiver and cuts off the call. He looks over NORMAN's pages. The telephone rings again. He picks it up) Fallout magazine . . . Oh, Mr. Franklyn. I guess you got cut off. Sorry. I'll give you our billing department. (He presses the button and resumes a Titus Moody voice) Billing department . . . Oh, yes, Mr. Franklyn. Well—(Again he deliberately clicks off. He hangs up and waits. The phone rings again. ANDY uses the nasal voice of a telephone operator) . . . And a fifty percent chance of showers today. Tomorrow morning, clearing with patches of fog—(He winces as FRANKLYN hangs up hard) I don't know what you're so sore about, Franklyn. You may not be getting your money, but at least you know it's going to rain. (The telephone rings again. ANDY turns on the tape machine and records) . . . Hey, Luigi, how about a little service? (The telephone rings again and he records that too. He turns off the machine, picks up phone and takes it to the desk. Then, with an Italian accent, he answers it) Luigi's Restaurant . . . Who? No, is no magazine. Is Luigi's Restaurant . . .*

(He turns on the tape and plays it back)

ANDY'S VOICE Hey, Luigi, how about a little service?

ANDY (Still in Italian accent) Sí, sí, I'm-a coming. (*The phone's ringing is heard on the tape recorder*) 'Scusa, my other phone, she's-a ringing. (*He hangs up and rubs his hands with satisfaction*) I can keep this up as long as you can, Franklyn.

(*The roof door opens and NORMAN comes down the ladder carrying a basket of laundry. NORMAN is about the same age as ANDY. Although he is the brain, the intellect behind Fallout, when he is away from the typewriter he is an incorrigible adolescent*)

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THE STAR-
SPANGLED

GIRL

NORMAN (On the balcony) I just saved us eight dollars in laundry bills. And I found you your blue shirt.

ANDY I didn't lose one.

NORMAN I didn't say you did. I just said I found you one.

ANDY Did you have lunch today?

NORMAN (Comes down the steps to the landing) Certainly. I had one sardine on a frozen waffle.

ANDY Why?

NORMAN Because that's all there was.

ANDY You mean there's nothing else to eat in the refrigerator?

NORMAN There's three ice cubes and a light bulb. I'm saving them for tomorrow. (*At the center table, he puts the basket down. Then he holds up a shirt*) I'll put this in the freezer. We don't have any more starch.

(*He takes the shirt into the kitchen*)

ANDY (Sitting on the pole table) Norman, it's just occurred to me that being poor is very boring. We really wouldn't have to worry about money if you would let me do what I suggested.

NORMAN (Comes out of the kitchen and goes down right to the table between the sofas) What was that?

ANDY Selling you to a medical school.

NORMAN Never mind me, how about selling the magazine? How'd you do today?

ANDY If selling two subscriptions is good, we only did fair. (NORMAN picks up an empty box of cookies) Somehow I don't think the average San Francisco housewife is ready for a politically controversial magazine that is definitely anti-American . . . Is there any mail?

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Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

NORMAN (*Throws down the empty box*) In the wastebasket. (*He walks to the center table*) I'm so hungry. (*He puts the clothesbasket on the floor, downstage of the left chair. Then he eats crumbs from a plate on the table*)

ANDY (*He picks up the wastebasket, puts it on the pole table and goes through the bills*) Printing bills, typewriter repair bills, rent bills, electric bills, food bills, gas bills. This is a bill for the waste paper basket.

NORMAN (*Running his finger around the empty jam jar in search of food*) And we owe the lady from the pet shop eighty cents.

ANDY The pet shop? What for?

NORMAN She gave me a haircut today.

ANDY (*He returns the wastebasket to left of desk*) Let me worry about the bills, Norman, you write the magazine. I need your blue jacket. I've got to go out tonight. (*He goes up left and gets the blue jacket hanging upstage of a bulletin board*)

NORMAN Business?

ANDY Why else would I do the Monkey until three o'clock in the morning at the Velvet Cucumber?

NORMAN Who are you going with?

ANDY Who do I go with every night? Our landlady, Mrs.

Mackininee. (*He takes the jacket to the sofa, where he lifts up the top mattress and lays the jacket between the mattress and springs. He drops the mattress down.* NORMAN looks for food in the drawers of the slant-top desk) Norman, you have no idea what I go through to keep us from being thrown out on the street. (*ANDY kneels on top of the mattress—he puts all his weight on it—to press the suit*) Not only is she totally lacking in rhythm, but she has no sense of direction. Last night she Watusied out the door and into the parking lot.

(*He rises and gets a dumbbell. Then rolls it over the mattress*)

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THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

NORMAN (*Good-naturedly, at slant-top desk eating from a small cereal box he has found*) It'll go down as one of the great sacrifices in journalistic history.

ANDY You don't think it's humiliating to sit in a night club with a dark-haired widow who wears blonde braids and picks up the bill?

NORMAN She likes you, doesn't she? Why don't you take her to the beach for the weekend so we can have the apartment painted?

(*He sits at the desk*)

ANDY You think I want to fall off her motorcycle the way her husband did?

NORMAN Listen, anytime you want to change places I'm perfectly willing.

(*The telephone rings. NORMAN gets up hurriedly and motions to ANDY to answer it as he goes to the chair left of the center table. He then sits and begins to fold clean socks. ANDY crosses left, above the table, to answer the phone*)

ANDY (*Into phone, Titus Moody voice again*) Billing department . . . ! (*Changes to his normal voice*) Oh, Mrs. Mackininee . . . No, no, I wasn't trying to sound older. I think I caught a cold last night. Yes, on the back of the motorcycle . . . You really are a wonderful driver . . . Did you ever find your other braid? Oh, too bad. I

feel kind of responsible . . . Well, I do—I mean I felt myself slipping off and it was the first thing I grabbed . . . Yes, I'll pick you up at eight o'clock . . . Oh, that sounds wonderful. I can't wait to see them. 'Bye.

NORMAN You can't wait to see what?

ANDY Her new gold-sequined goggles. You can imagine how they look with her silver-lamé jumpsuit . . . Promise me one thing.

NORMAN What?

ANDY If there's a crash and they find my body next to hers, tell my mother and father I was kidnapped.

(ANDY goes and pulls the suit from under the sofa and walks to the stairs with it)

NORMAN Listen, when you come home tonight, I want to hear everything that happened. I don't care what time it is, wake me up and tell me.

ANDY All right, Norman.

NORMAN Don't say all right. Promise me. You'll wake me up and you'll tell me everything. Don't leave anything out.

ANDY (*Leans over the balcony. He looks at NORMAN with concern*) Norman, I think you've been working too hard lately. Why don't you take the night off and go see a sexy movie?

NORMAN How can I take the night off? We've got a magazine to get out here.

ANDY You've got five days to finish three articles. You can do that with two fingers. Why don't you call up a girl?

NORMAN You can't just call up a girl. You have to know her first.

ANDY Well, call up a girl you know.

NORMAN I don't like any of the girls I know. I only like the girls *you* know.

ANDY All right, call up one of my girls.

NORMAN I can't. I don't know them.

(NORMAN rises and takes the clothesbasket into the kitchen. He returns and goes to the desk)

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ANDY Norman, I'm as dedicated to this magazine as you are. Maybe even more. You put your talent into it; I put in my blood. And it's my job to preserve that talent and keep it in perfect working order. That's why I want you to relax once in a while. If you don't, you're going to get a bubble on your head.

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

NORMAN (Seated at the desk) I'll go out as soon as this issue is finished.

ANDY Who will you go out with?

NORMAN A beautiful, gorgeous blonde will move into the empty apartment next door and I'll fall madly in love. All right?

ANDY All right, Norman, if you're happier working, then I'm happy. Work all night and enjoy yourself.

(He goes into the room and closes the door. NORMAN sits at the typewriter and picks up the clippings. He talks aloud to himself)

NORMAN I don't know how he expects me to finish a magazine if I don't sit down and finish it . . . Things do not get written by themselves—unless he believes in elves and gnomes . . . And they don't write magazines, they repair shoes . . .

(He begins to type. The doorbell rings. He gets up, crosses to the door and opens it. SOPHIE RAUSCH-MEYER, a lovely young blonde, stands there. She is everything NORMAN has described. She is the prototype of the all-American girl. If she had a few freckles on her nose it would be perfect. Her compact, solid form and freshly scrubbed face tell us

that this is a purely physical creature. What she can't do with an intellectual problem, she more than makes up for with her strong backstroke or her straight back when astride a horse. The Arkansas drawl doesn't add to her image as an intellect either. And best of all, she smells good)

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SOPHIE (*With a big, warm smile*) Excuse me. Mah name is Sophie Rauschmeyer. Ah just moved into the empty apartment next door. Ah know people in big cities don't usually do this, but Ah promised mah folks Ah would make mah akwaintance with mah neighbors so Ah just want to say it's a pleasure meetin' you and hope Ah see you again. Real soon. 'Bye!

(*She gives him a big smile. She turns, closes the door and goes. NORMAN has not flinched a muscle since she appeared. He now seems to be frozen to the spot and stands motionless for what seems to be an hour and a half*)

ANDY (*Comes out of his room, wearing the blue jacket, no shoes*) Did someone just ring the bell . . . ? Norman, did someone just come in?

(*He leans down and taps NORMAN on his head*)

NORMAN What? What? (*Quickly*) No! No! No one came in. There's no one here. Go back to your room.

ANDY What's the matter, Norman?

NORMAN There's nothing the matter. Leave me alone. Go back to your room. Can't you see I'm busy working.

ANDY At the door?

NORMAN I needed some air.

ANDY Why don't you open the window?

NORMAN I don't want fresh air. I want plain air . . . will you please go back to your room?

ANDY All right, Norman. Don't tense up. Relax. Try and relax. (*He is about to go back into his room when the*

doorbell rings again. ANDY stops and looks at NORMAN, who doesn't move) Now I hear a bell.

NORMAN All right, so you hear a bell. People ring bells all day long. It's no reason for you to loiter on top of the stairs all night.

(*The doorbell rings again*)

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ANDY Are you going to answer that or am I?

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

NORMAN I'm going to answer it. Stay up there.

(*He looks at ANDY, hoping he'll go away. But he knows he won't so NORMAN opens the door. SOPHIE stands there again. She has a cake in her hands*)

SOPHIE (*Big smile again*) Excuse me again . . . Ah was just unpackin' and mah friends back home sent me this fruit cake with rum in it which Ah'm not allowed to eat 'cause Ah'm in trainin', and Ah'd hate to see it go to waste so Ah'd appreciate it if you'd accept it with mah compliments. (*She gives him the cake*) Nice seein' you again. 'Bye.

(*She pulls the door shut and exits. NORMAN gives a long look at the door*)

ANDY Who's that, Norman?

NORMAN Never mind who it is, I saw her first.

ANDY All right, you saw her first. Who is she?

NORMAN (*Turns front*) Her name is Sophie Rauschmeyer and she just moved into the empty apartment next door and she just gave me a fruit cake with rum in it and I love her. (*Running left, right, and all over the room*) Wahoo! Did you see what moved into this building? Next door to where I live! (*He puts the cake on the pole table*) It's for me. All for me. God loves me and He gave me something wonderful.

(*He stands with arms outstretched*)

ANDY (*Happy for NORMAN, on the bottom step*) I was going to get you one for Christmas.

NORMAN (*He is now dancing all over the room*) Did you smell her? Did you get one whiff of that fragrance? Did you open your entire nose and smell that girl?

ANDY (*Comes down onto the stage floor and goes stage left*) I was upstairs, she didn't smell that far . . . I need your dancing shoes.

(*ANDY picks up the cake, gives it to NORMAN, and then pushes him onto the pole table*)

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Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

NORMAN Didn't smell that far? It's all over the room.

(*ANDY pulls the director's chair left, sits down and starts pulling off NORMAN's shoes*) It's even out in the hall. I'll bet she's inundated the whole lousy neighborhood. They're gonna start raising rents. And you stay away from her.

ANDY No contest. She's not my type.

NORMAN Well, she's my type. (*He takes the cake to the kitchen—in stocking feet*) How do you know what type she is?

ANDY (*He pulls the chair back to the center table and gets the rubber stamp*) Norman, when it comes to girls, I have extrasensory perception. (*He applies the stamp to the pad, then to the shoes*) She's the all-outdoor type. Enormously strong from the neck down.

NORMAN (*He returns from the kitchen, and goes to the right of the center table*) Who cares what her I.Q. is? I'm not giving out any Fulbrights. I just want to smell her and touch her.

ANDY All right. Go ring her doorbell and say you want to smell her and touch her.

NORMAN Are you crazy, didn't you hear the way she talked? "Ah'm glad to make yo' akwaitance"—she comes from Rhett Butler country. The only way to make it with a girl like that is with romance, big gestures.

ANDY All right. Go out and burn down Atlanta. She'll be crazy about you.

NORMAN (*Going left, downstage of the table*) You think I wouldn't do it if I could get to nibble on her chin for an hour?

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ANDY I was right. You've been working much too hard lately.

(*He rises and goes right to the stairs*)

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

NORMAN (*Follows ANDY*) Wait a minute. Talk to me. (*ANDY stops on the stairs and gets the tie hanging on the landing balustrade*) Help me. I've got to plan this all very carefully. I mustn't jump into anything. One wrong move and I can blow the entire love affair . . . Flowers? What about flowers? Flowers every morning. Flowers twice a day . . . No. No. That's not big enough.

ANDY (*Still on the stairs, he puts on the tie*) How about trees?

NORMAN Maybe it shouldn't be big. Maybe it should be small. Something with thought. Something personal. What could I do for her that's very small and very personal?

ANDY How about brushing her teeth?

NORMAN Get outa here! You're killing everything. You have no idea how to treat a girl like that.

ANDY Personally I wouldn't try, but if she excites your nasal passages, Norman, I'm with you.

NORMAN I got it! I got it! Where's the paint can? I need a can of green paint.

(*He goes stage left and gets the paint can from under the table*)

ANDY What are you going to do?

NORMAN (*Goes to ANDY*) I'm going to paint the stairs.
One letter on each step. So that when she comes home at
night and goes up the stairs, it's going to read (*He indicates with his finger pointing up the stairs*) . . . I-love-
you-Sophie-Rauschmeyer.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ANDY But she's already upstairs. When she goes down in
the morning it's going to say Reymshaur-Ephos-Ouvlie!

NORMAN (*Goes down right*) Why do I bother talking to
you?

ANDY I'm going to meet Mrs. Mackininee. (*Crosses to the
door*) If I'm still alive, I'll be back at two A.M. . . . If
not, about three-thirty.

(*He exits. Blackout*)

The lights come up. It is three days later. The room is empty. The door opens and ANDY enters carrying his briefcase, having just returned from another grueling afternoon of selling.

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

ANDY Hi, Norman, how's it going? (*He stops and looks at the desk, but NORMAN isn't there. He walks into the room—he looks upset. He puts down his briefcase up-stage of the radiator and crosses to the tape recorder*) All right, Norman, where the hell are you? (*The telephone rings. ANDY doesn't answer it. It rings again. He pushes the receiver into the waste paper basket. Then he picks it up*) Hello . . . ? Oh, Mr. Franklyn . . . I'm sorry I didn't answer the phone sooner, but I couldn't find it. I still have the bandages on my eyes—oh, didn't I tell you? Well, the doctor says my only chance is to have the operation. The only trouble is, it's six hundred dollars . . . Yes, the same amount I owe you . . . But I'm determined to pay your bill rather than have the operation—unless you have another suggestion . . . You like the first one best . . .

(*We hear a pounding on the front door*)

NORMAN'S VOICE (Offstage) Andy, hurry up. Open the door. I forgot my key.

(*ANDY crosses to the door and opens it. NORMAN rushes in with a large package of groceries*)

ANDY Where've you been all day?

NORMAN (*Taking the groceries to the center table*) In love. Don't talk to me now. I'm busy.

(*He crosses to the desk, takes off his jacket, and puts it on the desk-chair*)

ANDY I know you've been busy, but you haven't been working. I just looked on the desk; there are no new pages.

NORMAN (*Goes upstairs to his room for a fancy basket*)
I've got plenty of time. Plenty of time.

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Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

ANDY Not anymore we don't. We have three days. Three days to finish three articles.

NORMAN I'm thinking all the time. I've got everything up here.

(*He points to his head and starts downstairs*)

ANDY One! Give me one article. Give me one title you've thought of since the day that Arkansas frangipani checked in here and you painted love letters up and down the staircase . . . Let's hear one title!

NORMAN "The Real Case Against Fluoridation. Is Tooth Cancer Next?"

ANDY Write it. Sit down and write it. Now!

NORMAN Don't coerce me. I can't work under coercion.

ANDY How about under savage beating? I got a life savings and three years of work tied up in this venture. And I'm not going to see something good and vital and worthwhile go down the drain because you can't think of anything else but that corn-fed Minnie Mouse next door. What's in that package?

NORMAN Groceries.

ANDY I buy the groceries. It's for her, isn't it? What have you got in there?

NORMAN (*Indignantly picks up the bag*) None of your business. It's private groceries.

ANDY (*Looks at the package which NORMAN is holding*) The United Nations Gourmet Shoppe?

NORMAN They always have a big sale before Lent.

ANDY (*Snaps his fingers and points to the table. NORMAN obeys and puts the bag down. ANDY starts to take out some of the cans and jars and examines them*) Miniature watermelon . . . ? Baby Siberian herring fillets . . . ? Tiny kumquats . . . ? Who's coming for dinner, a couple of midgets?

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NORMAN I had a yen for some delicacies.

(*He goes left, below the table, to the desk*)

THE STAR-

SPANGLED

GIRL

ANDY Delicacies? You haven't eaten anything fancier than a banana and peanut-butter sandwich since the day I met you. (*Puts the jars back. He reaches in the bag and takes out the bill—he is shocked*) Twenty-two dollars?? You spent twenty-two dollars for *toy food*?

NORMAN Take it out of my share of the profits.

ANDY Your share of the profits can't pay for your banana and peanut-butter sandwiches. Are you out of your mind?

NORMAN I'm giving her a gift. You gave your mother a gift on Mother's Day, didn't you?

ANDY I gave her a year's subscription to our magazine. You hardly even know this girl.

NORMAN I know her. (*Goes to the telescope. ANDY crosses to the desk for glue and dummy magazine*) I know she works like a dog six days a week. I watch her through the telescope running after that bus every morning. I watch her coming home every night. Tired. Hungry. (*Goes left to ANDY*) That sweet, beautiful girl coming home to nothing better for dinner than a can of Broadcast Corned Beef Hash.

ANDY How do you know that?

NORMAN I check her garbage every afternoon.

ANDY All right, Norman, get a hold of yourself.
(*He sits on the pole table*)

NORMAN Get a hold of myself? Are you kidding? My functioning days are over. I've become an animal. I've developed senses no man has ever used before. I can smell the shampoo in her hair three city blocks away. I can have my radio turned up full blast and still hear her taking off her stockings! Don't you understand, SHE TURNS ME ON! From my head to my toes, I take one look at her and I light up. This month alone my personal electric bill will be over two hundred dollars . . .

(He starts putting the jars and cans into the basket)

ANDY (Glues a clipping onto the page of the dummy magazine) You know, when I first met you in high school, I thought you were eccentric. When we worked on the journal together in college, I thought you were a very promising fruit cake. The last couple of years I decided you were a tremendously talented bedbug. Now I know what you are . . . (He rises, and goes a few steps right) You are the unhatched egg of an illiterate looney bird! We've got three days to get out a magazine and you spend your time buying pygmy cucumbers for a girl with strong shampoo?

NORMAN I'm going to let that pass. I am also not going to waste time trying to explain something that cannot be explained. Because it would be a waste of time.

ANDY You've already cornered the waste of time market. Explain it to me.

NORMAN Did you ever hear of physical attraction? Pure, unadulterated physical attraction?

ANDY I have.

NORMAN What is it?

ANDY It's when one hippopotamus likes another hippopotamus with no questions asked.

NORMAN Exactly. Now it's five-thirty and my hippopotamus will be getting off her bus. Now leave me alone because I've got work to do.

(He takes the cans and jars out of the bag and puts them on the table)

ANDY All right . . . Look, I'll put the kumquats in the basket and you finish the article.

NORMAN Who are you, Miles Standish? I'll put my own kumquats in the basket. (*He goes left, upstage of ANDY*) A ribbon! I need a red ribbon. You got a red ribbon?

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ANDY Do I have a red ribbon?

NORMAN Either you have a red ribbon or you don't. If you have a red ribbon, I'd like it for my basket, please.

THE STAR-
SPANGLED

ANDY I'm not going to discuss red ribbons with you at this time.

GIRL

NORMAN In other words, you're not going to give me your red ribbon!

ANDY That's right. Out of the *thousands* I have saved in my closet, I'm not going to give you a red ribbon.

NORMAN (*He goes up the stairs to the landing*) That's one I owe you, Andy. From now on I'm keeping score. (*He glances out the window*) There's her bus. (*He looks through the telescope*) I almost missed her bus account of you.

ANDY Get away from that window.

NORMAN Are you crazy? And miss Sophie getting off the bus? You know I wait for this all day.

(*He looks through the telescope, focusing it*)

ANDY (*He takes a few steps right*) Norman, write me two more articles and I'll buy you a bigger telescope. You'll be able to zoom right into her shoes. What do you say?

NORMAN (*Looking through the telescope*) I could have missed her bus. Sophie is on that bus and I almost missed it.

ANDY (*He crosses up the stairs to the window and puts his hand over the lens, covering it*) Damn you, Norman, answer me!

NORMAN (*Still looking through the telescope. He screams*)

Oh, my God! Sophie! (*He looks up and sees that ANDY has his hand covering the opening*) You idiot! I thought her bus fell into a hole. Get your hand off my lens opening!

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ANDY My hand stays on your opening until you make me a promise.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

NORMAN I promise! I promise! Now get out of the way. (*ANDY comes down the stairs*) There she is! Oh, Mother in Heaven, will you look at that girl! Look at her! Just look at that girl!

ANDY All right, let me see.

NORMAN (*Screams*) Stay away from here. (*ANDY hangs up his jacket on the bulletin-board hook, then sits on the pole table*) I'm looking at her. Oh, you wonderful crazy Sophie. She has got without a doubt the most magnificent earlobes on the face of the earth. (*He looks out the window, straight down*) She's in the building. She'll be upstairs any minute. (*He runs down the steps, picks up the basket from the table and goes to the desk*) You're not going to give me your red ribbon, right?

ANDY Who do you think I am, Fanny Farmer?

NORMAN That's two I owe you.

(*He sits at the typewriter, puts the basket on the floor and rips the paper out of the machine. Then he puts in another piece and begins to type*)

ANDY What are you doing? Are you working . . . ? Norman, sweetheart, what are you writing? (*Rises and goes to peer over his shoulder. He then reads aloud*) . . . *Adomis terra amorta eternos . . .* What is that, a prescription?

NORMAN It's "I worship the ground you walk on" in Latin. It goes with the groceries. (*He rises and puts the note in the basket, then faces ANDY*) Now get out of my way

or you get Alberta peaches in brandy right between the eyes.

(ANDY moves and NORMAN starts to the door as the telephone rings)

ANDY (*Calls after NORMAN*) Norman, you've got three minutes to deliver your Care package. (*Picks up the phone*) United Nations Gourmet Shoppe . . . Oh, hello, Mrs. Mackininee, how are you . . . ? The beach this weekend? Gee, I don't know. I've developed this awful cough . . . Yes, I'm disappointed too.

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THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

NORMAN (*Rushes in*) She's got it! She's got the basket!
(*He runs back to the door*)

ANDY (*Into the phone*) Yes, I agree it would be a lot more fun than staying home and collecting rents. What time do you want to go?

NORMAN (*Holding the door open and peeking through the crack*) She's reading the note.

ANDY (*Into the phone*) How?

NORMAN She's moving her gorgeous lips and reading the note.

ANDY (*Into the phone*) You mean I hold onto you and the surfboard at the same time? Won't that be a problem going through tunnels?

NORMAN She's looking over here . . . Here she comes! (*Closes the door and runs screaming to the center table*) Clean the apartment! Hurry up! (*He takes the grocery bag to upstage of bar*) Clean the apartment! (ANDY hangs up the phone) I'm shaking. (*Rushes left to ANDY*) Look at that hand shaking. Andy, I'm scared to death.

ANDY You're scared? I'm going surfing tomorrow with a daredevil landlady. They'll find me washed up in Hawaii.
(*The doorbell rings*)

NORMAN Open the door! Open the door! (*The doorbell rings again. ANDY turns to go*) Where are you going?

ANDY To open the door.

NORMAN Don't open the door. I'm not ready yet. (*NORMAN puts his jacket around his shoulders and gets a pipe from the slant-top desk, which he puts in his mouth—upside down. Then he sits above the desk and poses*) Open it! Open it!

(*ANDY opens the door and SOPHIE enters carrying the basket. She seems quite upset*)

SOPHIE (To ANDY) Excuse me. (To NORMAN) Mr. Cornell, Ah have tried to be neighborly, Ah have tried to be friendly and Ah have tried to be cordial . . . Ah don't know what it is that you're tryin' to be. That first night Ah was appreciative that you carried mah trunk up the stairs . . . The fact that it slipped and fell five flights and smashed to pieces was not your fault . . . Ah didn't even mind that personal message you painted on the stairs. Ah thought it was crazy, but sorta sweet. However, things have now gone too far . . . (*Goes down to the pole table*) Ah cannot accept gifts from a man Ah hardly know . . . (*Puts the basket on the pole table*) Especially canned goods. And Ah read your little note. Ah can guess the gist of it even though Ah don't speak Italian. (*ANDY sits on the stool below the kitchen bar*) This has got to stop, Mr. Cornell. Ah can do very well without you leavin' little chocolate-almond Hershey bars in mah mailbox—they melted yesterday, and now Ah got three gooey letters from home with nuts in 'em—and Ah can do without you sneakin' into mah room after Ah go to work and paintin' mah balcony without tellin' me about it. Ah stepped out there yesterday and mah slippers are still glued to the floor. And Ah can do without you tying big bottles of eau de cologne to mah cat's tail. The poor thing kept swishin' it yesterday and nearly beat herself to death . . . And most of all, Ah can certainly do without you watchin' me get on the bus every day through that high-powered telescope. You got me so nervous the other day Ah got on the wrong bus. In short, Mr. Cornell, and Ah don't want to have to say this again, leave me ay-lone!

(*She turns and starts to go*)

NORMAN Aside from that, is there any chance of your falling in love with me?

(SOPHIE turns)

SOPHIE You are crackers, you know that, don't you? (To ANDY) Did you know your roommate is crackers?
(ANDY crosses down right)

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ANDY Yes, but I didn't know the exact medical term.

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

SOPHIE (To NORMAN) Didn't you listen to one solitary word Ah said to you?

NORMAN Yes, I'm listening . . . (The jacket comes off his shoulders as he rises and goes above the pole table to SOPHIE) I'm listening, I'm looking, and I'm smelling.
(He sniffs)

SOPHIE (Yells and backs right) Ah don't want to be smelled! (NORMAN follows and sniffs again. She moves right. To ANDY) Tell him to stop smelling me.

ANDY (Quietly) Norman, stop smelling her.
(He sits on the sofa)

SOPHIE (To NORMAN) Ah am going to repeat this to you once more and for the last time. Ah am ingaged to be married to First Lieutenant Burt Fenneman of the United States Marine Corps. (To ANDY) And in six weeks Ah will be Mrs. First Lieutenant Burt Fenneman of the United States Marine Corps. (To NORMAN) And Ah intend to be happily married to him for the rest of mah natural life. (She takes a step left) Do you understand that?

NORMAN (Goes right to her) Please lower your voice. I'm trying to hear your hair growing.

SOPHIE (Goes right to ANDY) What is wrong with him? Does he have oral trouble?

ANDY Oral trouble?

SOPHIE (Points to her ears) With his ears. Hard of hearing.

ANDY Yes, he has very bad orals.

SOPHIE Ah thought as much. (*Goes back to NORMAN*)
Ah could have you arrested, you know that? For loiterin', breakin' 'n' enterin', tamperin' with mah mailbox, pesterin', peepin' tom'n! Don't think Ah won't do it.
(*She starts toward the door*)

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

NORMAN (*Stops her*) Then I'll have *you* arrested. For creamy smooth skin, perfect teeth, a ridiculously small nose, insanely gorgeous earlobes and an indecently fantastic, unbelievable fragrance.

(*He inhales*)

SOPHIE (*Screams*) Ah told you to stop smelling me! (*To ANDY*) Do something!

ANDY Do you want me to hold his nose?

NORMAN (*Moves right to her*) I'm sorry. A girl who looks like you shouldn't be allowed to walk the streets. (*Grabs her downstage arm*) This is a citizen's arrest!

(*He starts pulling her with him toward the steps*)

SOPHIE (*She pulls away. To ANDY*) If he doesn't keep away from me, Ah'm going to arrange to have mah fiancé inflict bodily harm to him. Tell him that.

ANDY Norman, her fiancé is going to inflict your body with harm.

NORMAN Do you think that would stop me? Beatings? Flailings? Whippings? I welcome them. Tell her!

ANDY (*To SOPHIE*) He says he welcomes beatings, flailings and whippings.

SOPHIE Ah heard him!

ANDY She heard you.

NORMAN (*On the stairs*) If having a friend of yours punch me very hard is going to make you happy, my entire face is at your disposal.

SOPHIE Hey . . . Are we on one of those television programs or somethin'? If we are, Ah'd like to know. Otherwise Ah'm callin' Camp Pendleton.

ANDY Don't look at me. I'm just an innocent bystander.

SOPHIE So am I. Two years ago in Japan Ah represented mah country in the Olympic swimming competition. In order to be a member of the official United States Olympic swimming team, you must be in one hundred percent perfect physical condition. That's me. Ah was one hundred percent physically perfect. *Until* Ah moved next door. From the day Ah found that trail of little heart-shaped peanut brittles leading from mah door to his door, Ah have been a nervous wreck . . . Not only is it difficult to keep up with mah swimming, but Ah'm afraid to take a bath. Ah have found that when Ah brush mah hair, mah hair falls out. And the ones that fall out have not been replaced by new ones . . . Ah am twenty-three years old and that man is starting me on the road to total baldness. Ah intend to get married while Ah still have a full head of hair left. (*She goes to the door*) Ah am now going to have a dinner of good, basic American food, clean mah apartment and get ten hours' sleep. If Ah see him sittin' in that big tree outside mah window again, strummin' that ukelele and singin' those Spanish love songs, Ah'm gonna call for the United States Marines.

(*She exits and slams the door. NORMAN and ANDY stand there for a brief second in silence. Then a wild gleam of uncontrolled happiness flashes across NORMAN's face*)

NORMAN (*Goes to the kitchen*) I'm getting to her, Andy . . . I tell you, I'm getting to her.

ANDY The only thing you're going to get is bayonet practice . . . She's engaged, Norman, forget about her.

NORMAN (*Coming out of the kitchen*) Forget about her? Did you see what was just in this room? Did you see?

ANDY I saw. It was a girl.

NORMAN (*Shocked. Comes down right to ANDY*) A girl?
You call that a girl?? That's not a girl. *That* was one
of God's creations made during His *best* period! Don't
ever call her a girl in front of me again.
(*He storms back into the kitchen*)

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ANDY Well, whatever that thing is, if it goes bald, you're
in big trouble with our armed forces.

NORMAN (*Comes out of the kitchen with a mop*) I can
handle Uncle Sam.

ANDY Where are you going with that?

NORMAN (*Crossing down left, he empties wastebasket on
the floor*) You think I'm going to let her clean her apart-
ment after she's been working all day?

ANDY (*Rises and goes to the bar. He gets the ukelele, and
goes stage left menacingly*) All right, I've had just about
as much of King Kong and Fay Wray as I can take . . .
You move two steps away from that typewriter and for
the rest of this week you'll be picking ukelele out of
your head.

NORMAN Not unless you're capable of swallowing an en-
tire mop.

ANDY Norman, what's happened to you? I've seen you
panting over a girl before, but this is the first time I
ever saw steam coming out of your ears . . . I'm worried
about you.

NORMAN Don't you think I am too? I am definitely wor-
ried about me. I was up all last night rereading Krafft-
Ebbing. In 1926 there was a case very similar to mine
in Gutenburg, Germany. It involved a nun and a knock-
wurst salesman. (*He crosses to the door with the waste-
basket and mop. ANDY then goes left, and leaves the
ukelele on up left table*) But I can't help myself because
I'm crazy about that girl. I'll do anything, including mop-
ping her kitchen floor, to be with her every night for
the rest of my life.

ANDY In six weeks she's marrying the Marine.

NORMAN What she does during the day is her business.

(*He exits. The telephone rings. ANDY turns the tape recorder on to "record," and talks into the mike*)

ANDY (In Chinese) Oh sing mah toh wan po soo chow moo ling. (*He turns the machine off. The telephone rings again. He quickly reruns the tape, then picks up the phone and speaks in his Chinese dialect*) Yes, please? Wo Ping's Chinese Gardens.

(*He turns the machine on and we hear his voice from before*)

ANDY'S VOICE Hey, Luigi, how about a little service?

(*He quickly hangs up, and turns off the machine. The door flies open and SOPHIE storms in angrily*)

SOPHIE (Shouts) Do you know what he's doing? Do you know what he's doing now?

ANDY He's mopping your kitchen floor.

SOPHIE *He is mopping mah kitchen floor!*

ANDY And you don't want your kitchen floor mopped.

SOPHIE (Screams) Ah don't want it mopped 'cause Ah waxed it last night and now *he's moppin' up all the wax!*

ANDY I can hear you. I have perfect orals.

SOPHIE Don't you understand? He has illegally entered mah apartment and criminally mopped mah floor. Aren't you going to do anything except stand there?

ANDY If you'll calm down, maybe we can discuss this?

SOPHIE Of course. (*Crosses to the desk*) Ah just have to make one call. May Ah use your phone?

ANDY Certainly.

SOPHIE (*Dials once*) Thank you. Ah don't have one of mah own. (*Into the phone*) Hello? San Francisco Police.

(ANDY closes the door)

ANDY You wouldn't.

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Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

SOPHIE Wouldn't I? (*Into the phone*) Ah'd like to report a demented man who's run amuck in mah kitchen.

ANDY (*Goes to SOPHIE*) Will you just listen to me for two minutes?

SOPHIE (*To ANDY*) In two minutes he will have mah wallpaper steamed off and sent out to be dry cleaned. (*Into the phone*) That's right, run amuck . . . No, not with a knife, with a mop.

ANDY (*He tries to restrain her by holding her shoulder*) Give me sixty seconds.

SOPHIE Take your hands off mah "ingaged" shoulder.

ANDY Give me that phone.
(*He takes it from her*)

SOPHIE It's just gonna cost you another dime 'cause Ah'm gonna call them again.

ANDY Why won't you listen to me?

SOPHIE Why? Ah'll tell you why. (*She crosses and picks up a lamp. She crosses back to him and turns the lamp on, holding it up to her cheek right in front of his face.* ANDY puts phone on desk) Look at mah skin. Those big, ugly red blotches are hives. Do you know what causes me to get hives?

ANDY Holding a lamp to your face?

SOPHIE Nervous tension causes me to get hives. And having mah floor mopped causes nervous tension. Ah am breaking out in big red blotches and Ah am losing mah hair and Ah have a date (*Puts the lamp back on the*

desk) with mah fiancé tomorrow night and Ah'm going to look like a little old man with the measles . . . And you have the ultimate gall to ask me for time.

(*She goes right—upstage of ANDY*)

ANDY I know exactly what you're going through. I've lived with that nut for three years and he's turned my hair grey.

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SOPHIE (*Comes back downstage*) Ah fail to notice it.

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

ANDY (*Goes to SOPHIE*) Look at my eyelashes. All grey. I used to have long, beautiful black eyelashes. Did you ever see anything like that before? Grey! Grey! Grey!

SOPHIE (*Moves in close and scrutinizes*) Grey eyelashes are not as noticeable on a man as a receding hairline is on a girl.

(*She goes downstage*)

ANDY (*Being solicitous*) It's not receding. You have beautiful hair.

SOPHIE Do you like it?

ANDY Very much.

SOPHIE I'm glad. Because a lot of it has fallen on your floor. And if he's not out of there in five seconds, a lot of his blood is going to be on mah floor . . . Ah'm gonna start counting before Ah call again.

ANDY No, you're not. You're going to sit down and listen to me.

(*He gives her a gentle push toward a chair*)

SOPHIE (*Rises immediately*) If you're threatening me Ah'd advise you not to. You're tall and skinny and Ah'm short and strong.

ANDY Well, I'm glad you live next door. I have a lot of trouble opening jars . . . Can I tell you about Norman Cornell?

SOPHIE Why not? Ah'm not doin' anything but countin'
... One, two, three—

ANDY He is impulsive, compulsive, irrepressible and incorrigible . . . (*SOPHIE starts to interrupt, but ANDY continues*) but he is also one of the most talented, creative and inspired young writers living in this country today. Will you accept that?

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SOPHIE Ah have never read anything of his except an Italian mash note in mah grocery basket . . . Four, five—
(Goes left, downstage of ANDY, to the desk) Ah'm usin' the phone.

ANDY (*Rushes left*) Not until you hear me out. (*He takes the phone*) In his freshman year at Dartmouth he wrote a thesis on the economic growth of the Philippine Islands since 1930 without any previous knowledge of economics, the Philippines, or 1930.

SOPHIE There is no end to the talent of the mentally warped. (*She starts to pick up the phone, but ANDY's hand is there to stop her again*) If Ah have to scream, Ah'll scream.

ANDY He's been offered jobs to write for every news agency in the country, plus *Time*, *Look*, *Life*, the *Saturday Review* and the *Diners' Club Monthly*. (*He guides SOPHIE into the chair. He goes left upstage of SOPHIE, and sits on the desk*) Please believe me when I tell you that Norman Cornell is not only one of the brightest young men in America today, but he is also the hope and promise of today's young generation and tomorrow's future.

(*And in the door with a mop comes the hope of tomorrow's future*)

NORMAN I just knocked your cat in the toilet. It was an accident. He's going to be all right.

(*He rushes back out, closing the door behind him*)

SOPHIE (*She rises and runs right, above the table, to the landing*) Police! Somebody get the police!

ANDY (*Running after her*) All right, Miss Rauschmeyer, let's not panic.

SOPHIE (*On the steps leading to the landing*) That's easy for you to say. He's not out flushin' your cat into the San Francisco Bay. (*She comes down the stairs*) Gimme that phone.

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ANDY (*When he stops her, she starts kicking him*) I promise the minute he comes back I'll thumbtack him to the wall. Stop kicking me. I have very thin socks.

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

SOPHIE Either you let me call the police or Ah'll smash everything in your house, startin' with the dishes.
(*She runs into the kitchen. We hear a loud crash*)

ANDY Okay, if you want to play rough, then we'll play rough. (*We hear another crash. He charges into the kitchen after her. Now there is some yelling followed by dishes crashing, and pots and pans. Two seconds later he comes out, his arm twisted behind his back, followed by Sophie, who is doing the twisting*) All right, let go . . . I don't want to take advantage of you, so let go.

SOPHIE Ah'm callin' the police and Ah don't want any trouble from you.

ANDY I won't give you any trouble if you don't give me any trouble.

SOPHIE Are you goin' to let me call the police?

ANDY (*In pain*) Yes . . . Yes . . . (*She lets him go. He rubs his arm and goes left around the pole table.* SOPHIE goes to the phone) You ought to be ashamed of yourself, being stronger than a fellow.

SOPHIE Physical fitness is as important as Godliness and Cleanliness.

ANDY What about friendliness? And good neighborliness? Just hear me out and then if you're still upset we can go back to angeriness and destructiveness. All right? (*She*

looks at him, then puts the phone back on the receiver)
Thank you . . . Have you ever heard of a monthly magazine called *Fallout*?

SOPHIE Is it anything like the *Reader's Digest*?

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ANDY It is nothing like the *Reader's Digest*. It is a protest magazine. And one of the things it protests against is the *Reader's Digest* . . . What do you read?

SOPHIE Ah'm a religious follower of *Sports Illustrated*.

ANDY Why did I ask? I'll try to explain what we do. (*He points to a sign above the bulletin board on left wall*) This is our credo—"A Remedy for a Sick Society"—(*He goes left above the pole table*) We're not doctors, we're diagnosticians. We point to the trouble spots. I'm the editor and publisher. It's my job to get it printed and sold. Norman is our staff. He is fourteen of the best writers around today. Every word, from cover to cover, is his. Besides Norman Cornell, he is sometimes Abbott Kellerman, Professor O. O. Pentergast, Gaylord Heyerdahl, José Batista, Madame Pundit Panjab, Doctor Sydney Kornheiser, Major General Wylie Krutch and Akruma Oogwana—the kid is versatile . . . Now we may use assumed names, but we believe in what we write and in what we publish. (*He gets a copy of Fallout from a pile of magazines under the left end of the desk*) When you go back to your room, I would like you to read last month's issue, and then I want you to tell me if you think we've spent three years and every penny we have in the world for nothing. (*He goes right, with the magazine, downstage of SOPHIE to below the center table*) Tell me if the things we protest against every month in *Fallout* aren't the things you protest against every day in your everyday life. (*SOPHIE starts to interrupt*) We have a modest business here, Miss Rauschmeyer. We don't make much money. If we sell every magazine we print each month, we make just enough to buy a new typewriter ribbon so we can get out the next month's issue. But we stay alive. And we love every minute of it. And we'll continue doing it as long as there is an angry breath in our body and as long as there is one single iota of corruption left in our society that's worth protesting

about. (*SOPHIE makes a move to interrupt*) But, Miss Rauschmeyer, unless you smile at that talented lunatic in there and say, "Thank you for your little Budapest sausages," one of the great organs of free press will disappear from the American scene.

(*There is a pause as he waits for her reaction*)

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SOPHIE Ah don't think we've been properly introduced.

ANDY My name is Hobart, Andrew Hobart.
(*He drops the magazine on the table*)

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

SOPHIE (*Goes right to ANDY*) How do you do. Ah'm Sophie Rauschmeyer. (*They shake hands*) Mr. Hobart, Ah appreciate the fact that you want to preserve the dignity of our nation. As Ah told you before, Ah had the privilege of representing the United States in the Tokyo Olympics.

ANDY I think that's wonderful. How did you do?

SOPHIE Well—Ah came in fifth. Not only was Ah beaten by the USSR and Poland, but Ah also trailed behind Turkey and Egypt.

ANDY I didn't know they swam in Egypt.

SOPHIE Then you can imagine how Ah felt representing the greatest nation on earth, coming in six seconds behind a little fat girl who was raised in the desert. (*She goes left a few steps*) Since the day Ah disgraced them, Ah have not been back to mah home in Hunnicut.

ANDY Hunnicut seems to disgrace quite easily.

SOPHIE (*She comes back to the center table*) You don't know Hunnicut. In our schools we sing all four stanzas of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

ANDY I thought there were only three.

SOPHIE Our principal wrote a new one. Since mah black day in Tokyo Ah have made a new life for mahself. One that Ah don't wish to jeopardize. (*ANDY goes upstage of*

center table to the desk, where he then sits. SOPHIE follows him) Ah have found a nice job teachin' children to swim at the YWCA. (*ANDY starts licking the envelopes and then seals them*) It doesn't pay much, but it keeps me wet . . . My parents, bless 'em, come up to see me twice a year from Hunnicut. (*He nods and licks another envelope*) But most important, Ah have met, fallen in love with, and intend to marry—First Lieutenant Burt Fenneman of the United States Marines.

(*She grabs an envelope from ANDY, licks it, and puts it down on the desk*)

ANDY I'm delighted you're going to marry a Marine. I hope you live happily ever after in the halls of Montezuma.

SOPHIE Except he's not gonna marry me if he finds that wax-moppin', cat-drownin' lunatic in mah house.

ANDY There's a very simple solution. (*Rises*) I'll save your marriage and you'll save my magazine.

SOPHIE How?

ANDY (*He goes to the table and picks up a copy of Fall-out*) I promise to keep Norman away from you as much as possible, if when you see him in the hall or on the stairs you'll just smile at him. One hello from you will keep him happy for a long time. It'll keep us all happy. Will you do it?

SOPHIE No!

ANDY Will you do it for me?

SOPHIE No!

ANDY Will you do it for America?

SOPHIE Well, if you put it that way.

ANDY And will you please read this tonight?

SOPHIE (*She goes upstage*) All right, but you better keep him away from me.

ANDY (*Follows*) I promise you he'll never bother you again.

(NORMAN reappears with the mop)

NORMAN (*With a big smile*) All finished. And the cat is fine. I gave her artificial respiration.

(He shows how with his two index fingers, then takes the mop to the kitchen)

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SOPHIE (*She looks at ANDY, then back to NORMAN as he comes back into the room and goes to the tape recorder*) Thank you.

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

NORMAN (*Moved*) Andy—she said "Thank you."

ANDY I heard.

SOPHIE Now if you'll excuse me . . .
(She starts for the door)

NORMAN Norman. Say my name . . . Norman.
(SOPHIE looks at ANDY)

ANDY (*Shrugs*) It's one little word. Norman.

SOPHIE (*Reluctantly*) Norman.

NORMAN (*He holds the mike from the tape recorder*) Would you say it in here? I'd like to have it to keep.

SOPHIE (*She glares at ANDY, who looks at her for a little understanding. She sighs. NORMAN turns the machine on and she speaks into the microphone*) Norman.

NORMAN (*He turns the machine off*) Oh, that was wonderful. Thank you, Sophie.

SOPHIE (*She turns and starts out. To ANDY*) Ah've kept mah promise. Live up to yours.

(She exits. The instant she's gone, NORMAN rushes over to the window and opens it, then rushes back to the tape recorder)

ANDY All right, Norman, I've just made that girl a promise.
As long as you behave decently and normally and act
like a sensible hum . . . What are you doing?

NORMAN I want the world to hear it. From her own lips.
(*Shouts out the window*) Norman loves Sophie and
someday Sophie will love . . .

(*He turns the machine on*)

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SOPHIE'S VOICE (From the recorder) Norman.

ANDY (Afraid SOPHIE will hear) Turn that thing off!

**NORMAN (He stops the machine, rewinds, and shouts out
the window again)** Tell 'em again, Sophie! Who's the
one who drives you out of your mind?

(*He turns the machine on*)

SOPHIE'S VOICE (Again from the recorder) Norman.
(*SOPHIE bursts into the room*)

SOPHIE (She screams and goes to the pole table) Ah
heard that. He is using mah voice in vain. That's against
the law. Make him stop.

ANDY (Runs after her) He was just kidding around. He
won't do it again.

NORMAN I was just kidding around. I won't do it again.

SOPHIE Stop embarrassin' me in front of mah neighbors.
And that's the last time Ah'm warnin' you. (*She points
her finger at him, and sees her fingernails*) Look at that.
Now mah nails are beginnin' to crack.

(*She exits. NORMAN turns back to the tape recorder*)

ANDY (He closes the door) If you turn that machine on
again, you'll be recording your own death.

NORMAN I'll play it very low. She'll never hear me. (To

the machine) Whisper it, Sophie. Tell me and nobody else. Who do you love?

(He turns the machine on, lowering the volume)

SOPHIE'S VOICE (*Whispering from the recorder*) Norman.

(NORMAN falls to his knees as the curtain falls)

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T H E S T A R -

S P A N G L E D

G I R L

Act Two

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SCENE I

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

It is the next day, about 5 p.m. The room is in pretty much the same condition, though the bills have been cleaned up from the floor around the desk and the dirty cup and coffee pot have been removed from the center table. Two used coffee containers have replaced the stack of newspapers on the rattan stool. ANDY's briefcase, the United Nations grocery bag, and the "bon voyage" basket are no longer in sight. The tape recorder is missing from the desk and the clippings as well, but the dummy magazine is still there to be finished. A recent copy of Fallout is on the center table. The ukelele is back on the kitchen bar. On the slant-top desk we now see two hairbrushes and an electric cordless razor. On the sofa down right is an empty coffee can. Both doors are closed on the balcony.

There is no one on stage, but we can hear the slow, steady rhythm of a typewriter coming from NORMAN's bedroom. It stops occasionally, then proceeds to plod on.

The front door opens and ANDY enters carrying a small bag, his bathing suit wrapped in a towel, and a terrycloth robe. In the other hand he carries a jar of Noxzema. He walks carefully and in pain, the result of an excruciating sunburn.

ANDY Norman? (*The typewriter clicks away. ANDY looks up at NORMAN's room and nods in relief. He throws the bag, towel, and robe onto the sofa, and puts the Noxzema in his jacket pocket*) I'm back! I'm back from the beach . . . I have first degree burns on ninety-eight percent of my body—the other two percent is scorched. We went a half a mile out on the surfboard and there wasn't a god-damned wave for three hours . . . (*The typewriter continues*) The only time I had shade was when a bird flew over me . . . You can see his outline on my back. (*He starts up the stairs*) This is my eighth jar of Noxzema. (*The typewriter continues but no sound of NORMAN*)

. . . How's it going, Norm? (Still no answer) Norman . . . ? (Now he's nervous. He starts up the stairs to NORMAN's room) Norman, you hear me? (He goes into NORMAN's room. The typing stops. ANDY returns carrying the tape recorder. He takes Noxzema out of his pocket, unscrews the top and puts a dab under his shirt at the back of his neck. He winces as the cold meets the hot. He picks up the phone gingerly, then starts to dial but winces in pain after the second dial. With his left hand he takes some more Noxzema and applies it to the dialing finger of his right hand and then continues to dial. He also puts a little on his ear before applying the phone to that spot. Then he talks, in pain and softly) Hello, Mrs. Mackininee . . . ? It's me, Andy . . . I can't speak louder, my lips won't open all the way . . . No, the chattering stopped but now I have chills. I really don't think I'll be able to come down for that cocktail—do you mind? You do mind . . . Then I'll be down for that cocktail . . . (He hangs up) I sold my soul.

(The door opens and NORMAN steps in. He holds one hand over his eye, and he seems to be in some pain. ANDY looks at him)

NORMAN (Calmly, looking at ANDY through his other eye)
Why did you hit me with an apple?

ANDY Why?

NORMAN Yes, why? Why did you hit me with an apple?
(He goes to the landing) What were you trying to do, take my eye out?

ANDY I was trying to kill you but I'll take whatever I can get.

NORMAN (Going up to the balcony) I don't think it's funny. Do you know what the impact force is of an apple falling three-and-a-half stories? Forty-eight miles per hour. That apple was doing forty-eight miles an hour.
(He goes into the room)

ANDY You're lucky you didn't get a jar of Noxzema doing seventy-five . . . ! I'm not going to ask you where you

were, Norman, because I think I know where. I'm just curious as to why you came back. (*NORMAN comes out of his room, his jacket off*) Because there is nothing left for you here except physical mutilation.

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NORMAN (*Comes down the stairs*) I came back because I have work to do. I believe we have a magazine to get out.

Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

(*He goes left toward the desk*)

ANDY (*Goes right*) Norman . . . Don't play with me. I'm in a fragile state of mind.

NORMAN If you'll excuse me—

(*NORMAN puts a handkerchief in his pocket and sits.*

Next he puts a piece of paper in the typewriter)

ANDY Who are you kidding? What about the girl?

NORMAN (*Looks straight at him*) What girl?

ANDY That star-spangled cornpone next door! I think I know where you were this morning, Norman. You were down at the delicatessen having a life-sized statue of her made in potato salad.

NORMAN You're wrong, Andy. I'm no longer interested. It's over. Done. Finished. Finito.

ANDY Is that a fact?

NORMAN That's a fact.

ANDY Then who did I hear in your room at three o'clock this morning playing "Prisoner of Love" on tissue paper and comb?

NORMAN Me! That was me! Buf that was last night. And last night is not today.

ANDY Something's happened, Norman, and I'm afraid to ask what. What's happened, Norman? (*NORMAN turns*

away from ANDY. ANDY goes upstage to NORMAN's left)
Look at me and tell me what happened!

NORMAN (*Walking away, stage right*) Nothing.

ANDY You followed her this morning.

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NORMAN I don't want to talk about it.

ANDY You waited for her outside the "Y."

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

NORMAN (*Right of the center table*) I did not wait for
her outside the "Y."

ANDY You went *inside* the "Y"?

NORMAN (*He sits on the chair*) I don't want to talk
about it.

ANDY You went inside and started yelling for Sophie.

NORMAN I did not yell. I asked politely.

ANDY *Then* you started to yell and they asked you to leave.

NORMAN I don't want to talk about it.

ANDY (*He goes to the center table*) You didn't go all over
the YWCA looking for her, did you?

NORMAN No, I did not go all over the YWCA looking
for her.

ANDY Where *did* you look?

NORMAN Just the swimming pool.

ANDY (*He turns away*) I don't want to talk about it.

NORMAN They wear bathing suits, if that's what you're
worried about.

ANDY That's what I was worried about. What did she do, threaten to call the police?

NORMAN She did *not* threaten to call the police.

ANDY What *did* she do?

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NORMAN She *called* the police . . . They took me away in a patrol car.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ANDY I knew it. I knew it.

NORMAN (*He gets up*) You wanna hear my side?

ANDY I'm not through with *their* side yet.

NORMAN (*He sits*) We live in a police state, Andy. Did you know we are living in a police state?

ANDY (*Who can reason with this idiot*) I know. First they start burning books. Then they keep the men out of the women's pools.

NORMAN As we drove away I heard her screaming, "I hate you . . . I hate you, I loathe you, and I despise you. Hate, hate, hate, loathe, despise, and hate!" So I figured the best thing to do is forget about her.

ANDY I think you made a wise decision, Norman.

NORMAN I mean if she wants to play it cool, I don't have time to waste.

ANDY (*He may be serious*) Do you mean that, Norman?

NORMAN (*He gets up again*) I want to bury myself in work, Andy. Busy. I have to get busy again. (*He goes left, downstage of the table and ANDY, to the desk*) Just give me a typewriter and a lot of paper and then stand back, because you may get hurt.

(He sits at the desk)

ANDY I think you really mean it. That's wonderful! (*He*

goes to the up left table, gets a pile of paper and hands it to NORMAN) Here. No spaces, just lots of words.

NORMAN What did I see in her, Andy? She's not bright, you know. Do you think she's bright?

ANDY She has a native intelligence. Of a very remote country.

NORMAN We have absolutely nothing in common. And how long does physical attraction last?

ANDY An hour, an hour and a half the most.

NORMAN Say it again!

ANDY Sophie!

NORMAN Say the last part.

ANDY Rauschmeyer.

NORMAN Now the whole thing.

ANDY Sophie Rauschmeyer!

NORMAN You're boring me. I've got work to do.

ANDY (*Elated*) Ah ha! I'll knock out the mailing list. (*He goes to the up left table and gets the clipboard with pencil attached—he then goes to the chair right of the center table*) You just sit there and write. If you want to eat or drink or smoke or go to the bathroom, you sit there and I'll do everything. (*NORMAN starts to type and he goes at it furiously. ANDY sits and makes out the mailing list. NORMAN stops, looks at what he wrote, quickly tears it out of the typewriter, crumples it up, throws it away, puts another piece in and begins to type furiously. Then he stops, looks at what he wrote, tears it out of the machine, crumples it and throws it away. He then rises, paces right, sits, and puts in another sheet of paper and begins to type. ANDY looks up at this. The third time that NORMAN*

starts and stops typing is too much for ANDY) Norman,
if you're having trouble, maybe I can help you.

NORMAN (*Looks up at him*) What is today's date?

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ANDY Norman, the date isn't important. Just write the ar-
ticle. I'll fill the date in later.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

NORMAN (*He stares at the paper*) You're right . . . Who
cares about the date? Boy, it's good to get back in harness
again. (*He stares at the blank paper a moment*)
And here we go . . . (He adjusts the margin indicator)
You notice how I don't mention her name anymore?

ANDY You're not concentrating, Norman.

NORMAN You're right. You're right . . . You'd better get
up on the roof because I'm opening the flood gates. Okay.
We're all set . . . The paper is in—my fingers are
poised . . . An idea is forming in my mind . . . Some-
thing is about to come out—

ANDY Norman, don't announce it. You're a writer, not a
train conductor.

NORMAN Maybe if I just started typing, something'll come
out.

(*He starts to type as ANDY looks at him incredu-
lously*)

ANDY I don't think that's going to work, Norman.

NORMAN I can try, can't I? There's no harm in trying.
(*He types. After doing a line, he stops and looks at it*)
Andy!

ANDY (*Hopefully*) Yes?

NORMAN I think I'm going out of my mind.

ANDY You're stale, sweetheart. You haven't written any-
thing in nearly five days.

NORMAN Did you see what I just put down on this paper?

Zizzivivizz! Second in my class at Dartmouth and I wrote zizzivivizz . . . ! You wouldn't accept work like that from a monkey.

ANDY Don't get hysterical on me, Norman.

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NORMAN (*He rips the sheet out of the typewriter and takes it to ANDY*) Here. Read it for yourself. What does that say?

ANDY (*Resigned*) Zizzivivizz!

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

NORMAN (*Crumples the paper, throws it on the table and goes back to the desk*) Don't tell me not to get hysterical. Maybe if I called her at the "Y" and tried to apologize . . .

ANDY (*Rises and goes to a place above the table*) She just had the police drag you away. Does it make sense for you to call her again?

NORMAN You're talking to a man who just wrote zizzivivizz . . . ! (*He picks up the phone*) I'll dial, you talk to her.

ANDY Why should I talk to her?

NORMAN Because my mouth dries up when I talk to her. No words come out, just little bla bla sounds. (*He demonstrates*) Bla bla bla—

ANDY If you dial, Norman, you're going to bla bla to her yourself.

NORMAN (*Glares at him, the phone still in hand*) You know what you are, Hobart? You're cold turkey. Cold turkey, lumpy stuffing, and watery cranberry sauce. You have all the romance and sensitivity of a used-car lot. (*He dials*) You know what else you are? You're a sexual snob. You don't get really excited unless the girl has a

straight-A average . . . Tell the truth, Andy, the sexiest woman who ever lived was Madame Curie, right?

ANDY Right. I dream of her leaning over a low-cut microscope.

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NORMAN I don't need you. I'll talk to Sophie myself.
(Into the phone) Hello? Is this the YWCA . . . ? It is? Bla—bla—bla . . .

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

(He quickly gives the phone to ANDY and goes stage center)

ANDY *(Reluctantly talks into the phone)* Miss Sophie Rauschmeyer, please . . . What? *(NORMAN hurries to ANDY's side to listen)* When . . . ? Why . . . ? Where?

NORMAN *(Anxiously)* What - when - why - where - what?
What's happening?

ANDY I see. Thank you. *(He hangs up)* They just fired her! They said it's the *third* time this week a madman caused a commotion there.

(We hear a pounding on the door)

SOPHIE'S VOICE *(Offstage)* Open this door or so help me,
Ah'll break it down.

NORMAN Andy, help me. What'll I do?

ANDY Get out of here. Let me talk to her.
(The doorbell buzzes furiously)

NORMAN *(Starting upstairs)* What will you say, Andy?
What will you tell her?

ANDY She's banging on the door. I can't audition for you now.

(Again the doorbell buzzes angrily)

NORMAN *(Halfway upstairs)* Just tell me one thing. Tell me one nice thing you're going to say about me.

ANDY You never wear brown shoes with a blue suit. *(The doorbell again)* Get out of here . . . *(NORMAN is climbing the ladder to the roof)* Where are you going?

NORMAN On the roof. If everything is all right, call me and I'll come down. If not, I'll jump down.

(He disappears through door at the top of ladder.
The doorbell buzzes again. ANDY goes to the door
and opens it. SOPHIE enters—wet. She carries a
YWCA duffle bag and a copy of *Fallout*)

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SOPHIE (She goes to the foot of the stairs) Where is he? Where is that insane, crazy, trespassin' lunatic? (ANDY closes the door) Ah know exactly what Ah'm goin' to do to him. Ah planned it all as Ah sat there drippin' all over the bus.

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

ANDY (Goes toward her) He's up on the roof, miserable and eating his heart out.

SOPHIE Well, you can tell him not to bother. Ah'm gonna get a big dog to eat it out for him . . . Ah have been fired. They didn't even give me time to dry off.

ANDY I know. I just spoke to the "Y." But it wasn't your fault. Didn't you explain that to them?

SOPHIE Ah found it difficult gettin' their attention while a crazy man was chasin' me all through the YWCA . . . And that present of his is still pecking away at everyone in the buildin'.

ANDY What present?

SOPHIE The duck. He brought me a live duck. It's still there quackin' and snappin' at everyone. When Ah left, the gym teacher was a-hangin' from the basketball hoop and then that crazy bird chased a seventy-three-year-old arts and crafts teacher down to the swimmin' pool and off the high diving board.

ANDY I didn't know about that.

SOPHIE Well, did you know that Ah've been locked out of mah apartment until Ah pay mah rent which Ah can't do because Ah don't have a job.

ANDY Look, we'll make it up to you somehow. I'll get you another job. Just give me a couple of days.

SOPHIE (*Goes left, downstage of ANDY*) Ah don't have a couple of days. Ah have rent to pay and food to buy. What am Ah gonna do?

ANDY There must be someone in San Francisco who needs somebody young and healthy and strong . . . I don't suppose you've ever considered professional football?

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SOPHIE (*She goes downstage to the phone on the desk and starts to dial*) Ah'm callin' my fiancé!

ANDY (*He goes toward SOPHIE*) Wait . . . I have an idea. I don't say you're going to love it, but how would you like to come to work for us?

SOPHIE Ah would rather get beaten in the Olympics by Red China.

ANDY Why not? It'll pay your rent and buy you your iron and steel, or whatever it is you eat.

SOPHIE (*She hangs up*) Ah believe you're serious. If you're serious, Ah suggest you make yourself available for our country's mental health program. Do you think Ah would work for that bomb aimed at the heart of America?

ANDY What bomb?

SOPHIE (*She goes a few steps right to ANDY*) Mr. Hobart, Ah don't know if you're a communist, or a fascist, or just a plain old-fashioned traitor—but you are certainly no American.

ANDY What are you calling me a traitor for?

SOPHIE (*She picks up the magazine from the pole table*) For this! For holding your country up to ridicule in black and white. All Ah read last night was the table of contents, but if you don't like the country that gave you your birth, why don't you go back where you came from?

ANDY I don't know what you're talking about, but writing

constructive criticism about the degenerating American way of life is certainly not treason.

SOPHIE Ah don't know what is in your government-overthrowing mind, but do you expect me to work for a magazine that publishes an article entitled (*Goes right, upstage of ANDY, and looks through the pages*) . . . "Is LBJ on LSD?"

ANDY We are not implying that he takes drugs. It's a symbolic alliteration meaning maybe the President in certain areas has gone too far.

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THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

SOPHIE How about "Twenty-Seven Ways to Burn a Wet Draft Card"? Written from personal experience, Mr. Hobart?

ANDY For your information, I happened to have served two years in the United States Army where I was interpreter for Brigadier General Walker Cooper.

SOPHIE In what country?

ANDY In *this* country. That idiot could hardly speak English! (*Tosses the magazine on the table*) My feelings about this country run just as deeply as yours, but if you'll turn down the national anthem for a few minutes, you'll be able to hear what some of the people are complaining about.

SOPHIE Well, Ah am one of the people and *you* are one of the things Ah'm complaining about.

ANDY Well, fortunately, you're not in much of a position to complain about *anything* . . . ! Look, if you don't work, you don't eat. If you don't eat, you get very skinny, you fall down and then you're dead. (*He goes left, up-stage of the pole table*) If you think your Marine will be happy living with a dead, skinny lady, that's his business. Personally, I think you ought to accept the meager bread I'm offering you.

SOPHIE First you take *my* loaf and then you offer me your meager bread.

ANDY Why does everything you say sound like it came out of the Bible?

SOPHIE Thank goodness you heard of the book.

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ANDY Look, do you want the job or don't you? If you don't want it, I'll take it, 'cause I need the money.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SOPHIE Unfortunately, so do Ah. Just tell me why . . . why do you want me around here?

ANDY I'll tell you why. I *don't* want you around here. But that nut up on the hot tin roof wants you around here. You believe in your principles, I believe in mine. Mine is this magazine, and I'll do anything to keep it from going under water—that was an unfortunate choice of phrase.

SOPHIE All right. That's your principle. Mah principle is breathin', eatin' and livin', just like any other animal on this earth.

ANDY So much for your character references. Now about salary. What did you get at the "Y"?

SOPHIE Seventy-two dollars.

ANDY Norman and I both know how to swim; I'll give you fifty-five.

SOPHIE For fifty-five dollars Ah will come in early and poison your coffee. Ah want what Ah got at the "Y." Seventy-two dollars.

ANDY (Reluctantly) So be it, you're hired. Your hours will be from ten to six, half a day on Saturday. Can you type?

SOPHIE No.

ANDY Can you take shorthand?

SOPHIE No.

ANDY Can you do filing?

SOPHIE No.

ANDY Maybe you'd better come in at eleven . . . Can you cook?

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SOPHIE Mah cat seems to think so.

ANDY Okay, you can make lunches and pretend to look busy. Let's say you have two main functions. First, to keep out of my way at all times, and second, to *smile* at Norman as much as is humanly possible.

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

SOPHIE Yes, sir. The first Ah will do with the utmost dedication. And the second Ah will do over mah dead body.

ANDY (*Goes right, downstage of SOPHIE*) Miss Rauschmeyer, it's evident you and I haven't gotten along since you came to work here . . . We're both trying to make the best out of an impossible situation. You need money, I need you to say goo-goo to my partner once in a while. Now I suggest you roll up your lips and smile so we can get to work.

SOPHIE All right, Ah'll make mah bargain with the devil. Ah've never run from a fight. Ah'm ready to go to work.
(*She extends her hand*)

ANDY Am I supposed to shake that?

SOPHIE No, you're supposed to put seventy-two dollars in it.

ANDY We pay at the end of the week. Company policy.

SOPHIE Then Ah'll start at the end of the week. Ah-don't-trust-you policy.

ANDY All right, wait a minute. (*He gets the milk bottles filled with pennies*) There's seventy dollars in pennies. (*He gives her the two bottles, takes the third bottle and*

empties some of it in the can on the sofa) Minus Federal withholding tax and social security.

(Curtain. While the curtain is down, we hear the sound of a typewriter over the house speakers)

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Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

SCENE 2

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

It is a few days later.

Missing from the room now is SOPHIE's YWCA bag, all the crumpled paper from the floor, the coffee can seen on the sofa in the previous scene, the Noxzema jar, and all of ANDY's beach equipment. Half a dozen books are now occupying the shelf where the pennies were. The left side of the center table is set for lunch. A copy of Sports Illustrated is also on the table.

NORMAN is seated at the typewriter, his back to the front door. He is pounding away like a man obsessed. To his right, on the desk, is a pile of typed yellow pages. Despite this display of frenetic labor, NORMAN seems to be a happy man. Suddenly he stops as he seems stuck on something. He thinks a moment, then picks up a bell that is on top of his typed pages, and rings it with a flourish.

SOPHIE appears from the kitchen wearing a little apron over a bright orange dress and holding a dish towel. She looks at him.

NORMAN Ubiquitous.

SOPHIE (*She goes left to the slanting desk where there is a large dictionary. She looks up the word*) Ubiquitous. U-b-i-q-u-i-t-o-u-s. Ubiquitous.

(She closes the dictionary and marches back to the kitchen)

NORMAN Thank you.

SOPHIE You're welcome.

(She smiles, then exits. Once SOPHIE is in the kitchen, NORMAN rises, goes to the slanting desk, gets the dictionary and brings it to his desk. He sits

at the typewriter again and rings the bell. SOPHIE returns, tired, carrying the bowl with the mixing spoon)

NORMAN Meretricious!

(Wordlessly SOPHIE crosses left to the slanting desk, but discovers that the dictionary has been moved to NORMAN's left. She quickly runs through the pages, stops and reads from the book, slowly and deliberately)

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SOPHIE Meretricious. M-e-r-e-t-r-i-c-i-o-u-s! Meretricious!

(She puts the dictionary back on the desk, picks up her mixing bowl and starts to exit. Once past him, she turns and gives him a huge, forced smile baring all her teeth. She continues to the kitchen. He picks up the bell again and rings with a flourish. She turns around) Stop ringin' that bell, Ah'm not a cow!

NORMAN Well, you don't like it when I call you Sophie.

SOPHIE Ah'm an employee here, mah name is Miss Rauschmeyer . . . What is it, Mr. Cornell?

NORMAN What's for lunch, Miss Rauschmeyer?

SOPHIE Banana fritters, Mr. Cornell. Do you like them?

NORMAN I love them. What are they?

SOPHIE Fritters made with bananas.

(She starts to go back into the kitchen, stops, turns and smiles. Then exits. NORMAN rushes to the slant-top desk and quickly combs his hair, looking in the mirror on the wall above the desk. He quickly shaves with an electric cordless razor. Then he goes toward the kitchen)

NORMAN Do you notice the way I've calmed down? (*He looks in*) I'll never know how we got along without a secretary all these—oh, let me help you with that.

(He goes into the kitchen. We hear SOPHIE shout and then a loud crash. NORMAN rushes out and goes stage right)

SOPHIE (*Following him, brandishing a pot*) You try that with your hands again and you'll have to learn to type with your nose.

NORMAN Your apron was slipping. I was just tying it in the back.

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SOPHIE And stop trying to get me into corners.

NORMAN I'm not trying to get you into corners.

SOPHIE Then how come this mornin' for ten minutes we had our heads stuck in the oven?

GIRL

NORMAN All right, don't be angry. Don't be mad at me. (*Goes back to the desk*) You go back into the kitchen and I'll go back to work. See? See? I'm working again. (*He types*) See? Working . . . (*She returns to the kitchen and after a moment of disgust, he resumes work. He is once more engrossed and does not hear or notice ANDY as he comes in the front door. ANDY looks exhausted from his outside activities. He looks over at NORMAN, whose back is to him, typing away feverishly. ANDY tiptoes behind him to get a better look at his work without disturbing him. He reads over NORMAN's shoulder a minute. He seems pleased with what he reads. To get a better look, he leans over and places his hands on NORMAN's shoulders. NORMAN closes his eyes upon feeling the hand on his shoulder. He turns his head and kisses ANDY's hand*) Forgive me! (*He notices that it is ANDY's hand and jumps out of his chair and turns angrily to ANDY*) Are you crazy? You wanna give me a heart attack? Don't ever sneak up on me like that again.

ANDY I didn't want to disturb you. You've really been working, heh?

(*He picks up a stack of typewritten pages and begins to look them over*)

NORMAN I've been doing fine, fine.

ANDY (*Looks around*) Where's Esther Williams?
(*He starts walking stage left, followed by NORMAN*)

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NORMAN (*Following*) Shhh! I thought you were going to be gone all day.

ANDY I couldn't take anymore. (*Turns and now walks stage right, followed by NORMAN*) I just flew under the Golden Gate Bridge with a crazy landlady pilot. Actually she did very well for a woman who just got her license yesterday.

(*He continues to read NORMAN's pages*)

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

NORMAN Tell me all about it later. I want to finish this.

ANDY She made three passes at the bridge. On the third one we had to pay a toll. (*He starts up the stairs*) Norman, this is good. It's better than good. It's brilliant.

NORMAN I know . . . I know . . .

(*ANDY goes on up the stairs and into his room. SOPHIE comes out of the kitchen carrying a frying pan with a banana fritter*)

SOPHIE Come on! Here's your lunch. Eat it while it's hot.

(*NORMAN crosses and sits in a chair to the left of the table—he tucks a napkin in his shirt*)

NORMAN I like that. You're worried about me.

(*SOPHIE tosses the fritter onto the plate already set on the table and returns to the kitchen. She re-enters, taking off her apron*)

SOPHIE (*Standing above the table*) Would that be all now? If so, Ah'd like to go home.

NORMAN You could vacuum the rug.

SOPHIE Where's the vacuum?

NORMAN In that closet. (*SOPHIE leaves her apron on the kitchen bar en route to the closet*) I'll help you with it. It's very heavy.

(*He goes into the closet after her and closes the door. We hear a loud crash. The closet door opens and SOPHIE comes storming out. She slams the door behind her. NORMAN does not appear. ANDY rushes*

out of his room without his jacket and comes running down the stairs)

SOPHIE This time Ah'm pressin' charges.
(She heads for the door)

ANDY (*Carrying NORMAN's yellow pages*) What's the matter? Where's Norman?

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SOPHIE You'll find him under the vacuum cleaner.
(She storms out and slams the door. NORMAN comes out of the closet, holding his head in pain and wearing the vacuum-cleaner hose around his neck)

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

ANDY (*To NORMAN*) What did you do?

NORMAN I bit her earlobe! It was dangling right in front of my mouth. What did you want me to do, ignore it?

ANDY (*He rushes to the door and goes out in the hall and shouts*) Miss Rauschmeyer! Sophie! Wait a minute!

NORMAN (*Follows ANDY to the door*) Tell her I'm sorry.

ANDY Seventy-five dollars! I'll raise your salary to seventy-five dollars a week. (*He comes back into the room and leaves the door open*) She's coming back.

NORMAN (*Following ANDY*) Andy, you've got to square me with her just one more time.

ANDY Norman, this has got to stop. She's becoming one of the highest-priced secretaries in America—and she can't even type.

NORMAN Tell her I've been working under a great strain lately. That I haven't been myself. Help me! What am I gonna do?

ANDY (*Removes the napkin and the vacuum hose from NORMAN's neck and tosses them upstage of the kitchen bar*) Go downstairs and buy a bottle of wine. We'll have a party just for the three of us.

NORMAN (*He rushes to the front door*) That's a wonderful idea. I'll get a bottle of muscatel.

ANDY Not muscatel. Champagne. Girls love champagne.

NORMAN That's right. I'll take all my pennies and get a bottle of champagne.

(*He starts toward the shelf where the pennies were kept*)

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Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

ANDY (*He grabs NORMAN, stops him and shoves him toward the door*) No, you're right. Muscatel is better. Now get out of here.

(*NORMAN gets to the door just as SOPHIE returns. NORMAN hides his face with his hands*)

NORMAN Sophie, I just want to say. I know you hate me now, but—bla bla bla bla bla . . .

(*He runs down the corridor and disappears. SOPHIE ignores him*)

SOPHIE Where's mah three-dollar raise?

ANDY You'll be drinking it in ten minutes.

SOPHIE Ah knew Ah shouldn't have trusted you.
(*She turns to go*)

ANDY I thought you never run from a fight.

SOPHIE (*Turning back*) Ah don't. Ah just had one in the closet. Mah ear is pierced now and Ah don't even wear earrings.

ANDY I told you it wouldn't be easy. I should have known you didn't have the guts to stick it out.

SOPHIE Stick it out? Ah have been smiling at that idiot for three days. (*She gives a big, forced smile as she comes back into the room to the center table*) You see that? That's what Ah've been doing since ten o'clock this morning.

ANDY Well, cut it out. You look like a demented ventriloquist.

(He picks up NORMAN's work and sits to the right of the table—he takes a pencil from the mug)

SOPHIE Look, this was not *mah* stupid idea. It was *your* stupid idea.

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ANDY Well, it's a very *smart* stupid idea because it's working!

(He flourishes NORMAN's papers in the air as proof)

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

SOPHIE It's working for *you!* You're gettin' your magazine. Ah'm gettin' holes in mah ears.

ANDY I happen to be paying through the nose for those holes in your ears. It won't happen again . . . Now I've got fifty pages to edit so I'd like a little quiet, please.

SOPHIE You won't even know Ah'm here—'cause Ah won't be here!

(She starts for the door)

ANDY (Turns and shouts) You'll be here because I'm paying you to be here and he's coming back in ten minutes and he *wants* you here.

SOPHIE (Closes the door and comes downstage) Then *here* Ah will be!

(She sits left of the table angrily, grabs a magazine, crosses her legs, and reads)

ANDY (Looks at her) This is not the Christian Science Reading Room. It's an office. And there's work to be done.

SOPHIE Then do it.

(She continues reading)

ANDY I'm talking about you.

SOPHIE Would you like me to type a letter? Ah can have it finished a year from September.

ANDY You can sharpen some pencils—and be quiet.

SOPHIE Yes, Boss!

(SOPHIE glares at him, then gets up and goes to the radiator where there's a pencil sharpener. From a bowl she takes one, inserts it in the sharpener, and grinds. It makes a loud noise. ANDY looks up, then goes over to her)

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ANDY What are you doing?

SOPHIE What you told me to do.

ANDY (Pulls the pen from the sharpener) Thank you. I now have a ballpoint pen without a ballpoint. (He goes to a tall vase on the kitchen bar and takes a feather duster from it. He goes back toward SOPHIE) Do you see this?

SOPHIE Ah see it.

ANDY First let me tell you that it is not a dead chicken on a stick. It's a feather duster. By that I don't mean you dust feathers with it. You hold it on this end (He demonstrates)—and you flick it against the furniture, thus dusting it. Do you think you could do that?

SOPHIE Lefty or righty?

ANDY If you'd like, you can stick it in your pierced ear and shake your head. Just clean the room and be quiet. (He puts the duster on the pole table, then goes back and sits in a chair to continue working. SOPHIE glares at him, holding the duster)

SOPHIE Yes, sir! (She begins to dust the pole table, vigorously and angrily—she knocks magazines onto the floor. She dusts her way across the room to ANDY's chair, dusts under it, making some noise. Then she moves back to the center table) Ah think Ah'm gettin' the hang of it.

ANDY Yes, you seem to be.

SOPHIE (She dusts bits of torn paper out of the ashtray, and

sings as she goes up to the kitchen bar)

"Yankee doodle went to town, riding on a pony,
Stuck a feather in his cap and called it macaroni . . ."
(Now she is dusting the steps leading to the landing)

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ANDY You're not going to whistle the second chorus, are you?

SOPHIE Ah just work here. Ah do what Ah'm told.
(She starts to whistle. ANDY gets up and crosses to her. He takes her wrist, leads her to the desk)

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

ANDY All right. *(He takes some envelopes from the end of the desk and some stamps and places them before her)* Here are fifty addressed envelopes and fifty stamps. You have a tongue. Don't talk. Lick.

(He takes the duster from her and puts it on the pole table. He goes back to the chair and picks up the pages)

SOPHIE *(Seated at the desk, holding the envelopes)* Are these announcements for next week's cell meeting, Comrade?

ANDY No. Actually they're very thin bombs. You just add water. *(She laughs. Then she begins to lick the stamps and places them on the envelopes)* I get the impression that you don't approve of me as a person.

SOPHIE If that's what you are, that's what Ah don't.

ANDY Why not?

SOPHIE Because Ah don't approve of your character, your philosophy, your principles, your ideals, your vocation, your methods, your scruples—shall Ah continue?

ANDY Look, your opinions on anything have as much practical value as a 1939 calendar. I'm not paying seventy-five dollars a week to listen to a limited vocabulary. Be quiet and lick the stamps. I'm a busy man.

(He goes back to his pages)

SOPHIE So was John Wilkes Booth the night he assassinated Lincoln.

ANDY (*Stops*) Are you implying I was in on the Lincoln job?

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SOPHIE Ah'm talking about your present activities. But Ah wouldn't put it past you.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ANDY Sorry, that night I was in Philadelphia cracking the Liberty Bell. (*He gathers his papers, rises, and starts up the stairs*) I can't concentrate in front of the Senate Investigating Committee.

SOPHIE The truth is always difficult to face. (*She stands up*) Can mah tongue rest? The well has dried up.

ANDY (*He stops on the stairs*) Look—if you're unhappy here, why don't you take a job as night watchman at the Statue of Liberty? Then you could swim around her at night checking to see if the torch went out.

SOPHIE (*Going upstage a few steps*) "The enforcers of justice have always been the scapegoat of the enemies of freedom . . ." Do you know where Ah read that?

ANDY On the back of a Patrick Henry bubble-gum card?

SOPHIE (*She walks stage left above the pole table*) No—in the speeches of Socrates. Did you ever read the speeches of Socrates?

ANDY I'm waiting for the paperback to come out.
(*He goes up to the balcony*)

SOPHIE (*Shouts up*) It's out. That's where Ah read it . . . It would shock you, Mr. Hobart, to know the amount of political literature Ah have read.

ANDY I would be nonplussed if you got into anything deeper than the names and addresses of the girls in the Miss America Contest. I notice that your tongue is functioning again. Go back and lick the stamps.

(*He goes into his room*)

SOPHIE And Ah'm sure if it was left up to a *traitor* like you, no one would *win* the Miss America Contest.

(She goes back to the desk and stamp-licking—standing up. ANDY comes out of his room again, much angrier at the "traitor" remark)

ANDY You're right. I think a parade of pretty girls is fine. But listening to Miss North Dakota singing an aria from *The Barber of Seville* in the key of M, while baking an upside-down seven-layer cake in a hoop skirt she hooped herself, is beyond human endurance . . . I'll be very frank with you, Miss Rauschmeyer, up until now I'm not happy with your work.

(He goes back to his room)

SOPHIE (She glares after him. She is murmuring to herself and what she says is almost inaudible) Ah suppose next he'll outlaw apple pie.

ANDY (He comes out of his room) I heard that. I happen to love apple pie. Which, for your information, originated in Bavaria, Germany.

SOPHIE (She goes stage left to above the pole table) That's a lie. Apple pie is as American as blueberry pie.

ANDY The only truly indigenous American foods are Thanksgiving turkey and chicken chow mein. (He starts down the stairs as she goes right to meet him) You're deliberately distracting me from working on my magazine, aren't you?

SOPHIE (Returning left to the desk, and back to the stamps) Each citizen must do what he can.

ANDY Of all the bigoted things—you haven't read one word in it past the table of contents.

SOPHIE You don't have to drink the poison if it says so on the label.

ANDY I'm going in the closet to work. Call me when Norman gets back.

(He goes up center)

SOPHIE (*She goes toward him*) All right, tell me. Is there anything about this country you do like?

ANDY I like almost everything about this country except people who like *absolutely everything* about this country.

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SOPHIE Why don't you answer mah question?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ANDY Why don't you question my answer?

SOPHIE Why don't you talk like a person so Ah can understand which are the questions and which are the answers?

ANDY Would it be all right if I worked in your apartment?

SOPHIE It would not. If there's gonna be a fight, let's draw the battle lines on the field of the aggressor. And don't bother guessin' who said that 'cause Ah made it up mahself.

ANDY I had it narrowed down to you or Winston Churchill.

(*He goes right a few steps*)

SOPHIE (*Follows*) And for your information, did you know Winston Churchill's mother was born in the United States—*in Brooklyn!*

ANDY You'd never know it from the way he talked. (*Goes to the door, downstage of SOPHIE*) Why don't you go back to your apartment and make some chitlins or grits? Your cat must be hungry.

(*He opens the door for her*)

SOPHIE (*She sits right of the table*) Ah'm not leavin' until you admit you are snide, smug, and narrow-minded.

ANDY Will you settle for belligerent?

SOPHIE Ah will accept deceitful and treacherous.

ANDY (*He slams the door, and comes downstage to the bottom step*) Okay, I'm deceitful and treacherous. And

you are provincial, and old-fashioned, antiquated, unrealistic, unimaginative, unenlightened, uninformed, and unbelievably unable to understand anything that isn't under water . . . (SOPHIE rises) Your big trouble in life is that you were born a hundred and fifty years too late. You should have been at Bunker Hill loading muskets, raising flags, and waiting for the British to show up with the whites of their eyes. Well, you may be shocked to learn that this is 1967 and this country has a whole new set of problems. But you wouldn't know about that because I don't think you're a real person of flesh and blood with feelings and sensitivities. I don't think you could be capable of having a genuine emotional attachment for another human being unless it was first passed by Congress and amended to the Constitution and painted red, white, and blue. If you've been listening carefully, Miss Rauschmeyer, I have just made a point.

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THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

SOPHIE (*She walks to the door, opens it, then slams it shut*)

All right, if you wanna make points, then Ah'm gonna make one. Ah'm gonna make the biggest point you ever heard.

ANDY (*He goes to the sofa and tosses the pages on it*)

When you get to it, raise your right hand. With you it's hard to tell.

SOPHIE You'll *know* when Ah'm makin' it only you're not gonna like it. Are you listenin'?

ANDY With one ear. That's all I need with you.

SOPHIE Then here goes. (*She comes downstage to ANDY*) Ah don't like you for a lot of the reasons Ah already said. But the main reason Ah don't like you is because Ah am ingaged to Lieutenant Burt Fenneman of the United States Marines. And in a few weeks we're supposed to get married. But for some insane reason that only a Hungarian psychoanalyst could explain, Ah have suddenly discovered—and here comes the part Ah was telling you about—that *Ah am physically attracted to you . . . !* Now how do you like *that* for a point? (*And she storms*

out slamming the door behind her. ANDY does not react. He just stands there. Suddenly the door flings open again and SOPHIE stands there glaring at him, hands on her hips) Did you hear what Ah said?

ANDY (*Without emotion*) I heard. I heard what you said.

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SOPHIE (*Slams the door*) Well, how do you like them apples?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ANDY Those apples.

SOPHIE (*She goes to stand above the center table*) Them apples. How do you like them?

ANDY Are you serious?

SOPHIE (*Yelling*) Of course Ah'm serious! There is something about your physical presence that appeals to me—and Ah am as repulsed by it as you are.

ANDY You couldn't possibly be.

SOPHIE There is no earthly reason why Ah should like *anything* about you. And Ah don't. But Ah do! What do we do about it?

ANDY If you're looking for another boost in salary, this is *not* the way to get it.

(*He starts up the stairs*)

SOPHIE Where are you goin'?

ANDY To get Norman's copy of Krafft-Ebbing. You're a bigger nut than he is.

SOPHIE You don't believe me.

ANDY I believe you. I just don't *understand* you. (*Comes back down the steps*) What do you mean you're physically attracted to me?

SOPHIE Do you want a complete rundown of arms, legs,

hair, and teeth? Go get a pencil and paper and we'll take it item for item.

ANDY You mean you like the way I look?

SOPHIE Not terribly.

ANDY You like the way I walk?

SOPHIE Not really.

ANDY You like the way I dress?

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THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

SOPHIE Not remotely.

ANDY Then what *do you like?*

SOPHIE *Ah like the way you smell!!*

(ANDY turns and looks to heaven or anyone else for some help)

ANDY Oh, Sophie, Sophie, Sophie!

SOPHIE And don't call me Sophie-Sophie-Sophie. Ah'm attracted to you but Ah still don't like you.

ANDY That's impossible.

SOPHIE Ah know. You are the most irritating, nauseating man Ah have ever met in mah life—and if you tried to kiss me right now Ah would not stop you. You wanna work on that for a while?

ANDY (*He turns in despair and goes to the landing*) No, I think I need outside help.

SOPHIE Ah suppose you wanna know what started it all?

ANDY (*Turns to a wall and just faces it*) No, I don't.

SOPHIE Yes, you do.

ANDY Yes, I do. What started it all?

SOPHIE It was your grey eyelashes. Ah have never met a man in your age bracket with grey eyelashes. Ah think it's *dumb* to have grey eyelashes, but Ah'm very glad you have them . . . Now can Ah ask you a question?

ANDY Yes, you may ask me a question.

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SOPHIE Do you have any desire whatsoever to touch me?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ANDY What does that mean?

SOPHIE Which is the part you don't understand, desire or touchin'?

ANDY (*Goes downstage*) I understand both parts, I just never thought about it.

SOPHIE (*Follows*) Well, *think* about it . . . Time's up! Do you want to touch me or don't you?

ANDY You've been spiking your fritters with bourbon, haven't you?

SOPHIE Ah am being honest with mah emotions because that's the only way Ah know how to deal with them. (*She moves closer to ANDY*) The plain disgustin' truth is Ah would like to stand very close to you and feel your breath somewhere on mah neck.

ANDY You shouldn't tell me that.

SOPHIE Ah know it but it just comes out. Is there any possibility of you havin' the same disgustin' feeling about me?

ANDY If I did it wouldn't be disgusting, and if I found it disgusting I wouldn't have the feeling.

SOPHIE Ah don't think Ah got that but touché anyway.

ANDY (*As he moves into the right corner*) And will you stop following me around the room.

SOPHIE Ah'm not followin' you. You're runnin' from *me!*

ANDY I'm running because you're following. Stay over there!

SOPHIE Ah can't smell you from over here!

ANDY (*Exasperated*) What am I going to do with you?

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SOPHIE Ah gave you a suggestion, you didn't do it.

ANDY Listen, you, for an all-American girl with a complete set of Eagle Scout principles, how do you explain being engaged to one man and attracted to another man?

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

SOPHIE Very simple explanation. Ah can't explain it.

ANDY What about your fiancé?

SOPHIE He can't explain it either.

ANDY You mean you told him?

SOPHIE Certainly Ah told him. We're ingaged.

ANDY Oh, God, I'm afraid to ask what his reaction was.

SOPHIE You may well fear. He wants to kill you.

ANDY WHY? WHAT DID I DO?

SOPHIE What did Ah do when that lunatic friend of yours chased me all over the YWCA? It's nobody's fault. It's something that just happened.

ANDY (*He escapes from her by going left, between the right chair and the center table*) Well, make it unhappen. If I'm going to get killed by a man in uniform, let it be the enemy.

SOPHIE Ah am tryin' just as hard as Ah can to make it unhappen. The minute you do anything physically repulsive, we'll all be a lot better off. (*ANDY looks at her and then in an effort to be physically repulsive, he knocks*

over the director's chair and goes to her, grabs her and gives her a hard, vicious kiss. Then he pushes her back and returns to stage left. He looks at her) Ah liked it. We're in big trouble.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ANDY What do you mean, *we're* in big trouble? *I'm* the one who's in big trouble.

SOPHIE Are you going to yell at me or are you going to do something about our predicament?

ANDY (*Yelling*) I'm going to yell at you! You're going to ruin everything I ever worked for in my entire life! Why don't you go back into the ocean with the rest of the fish? (*She smiles*) What are you smiling at?

SOPHIE Ah like it when you yell at me?

ANDY I don't care what you like, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

SOPHIE How should *Ah* know? But until we think of somethin', why don't you kiss me again?

(*ANDY charges at her with a threatening finger*)

ANDY You are without a doubt—the most—you—ah—oh, the hell with it.

(*He goes to her, takes her in his arms, and kisses her. He's not quite sure why, but at this point his common sense is beyond all reasoning. SOPHIE puts her arms around his neck and solidifies the kiss. The door flies open and NORMAN springs in happily, a bottle of muscatel in a brown paper bag in his hand*)

NORMAN (*Singing*) "She loves me, but . . ." (*He stops and freezes as he catches them in the embrace. He looks at ANDY and SOPHIE*) The least you could have done was chipped in for the wine!

Curtain

Act Three

373

It is the next day, early afternoon. There is one open suitcase, downstage of the kitchen bar. A duffle bag is on the sofa next to the portable typewriter, all ready to go. The luncheon dishes have been cleared and the feather duster returned to the kitchen bar. The stamped envelopes and the manuscript pages are no longer on the desk, but the dummy magazine is still there, unfinished. The telephone is back on the pole table along with a large pile of magazines near the pole. Upstage, unseen by the audience, is an eight-pack of empty Coke bottles. ANDY's clipboard is on the center table.

NORMAN appears from his room at the top of the stairs, carrying a pile of books. He leans over the railing and drops the books like a load of bombs into the open suitcase below.

The front door opens and ANDY, in his raincoat, enters, a very morose-looking young man. He looks up at NORMAN, who tosses his head. NORMAN is trying to convey all his anger and bitterness in this one gesture.

The telephone rings. ANDY closes the door, crosses to the pole table and answers the phone.

ANDY (*Into the phone*) Cavanaugh's Crematorium . . .

Oh—Mrs. Mackininee—no, I'm not trying to avoid you. I have a little answering service on the side . . . Yes, I called you earlier because I was wondering if I could beg off tonight's karate party . . . Well, I'm sure the Tako-shimo's are a lot of fun, but I'm awfully tired—I just don't think I'm up to an entire evening of being thrown against the wall . . .

(*NORMAN comes out of his room carrying an enormous five-foot-square blowup photograph of Albert Einstein*)

NORMAN (*Not to ANDY directly*) Railway Express will pick it up in the morning.

(*He leans the picture-face to the wall and goes back into his room*)

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

ANDY (*Back into the phone*) Mrs. Mackininee, I definitely don't think I can make it tonight. I have some urgent business here . . . No, I'm positive I can't—Mrs. Mackininee, I think this is hardly the time to discuss a rent increase . . . Well, for that matter, I couldn't even pay a fifteen percent decrease . . . ! All right, if that's how you feel about it, you can pick up your apartment in the morning.

(*He hangs up. NORMAN comes out of his bedroom carrying a flower box with a few tiny leaves starting to sprout. He carries it down the stairs*)

NORMAN I'm taking the marijuana plant.

(*He puts the plant on the kitchen bar. He starts for the stairs again*)

ANDY Is this your final decision?

NORMAN (*He crosses to the tape recorder, turns it on, picks up the speaker and switches on to record*) It's my final decision. This is a recording.

(*He switches it off and starts up right*)

ANDY Because I think you're making a mistake.

NORMAN (*He stops at the bottom of the stairs*) I've only made two mistakes in my life. One was trusting you as my friend—the other was going out for the muscatel.

(*He continues up the stairs*)

ANDY Norman, I've known you for eight years. Can you ever remember me lying to you *once* in all those eight years?

NORMAN Yes. I've known you for nine years.

(*He continues up the stairs*)

ANDY All right, *nine* years. I don't care what you saw yesterday, I'm telling you the truth. I cannot abide that girl and she finds me snide, smug, and repulsive.

NORMAN (*Stops*) I see. And I walked in just as she was sinking her fangs into your throat, and you fought off the attack with your mouth.

ANDY (*He goes up center*) No, she was kissing me.

NORMAN Kissing you . . . ? You're a foot taller than she is and you can't stand her. So the way I see it, the only way she could have kissed you against your wishes is for her to have nineteen-inch lips—and I just don't buy that.

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ANDY I don't care what you're buying, I did not make an overt act toward her.

NORMAN In other words, she was the one who did the overting.

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

ANDY Correct.

NORMAN Why?

ANDY Well—that's beside the point.

NORMAN I think not. Why did she overt you right on the mouth?

ANDY You're gonna laugh.

NORMAN Try me.

ANDY She likes the way I smell.

NORMAN (*He looks at his watch*) It is now three o'clock.
I will be hysterical until three-fifteen.

(*He continues up the stairs into the room*)

ANDY What's so insane about it? You like the way *she* smells.

NORMAN (*He storms out*) How can you even mention the two smells in the same breath?
(*He exits to his room*)

ANDY Norman . . . (*He takes off his raincoat and tosses it on a high stool up left between the table and stairs*) You mean to tell me that after nine years of a personal, meaningful relationship, you would let that flag-waving sea urchin come between us?

NORMAN (*He comes out of his room and goes down the stairs to the landing*) I can live with a slob, a sadist, a forger, or a junkie. I draw the line at finks.

(*He goes to the light-fixture on the landing and removes one bulb*)

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ANDY (*He walks downstage to the desk*) And what about the magazine?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

NORMAN (*He comes down the stairs to the suitcase*) The magazine is no longer my concern.

(*He puts the bulb in his suitcase and goes above the kitchen bar for the eight-pack of empty Coke bottles—takes half the bottles and packs them in the suitcase*)

ANDY You—hypocrite! You pretend to be devoted and dedicated to an ideal that we've literally starved for, and you can blithely toss it all aside because we're suddenly embroiled in a romantic triangle!

NORMAN (*He goes to ANDY*) Now I know why this magazine never made a cent. Now I know why we were starving. You, me, the girl and the Marine are a quadrangle, not a triangle!! You can't add!

(*He goes to the suitcase*)

ANDY And what do you think you're going to do once you leave here?

NORMAN In exactly thirty minutes I have an interview for a job with the A-P.

ANDY Working at the checkout counter?

NORMAN Not the A and P, you idiot. The A-P! The Associated-Press.

ANDY Doing what?

NORMAN I'm a writer. They'll pay me for writing . . . Just as, I imagine, you'll make your living by *finking!*
(*He goes to the closet*)

ANDY (*He goes left to upstage of the pole table*) A writer?

Without me to push you, prod you, and encourage you, you couldn't hold down a job writing Rhode Island license plates.

NORMAN (*He comes out of the closet carrying two jackets on wooden hangers and goes stage left to ANDY*)

No . . . ? LJ Seven-one-nine-six . . . ! And there's plenty more ideas where that came from.

(*He gives the jackets to ANDY and takes the coat hangers to the duffle bag*)

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ANDY All right, so we don't get along. Gilbert and Sullivan didn't speak to each other for fourteen years and they wrote twenty-three operettas together. Why can't we?

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

NORMAN (*At the sofa*) Gilbert never walked in and caught Sullivan kissing Poor Little Buttercup.

ANDY (*He puts the jackets on the up left table and then he goes right to the short wooden stool*) Okay, Norman, if I have to fight for my magazine, I'll fight for it.

NORMAN (*Looks at him in disbelief*) You're joking, surely.

ANDY Surely not.

NORMAN Andy, I'm warning you. I'm not wiry, but I'm thin. I'll cut you to ribbons.

ANDY I've already faced death with our paratrooper landlady. I'm not afraid of a skinny typist.

(*He takes the short stool to the door. He sits on it and crosses his legs in a Gandhi fashion*)

NORMAN (*Looks at him*) What is that supposed to be?

ANDY What does it look like? It's a sit-in!

NORMAN (*He looks around to see if any sane person heard this lunatic remark. Then he moves up to the door*) If you don't get up from that sit-in, you're gonna see a punch-down!

ANDY Is that your answer to passive resistance?

NORMAN No, my answer to passive resistance is active kicking . . . Get up! What do you think you're doing?

ANDY The same as they did in Bombay in 1947 when twelve thousand Indians threw themselves across fifteen miles of railroad tracks.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

NORMAN (*Looks at his watch, goes to his suitcase, closes it and picks it up. Then he goes to ANDY*) Well, Charley, in thirty seconds the five-fifteen is coming through.

ANDY (*Steeling himself*) Thou shalt not pass!

NORMAN Thou shalt bleed from both ears!

ANDY You would hit a man who wouldn't raise his arms in defense?

NORMAN Actually I prefer it that way.

ANDY Norman, if you go over to their side it's the end of free, creative thinking. They'll have you writing weather reports and shipping news.

NORMAN In two minutes I bring in my first story about a dead man leaning against a door.

ANDY (*Looks at him, then gets up*) All right, Norman . . . (*He returns the stool to right of radiator*) I had hoped to avoid bloodshed . . . (*He takes off his sweater*) But you leave me no recourse. The pain I am about to inflict is done purely on request.

NORMAN (*Looks at him in disbelief*) Do you mean it is your intention to actually come to blows? Hard hitting and everything?

ANDY (*At the pole table, rolling up his shirt sleeves*) My fist right on your deviated septum.

NORMAN Knowing full well that on July sixteenth I finish a three-year course in Oriental combat?

ANDY I intend to compensate by fighting dirty.

NORMAN (*He puts down his suitcase, takes off his jacket and puts it on the landing*) Okay, Andy, as long as you know the score. I've been waiting six months to try this in a real-life situation. I had hoped my first victim would be a mugger, but you'll do nicely. (*Goes to the center table as he rolls up his shirt sleeves*) Oh, by the way. It's my legal obligation to warn you that karate may be hazardous to one's health.

ANDY And let me warn you that I have never once in my life struck another human being in anger. (*Both ANDY and NORMAN pick up the center coffee table and carry it stage right*) I don't want to kill you, but I have no idea how strong I am. (*Goes left and takes the director's chair to the right of the desk*) If you feel yourself dying, just speak up.

(NORMAN tries to lift the right chair with one hand. ANDY comes to his rescue. NORMAN then carries the chair up right and puts it down near the table—he bows to the chair)

NORMAN Anytime you're ready.

ANDY I'm ready if you are.

(NORMAN assumes a sort of professional pose while ANDY just tries to look menacing)

NORMAN (*Smirks*) Is that the way you're going to stand? You don't know the first thing you're doing. You won't last ten seconds.

ANDY When you're able to talk again, you can teach me.

NORMAN Can I show you the four basic positions? I'm still going to break your neck, but at least you'll look better. (*He goes toward ANDY, who growls at him*) This is ridiculous. You have no defense at all. I'm not even enjoying this.

(*He goes stage right*)

ANDY If you want entertainment, turn on the television. If you want to fight, come over here.

NORMAN I want to fight . . .

(*In true karate fashion, NORMAN takes a step towards ANDY, swipes at the air twice and grunts audibly in Japanese fashion. He repeats the move with the other hand and the sound*)

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ANDY If you're gonna do that, why don't you put on those big white bloomers like the Japanese wear?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

NORMAN You must be out of your mind. (*Holds up his poised right hand*) Don't you realize this is a lethal weapon? This hand is trained to kill. Once I start it in motion, it can't be stopped. It's been trained that way. All right, Andy, I'm through toying with you. I'm gonna give you one chop (*Looks at his watch*) . . . and then I've got to go. (*NORMAN approaches ANDY. He raises his hand. ANDY runs upstage of the pole table and goes right. NORMAN follows him*) Damnit, Andy, why don't you stand still and fight like a man?

ANDY Because I'm afraid, that's why.

NORMAN I told you that before we started.

ANDY Not of you, of myself. I am so seething, so fed up with your monumental stupidity and infantile behavior, that if I get within two inches of you, I swear by everything I believe in this world, I'll crack your head wide open.

NORMAN Then you'd better do it to me before I do it to you.

ANDY All right, damnit, here!! (*And in a karate-type swipe, ANDY swings at NORMAN, who simultaneously swings at him with an identical blow, but they succeed in landing both blows on each other's arms between the wrist and elbow, causing enormous pain to both. They both stop and rub their painful arms and moan together*) Ooohhh . . . Oh, boy, that hurts . . .

NORMAN (*Grimaces*) Oh, God, my arm, my arm.

ANDY (*Goes toward him*) Are you all right?

NORMAN (*Goes away to the pole table*) Let me alone.

Why don't you look where you're hitting? In karate you hit the neck or the kidneys, not the arm. (*He looks at his wrist*) Ah, damn.

ANDY What's wrong?

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NORMAN You broke my Benrus watch.

ANDY (*He takes a few steps left*) Let me see.

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

NORMAN It's broken. It's broken. There's nothing to see—it's my good watch, too.

ANDY I'm sorry.

NORMAN And I just put in a new crystal, and I had it cleaned.

ANDY Why didn't you take the watch off first?

NORMAN Because I didn't expect to get hit on the wrist. I told you you didn't know what you were doing . . . I don't want to fight anymore.

(*He goes right, downstage of ANDY*)

ANDY Well, what are we gonna do?

NORMAN (*Putting on his jacket*) You can do whatever you want, I'm going.

ANDY For good?

NORMAN For good. I really don't like you anymore.

ANDY (*Turns away*) Okay, Norman, if you wanna go, then go. I think you're wrong, but if that's what you want (*Goes left to the desk*) I wish you the very best of luck.

NORMAN (*Looking at his watch again*) Boy, I really loved this watch, too.

ANDY (*He goes upstage of the pole table. NORMAN goes to his suitcase*) So, this is the end of *Fallout* magazine—you've got to admit it, Norm, for a while we had a good thing going here.

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NORMAN (*Points to his watch*) If I knew what time it was, I'd hang around another ten minutes and watch you cry.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ANDY You don't think I'm sincere about our friendship.

NORMAN (*Picks up his suitcase*) For this magazine you would sell your own mother—who, incidentally, no one has seen for three years.

ANDY Norman, please believe me when I say I'd rather have a handshake from you right now—than the Pulitzer Prize. (*He extends his hand out to NORMAN. NORMAN looks at him, puts down his suitcase and goes left to ANDY*) What's the matter?

NORMAN I'm afraid you're going to grab me and handcuff me to the steampipe.

ANDY (*He extends his hand again*) Good-bye, Norman.

NORMAN Good-bye, Andy. (*NORMAN extends his hand to ANDY, who in a flash of dexterity pulls up a pair of handcuffs from the pole table. One handcuff has been affixed to the steampipe, the other one ANDY puts on NORMAN's wrist. The handcuffs had been hidden by a pile of magazines. It happened so fast NORMAN is dumbfounded and can only stare blankly at what ANDY has done. ANDY rushes to remove the telephone from the pole table, puts it on the floor. He replaces the director's chair left center, pulls back the round center table and resets the chair right of the table*) You dirty, no-good rat, I even have to write your lousy ideas!

(*He pulls on the handcuffs*)

ANDY That one was my own, sweetheart. I heard you on the phone this morning with the A-P. Now we have one article to finish, one more page. And we're down to the

finish line, Norman, because in forty-five minutes, Mr. Franklyn's two Neanderthal sons will be here to pick up our completed magazine or their six hundred dollars. And if I can't give them either one, I'll give them you.

NORMAN (*Looks at him in disbelief*) You mean you're serious? You actually intend, in real life, to keep a human being chained to a steampipe?

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ANDY (*He gets the typewriter from the sofa and takes it to the pole table*) Until tomorrow—when the police find an unidentified broken object dangling from a post.

(*He puts the typewriter on the table*)

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

NORMAN All right, Andy, I'm in no mood for the "Prisoner of Zenda." Open up!

ANDY Not until I see some paper work.
(*He starts for the kitchen*)

NORMAN Where are you going?

ANDY To the kitchen to get myself a tiny-kumquat sandwich.
(*He goes into the kitchen*)

NORMAN (*Shouts toward the window*) Help! Help! I'm being held prisoner! (*He looks out the window and shouts to someone*) Hey, lady! You wanna make a dollar?
(*We hear a thunderous crash in the kitchen and a loud scream from ANDY*) What happened?

(*From the kitchen, ANDY staggers out holding his back in pain. He leans on the bar for support*)

ANDY Why did you wax the kitchen floor?

NORMAN Are you crazy? I didn't wax the kitchen floor.

ANDY (*Going toward a chair*) Well, the kitchen floor is waxed and if you didn't wax it, who did?

(*The front door opens and SOPHIE enters carrying a package in tin foil in one hand and a red suitcase in the other*)

SOPHIE (*Leaving the suitcase at the door*) Ah've come to say good-bye. Ah froze a dozen fritters for you and be careful in the kitchen, Ah just waxed the floor.

(*She puts the fritters on the kitchen bar*)

NORMAN Sophie, he's gone crazy. Look what he's done to me. He's chained me to a steampipe!

(ANDY sits in the chair)

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SOPHIE That won't be necessary anymore, Mr. Hobart. My bus is leavin' for Hunnicut in fifteen minutes. Since Ah only put in a three-day week Ah believe you have some money comin' back to you.

(*She pours the pennies out of her purse onto the center table and starts out*)

NORMAN Sophie, you don't have to leave because of me. I'm not going to bother you anymore. I didn't even smell you coming in here.

SOPHIE Ah'm glad, Norman. Ah'm not leavin' because of you. Ah don't blame you for the crazy way you been actin' lately. Ah understand it now. There are some things in life we just can't control. For no reason at all somethin' strange and mystifyin' hits us and there's nothin' anybody can do about it except just sit and wait and hope it goes away just as fast as it came. Unfortunately Ah don't see mine goin' away in the foreseeable future and that's why Ah decided Ah can't marry Lieutenant Burt Fenneman and that's why Ah'm gettin' on the bus to Hunnicut an' Ah can't say another word or else Ah'll start cryin' all over this room.

(*She starts to cry and runs toward the door, picking up her suitcase*)

ANDY Miss Rauschmeyer . . . Wait! (*She stops at the door and waits*) I am in great physical pain. I have a dislocated back from an overwaxed floor and a limp arm from a misguided karate chop. (*He rises from the chair*) But I just wanted you to know that I'm sorry—sorry that some of us react to certain stimuli, and that others of us don't. However, I have no wish to cause you any embarrassment or discomfort. Starting tomorrow I may be run-

ning this magazine myself. If you like, you can stay on—
at half salary.

SOPHIE (*Puts her suitcase down outside the door and returns to the room*) You expect me to stay here with me feelin' the way Ah feel and you feelin' the way you don't . . . ? Mr. Hobart, if Ah wasn't afraid Ah'd miss mah bus, Ah'd really tell you somethin'. (*To NORMAN*) Do you have the time?

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NORMAN (*Looks at his watch*) I don't even have a crystal.

SOPHIE (*To ANDY*) Well, Ah'll tell you anyway. You're right. Ah may be provincial and old-fashioned. Ah may believe in a lot of things like patriotism and the Constitution because that's the way Ah was brought up, and that's the way Ah feel. The trouble with you is you can't feel. You can't feel, you can't see, you can't hear and oh, boy, *you can't smell*. All you can do is think. But until you learn to use all those wonderful gadgets that nature has given you, you are only one-fifth of a man. Unfortunately by the time you get them all workin' and realize you are crazy about me, Ah will be back home in mah high school gymnasium gettin' in shape for next year's Olympics. If you want mah advice, Ah suggest you take those pennies and visit an eye, ear, nose and throat man. (*Starts for the door*) And maybe you ought to see a dentist too. Because mah former fiancé, not happy with the recent turn of events, is on his way over here to separate your teeth from your face.

THE STAR-
SPANGLED

GIRL

NORMAN (*Jumps up and down happily*) Now you're gonna get it! Now you'll first get it!

(ANDY sits)

SOPHIE Did you hear what Ah said? There's an eight-foot Marine on his way here to chomp you up!

NORMAN (*Gleefully*) You hear that? The Yanks are coming! It's all over now, brother. (*Yells out the window*) Come on, Leathernecks. (*He sings the "Marine Hymn"*) I'm glad I'm chained to a pipe because I wouldn't miss this for anything.

SOPHIE (*With a big smile*) Ah wish Ah could stay to see it.

ANDY But you can't because you're leaving.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SOPHIE (*Goes to stairs leading to the front door*) That's right, Ah'm leavin'! Ah'm leavin'! Back to Hunnicut. And startin' tomorrow Ah'm gonna swim a mile every day from now until next summer. (*She comes down the steps and walks toward the center table*) Every American has to do what he does best for his country, and Ah can swim! Ah'm gonna swim the United States right into a gold medal and this time Ah'm gonna beat the livin' nose plugs offa that little fat girl from the desert. (*She picks the phone off the floor*) Ah'm usin' your phone one more time. (*She dials*) Gimme Western Union! (*To ANDY*) And what you did to blacken America's good name with your protestin' magazine, Ah will whitewash with mah backstroke down in Mexico City. (*Into the phone*) Ah'd like to send a telegram, please. To Mr. Andrew Hobart, 217 Chestnut Hill, San Francisco. (*She looks at ANDY*) "Dear Mr. Hobart . . . Whether you like it or not, Ah pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America . . . And to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." Sign that "A Patriot," and send it collect.

(*She hangs up, puts the phone back on the floor and exits with a flourish*)

NORMAN You mean you're just going to sit there? She's going back to Hunnicut and you may never see her again!

ANDY I'll see her again.

NORMAN When?

ANDY In 1972. I guarantee you she's the next President of the United States . . . Norman, I've had just about enough of you. Every man has his breaking point and my point just broke.

NORMAN What are you gonna do?

ANDY Murder! I'm going to commit cold-blooded murder right in this room. (*He rises and goes stage left*) I'm going to kill the only thing in this world that really means anything to me—my magazine. (*He takes the key and unlocks NORMAN's handcuffs*) There! Go on, you're free. Now get out of here and let me bury the body. (*He goes to the bulletin board while NORMAN goes center. ANDY rips down the credo sign and breaks it over his knee*) Maybe you were right. Maybe you were both right. Maybe I am crazy. Maybe it was lunatic to try to hold on to one tiny, not very important, insignificant little voice-in-the-wilderness against such overwhelming odds as a girl-smelling mental case and a wetback Martha Washington. (*He picks up the magazines from the pole table and takes them right to the duffle bag on the sofa. Then he puts the magazines into the bag*) I'm sure she'll be very happy now. America is safe tonight. In tribute, tomorrow Howard Johnson's will add another flavor. (*He throws the duffle bag on the floor*) She's won, don't you see that, she's won. Divide and conquer, that's the way they do it. Well, we're divided and we're conquered. The war is over and we've surrendered. In reparations, she gets the Polish corridor, the free city of Danzig, three outfielders, two turtledoves and a partridge in a pear tree.

(*He collapses into the chair right of the table*)

NORMAN Well—we can't always have what we want.

ANDY Go on, you were in such a hurry to go, why don't you go?

NORMAN (*Goes to the suitcase*) Yeah . . . Want me to help you straighten up before I go?

ANDY I wouldn't want you to be late for your appointment.

NORMAN (*He nods and picks up the suitcase*) One thing you were right about. Physical attraction isn't enough. It's like chewing gum. It starts off great, but the flavor doesn't last long.

ANDY That's why they put five sticks in a pack. I'll see you, Norman.

(*He rises and goes up the steps to the landing*)

NORMAN Any idea what you're gonna do now?

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ANDY I might go back to Philadelphia. Maybe work for my father.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

NORMAN I can't picture you in your father's business.

ANDY I don't know. There's a lot of important work being done in the kitchen-cabinet field today.

NORMAN Yeah. They say Formica is the hope of the future. (*He pauses*) I just want to say that if you decide not to go back to Philadelphia, that maybe someday, I don't know when, I'll be able to forget our differences, forget what's happened here the last few days, forget everything . . . And when I do, maybe someday I'll be back.

ANDY I hope so, Norman . . . So long.

(*NORMAN nods and leaves. There is a moment's silence, then the door opens and NORMAN returns*)

NORMAN I forgot everything; I'm back.

ANDY What took you so long?

NORMAN (*He puts his suitcase down near the kitchen bar*) I got stuck in traffic. (*ANDY comes down steps*) Hey, tell the truth! Were you really going back to Philadelphia?

ANDY Of course not. I was going to marry Mrs. Mackinnee and open up the only discothèque funeral parlor in California.

(*They break up laughing*)

NORMAN And you'll be glad to know I'm Norman again. Norman the writer . . . (*He picks up the typewriter from the pole table*) Norman the man who's dedicated to this magazine.

(*He goes upstage to the left window*)

ANDY (*Closing the door*) And promise me you'll never go off the deep end over a girl like that again.

NORMAN (*At the window*) I'll promise tomorrow.

ANDY Why not today?

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NORMAN 'Cause there's a gorgeous redhead across the street. (*Yells out*) Hey, beautiful redhead lady, I love you!

ANDY Norman, get back to that typewriter. (*He picks up the phone and puts it on the desk*) We've got a magazine to get out.

NORMAN (*Going to the desk. He sits*) All right. All right.

ANDY And promise me you won't get up from that chair until you finish.

(*He picks up the dummy magazine from the desk*)

NORMAN My fingers are glued to the keys.

ANDY No distractions?

NORMAN No distractions.

ANDY (*Going stage right*) No matter how much the smell in here is driving you crazy?

NORMAN What smell?

ANDY What do you mean, "what smell"? Her smell. Sophie.

NORMAN I don't smell Sophie.

ANDY Are you crazy? How can you not smell it? It's all over the room.

NORMAN This room?

ANDY Of course this room. She was just in here, wasn't she? I know the difference between a room-smell and a Sophie-smell and this is definitely—(*He drops the dummy*

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

magazine on the center table) My God, what has happened to me?

NORMAN You want me to chain you to the steampipe?

ANDY It's not possible. These things don't happen to me.
You were second in your class in Dartmouth, *but I was first.*

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

NORMAN It's just physical attraction. That's not for us. It's for hippopotamuses.

ANDY (*Screaming*) I know that, damnit!

NORMAN What are you screaming for?

ANDY Because I'm standing here talking to you, and my hippopotamus is getting on the bus. (*Rushes right to the window on the landing*) Sophie! Sophie!
(*The door flings open and SOPHIE rushes in but stops on the steps*)

SOPHIE Ah been standin' out there just prayin' you'd say mah name. If you didn't say it in two more minutes, Ah was gonna come back in here and say it for you.

ANDY (*Comes down the stairs*) You didn't get on the bus.

SOPHIE Ah didn't get on the bus because Ah'm not goin' anywhere. Ah heard everything you said and if you were gonna give up this subversive magazine Ah was personally gonna come in here and tear you apart mahself. (*Comes down one step*) Ah may not agree with what you say, but if you stop sayin' it, then no one will disagree and that is not the idea of democracy. (*Down one more step*) We got free speech in this country and Ah'm here to see that it stays free and spoken.

ANDY You really didn't get on the bus.

SOPHIE (*Goes right to ANDY*) Of course Ah didn't get on the bus. 'Cause in the first place Ah'm crazy about you and in the second place Ah left mah bus fare on your table.

ANDY If you had gone back to Hunnicut, I'd have done something crazy like going after you on the next bus or the next train or the next plane or the next ship out of here.

(*The telephone rings. NORMAN, at the desk, picks it up*)

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NORMAN (*Into the phone*) Thomas Cook Travel Agency . . . No, it's his friend, Norman.

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

SOPHIE Besides, Ah got a job here that pays me seventy-five dollars a week and Ah'm not about to give it up.

ANDY Seventy-two dollars. We've got to stick to the President's guide lines.

SOPHIE That's fine with me.

NORMAN (*On the phone*) That sounds wonderful. I'll be right there.

(*He hangs up and starts for the door*)

SOPHIE Where are you goin'?

NORMAN Skydiving with Mrs. Mackininee.

SOPHIE (*She takes a few steps to NORMAN*) You stay where you are and get back to work. We have a magazine to get out here. (To ANDY) Right?

(*NORMAN sits down again*)

ANDY Right! Only let me give you fair warning. It's not going to be easy. You start at eight and quit at seven.

SOPHIE That's fine with me!

ANDY I want pencils sharpened and papers stacked.

SOPHIE That's fine with me!

ANDY I want the books dusted, the floors cleaned and when I say hot coffee I mean hot coffee!

SOPHIE That's fine with me!

ANDY Good. Now that you know what the rules are . . .
(*He goes to NORMAN, who is sitting at the desk*) Let's you and I get back to ripping apart the degenerating American way of life. Right?
(*SOPHIE follows*)

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NORMAN Right!

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ANDY (*Turns to SOPHIE*) And if you've got anything to say, say it to yourself . . . Okay! Now that we all understand each other, maybe we'll finally get a little work done around here.

(*Both ANDY and SOPHIE smell each other. ANDY crosses downstage of her, goes to the chair right of the center table and sits. He picks up the clipboard and goes to work. NORMAN starts typing. SOPHIE takes off her jacket and puts it on the back of the director's chair. She goes to the kitchen bar for the feather duster. As she starts dusting, she starts singing*)

SOPHIE (*She dusts the up left table and pole table*)

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord,

He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored,"

(*From the wings—no, from the heavens, we hear VOICES joining SOPHIE in the stirring, building strains of this, the most inspiring of all patriotic hymns*)

"He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword:

His truth is marching on."

(*Curtain. The curtain goes back up immediately. SOPHIE is busy dusting and singing. Both ANDY and NORMAN look front incredulously. The curtain falls —music rings out during the curtain calls*)

"Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

His truth goes marching on."

Curtain

Promises, Promises

BOOK BY

Neil Simon

BASED ON THE SCREENPLAY

THE APARTMENT

by *Billy Wilder & I. A. L. Diamond*

MUSIC BY

LYRICS BY

Burt Bacharach Hal David



SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I:

- SCENE 1:** The Offices of Consolidated Life
- SCENE 2:** Chuck's Apartment House
- SCENE 3:** Medical Office
- SCENE 4:** Mr. Sheldrake's Office
- SCENE 5:** Lobby
- SCENE 6:** Lum Ding's Chinese Restaurant and
Madison Square Garden
- SCENE 7:** Lobby, Executive Dining Room, and Sun
Deck of Consolidated Life
- SCENE 8:** At the Elevator
- SCENE 9:** Nineteenth-Floor Christmas Party

Act II:

- SCENE 1:** Clancy's Lounge
- SCENE 2:** Chuck's Apartment
- SCENE 3:** The Offices of Consolidated Life
- SCENE 4:** Lum Ding's Chinese Restaurant and Street
- SCENE 5:** Chuck's Apartment

Act One

SCENE I

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CHUCK BAXTER is at his desk working at an adding machine. He looks up and notices the audience.

PROMISES,
PROMISES

CHUCK The main problem with working as a hundred-and-twelve-dollar-a-week accountant in a seventy-two-story insurance company with assets of over three billion dollars that employs thirty-one thousand two hundred and fifty-nine people here in the New York office alone . . . is that it makes a person feel so God-awful *puny*. (*He resumes work, then stops*) Not that I don't have aspirations and ambitions. I definitely have aspirations and ambitions . . . As you can see it's five-forty and everyone else went home at five-thirty and I didn't go home at five-thirty because Mr. Sheldrake, the personnel manager, doesn't leave until five-forty and I thought it wouldn't hurt, promotion-wise, if he saw me working past five-thirty—(*SHELDRAKE enters, heading for the elevators; he rings the elevator bell*) Evening, Mr. Sheldrake . . . How are you, Mr. Sheldrake . . . You're looking well, Mr. Sheldrake . . . (*SHELDRAKE enters the elevator*) Nice seeing you again, Mr. Sheldrake. Good-by, Mr. Sheldrake. (*SHELDRAKE has gone. Crossing in front of the desk, CHUCK sits against it*) If you've noticed, I'm the kind of person that people don't notice . . . I wish I were sitting out there with you so I could take a look at me and figure out what's wrong. (*He sings "Half As Big As Life"*)

Did you ever stop, really stop, and take a look
Take a look, a really good look at yourself?

I just took a peek, really peeked, to tell the truth
Through my eyes, I don't look so good to myself.

Half as big as life, that's me
But that's not the way I always mean to be.

Half as big as life, that's small
But deep in my heart I can feel
That I'm ten feet tall—ten feet tall.

I know that
Inside of myself there's a man, the kind of man
You would like, if you were just willing to look.

I've got lots of dreams
And my dreams will take me far
Very far, a cover is not the whole book.

Half as big as life, they say
But they're gonna see how wrong they are
Someday.

Half as big as life, that's small
But I wasn't born to be looked at
As five feet tall—no, not me.

I want a lot
And I know that I'll get it all
Just like someone who's
Twice as big as life.

(*He crosses behind the desk and puts on his jacket*) Not that there aren't some people around here who've noticed I'm something more than a nine-to-five adding machine . . . Like this real pretty girl who works up in the Employees' Cafeteria, Fran Kubelik . . . *she* notices . . . Oh, Miss Kubelik . . . Working late too, I see.

FRAN Oh, hello, Chuck. Yes, I had a few things to take care of in the cafeteria and I thought I'd just— Oh, what's the use, Chuck. I stayed late because I wanted to see you. I guess it's no secret that I'm enormously attracted to you but you never seem to pay any attention to me . . . Look, Chuck, can't we go somewhere and have a drink because—

CHUCK (*Raises his hand*) Wait! Hold it a second! (**FRAN** freezes, **CHUCK** turns to the audience) It's not true. She never said that. I mean, I can kid myself but there's no point in lying to you. I'm not doing too well in this department either. So sometimes I dream up conversations . . . (*He looks at her, then back to the audience*)

Well, you can hardly blame me, can you? . . . No, what she actually said was—

FRAN Oh, hello, how are you, Frank?

CHUCK Chuck! Chuck Baxter.

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FRAN Oh yes, I'm sorry.

CHUCK That's all right. How are things in the cafeteria?

P R O M I S E S ,

FRAN Fine. I didn't see you there last week. Were you sick?

P R O M I S E S

CHUCK No, I was there. You just didn't see me . . . Look, if you're not in a hurry to get home, I was wondering if—

FRAN Oh, excuse me, Chuck, I'm in a hurry to get home. Bye.

(She exits into the elevator)

CHUCK —if you'd like to have a drink? (*To the audience*) How about you? You're not doing anything, are you? After work I usually like to unwind and have a friendly sociable drink at one of the bars on Second Avenue . . . where the young single set go . . . It could be any bar on Second Avenue . . . Your Mother's Hairnet, The Booze Boutique, Helen's Navel . . . As a matter of fact, my favorite Second Avenue bar is on First Avenue . . . It's owned by a friend of mine, Eddie Roth. (*The lights hit a sign that reads "Grapes of Roth." A bar is revealed, smoke-filled and packed with people. A dance is beginning. CHUCK enters the bar, and calls to the bartender*) Hi, Eddie. One beer!

(*BARTENDER EDDIE draws a beer, which is passed from one customer to another, over the heads of the others, eluding CHUCK. When he finally gets it, a lady customer drops her cigarette in it. A well-dressed man in his early fifties fights his way through the crowd pulling an attractive girl with him*)

DOBITCH Baxter! Baxter!

CHUCK Oh, hello, Mr. Dobitch. (*To the audience*) Mr. Dobitch, an executive in the Mortgage and Loans Department, a very important man for me to know.

DOBITCH Hya, Chuck. How are you?

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CHUCK Fine, Mr. Dobitch. What are you doing here? (*To the audience*) I'll tell you what he's doing here. Some married men between the ages of forty-five and fifty-five find single girls between the ages of twenty-one and thirty more attractive than some married women between the ages of forty-five and fifty-five, that's what he's doing here.

DOBITCH Oh, just dropped in for a beer . . . Oh, Sylvia, I'd like you to meet a bright young man from our Accounting Department, Chuck Baxter. Chuck, I'd like you to meet Miss Gilhooley, a bright young girl from our Telephone Operating Department.

CHUCK Hello.

SYLVIA Pleased to make the connection. (*Aside to DOBITCH*) Mr. Dobitch, it's almost seven-thirty. Are we or aren't we?

DOBITCH (*Aside*) We are, we are—I'm trying, honey. (*To CHUCK*) Baxter, can I speak to you for a second? Man to man?

CHUCK Gee, Mr. Dobitch, I never thought you considered me that way.

DOBITCH (*Takes him aside*) I've had my eye on you for a long time, Baxter . . . I understand you're a hard-working, dedicated, ambitious young man who has his own apartment on West Sixty-seventh Street. Is that true?

CHUCK Well, I try, Mr. Dobitch.

DOBITCH About the apartment?

CHUCK Oh, that? Yes, it's true. I have a small place. One bedroom, nothing to speak about.

DOBITCH I'd like to speak to you about it . . . The young lady I'm with is not feeling very well.

CHUCK Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. Is there anything I can do?

DOBITCH Interesting you should ask. She'll be all right, you understand, but the thing is, she needs a place to lie down—for about forty-five minutes, an hour the most.

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PROMISES,

PROMISES

CHUCK Oh?

DOBITCH You see, she lives all the way up in the Bronx—

SYLVIA Brooklyn!

DOBITCH —all the way out in Brooklyn, and we have no place else to go . . .

CHUCK For what?

DOBITCH For her to lie down . . .

CHUCK I see what you mean, Mr. Dobitch. The thing is I was just going home. I'm learning to play tennis on Channel Thirteen and I was just getting to the point where my backhand . . .

SYLVIA (*For CHUCK's benefit, but poorly done*) Oh, God, am I feeling rotten.

DOBITCH She's feeling rotten.

CHUCK Well, I'm certainly not adverse to getting ahead, Mr. Dobitch, but you see, Mrs. Lieberman, the landlady, is very sensitive about bringing unattached young ladies up to the apartment—

DOBITCH She's not unattached. She's with me.

CHUCK Oh! And you say she's really feeling sick?

DOBITCH I just touched her hand. She's hot as a pistol.

CHUCK (*Reaching in his pocket for the key*) Well, if you think it won't be more than an hour.

DOBITCH In her present condition, maybe only thirty minutes.

400

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CHUCK (*Hands him the key*) Here's the key. Nineteen West Sixty-seventh Street, second floor front.

DOBITCH (*Takes the key*) I won't forget you for this, Baxter . . . advancement-wise.

CHUCK There's some aspirins in the medicine cabinet and tea balls in the kitchen . . . Oh, and in case anything else develops, there's a doctor right next door.

DOBITCH Bite your tongue, kid!

(*He exits with SYLVIA. Music begins. Everything blacks out except for a lone spotlight on CHUCK*)

CHUCK (*Turning to the audience*) As it turned out, he didn't need the doctor, the aspirin or the tea balls. He nursed her back to health with a bottle of vodka and my record player . . .

Fade Out

SCENE 2

401

The outside stoop of a brownstone building swings in from the side.

PROMISES,

PROMISES

CHUCK She was fine the next day but it must have been a recurring ailment because she began feeling sick regularly every Tuesday night for the next month. But things were looking up. Mr. Dobitch introduced me to Mr. Kirkeby of Public Relations . . . (*Music to "Upstairs" begins*) . . . which meant that Wednesday nights I sat out in the public while he was busy having relations . . . (*He sings*)

Upstairs—two flights up
Looking out on the street
For eighty-six fifty a month it's mine
It may not be much but it's mine.

You just go upstairs, two flights up
Comfortable and complete
For every-day living it works out fine
It may not be much but it's mine.

Except on Wednesday night
It's walk, don't run.
I just kill time till Mister Kirkeby's done
With his Wednesday night fun
Outside of that the place is mine.

(*After CHUCK sings the first chorus, GINGER and KIRKEBY come out of the building. CHUCK hides behind the stoop*)

KIRKEBY Come on, Ginger, let's go.

GINGER Rush, rush, rush! First you rush me up here, then you rush me out.

KIRKEBY (*Looking at his watch*) I'm sorry, but I've got to meet my wife at eight-thirty. Tonight's our night with the marriage counsellor.

(*Blackout; a spotlight turns on CHUCK*)

402

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CHUCK Three weeks later, I still didn't have a promotion. However, I did meet Mr. Eichelberger of Research, who said he was looking for a bright young man for his department. He could have found one out on the stoop every Thursday night but he was busy doing research—upstairs, two flights up.

(*The lights black out on CHUCK and go up on the apartment. MR. EICHELBERGER, a very austere, controlled-looking middle-aged executive, sits on the bed, wearing an opened vest, his head rests on his hands. VIVIEN, a nifty-looking brunette, sits near him*)

EICHELBERGER Oh, God, what have I done? I'm a married man with children, what kind of animal am I? A cheat, a liar, a phony. A deceiving sneak. I've lost all respect for myself.

VIVIEN What about next Tuesday?

EICHELBERGER Tuesday's fine with me.

(*Blackout on the apartment; the lights go up on CHUCK in the vestibule outside his apartment*)

CHUCK And that's the way it went for a couple of months. Three nights a week I spend browsing through Doubleday's, Brentano's, Cinema I, Cinema II, and once in great desperation, a dance at Hunter College. (He bends down, lifts up the mat and picks up the key. He inserts it in the door) Now you may ask the question, "Didn't I think lending out my apartment in hopes of getting a promotion was morally wrong?" (He opens the door) Well, my answer is— "Yes, but I tried not to think about it." (He goes in and turns on the lights. He looks around the apartment, disgusted at the mess) You'd think they'd have the decency to clean up afterwards. (He picks up an empty liquor bottle) I'm beginning to feel like a chambermaid in a New Jersey motel.

(He shakes his head angrily, then crosses to the

door, opens it and puts out three empty bottles just as DR. DREYFUSS, an affable middle-aged man, comes up the vestibule heading for his own apartment directly opposite CHUCK's. He carries the usual black bag)

DR. DREYFUSS (*Disapproving*) Hello, Baxter. And how is "Mr. Whoopee" today?

403

CHUCK Oh, hi, Doc. Just tidying up.

PROMISES,
PROMISES

DR. DREYFUSS (*Looks at the bottles*) It's a wonder you can stand up. The garbage man told me the only place he picks up more empty bottles is the Copacabana.

CHUCK That's not me, Doc. It's just that once in a while I have some people in for a drink.

DR. DREYFUSS From what I hear through the walls, that's not all you have them in for. Three, four nights a week, you'll be dead by August.

CHUCK I'm sorry if it gets noisy—

DR. DREYFUSS I was telling the interns at the clinic about you. Three of them want to study you, four of them just want to shake your hand.

CHUCK I'm afraid they'd be disappointed, Doc.

DR. DREYFUSS Yeah. Well, slow down, kid. Take some of those sleeping pills I gave you.

CHUCK I'm not tired.

DR. DREYFUSS Me! Me! I haven't closed an eye in six weeks.

(*He goes into his apartment. CHUCK goes back into his and closes the door*)

CHUCK Funny, isn't it? Everyone in the building thinks I'm the greatest lover in New York—and at Hunter I couldn't get a dance until "Goodnight, Sweetheart." (*Takes a pill*) Well, at least I'll get a night's sleep tonight.

(The doorbell rings. CHUCK opens it. MR. VANDERHOF stands there. He is another dapper middle-aged gentleman)

VANDERHOF Baxter? C. C.?

404

CHUCK Yes?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

VANDERHOF Hi there. Jesse Vanderhof, twenty-seventh floor, Claims Investigation. Ed Dobitch and Mike Kirkeby were talking about you the other day in the Executive Dining Room and I thought I'd just drop by to say hello.

CHUCK Oh, that's very nice of you, Mr. Vanderhof. Hello.

VANDERHOF Hello. (CHUCK starts to close the door quickly. VANDERHOF grabs it) Forty-five minutes, kid, that's all I need the place. I got very lucky this afternoon.

CHUCK (*Trying to shut the door*) Yeah, well, your luck ran out tonight because I just took a sleeping pill.

VANDERHOF Kid, you don't understand. This is a nurse. She works for my dentist. I only see him twice a year. I won't bother you again until April.

CHUCK I've heard that before.

VANDERHOF I just had a tooth pulled. Give me a break, kid, the Novocaine is wearing off.

CHUCK I've got my own health to think about. The last hot meal I had was a bag of roasted chestnuts.
(He closes the door and leans his back against it)

VANDERHOF Baxter, there's a Junior Executive opening coming up in my department next month.

CHUCK (*Nothing doing*) Promises, promises, I'm sick and tired of promises.

VANDERHOF I'll put your name on top of the list.

CHUCK Is that a promise?

VANDERHOF It is not a promise, it's my bonded word of honor.

CHUCK (*Opens the door*) Well, as long as it's not a promise.

VANDERHOF (*Entering, circling from the sofa to the door*) You won't regret this, kid.

CHUCK You get the apartment just the way it is. I'm all out of liquor, all out of cheese, all out of crackers . . .

405
P R O M I S E S ,
P R O M I S E S

VANDERHOF Don't worry about it, I can't eat anything for an hour anyway.

(*He goes into the hall and whistles, then returns to the apartment and starts to help CHUCK on with his raincoat*)

CHUCK (*Putting it on*) I don't know why you can't go to a motel.

VANDERHOF (*Softly*) Because no decent girl would go to a motel with a man she met three hours ago . . . A friend's apartment is different . . . Can't you put your coat on outside?

(*CHUCK has an arm in one sleeve of his coat as VANDERHOF ushers him toward the door*)

CHUCK I don't know where you get your energy, Mr. Vanderhof. You should be home gargling with salt water. (*He steps to the hall and comes face to face with the willowy NURSE*) . . . Oh, hello.

NURSE I just dropped by to powder my nose.

(*She slinks into the apartment. VANDERHOF comes out into the hall with CHUCK*)

CHUCK (*Whispers*) Well, tell her not to powder too loud. I've got neighbors, you know.

(*He starts down the hall*)

VANDERHOF (*Calls after him*) If you can make it an hour and a half I'd appreciate it. (*CHUCK disappears as*

VANDERHOF goes into the apartment, closing the door behind him. At that moment, DR. DREYFUSS opens his door, putting out empty milk bottles. VANDERHOF says to NURSE) . . . And now, Miss Kreplinski, shall we have a little music while we discuss my bridgework.

(He flips a record on the phonograph. Music comes on. DR. DREYFUSS listens, shakes his head and turns into his apartment)

406

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

DR. DREYFUSS Mildred! He's at it again!

(The lights black out on DR. DREYFUSS and VANDERHOF and light up on CHUCK as he sits on the front stoop)

CHUCK (He is angry, but mostly with himself) No, I am not altogether proud of myself, if that's what you're thinking . . . But let me tell you this . . . Once I get to be a Junior Executive, I am going to work harder and later and with more dedication than any Junior Executive who ever lent out his apartment ever did before . . . (He looks up) . . . and some day I'm the one who's going to be . . . (Singing)

Upstairs two flights up
Looking out on the street
For eighty-six fifty a month it's mine
It may not be much but it's mine.

(Lightning flashes, thunder rolls and CHUCK looks up as if to say "Wouldn't you know it." He lifts his collar up about his neck and sinks deeper into his coat)

Fade Out

SCENE 3

407

1ST GIRL (*On mike*) Good morning, Consolidated Life.
I'm sorry, he's not in yet.

PROMISES,
PROMISES

2ND GIRL (*On mike*) Good morning, Consolidated Life.
No, he gets in at nine.

1ST GIRL (*On mike*) Good morning, Consolidated Life.
Oh, hello, Ethel. Wasn't that some storm last night?

(CHUCK appears on the right and crosses to the center)

CHUCK They didn't leave until two-thirty in the morning. Don't come near me, I'm very sick. (To NURSE) Er, my name is Baxter. I'd like to see the Doctor, please.

NURSE Do you have an appointment?

CHUCK No, just a cold. It was unexpected. I didn't know it was coming.

NURSE Take a seat, the Doctor will be right with you.

CHUCK I hope so, I'm almost out of nasal spray . . . By the way, I have a 101.3 temperature. You can see it on my thermometer here.

(He shows her the thermometer)

NURSE The Doctor will take it.

CHUCK Oh. (He starts to give it to her) All right. If I can have it back when he's through. It's my only thermometer . . .

NURSE He has his own. Will you please sit down?
(He sits as the COMPANY DOCTOR and VANDERHOF come out of the office)

DOCTOR I'd leave the bandage on another day, Mr. Vanderhof.

VANDERHOF Right, Doc.

DOCTOR And I don't care what you say, they still look like teeth marks to me.

(*He exits*)

408

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CHUCK Hi, Mr. Vanderhof.

VANDERHOF Oh, hi, kid.

CHUCK Don't "Hi, kid" me. Do you know I sat on a park bench until two-thirty in the morning in a snow storm in a London Fog coat? It's for fogs in London, not snow in New York!

VANDERHOF I'm sorry, kid. By the way, I intend to pay you for the broken ironing board. Kind of interesting the way it happened.

CHUCK And then you left the wrong key under the mat. I had to sleep in a Spanish Synagogue on Sixty-ninth Street.

VANDERHOF Think about your promotion, kid. I spoke to Mr. Sheldrake in Personnel, you should be hearing from him this morning.

CHUCK If I'm still alive.

VANDERHOF Now put me down for the apartment next Friday. And get in some new records, will you? It's not easy being sexy to Lithuanian Folk Dances.

(*Exits*)

CHUCK (*Shouts*) No one's using anything until I hear from Mr. Sheldrake! (*He holds his head*) Oh, God, I cracked a sinus.

(*FRAN enters*)

FRAN Excuse me, is the Doctor in?

CHUCK (*Rising*) Oh, Miss Kubelik, hello.

FRAN Oh, hello, er—

CHUCK Frank . . . er, Chuck. Chuck Baxter.

FRAN Yes, I know. How are you?

409

CHUCK Oh, just a little cold. How are you?

PROMISES,

FRAN Oh, the same old problem. Can't eat, can't sleep, just thinking about you, dreaming about you, hoping you'll call me—

PROMISES

CHUCK (*Turns to the audience*) I'm sorry, I won't do that again. (*To FRAN*) And how are you?

FRAN Oh, just a mild case of the hiccups.

CHUCK I'm sorry, my Eustachian tubes are blocked up, I didn't hear what you said. (*She hiccups*) No, I heard that. I missed the part in front of it.

FRAN I said just a mild case of hiccups.

CHUCK Oh. (*He is stuck for a moment. To the audience*) I think I'm running out of conversation . . . I mustn't panic. If I keep talking I'll be all right. (*To FRAN*) So, you have a mild case of the hiccups, do you?

FRAN Yes.

CHUCK I see. (*To the audience*) That's it. I have no more thoughts, I'm finished.

FRAN By the way, they made me hostess in the Executive Dining Room.

(*She hiccups*)

CHUCK I heard. Congratulations.

FRAN So I guess I won't be seeing you any more in the cafeteria.

CHUCK Unless I become an executive, which isn't entirely remote. Excuse me, a terrible sneeze is coming.

(He holds it in)

FRAN You really shouldn't suppress it, you know. You could blow out something internally. (She hiccups) Sneeze. (He sneezes) God bless you.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CHUCK Thank you. (She hiccups) Hey, we had a nice rhythm going there.

FRAN I don't know what brought these on.

CHUCK I read that emotional distress can sometimes cause hiccups. Are your emotions by any chance distressed? I don't mean to pry.

FRAN I don't think so.

CHUCK (To the audience) I think so. There was talk she was involved with some man but it's over now . . . Don't say anything. (To FRAN) Listen, I'm not a doctor or anything, but why don't you try taking your mind off whatever it is that's distressing you.

FRAN How?

CHUCK Well, try thinking about something else—get involved with a new interest. (To the audience) Me, me! Please let it be me.

FRAN Like what?

CHUCK Like me! I mean, take a person like me. I have lots of interests . . . uh . . . walking . . . browsing . . . (The music to "You'll Think of Someone" begins) . . . Don't you have any hobbies?

FRAN I don't like doing things alone.

CHUCK Oh, well, I'm sure there are lots of interesting people who'd be interested in doing things with you . . . for example . . .

FRAN (*Singing*)

I could take up knitting to feel better
I'd make someone a hand-knit sweater
But I just don't know who that someone should be.

CHUCK (*Singing*)

If you can't think of anyone else
How about maybe, someone
Like for example, perhaps, someone
Oh, you'll think of someone.

411

P R O M I S E S ,

P R O M I S E S

FRAN

I could take up tennis to relax me
A game of doubles wouldn't tax me
But I just don't know who my partner should be.

CHUCK

If you can't think of anyone else
How about maybe, someone
Like for example, perhaps, someone
Oh, you'll think of someone

FRAN and CHUCK

Who likes you and the things you like to do
Happy little things like climbing hills
And rowing boats on a lake
Fun is something that is yours to take.

FRAN

I could take up painting to amuse me
A portrait picture might enthuse me
But I just don't know who my model should be.

CHUCK

You can bet that there's someone around

FRAN

Someone to talk to, laugh with
Like for example dance with, sing to . . .

CHUCK

Cling to . . .

(*The NURSE comes out of the office*)

NURSE Baxter? Mr. Sheldrake in Personnel wants to see you right away. You're next, miss.

CHUCK (*Excited*) Did you hear that? Did you hear? This is what I've been waiting for in the fog and the snow and the cold for two months!

412

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

FRAN Well, I wish you the best of luck. And I want to thank you for trying to help me. It was very nice of you, Chick.

CHUCK Chuck.

FRAN Oh, yes, I'm sorry . . . Well, I hope I'll be seeing you in the Executive Dining Room. Bye. (*She enters the office and the NURSE follows*)

CHUCK (*He looks after her and sings*)
When you think about that someone
Who it could be
How about me?

Fade Out

SCENE 4

413

The office of J. D. SHELDRAKE, the Personnel Director. It is not an executive suite, but it is several pegs above the glass cubicles of the middle echelon. MISS OLSON, an attractive secretary, ushers CHUCK into the office.

PROMISES,
PROMISES

MISS OLSON If you'll take a seat, Mr. Sheldrake will be right with you.

CHUCK Thank you.
(He sits)

MISS OLSON And relax.

CHUCK I'm perfectly relaxed. (She smiles and exits. He turns to the audience) We know better, don't we? (SHELDRAKE enters) Mr. Sheldrake? I was told you wanted to see me . . . C. C. Baxter . . . (SHELDRAKE, smiling at CHUCK, sits, picks up a folder of papers from the desk and studies them) . . . Premium Accounting Division . . . Baxter . . . C. C.?

(SHELDRAKE puts down the papers, sits back in his reclining chair, cups his hands under his chin and studies CHUCK in silence a moment. CHUCK fidgets nervously)

SHELDRAKE So you're C. C. Baxter.

CHUCK (Big smile) Yes, sir. I am. I am C. C. Baxter.

SHELDRAKE Mmmm, hm.

CHUCK Yes, sir.

(SHELDRAKE looks at the papers again; CHUCK snif-fles)

SHELDRAKE Is that a cold you have there, Baxter?

CHUCK Where? Oh, here . . . (*He touches his nose*) Yes, sir, that's a cold. I haven't been sleeping much lately.

414

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SHELDRAKE Maybe you ought to go to bed early.

CHUCK That certainly is wonderful advice, Mr. Sheldrake . . . The thing is, I've been trying to catch up on extra work in the office a couple of nights a week. (*Turns to the audience*) I've sold out. God'll punish me.

SHELDRAKE So you do have ambitions.

CHUCK Yes, sir, I do . . . Ambitions and capabilities . . .

SHELDRAKE Like "Loyal, resourceful, cooperative"?

CHUCK Well, yes, those are good ones.

SHELDRAKE (*He picks up the papers on his desk and looks at them*) That's what Mr. Vanderhof thinks. This is his report. He says you're loyal, resourceful, cooperative.

CHUCK (*He twists his head to look at the report*) Mr. Vanderhof said that? In that order? Imagine.

SHELDRAKE And Mr. Dobitch told me that you've been of immense help to him. And Mr. Kirkeby in Public Relations thinks you're very bright.

CHUCK Mr. Kirkeby thinks I'm bright?

SHELDRAKE Yes, they're all keen on you. Vanderhof, Kirkeby, Dobitch . . . even Mr. Eichelberger.

CHUCK (*To the audience*) I think they overdid it. He's going to want to know what makes me so popular.

SHELDRAKE Tell me, Baxter, what makes you so popular?

CHUCK Well, I imagine it's . . . Well, they probably . . . I don't know.

SHELDRAKE Baxter, is it your impression that I'm stupid?

CHUCK No, sir, it is not. Have I given the impression that you give that impression, sir?

SHELDRAKE Well, I can tell you I'm anything but stupid. I know everything that goes on in this building. In every department, on every floor.

415

CHUCK (*To the audience*) All right, don't get nervous. Because if you get nervous, I'll get nervous. (*To SHELDRAKE*) On every floor?

P R O M I S E S ,

P R O M I S E S

SHELDRAKE In nineteen sixty-three we had an employee here named Fowler. Fowler was very popular too. Turned out he was running a bookie joint right in the Actuarial Department . . . tying up the switchboards, figuring the odds on our IBM machines. Used to pass the money back and forth on the coffee wagon. Winners paid off under the prune danish.

CHUCK Isn't that terrible?

SHELDRAKE It was for Fowler. I let him keep the prune danish because I knew he wouldn't be eating again for a long time.

CHUCK Sir, is there some point in this story that you're trying to point out to me? Because I'm not running any bookie joint.

SHELDRAKE (*He stops behind him and speaks into his ear*) What kind of joint *are* you running?

CHUCK I, sir? Me?

SHELDRAKE There's a certain key floating around the office, from Kirkeby to Vanderhof to Eichelberger to Dobitch back to Kirkeby, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. That key I mentioned is . . . a certain apartment . . . And do you know who that key belongs to?

CHUCK (*To the audience*) You are looking at a young man in big trouble. (*To SHELDRAKE*) Do you?

SHELDRAKE Yes.

CHUCK (*To the audience*) See?

416

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SHELDRAKE To "Loyal, Resourceful, Cooperative C. C. Baxter." Can I get you anything? Coffee? Prune Danish?

CHUCK Mr. Sheldrake, if you would just let me explain—

SHELDRAKE All right.

CHUCK Oh! . . . Well, you see one night about two months ago I was on my way home from work when I stopped in at the Grapes of Roth for a quick beer . . . that's all I drink, quick beers . . . when I met a certain executive from one of our departments, quite a decent gentleman, who was suddenly confronted with this very unusual problem—

SHELDRAKE The girl he was with was feeling sick.

CHUCK —the girl he was with was feeling sick. That's right! . . . Anyway, you could see she was hot as a pistol and all she needed was—

SHELDRAKE A place to lie down.

CHUCK —a place to lie down. You're right again. Anyway, he was in a tight spot because this girl—

SHELDRAKE Lived all the way up in the Bronx.

CHUCK No, as a matter of fact, she lived in Brooklyn.

SHELDRAKE Where did I make my mistake?

CHUCK That's all right. So what could I do but give him the key to my apartment? Then pretty soon I started getting calls from these other decent executives and that's pretty much how this whole thing sneaked up on me.

(He takes out a spray bottle and quickly sprays both nostrils)

SHELDRAKE Baxter, an insurance company can't afford to betray the public trust, you agree with that?

CHUCK (Grimaces) Ohhh.

417

SHELDRAKE You don't agree?

P R O M I S E S ,

P R O M I S E S

CHUCK I agree. I just sprayed my nose with eye drops. That can't hurt me, can it? I mean, you can't go blind in the nose.

SHELDRAKE Baxter, how many charter members are there in this little key club of yours?

CHUCK Just those four. Out of a total of 31,259 employees . . . so percentage-wise, we can be very proud of our personnel . . . (He sniffs, then breathes freely) Gee, the eye drops are better than the nose drops.

SHELDRAKE That's not the point. Four rotten apples in a barrel, no matter how large the barrel . . . You realize that if this ever leaked out—

CHUCK Oh, it won't, believe me. And I've decided from now on no more apples are going to use my barrel . . . apartment. (He squints) I wonder if the ear drops would work in the eyes.

SHELDRAKE Where is it?

CHUCK What?

SHELDRAKE Your apartment.

CHUCK West Sixty-seventh Street . . . But I'm changing the key, the lock, the door. I'd change my name but I don't know how else I'd get my mail.

MISS OLSON (Entering) Excuse me. Mrs. Sheldrake called and wants to know if you'll be home for dinner.

SHELDRAKE No, tell her I'm taking the branch manager from Kansas City to the basketball game. I'll be home late.

MISS OLSON Yes, sir.

(She exits)

418

SHELDRAKE Tell me something, Baxter. Do you like basketball?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CHUCK Basketball? I love it. I was going to play in college . . . but I stopped growing in high school.

SHELDRAKE How'd you like to see the Knicks' first game tonight?

CHUCK You mean you and me? Well, won't the branch manager from Kansas City be disappointed . . . ?

SHELDRAKE I made other plans for him . . . and me. You can have both tickets.

CHUCK Well, that's very kind of you . . . but I thought I'd just go home and take some Excedrin, Bufferin, Contac, Dristan, Cope, a lot of that stuff . . .

SHELDRAKE You don't understand, Baxter. I'm not just giving you these tickets . . . I want to *swap* them.

CHUCK Swap them? What could I have that you would possibly want?

SHELDRAKE (He picks up VANDERHOF's report) It also says here that you are alert, astute and quite imaginative.

CHUCK Well, I am but I just can't imagine— (The dawn breaks) Oh! (He reaches into his pocket and takes out the key) This?

SHELDRAKE (Smiles) . . . And I see what they mean . . . Next week there's going to be a shift in personnel around here, and as far as I'm concerned, do you know what I think you are?

CHUCK Executive material?

SHELDRAKE We think alike. Now put down the key—
(CHUCK quickly puts the key on the desk. SHELDRAKE pushes a pad toward CHUCK)—and put down the address.

(CHUCK grabs the thermometer, lays the key on the desk, unclips what he thinks is his pen and starts to write on the pad)

419

CHUCK It's the second floor front . . . my name's not on the door . . . it just says 2A . . . and the "A" fell off . . . (Suddenly realizes he's writing with his thermometer) Oh, that's my thermometer . . . (Looks at it) 106? My God . . . (Then realizes) Oh, that's just my pocket temperature . . .

PROMISES,
PROMISES

SHELDRAKE Relax, Baxter.

CHUCK Thank you, sir. I certainly will.

(He replaces the thermometer with his pen and resumes writing)

SHELDRAKE Now remember, Baxter, what is tonight going to be?

CHUCK Tonight, sir? (Thinks) A fun evening?

SHELDRAKE No, Baxter. Tonight is going to be our little secret.

CHUCK Oh, of course. You didn't even have to say that.

SHELDRAKE You know how people talk.

CHUCK You don't have to remind me.

SHELDRAKE Not that there's anything wrong. This happens to be a nice girl.

CHUCK Listen, you didn't have to tell me. Besides, it's none of my business. I mean, after all, four apples, five apples, what's the difference?

SHELDRAKE That's where you're wrong, Baxter. From now on there's only room for one apple in the basket, right?

CHUCK Right.

(**CHUCK** and **SHELDRAKE** sing "Our Little Secret")

CHUCK

All the other apples are spoiled and they're rotten
Out of the basket they'll go.

420

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SHELDRAKE

Your loyalty is something that won't be forgotten.

CHUCK

And there's one thing I promise you
I can keep secrets, too.
Oh—

CHUCK and SHELDRAKE

It's our little secret
Little secret, little secret . . .

CHUCK

I'm gonna buy me a hat
And keep our secret under that.

CHUCK and SHELDRAKE

It's our little secret
Little secret, little secret . . .

CHUCK

I'll even stop counting sheep
To prove I don't talk when I sleep.

CHUCK and SHELDRAKE

We've got a little plot
That we can tell—just one another
There isn't anyone
That we can trust, except each other.

That's why we'll never tell a soul
What it's all about
They'll never get a chance
To find out.

SHELDRAKE

There'll be questions

CHUCK

I won't answer

SHELDRAKE

There'll be gossip

SHELDRAKE and CHUCK

Let them gossip
We don't care.

421

P R O M I S E S ,

CHUCK

Just put your trust in me.

P R O M I S E S

CHUCK and SHELDRAKE

It's our little secret
And I'll keep it locked inside me
'Cause it's no one else's business
But our own anyhow . . .

(MISS OLSON enters. **CHUCK and SHELDRAKE** whistle four bars. MISS OLSON exits)

'Cause it's no one else's business
But our own anyhow.

Our little secret, oh yes, it's yours and mine
Our little secret, for now and all the time
We'll stick together
'Cause we've got our little secret now.

(After the number is over there is a blackout on the set, except for a spot that stays on **CHUCK** as he steps out front and addresses the audience)

CHUCK Listen, I wouldn't be too quick to judge a decent executive like Mr. Sheldrake. . . . I wouldn't want to pin any labels on him like "hypocritical" or "unprincipled." No, sir, not me . . . Of course, you're free to make up your own minds.

Fade Out

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SCENE 5

CHUCK waits in the lobby of Consolidated Life as other employees emerge, some posting letters on their way home. FRAN passes him on her way to the letter box.

FRAN (She passes CHUCK) Good night.

CHUCK Good night . . . Oh, hey, Miss Kubelik, I've been waiting for you.

FRAN You have?

CHUCK I almost didn't recognize you without your hiccups. I don't hear them so I guess you cleared up your emotional distress.

FRAN Well, temporarily. Did you get your promotion?

CHUCK Table for one tomorrow in the Executive Dining Room. And I like my salad tossed from left to right.

FRAN Good. Congratulations.

CHUCK Thanks. (She starts toward the revolving door) Oh, Miss Kubelik. Look, is there a wild, way-out remote impossible possibility that you'd be interested in basketball?

FRAN Oscar Robertson led the N.B.A. in scoring last year with a twenty-nine-point-seven average.

CHUCK That's right! Even the point seven. How did you know that?

FRAN I live in three and a half rooms with a father, brother, and one television set.

CHUCK Well, how'd you like to see the Knicks play in actual, real-life seven-foot-tall flesh?

FRAN You mean tonight?

CHUCK (He takes the tickets out) Yes.

FRAN I'm sorry, I can't tonight. I'm meeting someone.

CHUCK Oh. Exit the hiccups, heh? This date . . . is it just a date . . . or is it something serious . . . I'm sorry, you don't have to tell me that.

FRAN It *used* to be serious . . . At least *I* was, he wasn't.

CHUCK He must be crazy . . . So where does it stand now? You really don't have to answer that.

423

FRAN I don't know where it stands. I'm just going to have a drink with him. He's been calling me all week.

CHUCK He must be a nice fellow if you're interested in him.

PROMISES,
PROMISES

FRAN I'm not interested in him. I'm interested in you. I've always been interested in you. You're all I ever think about or dream about or—

CHUCK (*He yells at himself*) All right, cut that out, Chuck. (*FRAN freezes*) No one's interested in what you want to hear. (*To the audience*) You're interested in what she *said*, right? And what she said was—

FRAN (*Unfreezes*) Yes, he is very nice . . . Well, I'm late. Good night.

CHUCK Good night. (*To the audience*) I really didn't expect her to go anyway.

FRAN What time does the game begin?

CHUCK Six-thirty. But it's a double header. We don't have to see the first game. We don't even have to see the whole second game. I mean we could come in at the half or the last quarter. All the action's in the last twelve minutes anyway—

FRAN I could meet you at the entrance about nine.

CHUCK Nine! Nine is the perfect time. You don't run into all those early rushers who want to see everything—

FRAN Okay. Then I'll see you at nine.

CHUCK (*He calls after her*) Hey! The new Madison Square Garden. The old one is torn down. . . . How about that. She likes basketball! (*He sings*)

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

She likes basketball, how about that?
We've got something in common to talk about . . .
Basketball.

She likes basketball, how about that?

I have someplace to take her
When we go out . . .
Basketball.

Who ever would have dreamed

Ever would have thought
That my favorite girl liked my favorite sport
Like any other kid I would make believe
With a ball in my hand.

I'd dribble right past
All the others real fast
And I'd be six-foot-eight
And my jump-shot was really great.

She likes basketball, isn't that wild?
It's an omen that good things are on their way.
Things to share . . .

We share basketball, couldn't you die?
From a simple beginning like this
We may get somewhere.

It's nice to dream
Someday it might be
Basketball and me.

Who ever would have dreamed
Ever would have thought
That my favorite girl
Liked my favorite sport.

Like any other kid
I would make believe
With a ball in my hand
I'd dribble right past

All the others real fast
And I'd be six-foot-eight
And my jump-shot was really great.

She likes basketball!
Isn't that wild?

It's an omen that good things
Are on their way
Things to share . . .

We share basketball
Couldn't you die?
From a simple beginning like this
We may get somewhere.

It's nice to dream
Someday it might be
Basketball and me.

425

P R O M I S E S ,
P R O M I S E S

Fade Out

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SCENE 6

Lum Ding's Chinese Restaurant. There are a number of booths and a couple of scattered tables. The place is a little less than half filled. A lone man sits at the corner table.

The HOSTESS enters and crosses to the exit at the other side. The WAITER then enters and crosses to the exit at the other side. FRAN enters and without looking around heads straight for the lone man at the corner table.

SHELDRAKE Fran . . . Fran, how've you been?

FRAN Fine, Mr. Sheldrake.

SHELDRAKE Mr. Sheldrake? Whatever happened to Jeff?

FRAN Yeah, whatever happened to him?

SHELDRAKE Let me take your coat.

FRAN I can't stay long.

HOSTESS Good evening, miss. (Points to her head) You changed your hair. Very pretty.

FRAN Thanks.

SHELDRAKE That's right. You have changed your hair.

FRAN I knew you'd be the first to notice.

SHELDRAKE Okay, I haven't called you in six weeks. I deserve a little hostility. Am I going to get the egg rolls in the face?

FRAN I'm waiting for the sauce.

SHELDRAKE Fran, I missed you.

FRAN And there it is.

SHELDRAKE I was going to call you one night last week. I started dialing your number, then hung up in the middle.

427

FRAN It must have been Tuesday, the phone didn't ring all night. Can I have a cigarette?

P R O M I S E S ,

P R O M I S E S

SHELDRAKE (*He looks at her, then takes out a pack*) First time I ever saw you smoke.

FRAN I was saving it as a surprise. It's my new image. Joan Crawford, older but wiser.

SHELDRAKE (*He smiles*) It needs work. You've got the filter at the wrong end.

FRAN Yeah, well, in case you haven't noticed, I'm nervous as hell about seeing you again.

SHELDRAKE (*Lighting her cigarette*) I've noticed. I like it. You look great, Fran.

FRAN Thank you . . . How's the family?

SHELDRAKE You don't want to hear nice things from me, do you?

FRAN Yeah, I think it's terrific. You do it better than anyone I know. What'd you have in mind?

SHELDRAKE You know I haven't worked all day just thinking about you?

FRAN (*She puts her cigarette out, looking down without emotion*) Well, it's always a little slow before Christmas—

SHELDRAKE (*He grabs her wrist*) Damn it, Fran, look at me.

FRAN (*She snaps back quickly*) How do you want me to

react, with a chill and a quiver? . . . I did that all summer.
And the phone still didn't ring Tuesday night.

SHELDRAKE Fran, you know neither one of us wanted it to go this far . . . That first night we did nothing but sit here and talk until two in the morning . . .

428

FRAN Yeah, just a couple of innocent kids.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SHELDRAKE What is there about you that makes everything I say so damned phony?

FRAN (*She shrugs*) Everything you say. Hey, no kidding, Mr. Sheldrake, why did you call me? What do you want?

SHELDRAKE To look at you . . . to talk to you . . . to see if I can get things started again.

FRAN Well, that's honest enough . . . Sorry. Next summer I'm going to camp.

SHELDRAKE It's only November, maybe I can talk you out of it. Fran, I want you back. I don't want to go another day without seeing you.

FRAN You've already arranged that. Hostess in the Executive Dining Room. I've gone from "I love you, Fran" to "How are the scallops today?" in two short months.

SHELDRAKE If you really believe that, Fran, get up and walk out that door right now. I swear, I'll never bother you again . . . Otherwise, sit there and be quiet and listen to me. Because I have something to tell you.

FRAN (*Shrugs*) Go ahead and tell me. I'm just smoking and drinking.

SHELDRAKE Damnit, I can't talk here. Can't we go someplace?

FRAN No. I have a date at nine.

SHELDRAKE Oh? Important?

FRAN Not very. But I'm going anyway.

(*The WAITER approaches. FRAN takes out a compact and fixes her face*)

WAITER You like to order dinner now?

FRAN No. No dinner.

429

SHELDRAKE Bring us two more drinks.

FRAN No more drinks either.

P R O M I S E S ,

P R O M I S E S

WAITER Very good. That's no dinner and no more drinks.

(*He leaves. FRAN fixes her hair in the compact's mirror*)

SHELDRAKE I see you still use my birthday present.

FRAN Don't I get to keep it?

SHELDRAKE (*Smiles*) You've got that same petulant look on your face. You had it that first night in Atlantic City.

FRAN Stop it, Jeff . . . Hey, could I have another cigarette? I don't know what to do with my hands.

SHELDRAKE (*Getting up*) I'll get a pack. I have to make a call anyway.

FRAN Do you need change? It's twenty cents to White Plains. (*SHELDRAKE looks at her. There's no point in answering that. He walks off. FRAN sits there alone. She picks the compact up from the table and looks at herself*) You know what you would do now if you were smart, don't you? (*She sings "Knowing When to Leave"*)

Go while the going is good

Knowing when to leave

May be the smartest thing

That anyone can learn.

Go—

I'm afraid my heart

Isn't very smart

Fly while you still have your wings.

Knowing when to leave

Won't ever let you reach

The point of no return.
Fly—foolish as it seems
I still have my dreams

So I keep hoping, day after day,
As I wait for the man I need
Night after night
As I wish for a love that can be
Though I'm sure that
No one can tell
Where their wishes and hopes will lead
Somehow I feel
There is happiness just waiting there for me.

When someone walks in your life
You just better be sure he's right
'Cause if he's wrong
There are heartaches and tears you must pay.
Keep both of your eyes on the door
Never let it get out of sight
Just be prepared
When the time has come for you to run away.
Sail when the wind starts to blow.
But like a fool I don't know when to leave . . .

(The lights fade on FRAN and the Chinese restaurant, although the set stays on. As the lights go up on the right we see CHUCK waiting under a sign that says "The New Madison Square Garden")

CHUCK (*Looks at his watch*) She's probably having trouble getting crosstown . . . Gee, it must be rough on her trying to get rid of this other fella . . . In a way I feel sorry for the poor guy . . . (*He goes behind a poster looking for her again. The lights go up on FRAN as she sings*)

. . . So I keep hoping day after day
As I wait for the man I need
Night after night
As I wish for a love that can be
Though I'm sure that
No one can tell
Where their wishes and hopes will lead
Somehow I feel
There is happiness just waiting there for me.

When someone walks in your life
You just better be sure he's right
'Cause if he's wrong
There are heartaches and tears you must pay.
Keep both of your eyes on the door
Never let it get out of sight
Just be prepared
When the time has come for you to run away.

431

Sail when the wind starts to blow.
But like a fool I don't know
When to leave—when to leave—when to leave
When to leave.

P R O M I S E S ,
P R O M I S E S

(*The lights go up on CHUCK*)

CHUCK Maybe I rushed her? Do you think I moved in too fast? I mean she's just a simple girl, doesn't get around much. Mostly watches basketball at home with her brother . . . Maybe a fast-talking rising young executive like me frightened her . . . Sure . . . That's it . . . (*Looks at his watch*) That's why it's ten-to-eleven . . .

(*The lights go up on SHELDRAKE and FRAN*)

SHELDRAKE (*Returning from his call*) Tommy's got a cold . . . nothing serious.

FRAN Good. I'm glad everything's all right at home.

SHELDRAKE You know it isn't, Fran. And it hasn't been for a long time. Remember what we talked about? My getting a divorce?

FRAN We didn't talk about it, Jeff. You did.

SHELDRAKE I called my lawyer this morning. I'm going through with it, Fran.

FRAN Jeff, let's get something straight. I never asked you to leave your wife.

SHELDRAKE It's my decision. It's what I want.

FRAN Are you sure?

SHELDRAKE I'm sure. If you'll just tell me you still love me.

FRAN You know I do.

SHELDRAKE (Smiles) I never doubted it for a minute. Come on.

432

Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

FRAN Wait a minute. I had a date.

SHELDRAKE You said yourself it wasn't important. (*He kisses her*) Come on.

(*They exit. The lights go up on CHUCK*)

CHUCK Maybe she caught my cold. Sure, I bet she's in bed as I'm standing here. So I guess I'll get the papers and go home. After all, I'm sure she tried. (*A WATCHMAN comes out and locks the door*) Who won?

WATCHMAN Knicks lost one hundred twenty-nine to one hundred twenty-eight in double overtime . . .

CHUCK Well, doesn't sound like we missed much . . .

Blackout

SCENE 7

433

A single telephone in the lobby of Consolidated Life.
KIRKEBY is on the phone talking in hushed tones while
DOBITCH paces nervously. **VANDERHOF** and **EICHELBERGER**
join them.

PROMISES,
PROMISES

VANDERHOF Any luck with the kid?

DOBITCH He won't budge. No key, no apartment, no
nothing. And the louse still has a box of my cheese
crackers.

VANDERHOF That rotten kid is using his apartment for
his own selfish needs.

EICHELBERGER Oh, my God, no apartment! What'll we
do?

DOBITCH Will you stop panicking, you dirty old man.

VANDERHOF I'd use my car but the nurse is five-foot-ten
and it's a Volkswagen.

(**KIRKEBY** comes out of the booth)

KIRKEBY Forget it. I just spoke to Hertz and they don't
rent trailers for the night.

VANDERHOF Listen, I have a friend who has a liquor
store with a cot in the back. We can have it Sundays and
Election Day.

EICHELBERGER But tonight was supposed to be my night.
What am I going to do?

DOBITCH Why don't you take some hot Ovaltine and go
to bed?

KIRKEBY It serves us right. Never trust an ambitious kid with a one-bedroom apartment.

EICHELBERGER There must be somewhere, someplace—
(The music to "Where Can You Take a Girl?" begins)

434

DOBITCH Where? Where? (*He sings*)

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

Where can you if you're a man
Take a girl if she's a girl
That you can't
Can't ever take home for a little drink
Like other guys who live alone can do?
That is the reason why
Most married men are true.

Aside from hotels
Where can you on Tuesday night
Take a girl who's out of sight
That you can't
Can't ever take home for a little fun
Chase her around the room until you win?
That is the reason why
Most single men stay thin.

Aside from motels
Where can you if you're alone
Take a girl who's on her own
That you can't
Can't ever take home on your one night out
One night to be a man and not a mouse?
Most married men play cards
Most single men play house
We'd like to play house too.

All we need is one place
A small apartment, a truck or trailer, old or new
Oh there must be some place
A baby carriage, a kiddy car will do
We aren't proud.
Where can you take a girl that you just
Can't take home?

(The set changes to the Executive Dining Room)

You know, if it were a little warmer I'd even take Sylvia to Central Park.

VANDERHOF And take a chance of being mugged?

DOBITCH Nahh, she's a very nice girl. (*Singing*)

Where can you if you are free
Take a girl you'd like to see
That you can't
Can't ever take home on a weekday night
Put on some records and then go berserk?
Most single men we know
Work hardest after work.

435

P R O M I S E S ,

P R O M I S E S

Aside from rowboats
Where can you, a man that's true
Take a girl who gets to you
That you can't can't ever take home for a little whirl
Dance her around so fast she starts to shout?
Most married men just waltz
Most single men make out
We'd like to make out too.

All we need is one place
For sixty minutes or forty minutes more or less
Oh there must be some place
In twenty minutes we'll find happiness
We can be fast
In fact we always are.

Aside from rooftops
Where can you if you are free
Take a girl you'd like to see
That you can't ever take home?
What's there left to do
But to go home to
Our wives!

(At the conclusion of the number, CHUCK enters the room gaily. He is dressed a lot better now that he is a Junior Executive. He crosses to his "usual" table near the window, sits and looks at the menu. He nods at the "boys" and gives them a little wave with his fingers, then looks back at the menu. They mumble obscenities under their breath)

Look at him, calm, well-rested, the little fink.

(FRAN enters from the kitchen, wearing a pert hostess uniform. She carries a glass of sherry on a serving dish. She crosses to CHUCK)

436

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

FRAN Good afternoon, Mr. Baxter.
(She puts down the drink)

CHUCK Oh, hello.

FRAN A dry sherry before lunch, isn't it?

CHUCK Yes. You have a wonderful memory.

FRAN Not for some things.

CHUCK Oh, you mean the basketball game? I've forgotten about that. I told you yesterday.

FRAN You didn't wait outside all night, did you?

CHUCK No . . . just about fifteen minutes, then I went in. It was a terrific game.

FRAN I had no excuse.

CHUCK Well, that's plenty good enough for me. After all, I'm sure you couldn't help yourself . . . How's the chicken pot pie?

FRAN You shouldn't be so understanding. I'm not worth it.

CHUCK Miss Kubelik, one doesn't get to be a Junior Second Administrative Assistant around here unless he's a pretty good judge of character . . . and as far as I'm concerned, you're tops. I mean decency-wise and otherwise-wise.

FRAN Will that be all?

CHUCK That'll be all . . . unless you're not busy Thursday night? I'm usually free on Thursdays.

FRAN I'm usually not.

CHUCK (*Smiles*) Then I guess that'll be all. (*To the audience*) Cheers. (*The four execs approach*) I know. I see them.

(*FRAN nods and exits into the kitchen as the four execs surround CHUCK at his table*)

DOBITCH Dry sherry dry enough for you, kid?

437

VANDERHOF Nice big table all for yourself.

PROMISES,

KIRKEBY Hot food, warm plates, clean silverware.

PROMISES

EICHELBERGER This is the life, heh, Chuck, boy?

CHUCK (*Smiles*) Well, I'm not without contentment, no.

(*He sips his sherry*)

DOBITCH You've got it all now, Baxter. Success . . . accomplishment . . . security . . .

VANDERHOF But there's one thing missing, kid.

CHUCK What's that?

KIRKEBY Gratitude. We don't see any gratitude, do we, boys?

(*They all shake their heads "no"*)

CHUCK Well, I certainly don't want to seem ungrateful . . . How about four chicken pot pies?

(*They gather around him*)

VANDERHOF Don't play with us, kid. Don't toy with angry middle-aged executives.

CHUCK Look, fellas, for your information, my apartment is private property, not a public playground. I don't understand what happens to men when they get to be your age.

DOBITCH Don't understand us. Help us!

(*The four execs sing*)

All we need is one place
For sixty minutes or forty minutes
More or less
Oh, there must be some place
In twenty minutes we'll find happiness
We can be fast
Where can you take a girl
That you just can't take home

438

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

(*They exit, singing*)

Where can you, if you're a man
Take a girl, if she's a girl . . .

(*The lights black out, leaving a spot on CHUCK,
who steps out front to the audience*)

CHUCK In a way I sympathized with them. As middle-aged men they wanted to have occasionally what they thought young men like me have regularly. But I wasn't having it regularly. As a matter of fact, I wasn't even having what they have occasionally . . . it's something for you to think about. (*He crosses to SHELDRAKE, who is reclining on a sun deck chaise*) Oh, Mr. Sheldrake . . . they told me I'd find you here on the Executive Sun Deck.

SHELDRAKE Am I getting too red?

CHUCK Not for me, J.D. You have the kind of skin that bronzes nicely.

SHELDRAKE You've got your promotion. Don't butter me. I like you, Baxter, but let's understand each other. We may have a reciprocal arrangement that fulfills certain mutual needs, but in no way does it mean we're bosom buddies. I'm starting you on the very lowest rung of the executive ladder but you'll have to climb upward on your own initiative. I may have a private life to lead but I also have a department to run.

CHUCK Well, may I say you lead them and run them beautifully, sir. I just dropped up because I have something here I think belongs to you.

(*He reaches in his pocket*)

SHELDRAKE (*Puts down his reflector*) To me?

CHUCK I mean the young lady, whoever she may be. It was on the couch when I got home last night. It's a compact. (*He takes out FRAN's gold compact*) I'm afraid the mirror is broken.

439

SHELDRAKE I know. She threw it at me. Fortunately I ducked. Was there any damage?

(*He takes the compact*)

PROMISES,

PROMISES

CHUCK Oh, nothing much. A little hole in an old Van Gogh print on the wall. Luckily it went right through the sunset. (*Reaches in his pocket*) I have all the broken pieces of the mirror in my pocket if you care to put them together . . .

SHELDRAKE You know, Baxter, I envy you.

CHUCK Me? Why?

SHELDRAKE Your life is simple. A bachelor who can have an affair with no complications, no promises made that you can't possibly keep. You've got it made, right?

CHUCK If you say so, sir. (*He turns to the audience*) Why is it everyone envies me except me?

(*CHUCK exits. SHELDRAKE turns and looks out over the sun deck, then takes FRAN's mirror out of his pocket and looks at it. He sings "Wanting Things"*)

Tell me how long must I keep wanting things
Needing things, when I have so much?
There are many men who have much less than me
Day by day they make their way
And they find more in life than I can see.
Tell me

When will I learn to resist wanting things
Touching things that say
Do, do not touch.
People that I meet seem to think I am strong
They don't see inside of me
So they don't know I'm weak and often wrong.

Tell me why must I keep wanting things
Needing things that just can't be mine.
Oh wanting things that just can't be
Mine.

(*He exits*)

440

Blackout

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SCENE 8

441

Outside the elevator. FRAN appears and looks around.
MISS OLSON comes out of an elevator, somewhat tipsy,
holding a paper cup full of liquor.

PROMISES,
PROMISES

FRAN Excuse me, can you tell me where the Christmas party is?

MISS OLSON (*Points up*) One floor down.

FRAN (*Smiles*) Thank you.
(*She starts to walk away*)

MISS OLSON Hey, aren't you the branch manager from Kansas City?

FRAN I beg your pardon.

MISS OLSON I'm Miss Olson, Mr. Sheldrake's secretary.

FRAN Yes, I know.

MISS OLSON Four years ago I was the branch manager from Minneapolis.

FRAN I'm sorry, I don't understand—

MISS OLSON I know what you're going through, honey. I got the same routine, from a weekend in Atlantic City right through to Chinese food.

FRAN I'm afraid I don't know what you're talking about.
(*She starts to turn away*)

MISS OLSON Oh, come on, sugar, I know all about it. I'm very perceptive . . . and I also listen in on his telephone calls. (*She rocks a bit*) . . . You know I never drank before I met Jeff. I smoke now too . . . and I put on twelve pounds . . . Which is why I now smoke and drink and you're the new branch manager from Kansas City.

FRAN Miss Olson, if you'll excuse me . . .

MISS OLSON It's all right, honey, you're in good company. He only picks the cutest girls. Miss Rossi in Auditing, Miss Koch in Disability, Miss Della Hoya from Petty Cash—we thought we'd meet once a year for lunch at Schrafft's. When we get two more girls we're going to charter a boat ride to Bear Mountain.

FRAN Miss Olson, I don't know what you've heard, but I can assure you—

MISS OLSON What a salesman. If our affair lasted two more days I would have bought insurance from him. But you'll buy it too, sweetie. The same pitch about divorcing his wife, only by the time the papers come through, you'll be telling some cute receptionist what I'm telling you . . .

(She raises her hand)

FRAN I'm sure you mean well, Miss Olson—

MISS OLSON (Shrugs) Some people give to the Heart Fund, I warn girls about Sheldrake . . . You want to be smart, honey? Take the compact he bought you that I picked out, trade it in for a pair of track shoes and run for your life. (Looks in her cup) Excuse me, my stupor is wearing off. I've got to re-stupe.

Blackout

SCENE 9

443

The nineteenth floor. The floor is decked out in Christmas trimming, the desks are all pushed together for "Turkey Lurkey." DOBITCH stands on a desk.

PROMISES,
PROMISES

DOBITCH And now, ladies and gentlemen, the Christmas Party Committee has asked the Idea Committee to come up with an idea for the Christmas Party. So without further ado, I give you Miss Polansky of Accounts Receivable, Miss Wong of Mimeograph, and Miss Della Hoya of Petty Cash.

(They sing)

It's Turkey Lurkey time
Tom Turkey ran away but he just came home.
It's Turkey Lurkey time
He's really come to stay never more to roam.
Let us make a wish
And may all your wishes come true.
A snowy blowy Christmas
A mistletoey Christmas
A Turkey Lurkey Christmas to you
A Turkey Lurkey Christmas to you.

It's Goosey Poosey time
She was a gadabout but she's back again.
It's Goosey Poosey time
Her time is running out and we all know when.
Let us make a wish
And may all your wishes come true.
A snowy blowy Christmas
A mistletoey Christmas
A Goosey Poosey Christmas to you
A Goosey Poosey Christmas to you.

Turkey Lurkey
Goosey Poosey

Some for Uncle Joe
 And some for Cousin Lucy.
 Everybody gather round the table
 Dig in, dinner's being served
 Eat all the turkey you are able
 If you see a partridge in a pear tree
 Climb up and bring it down for me
 That's something I would like to see.

*Collected Plays
 of Neil Simon*

(They dance a wild dance, urged on, and later joined by, all the employees. When the dance is over the girls again sing)

A snowy blowy Christmas
 A mistletoey Christmas
 A Turkey Lurkey Christmas
 To you-ou-ou.

Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells,
 Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells,
 Merry Christmas,
 Merry Christmas.

DOBITCH Listen, kid, did you get my note? I meant what I said. The keys to my Jaguar and my Diners Club card for the entire Christmas holidays.

CHUCK Yeah, sure, Mr. Dobitch, anything you want. You just caught me at the right season.

DOBITCH Good. You leave the keys under the doormat. I'll be there at four o'clock.

CHUCK Hey, you didn't see Miss Kubelik around here, did you? (*She appears on the opposite side of the stage*) Never mind, I just felt her presence. (*He crosses to FRAN, who is glum*) Hi. Glad you could make it up to the nineteenth floor. I hear the eighteenth floor's already been arrested. (*He laughs*) Can I get you a drink?

FRAN (*Downhearted*) No thanks.

CHUCK Is anything wrong?

FRAN No, there are just too many people here.

CHUCK Funny how we're beginning to think alike.
(Takes her arm) Miss Kubelik, I would like to show you something. (They cross to the desk, where a couple is necking) Ahem. (The couple exits quickly) Boy, are they drunk. Those two are married to each other. (He takes a box from the desk drawer) Miss Kubelik, I want your honest opinion. I've had this in my desk for a week. (He shows her the hat) Cost me twenty-three bucks, but I just couldn't get the nerve up to wear it. (Puts on a gray homburg) It's called "Young Exec" . . . comes with a free subscription to the *Wall Street Journal* . . . Remember, an honest opinion. (He poses; she looks dumbly) All right, I'll accept a dishonest opinion . . . You hate it. I look like Sidney Greenstreet in "The Maltese Falcon" . . . I agree. Well, there's a doctor in my building I owe a Christmas present . . .

445

P R O M I S E S ,

P R O M I S E S

FRAN No, I like it. Very distinguished.

CHUCK Really? Classy Distinguished or Trying Distinguished? I mean I don't want to get an Al Capone effect.

FRAN I like the way you look. I really do.

CHUCK How about that? Listen, maybe I'll try it out this afternoon on Fifth Avenue. I sure could use some moral support.

FRAN Oh . . . This is a bad day for me.

CHUCK I understand. Christmas, family and all that . . .

FRAN Well, I'd better get back to the Dining Room. They must be wondering where I am.

CHUCK Hey, you sure you like the hat? I mean, is the angle good for my face?

FRAN I think so. Here, look for yourself.

(She takes out her compact and gives it to him)

CHUCK After all, this is a conservative firm. I wouldn't want people to think I was a ward heeler or something . . .

(As he looks in the compact mirror his voice gives out. FRAN notices his peculiar expression)

446

FRAN What's wrong?

CHUCK The mirror . . . it's broken.

Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

FRAN I know. I like it this way . . . makes me look the way I feel. (The phone rings. CHUCK doesn't hear it. He closes the compact, hands it back to FRAN) . . . Your phone.

CHUCK Oh. (He picks up the phone) Yes? (Throws a quick look at FRAN) Just a minute. (He covers the phone with his hand and speaks to FRAN) If you don't mind, this is sort of personal.

FRAN All right. Have a nice Christmas.

(CHUCK nods. She exits. CHUCK takes his hand off the mouthpiece)

CHUCK (Every word hurts) Yes, Mr. Sheldrake . . . No, I didn't forget . . . the tree is up and the Tom and Jerry mix is in the refrigerator . . . Yes, sir, the same to you.

(He hangs up and stands there for a moment, the new hat still on his head. He sits on the desk chair)

Curtain

Act Two

SCENE I

447

CHUCK *is sitting at a booth in Clancy's Lounge, a seedy Eighth Avenue bar. He looks up at the audience, obviously drunk.*

PROMISES,
PROMISES

CHUCK I'd rather not talk about it if you don't mind . . . Just look at me . . . in some seedy bar . . . God knows where . . . cheaping up slop whiskey . . . slopping up cheap whiskey . . . I disgust me . . . I mean what did I expect? That she was some kind of pure, untouched, unblemished rose just waiting for me to come along? . . . Yes, that's what I expected . . . Listen, I don't want to talk to you any more . . . I'll call you next week . . . (*He crosses to the bar and BARTENDER EUGENE. He puts money on the bar*) Eugene, Eugene, I'd like twenty-two dollars' worth of cheering up.

(*BARTENDER EUGENE pours him a shot. MARGE crosses to CHUCK with her empty glass*)

MARGE (*Warm smile*) Hello, there. All alone I see.

CHUCK (*He looks at MARGE, then at the audience*) I think I'm gonna be all right. (To MARGE) Hello there yourself.

MARGE As it happens, I'm alone too.

CHUCK As what happens?

MARGE Ooh, fast with the repartee, aren't you? In point of fact, I'm just trying to be friendly. I mean the world is hostile enough, isn't it?

CHUCK Everywhere you turn.

MARGE And your name is?—

CHUCK (*Lifts his hat*) Baxter. C. C. Baxter.
(*He drops the hat back on his head*)

MARGE Ohh, initials. That's very fancy . . . I'm just plain Margie MacDougal.

448

CHUCK (*Looks her up and down*) I don't see anything plain about you, Margie.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

MARGE Oh, touché! . . . (*She looks at her empty glass*) My goodness, have I finished that stinger already?

CHUCK (*To BARTENDER EUGENE*) Eugene, another stinger. Here.

MARGE Oh, isn't that sweet? That really isn't necessary. (*Quickly to BARTENDER EUGENE*) Double on the vodka, Eugene. (*To CHUCK*) By the by, before we go any further, I wouldn't want you to get the wrong idea about me. I'm *not* a pickup.

CHUCK Never crossed my mind.

MARGE Sociable maybe, but not a pickup . . . I'm just looking for a drink and some friendly conversation, that's all.

CHUCK Got you, Marge.

MARGE I mean I have no intention of going *anywhere* with *anyone* for *anything*.

CHUCK Good girl, Marge.

MARGE Why, do you have a place near here? . . . That's conversation, not curiosity. As I said, I'm not a pickup.

CHUCK Anyone could tell from the way you dress . . . Très chic.

MARGE (*Flattered*) Oh, gracias . . . You like this coat? It's owl. I actually swear on my mother's life, it's made from those birds with the big eyes that see in the dark and go "Hoo." A gift from my late husband, Jerome.

CHUCK Oh, a widow.

MARGE (*Takes a drink*) Well, I'm not dead certain I'm a widow, but when you don't hear from your husband in twenty-two months there's no point in keeping the roast warm. Sköl!

(*She drinks her vodka stinger*)

449

CHUCK Two years is a long time to be lonely.

PROMISES,
PROMISES

MARGE I don't recall saying I was lonely. Have I indicated to you in any way whatever that I was lonely? Indeed not. So don't be getting any fancy ideas in that rather attractive head of yours.

CHUCK So you find me attractive, eh, Marge?

MARGE You catch everything, don't you . . . I don't mean to imply attractive in any sexual way. Nor do I wish to imply that you are *unattractive* in a sexual way . . . What I *do* want to imply is that I'm not thinking in a sexual way at all. Not to imply that I've *never* thought in a sexual way. But I am, technically speaking, still in a state of mourning. So can we just drop the subject of sex, Mr. Fast-on-your-feet?

CHUCK How's your stinger?

MARGE You *are* persuasive, aren't you? (*She hands her glass to BARTENDER EUGENE for a refill*) Question. You married?

CHUCK Answer. No!

MARGE Family?

CHUCK In Ohio.

MARGE Mm. A night like this, Christmas Eve and all, it's not much fun walking into an empty apartment, is it?

CHUCK I said I wasn't married. I didn't say I had an empty apartment.

MARGE It wouldn't make any difference because I have no intention of going there, as I previously indicated . . . So just get it right out of your mind, Mr. C. C. Baxter with the sweet-smelling after-shave cologne that just happens to be my favorite.

450

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CHUCK You like Aqua Velva?

MARGE Oh, yes. Jerome used it by the gallon. He was quite masculine, you know. Used to shave three, four times a day.

CHUCK Boy . . . They don't make 'em like that any more.

MARGE I didn't mean to imply that you're *not* masculine. In your own off-beat way, I suppose you are. I mean with the light behind you and your chapeau at that jaunty angle, you remind me somewhat of Jerome, if I remember him correctly.

CHUCK —But Jerome isn't here.

MARGE (*She nods in agreement*) But Jerome isn't here.

CHUCK And "rather attractive" me is.

MARGE (*Nods*) And rather attractive you is.

CHUCK Those are facts we've got to face, Marge.

MARGE Well, you're definitely a fact . . . (*She sings*)

And a fact can be a beautiful thing
When the fact I am facing is you.

CHUCK (*Singing*)

A fact can be a terrible thing
When the dreams you've been dreaming fall through.

CHUCK and MARGE

Forget the past and think about the present
Right now is everything.
Forget the past and think about the present,

CHUCK

The present's very pleasant.

CHUCK and MARGE

Who cares what the future will bring?
There's just no predicting a thing.
Don't wait for a miracle
Because it's Christmas
Not a time to be alone with memories.
Christmas is supposed to be a happy holiday
Throw a little joy my way,

451

PROMISES,
PROMISES

MARGE

You could really make my day,

CHUCK

Throw a little joy my way,

MARGE

And a fact can be a beautiful thing
When I can see what I'm seeing in you.

CHUCK

A fact can be a wonderful thing
When your hopes to be happy come true.

CHUCK and MARGE

What's gone is gone and don't you ever doubt it,
Wake up and start to live.
What's gone is gone so learn to live without it

CHUCK

And never think about it.

CHUCK AND MARGE

Who cares what the future will bring?
There's just no predicting a thing.
Don't wait for a miracle
Because it's Christmas
Not a time to be alone with memories.
Christmas is supposed to be a happy holiday
Throw a little joy my way.

MARGE

Do we really have to stay?

CHUCK

Throw a little joy my way . . .

(*They start out, but are stopped by the singing of the PATRONS and employees, who insist on having a drink with them.*)

452

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ALL

Forget the past and think about the present
Right now is everything.
Forget the past and think about the present,
The present's very pleasant.
Who cares what the future will bring?
There's just no predicting a thing.
Don't wait for a miracle
Because it's Christmas
Not the time to be alone with memories.
Christmas
Is supposed to be a happy holiday
Throw a little joy my way.

(*An accidental rhythm occurs, caused by noises of a tray, two whiskey bottles, a laugh. CHUCK improvises a dance step to the rhythm. The others join in, till all are dancing the Game, including a first-reluctant MARGE*)

Because it's Christmas
Just the perfect night
For us to dance and sing.
Christmas
Is supposed to be a happy holiday
Happy holiday
So throw a little joy my way.

(*CHUCK and MARGE exit. The PATRONS dance in couples and sing*)

Forget the past and think about the present
Right now is everything.
Forget the past and think about the present,
The present's very pleasant.
Who cares what the future will bring?
There's just no predicting a thing . . .

Blackout

SCENE 2

453

CHUCK's apartment. The living room is dark, except for a shaft of light from the kitchen, and the glow of the colored bulbs on a small Christmas tree in front of the phony fireplace.

Hunched up in one corner of the couch is FRAN, still in her coat and gloves, crying softly. Pacing up and down is SHELDRAKE. His coat and hat are on the chair, as are several Christmas packages. On the coffee table are an unopened bottle of Scotch, a couple of untouched glasses and a bowl of melting ice.

SHELDRAKE (*Looking very upset as FRAN cries*) Come on, Fran, don't be like that. You just going to sit there, crying? (*No answer. He tries a new approach*) Look, I know you think I'm stalling you. But when you've been married to a woman for twelve years, you don't just sit down at the breakfast table and say, "Helen, can I please have the sugar and a divorce." (*He resumes pacing, FRAN keeps sobbing*) Anyway, this is the wrong time. The kids are home from school, the in-laws are visiting for the holidays. I can't bring it up now. (*Stops*) For God's sake, Fran, are you going to listen to me or are you going to keep crying?

FRAN (*Sobs*) I can do both.

SHELDRAKE You know, this isn't like you, Fran. You were always such a good sport, such fun to be with.

FRAN That's me, the Happy Idiot. Short on brains but a million laughs.

SHELDRAKE I didn't mean it that way . . .

FRAN It's true. I laugh easily. I even got a big chuckle

P R O M I S E S ,

P R O M I S E S

today out of your secretary, Miss Olson. You remember her, the branch manager from Minneapolis?

SHELDRAKE Is that what's bothering you? Miss Olson? For God's sakes, Fran, that's ancient history.

454

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

FRAN Well, she brought me up with more current events . . . like Miss Koch, Miss Rossi, Miss Della Hoya . . . How do you work it, Jeff, alphabetical order or one floor at a time?

SHELDRAKE Oh, come on, Fran . . .

FRAN It must have been rough when they switched to automatic elevators. All those cute little operators going to waste—

SHELDRAKE All right, Fran, I suppose I deserved that.

FRAN Try *definitely*.

SHELDRAKE Damnit, don't you understand that no one —*no one* means anything to me any more except you? Fran, I don't like to see you like this.

FRAN (*She takes a handkerchief from her purse*) Did I tell you I'm writing a book? *Affairs Can Be Fun.* (*Wipes her eyes*) Chapter One, Never Wear Mascara When You're in Love with a Married Man.

SHELDRAKE It's Christmas Eve, Fran. Let's not fight.

FRAN Merry Christmas.

(*She throws a package to him*)

SHELDRAKE What is it?

FRAN A scarf. I knitted it the six nights a week I don't see you.

SHELDRAKE Fran, if it were possible I would *never* leave . . .

FRAN (*She takes out a small leather frame from her*

purse) And I had that picture we took on the boardwalk framed. I bought it as a gift from you to me. I know you don't have much time to do any shopping . . .

SHELDRAKE As a matter of fact, I wanted to get you something . . . But you never know who you run into in department stores . . . (*He takes out a money clip, detaches a bill*) . . . so here's a hundred dollars . . . go out and buy yourself something. (*He holds the money out but she doesn't move. SHELDRAKE slips the bill into her open bag*) . . . They have some nice alligator bags at Bergdorf's . . . (*FRAN gets up and slowly starts peeling off her gloves. SHELDRAKE looks at her, then nervously glances at his watch*) . . . Fran, it's a quarter to seven—and I mustn't miss the train tonight—if we hadn't wasted all that time—well, I have to get home and trim the tree . . .

455

P R O M I S E S ,

P R O M I S E S

FRAN (*Having started to remove her coat*) Oh. Okay. (*She shrugs, puts her coat back on*) I just thought as long as it was paid for—

SHELDRAKE (*He takes an angry step toward her*) Don't ever talk like that, Fran. Don't make yourself out to be cheap.

FRAN A hundred dollars? I wouldn't call that cheap. And you must be paying someone for the use of the apartment—

SHELDRAKE Fran, the last thing I want to do is to hurt you.

FRAN (*She stares at him*) You'll miss your train, Jeff. (*SHELDRAKE releases her, then hurriedly puts on his hat and coat, and gathers up his packages*)

SHELDRAKE Are you coming?

FRAN You run along—I want to fix what's left of my face.

SHELDRAKE (*Nods*) Don't forget to kill the lights . . . I'll see you next week.

FRAN (*With bite*) I have it marked on my calendar. I draw a little heart around all the Thursdays.

SHELDRAKE It won't always be like this, Fran . . . I love you, you know.

456

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

FRAN I never doubted it for a minute. (*He bends to kiss her; she pulls away*) Careful . . . lipstick.

(*He kisses her cheek, looks at her uncomfortably, and then goes, closing the door behind him. Music begins. FRAN crosses back to the sofa and sits a moment, then picks up the photograph she has placed down and looks at it. . . . She sings "Whoever You Are"*)

Sometimes your eyes look blue to me
Although I know they're really green.
I seem to see you differently
Changing as I'm treated kindly
Or treated meanly.
From moment to moment
You're two different people
Faithful and warm when I'm in your arms
And then when you leave, you're so untrue, but
However you are, deep down whatever you are
Whoever you are, I love you.

Sometimes I feel you're mine alone
And yet I'm sure it's just not so.
I get this feeling on my own
After I learn if you're staying
Or if you're going.
From moment to moment
You're two different people
Someone I know as the man I love
Or the man I wish I never knew, but

However you are
Deep down whatever you are
Whoever you are, I love you.

Sometimes your eyes look blue to me.

(*After the song, she suddenly starts to sob, then crosses to the bed. She takes a Kleenex and starts wiping off her mascara. Then she notices a vial*)

of pills on the table. She takes it. Then she sits back and stares at it. The lights in the apartment dim and go to black. Outside in the vestibule we see CHUCK and MARGE)

CHUCK Just five more steps to Paradise.

457

MARGE I still haven't made up my mind if I'm going in there. I mean, can I trust you?

P R O M I S E S ,

CHUCK Not for a minute, Marge.

P R O M I S E S

MARGE Well, I guess a girl can't get hurt in a minute, can she? (*She laughs, then staggers*) Whoops . . . Don't push.

CHUCK Hey, Marge, are you all right?

MARGE So they tell me . . . Oh, heavens, you must think I'm awful.

CHUCK (*Grins*) I think you're peachy.

MARGE Oh, you're a smooth talker . . . I can see I'm going to have my hands full with you, Mr. Ready-for-Everything.

CHUCK An apt description, Mrs. MacDougall. (*He opens the door*) Enter. (*Switches on the light*) Like it?

MARGE (*Looks around*) Well, I'm not looking to rent it. (*CHUCK closes the door*) Just the one room, is it?

CHUCK And there's a bed back there, in case you were wondering.

MARGE One more remark like that and I'm going to ask you to leave the door ajar.

CHUCK May I take your owl?

MARGE Hoo! Not wasting any time, are you?

CHUCK Not preliminary-wise. (*He takes her coat off*) You beginning to get the feeling, Mrs. MacDougall, you are in the clutches of a raving sex-pot?

MARGE I may as well warn you now, erotic language doesn't arouse me . . . So don't be so sure of yourself.

CHUCK I'm as cute as the dickens and you know it . . . You are looking at the only male rape victim in this neighborhood.

458

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

MARGE (Smiles) That's adorable. You are not totally without charm.

CHUCK And I haven't started yet. (*He crosses to the phonograph*) Why don't you bat those big blue eyes at the refrigerator and melt some ice, while I put on my theme song.

MARGE I wish you'd stop being so attractive. I'm beginning to think wicked thoughts.

(*She gives him a flutter of her eyes and goes into the kitchen. CHUCK takes off his hat and tosses it on a chair. He skips to the door and bolts it. He rubs his hands eagerly, then notices FRAN's bag on the coffee table. He takes it over to the screened area and tosses it over and onto the bed. He starts away when he realizes what he has just seen. He pushes the screen back revealing FRAN in the bed. She is still dressed but appears to be in a deep sleep, almost lifeless. CHUCK, annoyed, shakes her*)

CHUCK All right, Miss Kubelik, get up . . . It's past checkout time and the hotel management would appreciate it if you would check out! Now! (*FRAN doesn't stir*) Look, Miss Kubelik, I used to like you. I used to like you a lot—but it's all over between us—so beat it! O-U-T! Out! (*No reaction. He puts a hand on her shoulder and shakes her more vigorously*) Come on, wake up! You wanna sleep, go home! (*She doesn't respond. He notices something in her fist. He opens it and removes the vial which contained the sleeping pills, now empty. He shakes it upside down*) Oh, my God! (*For a second he is paralyzed. Then he drops the vial and grabs FRAN, and shakes her violently*) Miss Kubelik!! Miss Kubelik!! (*FRAN's head drops to one side like a rag doll. CHUCK lets go of her, then dashes into the living room. He rushes to the phone and dials quickly. He speaks into the phone*) Hello, operator, get me the police.

(*Thinks about that*) No! . . . No, don't get me the police.

(*MARGE comes out of the kitchen with a bowlful of ice cubes*)

MARGE Your ice cube tray isn't cooperating at all. You really ought to get a new refrigerator. (*CHUCK ignores her and runs out of the apartment*) . . . Hey, I didn't mean right now!

(*She shrugs and goes back into the kitchen. CHUCK, in the vestibule, bangs on DR. DREYFUSS's door*)

459

P R O M I S E S ,

P R O M I S E S

CHUCK Doctor Dreyfuss! Hey, Doc! (*He bangs on the door*) Come on, please, you've got to be home. (*The door opens and DR. DREYFUSS stands there sleepily, pulling on his bathrobe*) There's a girl in my place—she took some sleeping pills—you'd better come quick, I can't wake her up . . .

DR. DREYFUSS Let me get my bag.

(*He goes back into his apartment. CHUCK turns and goes back into his apartment as MARGE comes out of the kitchen holding a bottle*)

MARGE Look what I found. Tom and Jerries. You sly dog!

CHUCK (*Takes her arm and pulls her*) Come on. Let's go.

MARGE (*Smiling vacantly*) Aren't we rushing things?

CHUCK The party's over. Nothing personal.

MARGE (*Being pushed toward the door*) I don't understand.

CHUCK Come on.

MARGE (*Taking his arm off her*) I'm going to ask you not to get physical.

CHUCK It's an emergency. I'll see you some other Christmas.

MARGE (*Suddenly she hears FRAN moan. She looks and*

sees her) Who's that? Where did she come from? (DR. DREYFUSS comes in and looks at MARGE) Who's he?

CHUCK (To DR. DREYFUSS) Not this one, Doc— (Points to the bed) The other one!

(DR. DREYFUSS rushes in to FRAN)

460

MARGE What's going on here? Who are these people?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CHUCK Please!

MARGE Oh, my God! It's an orgy!

CHUCK (To MARGE) Would you please go! Now!

MARGE An orgy—on Christmas Eve! It's the most disgusting thing I've ever run across.

CHUCK (He hands her his last few dollars) Here! Take a taxi! Get another stinger, only please go!

MARGE (Takes the money) I should have known. The minute I saw you walk in the bar with that dignified hat I knew you were a pervert!

CHUCK Well, that's the way it is.

(He pushes her out in the hall and closes the door. She pulls her coat around her and starts out)

MARGE Filthy, filthy perverts! (She knocks on DR. DREYFUSS's closed door and yells in) They're having an orgy on the second floor! . . . Oh, God, I think I'm going to be sick!

(She runs out and disappears. CHUCK rushes back to DR. DREYFUSS who is examining FRAN's eyes with a flashlight)

CHUCK Is she gonna be all right, Doc?

DR. DREYFUSS How many pills were in that bottle?

(He takes out a stomach tube from his bag)

CHUCK Twelve. I only used one . . . Is that enough—to do it?

DR. DREYFUSS Without even trying. Help me with her.

(They get FRAN into an upright position. They half-carry, half-drag FRAN's limp form toward the bathroom)

CHUCK What are you going to do?

DR. DREYFUSS Get that stuff out of her stomach, if it isn't too late.

(He takes FRAN himself)

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CHUCK (Stepping back) Oh, God . . . My God . . .

P R O M I S E S ,

P R O M I S E S

DR. DREYFUSS First put on some hot coffee . . . then you can ask your friend God for His help . . . (CHUCK backs away as DR. DREYFUSS enters the bathroom with the limp FRAN. The lights fade. About fifteen minutes later: DR. DREYFUSS is placing FRAN on the sofa as CHUCK stands watching fearfully, the hot coffee pot in his hand) Get my bag. (CHUCK quickly gets him his bag, and looks bewildered. DR. DREYFUSS has taken out a needle and syringe and measures off the correct amount of c.c.'s from a medical bottle) First put the coffee down, dummy. (CHUCK puts down the pot. DR. DREYFUSS feels her arm for the right spot to inject) Nice veins. You've seen them before, I guess.

CHUCK Huh?

DR. DREYFUSS (He swabs a spot with alcohol and takes the hypodermic needle from CHUCK) Want to tell me what happened?

(He injects her arm)

CHUCK I don't know . . . I wasn't here . . . I mean, we had some words earlier . . . nothing serious . . . what you might call a lovers' spat.

DR. DREYFUSS Some spat. Eleven pills worth.

CHUCK I didn't know she was so upset . . .

DR. DREYFUSS When did you pick up the other tootsie? Before she took the pills or during?

CHUCK I wouldn't have picked up the other one if I knew she was still here . . .

DR. DREYFUSS You know, Baxter, for a fink you got a lotta class.

(He starts to slap FRAN in the face. She moans and reacts)

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Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

CHUCK (Enormous relief) Look, Doc, she's breathing . . .

DR. DREYFUSS If it annoys you, I can turn it off. (He takes an ampule out of his bag) A half hour later you'd have found some Christmas present. (He breaks it under her nose. She winces) Give me that coffee. (CHUCK hands him the pot and mug) Open those windows. Get some air in here. It smells from disillusionment. (CHUCK quickly rushes to the windows, pulls up the shades and opens the windows wide. DR. DREYFUSS pours coffee into a mug and then tries to get FRAN to sip some. She coughs) What's her name?

CHUCK Fran, Kubelik.

(He crosses back to them)

DR. DREYFUSS Fran, I'm a doctor. I'm here because you took too many sleeping pills. Do you understand what I'm saying? (FRAN mutters) Come on, Fran, pay attention.

(He slaps her face again. She winces)

CHUCK (Winces too) Doesn't that hurt her, Doc?

DR. DREYFUSS (Scowling at him) For deep concern, you got lousy timing. (To FRAN) Fran, do you know where you are? . . . Do you know whose apartment this is, Fran?

FRAN (Sleepily) No . . .

DR. DREYFUSS (Pulls CHUCK over in front of her) Do you know who this is, Fran? . . . Look at him!

FRAN (Looks at him) Mr. Baxter—

CHUCK Hello, Miss Kubelik.

DR. DREYFUSS Mister—Miss—pretty formal for a suicide.

CHUCK Well, we work for the same company and we try to keep it quiet.

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FRAN (*Puzzled, to CHUCK*) What are you doing here?
(*CHUCK looks at DR. DREYFUSS as if to say "Her mind still isn't functioning"*)

PROMISES,
PROMISES

CHUCK (*To FRAN*) Don't you remember? We were at the office party together?

FRAN The office party—Miss Olson—

CHUCK (*To DR. DREYFUSS*) That's who we had the fight about—Miss Olson—you know, the other girl who just left—

DR. DREYFUSS You ought to print programs.

FRAN (*Pushing the coffee away*) I'm so tired. Please—just let me sleep.

DR. DREYFUSS Not tonight, little girl. (*Shakes her*) Come on, Fran, open your eyes. You mustn't sleep now. (*To CHUCK*) All right, give me a hand. Now comes the dangerous part.

CHUCK (*Concerned*) What do you mean, dangerous?

DR. DREYFUSS We gotta walk her around a couple of hours. I have to be careful I don't get a heart attack. (*He lifts FRAN up on her feet*) All right, Fran, we're going for a nice little walk . . . all around the apartment. (*CHUCK stands there watching*) You're just going to stand there, God's gift to women?

CHUCK What should I do?

DR. DREYFUSS Take her other arm. In this neighborhood

I don't like to walk alone. (CHUCK takes her other arm; they continue walking as the lights fade into a blackout. Five A.M.: Through the windows we can see the first faint light of dawn. FRAN, in her slip, is asleep on the bed. DR. DREYFUSS and CHUCK, both on the sofa, sit exhausted, their legs outstretched. Neither one seems to have the strength to speak) If I charged you by the mile, I'd be a rich man today.

CHUCK The color's come back to her cheeks. Don't you think she has better color?

DR. DREYFUSS (*He glances at her*) If you happen to like green, yes.

CHUCK (*He gets up and looks at her*) But she'll be okay, won't she?

DR. DREYFUSS She'll sleep on and off for the next twenty-four hours. Then she'll have a headache so bad they'll complain on Sixty-fourth Street . . . This will be followed by a monumental depression because we saved her life . . . In between this there'll be constant throwing up . . . All in all, she won't make the perfect house guest . . . Hold on to the good china, I'm gonna try to stand up.

(*He struggles to his feet*)

CHUCK You okay?

DR. DREYFUSS I'll have to wear braces the rest of my life. Fortunately I got a brother in surgical supplies . . . Let me have another cup of lousy coffee.

CHUCK (*He brings over the coffee*) I don't know what I would have done without you, Doc.

DR. DREYFUSS (*Reaching in his bag*) Probably you would have picked up a third girl and I'd be here pumping Miss Olson too. (*He takes out a pad and pen*) How do you spell her last name?

CHUCK Who?

DR. DREYFUSS (*Looks at him, then points to FRAN*) This one. Why, what have you got in the kitchen?

CHUCK Oh. Kubelik . . . With two K's.
(CHUCK *stares at him*)

DR. DREYFUSS Where does she live?

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CHUCK You don't have to report this, do you, Doc?

P R O M I S E S ,

DR. DREYFUSS You ever hear of a thing called "police regulations"?

P R O M I S E S

CHUCK But she didn't mean it. It was . . . it was an accident.

DR. DREYFUSS (*Looking at him*) She tripped over the bottle and the pills fell in her mouth? What do you mean, an accident?

CHUCK I mean, she had too much to drink . . . she didn't know what she was doing . . . there was no suicide note or anything . . . Believe me, Doc, I'm not thinking about myself . . .

DR. DREYFUSS (*Mockingly*) Perish the thought.

CHUCK It's just that she's got a family . . . and there's the people in the office . . . the company . . . please, Doc, just look at her . . . She's really a wonderful girl . . .

DR. DREYFUSS (*He looks at CHUCK, then at the sleeping FRAN*) Well, as a doctor I guess I can't prove it *wasn't* an accident . . .

CHUCK Thanks, Doc.

DR. DREYFUSS (*He closes the pad*) But as another human being, don't walk up the same staircase I'm walking down! (*He picks up his bag, puts it on the table, packs and closes it*) You kids today think you can get away with anything. You don't care who you hurt as long as you have yourself a good time . . . Well, life doesn't work that way, believe me.

CHUCK I found that out, Doc.

DR. DREYFUSS (*Stops at the door*) And don't think just because I'm the older generation, I don't know what's going on. Experimentally, I took a trip on LSD.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CHUCK You did?

DR. DREYFUSS I had a better time in Miami Beach when it rained for two weeks . . .

(*He exits and CHUCK closes the door behind him. CHUCK crosses back into the room, behind the bed where FRAN is fast asleep. He pulls the cover around her. Then he gets his coat, fishes out the Christmas card from SHELDRAKE. He turns and looks at the audience*)

CHUCK Look, I'd like to say something on her behalf . . . Aside from one tiny illicit affair and one very unprofessional suicide attempt . . . there lies one of the most decent girls it's been my privilege to meet.

(*He takes the phone to the coffee table, sits on the table and starts to dial. An overhead spotlight comes up as CHUCK dials his phone. VOICES sing in the orchestra pit*)

VOICES

Christmas Day is here and so are we,
Time for children and presents
And Christmas tree happiness.

(*VOICES continue humming as SHELDRAKE steps into the spotlight answering a phone which he carries*)

SHELDRAKE Yes?

CHUCK (*On his own phone in his apartment. Softly*) It's me, Mr. Sheldrake. Chuck Baxter. I hate to disturb you but something important's come up . . . I think it would be a good idea if you could see me . . . at the apartment . . . as soon as possible . . .

SHELDRAKE On Christmas morning? What's this all about, Baxter?

CHUCK I didn't want to tell you over the phone . . . but that certain party. You know who I mean . . . I found her here last night . . . she'd taken an overdose of sleeping pills.

SHELDRAKE *What?*

HELEN SHELDRAKE (*Appears next to SHELDRAKE*) What is it, Jeff? Anything wrong?

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SHELDRAKE (*He covers the phone*) One of our employees had an accident. Nothing serious. (*Into the phone*) How bad is it?

P R O M I S E S ,

P R O M I S E S

CHUCK Well, it was touch-and-go there for a while, but she's sleeping it off now . . . I thought you might like to be here when she wakes up . . .

SHELDRAKE Well—of course I would—but I just can't get away . . . Listen, do you think there'll be any er . . . problems . . . I mean, with a doctor?

CHUCK No, he's a friend of mine and I kept your name out of it . . . So I think you're in the clear, trouble-wise.

SHELDRAKE Don't think I don't appreciate that, Baxter.

CHUCK Well, you know me. Loyal and resourceful . . .

SHELDRAKE And if you need anything, medicines, well, you know, I'll pay for everything.

CHUCK Right. I'll just put it on the bill with the Tom and Jerries . . . Is there any sort of message you want me to give her?

SHELDRAKE A message. Like what?

CHUCK Never mind. I'll think of something . . . Good-by, Mr. Sheldrake. (*He hangs up; the lights black out on CHUCK but remain on SHELDRAKE*)

SHELDRAKE Good-by, Baxter . . . and I really apprecia—
(*He realizes CHUCK has hung up. He puts down*

the phone, stands for a second, then exits. The voices sing)

VOICES

If Christmas Day is really in your heart
You don't have to save up all your love
To give once a year.
Try to give, learn to live
Each day like Christmas Day.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

(*It is later that morning. FRAN moves in the bed.
CHUCK enters with a tablecloth to set the table.
He looks at her*)

CHUCK Good morning.
(*He closes the door*)

FRAN (*She holds her hands over her eyes*) You wanna bet?

CHUCK (*Looking out the window*) Actually good afternoon. You slept all day. It looks like snow.

FRAN I don't think I could stand the noise.
(*She props herself a bit, not without discomfort*)

CHUCK Fresh Colombian coffee coming right up, each bean carefully selected by El Exigente himself.

FRAN (*She looks at him*) I didn't know this was your apartment . . . I'm sorry . . .

CHUCK You'll be a lot sorrier in a few minutes. I make the world's worst coffee—

FRAN I'm so ashamed. Why didn't you just let me die?

CHUCK (*He moves toward her*) Hey, what kind of talk is that? You were just emotionally distressed again. So instead of getting hiccups, you took a few sleeping pills . . .
(*He puffs up her pillow. The front door opens and DR. DREYFUSS enters*)

DR. DREYFUSS Anything unusual?

CHUCK (*He turns to him*) No. She's resting.

DR. DREYFUSS I meant with you. I expected to find six naked dancing girls feeding you grapes. (*He crosses to FRAN, lifts her hand to take her pulse. She looks at him*) Good afternoon. Remember me?

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FRAN (*She turns to him*) Yeah. You slapped me in the face last night.

PROMISES,
PROMISES

DR. DREYFUSS (*To CHUCK*) A bedside manner I never had. (*Lets go FRAN's arm*) If that's your pulse, I'm not crazy about it.

FRAN I'm alive. Doesn't that make you happy? What do I owe you?

DR. DREYFUSS (*Looking at the thermometer*) For your recovery, nothing. For my recovery, you couldn't afford it. (*Shakes the thermometer*)

FRAN Sure I can. I'm rich. I've got a hundred dollars here someplace. Where's my bag? (*She reaches into her purse and takes out the one hundred dollar bill*) Take it, Doctor. A hundred dollars is the going price for me these days.

DR. DREYFUSS (*Putting a thermometer in her mouth and crossing to flick ashes on the coffee table*) Use it to stock up on Campbell's soup. What you need is hot food and plenty of rest.

FRAN What I need is to be left alone. What's the world coming to when a person can't get off whenever he wants?

DR. DREYFUSS (*Crossing to the foot of the bed*) Shame on you. Shame on you for being young and pretty and sorry you're alive. I'm a general practitioner. You want sympathy, go to a specialist.

CHUCK She's just tired, Doc.

DR. DREYFUSS I don't know. No one today can take heart-ache any more. Where I was brought up, as a kid we got *misery* as a reward. Like I tell the people with gallstones, live with it a few days. It'll pass.

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Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

FRAN (*Looks at DR. DREYFUSS, a faint smile*) Thanks for the poetry, Doctor.

DR. DREYFUSS (*Mock heart attack*) Don't tell me, is that the beginning of a smile I see? Well, don't let it lay there like a lump on your lips, give birth to it. Give me a full-grown, healthy smile. The way I walked for you last night I deserve it.

FRAN I'm sorry, Doctor, it's the best I can do.

DR. DREYFUSS Then take my advice. (*He sings "A Young Pretty Girl Like You"*)

Put my glasses on on the top of your head
On the top of your head—you won't see a thing
And the less you see, the sooner you'll be
Smiling, laughing, and happy.

CHUCK (*Singing*)

Oh yes, the less you see the better you feel
The better you feel, the quicker you smile
And the quicker you smile, the sooner you'll be happy
Happy!

DR. DREYFUSS

And a young pretty girl like you,

CHUCK and DR. DREYFUSS

Pretty as she can be
Really should be happy,

CHUCK

Happy.

DR. DREYFUSS

Try to
Take my stethoscope, plug it into your ears
Plug it into your ears—you won't hear a thing.

When there's too much noise, nobody enjoys
Smiling, laughing, be happy.

CHUCK and DR. DREYFUSS

Oh yes, the less you see, the better you feel
The better you feel, the quicker you smile
And the quicker you smile, the sooner you'll be happy
Happy!

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And a young pretty girl like you,

P R O M I S E S ,

Pretty as she can be
Really should be happy,

P R O M I S E S

CHUCK

Happy.

DR. DREYFUSS

Try to
Open up your mouth, let me look at your throat
Let me look at your throat, don't you say a thing
'Cause the less you say the sooner you'll play
Lipstick, powder, and girl games.

CHUCK and DR. DREYFUSS

Oh yes, the less you see, the better you feel
The better you feel, the quicker you smile
And the quicker you smile, the sooner you'll be happy
Happy!

DR. DREYFUSS

And a young pretty girl like you

CHUCK

Why don't you take a look?

CHUCK and DR. DREYFUSS

Really should be happy,

CHUCK

Happy!

CHUCK and DR. DREYFUSS

Yes, a young pretty girl like you

With all you've been through
Really should be happy,

DR. DREYFUSS
Smiling,

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CHUCK
Laughing,

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

DR. DREYFUSS
Giggling,

CHUCK and DR. DREYFUSS
Happy!

(At the end of the song, DR. DREYFUSS and CHUCK are standing, each with one foot on a chair, the other on the table)

CHUCK Hey, look, Doc. She's smiling.
(FRAN covers her head)

DR. DREYFUSS Now I know what Albert Schweitzer felt like. (He gets his stethoscope and glasses, and begins to leave) I'll look in again tonight. (He clutches his heart, breathing hard) I can't catch my breath . . . Lucky for me I have hospitalization.

(He exits. CHUCK turns to FRAN and looks at her. She looks back at him)

FRAN You're not going to keep staring at me like that all day, are you?

CHUCK (Rising, he crosses to the bookcase) I'm sorry. I guess it's the practical nurse in me. Do you play gin?

FRAN Not well.

CHUCK Good. If there's anything I love it's a lousy gin rummy player with a hundred dollars. Feet off my table, please. Penny a point?

(DOBITCH and SYLVIA enter the stage outside the door of the apartment)

FRAN Why do people have to love people anyway?

CHUCK (*Shrugs*) We just don't know any better, I guess.

FRAN I read in a science fiction magazine that in the future we won't need love any more. It's going to become an obsolete emotion.

CHUCK Well, we certainly have a lot to look forward to, don't we? (*Looks at a card*) Do you want that Jack? (*She shakes her head "no"*)

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P R O M I S E S ,

FRAN Maybe he does love me . . . only he doesn't have the nerve to tell his wife.

(*She throws out another card*)

P R O M I S E S

CHUCK I'm sure that's the explanation.
(*He takes the card she threw out*)

FRAN You really think so?

CHUCK I really think so.
(*She takes another card and throws it out without looking*)

FRAN I don't . . . Oh, God, I'm so fouled up . . . You're a smart person, Chuck, tell me what to do.

CHUCK Well—my personal advice is not to throw out that other Jack.

FRAN (*Distracted*) I really don't want it.

CHUCK In that case, I knock with three. You lose.
(*He lays out his cards*)

FRAN Yeah . . . I guess I do.
(*She turns her head away from him into the pillow and quietly begins to cry again. CHUCK looks at her, gets up and pulls the cover over her, knowing she will soon cry herself to sleep. DOBITCH and SYLVIA are at the door. DOBITCH rings. CHUCK crosses and opens the door*)

DOBITCH Four o'clock, kid, aren't you supposed to be in Radio City Music Hall?

CHUCK (*Trying to keep him out*) What do you want?
You can't come in.

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DOBITCH (*Pushes his way in*) What's the matter with you? I made a reservation for four o'clock. (CHUCK closes the door, locking SYLVIA out) "You caught me at the right season, Mr. Dobitch," don't you remember?

(He sees FRAN in bed)

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SYLVIA Hey, what about me?

DOBITCH Well, well, well, who'd a thought it. Next time I'll know what to order in the Dining Room.

(DR. DREYFUSS appears in the vestibule. CHUCK and SYLVIA speak together)

CHUCK (*Points to the door*) SYLVIA Hey, come on, what Get out, Mr. Dobitch. are we waiting for? Open up, willya?

DR. DREYFUSS Mildred, you'll never believe it.
(He enters his apartment)

CHUCK (*Crosses to the door*) Did you hear what I said, Mr. Dobitch? Get out!

DOBITCH Your problem, kid, is that you run this place like the Long Island Rail Road. You've got schedules but you don't keep to them. (He hands him a champagne bottle) Merry Christmas. (He and SYLVIA exit. We hear DOBITCH in the vestibule) Let's go to Central Park.

CHUCK (*Looking at FRAN*) Don't worry. I'll tell them at the office that you were in the neighborhood and you slipped in the snow and came up to dry off . . . and that's maybe the worst story I ever heard.

FRAN But very sweet . . . You know, if I had any brains, Chuck Baxter, I'd have fallen in love with someone nice like you.

CHUCK (*Turns*) Cut it out, Chuck, you'll drive yourself crazy.

FRAN Did I say something wrong?

CHUCK Oh, my gosh, that was really her talking. (To **FRAN**) No, no, you said the rightest thing in the whole world. You couldn't have said anything righter if you tried. (*There is a blackout on the set with a spot remaining on CHUCK. He speaks to the audience*) All right, you all heard that. Don't deny it, I was standing right here. She said, "If I had any brains I would have fallen in love with someone nice like you" . . . meaning someone nice like me . . . Oh, I realize the fact that she just tried to kill herself over someone else means my position is still a little shaky . . .

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PROMISES,
PROMISES

(*Blackout. In a spotlight we see the THREE EXECs at a phone*)

KIRKEBY (On the phone) Hello, Ginger! Listen, I think I found a spot . . . it's a deserted tug boat on Pier Twenty-three . . . But Ginger . . .

(He hangs up)

EICHELBERGER Can't you think of anyplace?

VANDERHOF For crying out loud, will you stop whispering. It's like living with the Goddamned CIA.

EICHELBERGER (Grabs him) But tonight was supposed to be my night. What'll we do?

VANDERHOF Take your clammy, oversexed hands off me.

KIRKEBY I don't know, fellas. I'm getting tired of all this. Why don't we just go to a steam bath?

EICHELBERGER Are you crazy? They'd spot the girls there in a minute.

(*Blackout. FRAN is in bed; CHUCK is helping her into his bathrobe*)

CHUCK Listen, I don't want to seem gloomy, but what are you going to tell your family? About what happened?

FRAN I thought I'd just tell my father. He's hard of

hearing . . . My brother's a problem. He's six-feet-six with a Polish temper.

CHUCK (*Starting to make the bed*) Well, if you need a character reference, I'm your man.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

FRAN (*Looks at the guitar on the table*) Is this your guitar?

CHUCK I bought it second-hand three months ago, in another futile attempt to become the life of the party.

FRAN (*Picks it up*) Would you play something for me?

CHUCK In about two weeks. The blisters on my fingers haven't healed yet . . . Luncheon will be served as soon as I finish my housework.

FRAN (*At the sofa with the guitar*) Tell me, how come someone like you isn't married?

CHUCK Oh. Well, there was a girl I wanted to ask back home. Bertha Gosseman. I was so crazy about her I even thought her name was pretty.

FRAN What happened?

CHUCK She married Albert Mangassarian, my best friend. On their wedding day I tried to kill myself.

FRAN You?

CHUCK I was going to hang myself in the attic. My kid sister saved me.

FRAN She cut you down?

CHUCK No, she wanted to watch, I got embarrassed.
(FRAN strums the guitar)

FRAN Well. I guess there's a lesson in there we've both learned.

CHUCK What's that?

(FRAN and CHUCK sing "I'll Never Fall in Love Again")

FRAN

What do you get when you fall in love?
A guy with a pin to burst your bubble
That's what you get for all your trouble.
I'll never fall in love again
I'll never fall in love again.

477

What do you get when you kiss a guy?
You get enough germs to catch pneumonia
After you do he'll never phone ya.
I'll never fall in love again
I'll never fall in love again.

PROMISES,
PROMISES

Don't tell me what it's all about
'Cause I've been there and I'm glad I'm out
Out of those chains
Those chains that bind you
That is why I'm here to remind you.

What do you get when you fall in love?
You only get lies and pain and sorrow
So far at least until tomorrow

FRAN and CHUCK

I'll never fall in love again
I'll never fall in love again.

CHUCK

What do you get when you give your heart?
You get it all broken up and battered
That's what you get—a heart that's shattered.
I'll
Never fall in love again,
I'll
Never fall in love again.
Don't tell me what it's all about
'Cause I've been there and I'm glad I'm out
Out of those chains
Those chains that bind you.

FRAN

That is why I'm here to remind you.

FRAN and CHUCK

What do you get when you fall in love?
You only get lies and pain and sorrow
So for at least until tomorrow

FRAN

I'll

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

FRAN and CHUCK

Never fall in love again.

CHUCK

I'll

FRAN and CHUCK

Never fall in love again
I'll never fall in love again.

FRAN Are you still in love with Bertha Gosseman?

CHUCK Well, since she moved to Canada, had six kids and put on forty pounds, my fervor has waned . . . But she sends me a fruit cake every Christmas. We're having it for dessert. And after dessert you know what we're doing?

FRAN Well, how about going up to White Plains and letting the air out of Mr. Sheldrake's tires?

CHUCK No, after dessert we're going to finish that gin game . . . (*KARL rings the doorbell; CHUCK crosses to the door*) . . . so I want you to keep a clear head. (*Opens the door*) Because I don't want to . . . take advantage of you the way I did yesterday in bed!

FRAN Karl!

CHUCK Your brother? . . . How do you do!
(*KARL walks in menacingly*)

KARL Get dressed, I got the car downstairs.

FRAN Karl, how did you find me?

KARL I went to the office looking for you. Four executives in the Dining Room said I'd find you up here . . . Who's this?

CHUCK (*Friendly*) My name is C. C. Baxter, Mr. Kubelik, but you can call me Chuck. Can I call you Karl? . . . Ho, heh? . . . Okay . . . Well, Mr. Kubelik, let me say this—

KARL Get your clothes and let's go.

P R O M I S E S ,
P R O M I S E S

CHUCK Go where? . . . Oh, he wants you to get your clothes . . . Would Karl care for some coffee and fruit cake? . . .

KARL My advice to you is to shut up. You still got your teeth in your face because I trust my sister. If she tells me nothing went on here, that's good enough for me.

CHUCK Nothing went on here.

KARL Are you my sister?

FRAN Nothing went on here.

KARL That's good enough for me.

FRAN I'll get my clothes.

(FRAN goes into the bathroom and closes the door.
There is an awkward moment as CHUCK tries to escape the contemptuous gaze of KARL, but KARL persists)

CHUCK May I say one thing? . . . Your sister is really terrific! (KARL glares) No, I think I said the wrong thing . . .

(The front door opens and DR. DREYFUSS steps in)

DR. DREYFUSS Hi. How's the patient.

CHUCK Oh. I'm fine, Doc.

DR. DREYFUSS I mean Miss Kubelik.

KARL What's the matter with Miss Kubelik?

DR. DREYFUSS Who are you?

KARL Her brother.

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DR. DREYFUSS (*Takes a step back*) Oh.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

KARL Who are you?

DR. DREYFUSS Her doctor. His doctor. Just a doctor.

KARL Why does she need a doctor?

DR. DREYFUSS Er—ah! (*To CHUCK*) Tell him why she needs a doctor.

CHUCK Er—fruit cake. Too much fruit cake.

DR. DREYFUSS (*Nods*) An overdose!

CHUCK It comes from Canada. And it was a very bad year for Canadian fruit cake.

DR. DREYFUSS One of their worst.

CHUCK Oh, what's the use . . . She had an accident.

DR. DREYFUSS These things happen.

KARL What things? Hey, what kind of a doctor are you?

DR. DREYFUSS (*Shrugs*) General practice. Colds, virus—

CHUCK He gave her a shot and pumped her stomach out.

KARL What for?

(*FRAN comes out of the bathroom*)

FRAN Because I took some sleeping pills. But I'm all right now. So let's go.

KARL Not until I find out what went on here. Why did you take sleeping pills?

CHUCK On . . . on account of me. (KARL looks at him) I jilted her. I threw her over. (He smiles at FRAN, pleased with himself. Then turns to KARL) You're going to hit me, aren't you?

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KARL You know it, brother.

(KARL smashes his fist into CHUCK's stomach. CHUCK groans and stands there doubled over)

PROMISES,
PROMISES

FRAN Karl! (Then KARL finishes the job, smashing his fist into CHUCK's jaw, who goes sprawling across the room, over a chair and onto the floor) Stop it! Leave him alone.

DR. DREYFUSS (Looking on) Tell me if you're going to do that again. I want my wife to watch.

FRAN (Rushes to CHUCK on the floor) You idiot. You really are an idiot!

KARL (Opens the door) Let's go.

FRAN Good-by, idiot!

(She kisses him warmly on the cheek and exits)

DR. DREYFUSS (Bends down, looks at CHUCK) You know, Baxter, I was just thinking. If I had three more like you in the building, I could give up the rest of my practice.

(FRAN and KARL exit from the stoop. The EXECS emerge after them, dancing and singing)

We did the right thing, the proper thing,
What else were we to do?

If it was your sister,
I'd do the same for you.

(A YOUNG MAN crosses in front of them)

YOUNG MAN Happy New Year, Mr. Vanderhof.

VANDERHOF Happy New Year, kid.
(YOUNG MAN continues off and exits)

DOBITCH Who's that?

VANDERHOF A new boy in my department.

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DOBITCH Single?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

VANDERHOF Yeah.

DOBITCH With his own apartment?

VANDERHOF Yeah.

(They all look at each other, then dance off in
the direction of the YOUNG MAN as they sing)

We did the right thing, the proper thing,
What else was there to do?

(They exit)

Blackout

SCENE 3

483

The lights go up on SHELDRAKE's office at the left. SHELDRAKE enters and crosses to his desk; he looks at the papers and calls offstage.

PROMISES,
PROMISES

SHELDRAKE Miss Olson . . . (No answer . . . a little louder) Miss Olson. (MISS OLSON enters, carrying a sheet of paper with a check attached. He seems perturbed) I'm not taking you away from anything, am I?

MISS OLSON I'm sorry, I was just typing this up. (She puts it on his desk) It needs your signature. (He looks at it) By the way, shall I tell the cashier to dock Miss Kubelik's pay? She didn't come in today. (He looks up at her) Virus, do you think?

SHELDRAKE I don't know what you're implying, but I've been with my family for the past two nights. In addition to which I don't think it's any of your business.

(He signs the check and paper)

MISS OLSON I know, just typing, filing, and reserving you hotel space in Atlantic City . . . or is it West Sixty-seventh Street now?

SHELDRAKE (Glances at her) I think that'll be all, Miss Olson.

MISS OLSON You know what's going to happen to you some day? You're going to use up all the girls in the office . . . and you'll have to turn to IBM machines . . . That means you'll have to get a bigger car, Mr. Sheldrake.

SHELDRAKE The Christmas party is over. I think you'd better pull yourself together.

MISS OLSON You know . . . somehow I could adjust to the end of our affair by telling myself I still had a good-paying job. But I think when you tell that kid your interoffice fling is over she's going to head for the nearest gas pipe. She's not made of concrete like me.

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SHELDRAKE (*Gets up*) I've got a conference now. I think we'd better finish this discussion later.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

MISS OLSON If you enjoy talking to yourself, because I won't be here. I'm quitting as a Christmas present to myself. (*She picks up the papers from his desk*) You just signed my two weeks' severance pay.

SHELDRAKE (*Looks at her*) That's up to you, Peggy.
(*He starts to go*)

MISS OLSON Oh . . . In case you're worrying about anyone telling your wife about all this, I have one word of advice . . . worry.

(*He glares at her; the lights go off on the office set.
He turns and exits*)

Blackout

SCENE 4

485

The lights go up on CHUCK outside Lum Ding's Chinese Restaurant. CHUCK takes a note from his pocket, shows it, and addresses the audience.

PROMISES,
PROMISES

CHUCK (*Reads*) "Would like to have a drink with you five o'clock, Lum Ding's Restaurant . . . J. S. Sheldrake" . . . (*Puts the note in his pocket*) . . . Well, I can see a two-week vacation with pay coming up for being loyal, cooperative and pretty damned quiet about Christmas Eve . . . I wasn't going to come except I have something to say myself . . . How does this sound to you? Be honest. (*Clears his throat*) "Mr. Sheldrake, inasmuch as you seem to be in an inextricable position, to relieve you of any further pain or hardship, since you don't really want her anyway and I do, I would like to take Miss Kubelik off your hands . . . It would be the thing to do . . . solution-wise" . . . I like that—"inextricable"—(*He turns and goes into the restaurant, which lights up as he enters. It is decorated for New Year's Eve, although it's only about 5:00 P.M. CHUCK crosses to SHELDRAKE at the usual table*) Happy New Year, Mr. Sheldrake.

SHELDRAKE Hello, Baxter. Sit down. Can I get you anything?

CHUCK No, thanks. I'm on my way to someone's party.

SHELDRAKE Pretty?

CHUCK Well, if you like chunky middle-aged doctors. He's got a few interns that are anxious to meet me . . . Er, Mr. Sheldrake . . . inasmuch as you seem to be in an inextricable position—

SHELDRAKE But I'm not. At least not any more. If you were in the office about eight-fifteen this morning, you would have seen me arrive with two large suitcases.

CHUCK Going somewhere, sir?

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SHELDRAKE Temporarily to the New York Athletic Club. Mrs. Sheldrake and I have split up—

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CHUCK You mean—for good?

SHELDRAKE It's funny what can happen to a twelve-year-old marriage with one phone call from a jealous ex-secretary.

CHUCK Oh. I'm sorry.

SHELDRAKE So it looks like I'll be taking Miss Kubelik off your hands permanently. By the way, I'm not ungrateful for Christmas Eve. I was thinking about a two-week vacation, with pay.

CHUCK (*Empty*) Gee, I never expected that.

SHELDRAKE Anyway, I'm meeting Fran—Miss Kubelik—later tonight. I intend asking her to marry me.

CHUCK I see. Well, I guess you don't need any good luck, knowing how she feels about you. I'm sure you'll both be very happy.

SHELDRAKE I appreciate that, Baxter, especially after the way I must have sounded on the phone the other day. I imagine I impressed you as a Class A-One heel.

CHUCK Well, it's not my place—

SHELDRAKE It's all right. You can be honest.

CHUCK Okay. That was my impression. Class A-One heel.

SHELDRAKE I don't blame you, Baxter. My behavior that day was anything but admirable. But you understood, I couldn't help myself. My hands were tied.

CHUCK Well, maybe it was the kicking with your feet that I objected to.

SHELDRAKE I'll let that pass, Baxter. We've all been under a big strain this past week.

CHUCK That's very charitable of you, sir. I'll try to keep my place from now on . . . So, when is the happy day?

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SHELDRAKE Well, I'm not sure.

P R O M I S E S ,

CHUCK I mean, this week? This month? This year?

P R O M I S E S

SHELDRAKE I said I'm not sure. You know, these things—

CHUCK (*Nods*) —usually drag out for months . . .

SHELDRAKE That's right. They usually drag out for months.

CHUCK There's always a million details—

SHELDRAKE Exactly. All those damn details—

CHUCK And in the meantime you have no place to go with Miss Kubelik, so you'd like the key to my apartment again.

SHELDRAKE Well, I can't very well take her into the New York Athletic Club. And it's New Year's Eve, there's not a hotel room in town. So if I could just have it for tonight—

CHUCK (*Puts a key on the table*) Here you are, Mr. Sheldrake.

SHELDRAKE (*Picks it up*) Thanks, Baxter. (*CHUCK gets up*) I'm sorry to ask on such short notice but I didn't know until last night that Mrs. Sheldrake—Hey, Baxter, wait a minute. You gave me the wrong key. This is for the Executive Bathroom.

CHUCK Right, Mr. Sheldrake. I'm all washed up around here.

SHELDRAKE What are you talking about?

CHUCK You're not going to bring anybody up to my apartment.

SHELDRAKE I'm not bringing anybody—I'm bringing Miss Kubelik.

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CHUCK (*Leans forward, his voice rising*) Especially Miss Kubelik!

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SHELDRAKE Just a minute, Baxter. I've been pretty damn nice to you. You were handing me that key fast enough when you were getting raises and promotions in the other hand.

CHUCK Mr. Sheldrake, I refuse to work for a man who would make a Junior Executive out of anyone whose only qualification is an available *eighty-six fifty a month apartment . . .* Especially when that Junior Executive is hypocritical, opportunistic, and an indiscriminate streetwalker like me! HAPPY NEW YEAR! (*He storms out of the restaurant into the street. Lights dim on the restaurant.*) CHUCK speaks to the audience) I will NEVER—never, never, never, EVER get myself into a situation like that again. That's a promise! Oh, God, there's that word again! (*He sings*)

Promises, promises,
I'm all through with promises, promises now.
I don't know how
I got the nerve to walk out.
If I shout
Remember I feel free.
Now I can look at myself and be proud
I'm laughing out loud.
Oh, promises, promises,
This is where those promises, promises end.
I won't pretend
That what was wrong can be right.
Every night I'll sleep now.
No more lies.
Things that I promised myself fell apart
But I found my heart.
Promises, their kind of promises
Can just destroy your life.

Oh, promises, those kind of promises
Take all the joy from life.

Oh, promises, promises, my kind of promises
Can lead to joy and hope and love,
Yes, love.

(*He exits*)

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Blackout

P R O M I S E S ,

P R O M I S E S

SCENE 5

The voices of two couples are heard as they climb the steps to the vestibule.

INTERN Hey, Doc, where are you. We're here! This is the place.

DR. DREYFUSS (*Appearing at the door*) Mildred, they're here.

(*The two couples enter DR. DREYFUSS's apartment*)

DR. DREYFUSS (*To the last intern*) Where's the ice? You were supposed to bring ice.

(*Enters his apartment. In his apartment, CHUCK is packing his clothes into a suitcase. He looks up and sees the audience*)

CHUCK I'll be leaving in a few minutes so I guess I won't be seeing you any more . . . You've been very patient . . . Listen, my rent is paid up for the next two weeks, so if you need a place to stay—you know where to find the key.

(*DR. DREYFUSS's door opens across the hall*)

INTERN (*Offstage*) Where you going, Doc.

DR. DREYFUSS Be right back. (*CHUCK continues packing*. DR. DREYFUSS comes in) Hello, Baxter. You were supposed to come to my party and we're running short of ice so I thought I'd come to a professional. (*Looks around, whispers*) Who's playing tonight?

CHUCK It's okay, Doc. I'm alone.

DR. DREYFUSS On New Year's Eve? Don't kid me. Ten-to-twelve I'll be in here on another house call.

CHUCK (*Hands him a bottle*) There's no ice, Doc. I defrosted the refrigerator . . . Can you use a bottle of champagne?

DR. DREYFUSS Booze we don't need. Why don't you join us, Baxter? I got a psychiatrist, a cardiologist and a gynecologist, all right up your alley.

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P R O M I S E S ,

P R O M I S E S

CHUCK Thanks, but I've got to finish packing. I'm moving out tonight.

DR. DREYFUSS Moving out? You mean giving up the apartment? Where are you going?

CHUCK I'm not sure yet. All I know is I got to get out of this place.

DR. DREYFUSS Mildred'll be sorry to hear it. Once you moved in, she gave up the Late Show . . .

CHUCK Doc, in case I don't see you again . . . I just want to thank you for taking care of that girl.

DR. DREYFUSS Forget it. She looked like a nice kid. I wouldn't trust her with a bottle of aspirins, but a nice kid. Whatever happened to her?

CHUCK Oh, you know me when it comes to women. Easy come, easy go . . . (*We see FRAN come down the vestibule toward CHUCK's apartment*) . . . Come on, Doc. Let's kill the bottle for old-time's sake.

(*He pulls the cork, it pops with a loud bang.*
FRAN freezes at the door)

FRAN Oh, my God! Mr. Baxter!! (*She rushes to the door*) Mr. Baxter!!! (*She opens the door and rushes into the apartment as CHUCK stands there pouring champagne into DR. DREYFUSS's glass . . . CHUCK looks up and sees FRAN*) Oh!

CHUCK Miss Kubelik . . . What's wrong?

FRAN Nothing. I heard an explosion and I thought—well, I thought that—that you did something terrible.

CHUCK Like what?

FRAN Like leaving town without calling me.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

CHUCK I *am* leaving town and I didn't see much point in calling.

FRAN Try me.

CHUCK What's that?

FRAN I said try me.

CHUCK Hello? Is Miss Kubelik there? . . . I'd like to speak to Miss Kubelik, please . . . Fran?

(They just stare at each other, as if in a trance, almost oblivious to the fact that DR. DREYFUSS is standing there between them. He looks at FRAN)

DR. DREYFUSS It's for you.

FRAN Yes, Chuck? . . .

CHUCK I just wanted to say good-by . . . and wish you and Mr. Sheldrake all the happiness in the world.

FRAN What was that name again? My Eustachian tubes are closing up.

DR. DREYFUSS What did I tell you? It's not even ten-to-twelve yet.

CHUCK Mr. Sheldrake told me he was meeting you tonight to ask you to marry him.

FRAN He did?

CHUCK . . . What did you say?

FRAN What do you think I said?

DR. DREYFUSS (*Looks at CHUCK, then at FRAN. There is a pause*) I can't stand it! What did you say?

FRAN It suddenly hit me for the first time. Mr. Sheldrake and I don't have anything in common. He really doesn't like basketball.

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CHUCK (*Big smile*) He doesn't?

DR. DREYFUSS Who could marry anyone who doesn't like basketball? (*To CHUCK*) I'm glad you're not moving out. I'm getting used to you. Happy New Year . . . I said Happy— (*He waves his arm in disgust and exits*) Forget it, Mildred, he's busy again.

P R O M I S E S ,

P R O M I S E S

(*DR. DREYFUSS goes through the vestibule, into his apartment, and closes the door. CHUCK and FRAN have virtually been staring at each other all this time. FRAN picks up the deck of cards on the table, sits on the sofa and starts to deal as CHUCK stares at her*)

CHUCK (*Crosses to her right*) I love you, Miss Kubelik.

FRAN You'll have to speak louder. You want the Queen of Hearts?

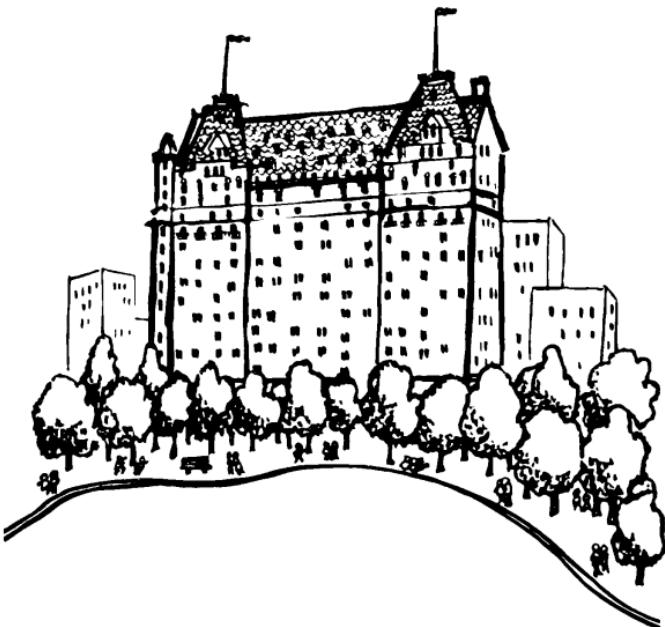
CHUCK (*Sitting right of her, picks up his cards*) I said, Miss Kubelik, that I absolutely adore you.

FRAN I heard you. Now shut up and play cards.
(*MUSIC swells*)

CURTAIN

Plaza Suite

Directed on Broadway by Mike Nichols



SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

VISITOR FROM MAMARONECK

A suite in the Plaza Hotel:—a late winter afternoon.

VISITOR FROM HOLLYWOOD

The same suite:—an early afternoon in spring.

VISITOR FROM FOREST HILLS

The same suite:—a Saturday afternoon in June.

VISITOR FROM MAMARONECK

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A suite at the Plaza Hotel on the seventh floor, overlooking Central Park. The set is divided into two rooms. The room at stage right is the living room. It is a well-appointed room, tastefully furnished with an entrance door at the extreme right and windows that look out over the park. A door leads into the bedroom, which has a large double bed, etc., and a door that leads to the bathroom. The room also contains a large closet.

PLAZA SUITE

It is about four in the afternoon in mid-December. The door of the suite opens and a BELLHOP enters and switches on the lights in the living room. He carries one small overnight bag.

KAREN NASH enters behind him. She wears a six-year-old mink coat which could use a bit of restyling, and a pair of galoshes. Underneath she wears an expensive suit which unfortunately looked better on the model in Bendel's than it does on KAREN. KAREN is forty-eight years old, and she makes no bones about it. C'est la vie. She is a pleasant, affable woman who has let weight and age take their natural course. A mink hat is plopped down on her head. She carries a box from Bendel's with her afternoon's purchases and a small bouquet of flowers.

The BELLHOP closes a half-open window in the living room, switches on the lights and puts the bag on the luggage tray. KAREN looks around the living room, crosses to the bedroom and puts her packages down on a chair. The BELLHOP goes to the bathroom and turns a light on in there.

KAREN follows him to the bathroom. The BELLHOP comes out of the bathroom, crosses the living room, opens the door to leave and hesitates in the doorway.

BELLHOP Everything all right, ma'am?

KAREN Wait a minute, I want to make sure this is the right room. (She crosses back into the living room) I know this is Suite 719, but was it always 719?

BELLHOP Yes, ma'am—719.

KAREN No, you don't understand. I know sometimes hotels change the numbers around, and this could have been 723 or 715. And it's very important I get 719.

(*She returns to the bedroom for the flowers*)

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BELLHOP I'm here two years, it's always been 719.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

KAREN Because you know about 826 at the Savoy-Plaza?

BELLHOP No, ma'am.

KAREN (*Unwrapping the flowers at a table behind the sofa in the living room*) Oh, well, they had a famous murder in 826. Then the next year there was a fire, and the year after that a husband and a wife committed suicide. Then no wanted 826. So they turned it into a linen closet. It's a fact, there is no more 826 at the Savoy-Plaza.

BELLHOP There's no more Savoy-Plaza either. They tore it down two years ago.

KAREN (*Looks at him incredulously, then goes to look out the window*) Oh, my God, look at that. There's no Savoy-Plaza . . . What's that monstrosity?

BELLHOP It's the new General Motors building.

KAREN (*Still looking out the window*) Shows you how often I get into the city. Well, listen, that's what they're doing today. If it's old and it's beautiful, it's not there in the morning . . .

BELLHOP (*Indicating the other windows*) Well, you still have a nice view from here.

KAREN (*Crosses to the other windows and looks out*) Mmmm, for how long? I guarantee you Central Park comes down in five years.

BELLHOP You think so?

KAREN (*Starts to put the flowers in a vase on the sofa table*) I know so. Five years from now you'll look out this window and you'll see one little tree and the world's largest A and P.

BELLHOP I don't think I'll be working here five years from now.

KAREN You mean the rumor is true?

BELLHOP What rumor?

KAREN That the Plaza is coming down too!

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BELLHOP This Plaza?

KAREN (*Puts the vase on the chest between the windows*)

PLAZA SUITE

I don't want to worry you or anything. It's just a rumor. No one knows for sure . . . But it's definitely coming down.

BELLHOP I didn't hear that.

KAREN (*Crossing to the bedroom, she takes a bag from the luggage rack and puts it on the dresser in front of the bedroom window*) Well, I'm sure they want to keep it quiet from the staff. The story is that they're going to tear down the Plaza and put up a fifty-two-story luxury hotel.

BELLHOP Why? This is a luxury hotel.

KAREN Yeah, but it's an *old* luxury hotel. Today it has to be new. Old is no good any more. (*Picks up the phone on the chest in the living room*) Well, all I really care about is tonight.

BELLHOP Yes, ma'am. Is there anything else?

KAREN Oh, wait a minute. (*She puts down the phone, runs to the bedroom for her purse and looks for change*) Don't tell me I don't have any change.

BELLHOP That's all right, ma'am.

KAREN (*Crossing back into the living room*) It's not all right. This is your living. (*Takes out a dollar bill*) Here you are.

BELLHOP (*Taking it*) Thank you very much.

KAREN I'll be very honest with you. I don't usually give dollar tips. But it's my anniversary. So I can be a sport.

BELLHOP (*With his hand on the door. He'd really like to go*) Oh, well, congratulations.

KAREN Thank you, dear. Twenty-four years ago tonight I spent my honeymoon in this room. This is 719, isn't it?

BELLHOP Yes, ma'am—719.

KAREN I bet you weren't even born twenty-four years ago, right?

BELLHOP No, I was born . . .

KAREN You know what I was? I was twenty-five. You know what that makes me today? . . . Some old lady.

BELLHOP Well, you certainly don't look like an old lady. (Smiles) . . . Well . . . have a pleasant stay, ma'am . . . and happy anniversary.

(He starts out the door)

KAREN Thank you, dear . . . and take my advice. Don't rush . . . but look around for another job. (The BELLHOP nods and exits. KAREN crosses to the bedroom and looks at herself in the full-length mirror on the closet door. She takes off her hat and puts it on the dresser) . . . You are definitely some old lady. (She crosses to the phone on the night table next to the bed, takes it and sits on the bed, still wearing her mink coat) . . . Room service, please. (She groans as she bends over to take off the galoshes) . . . Ohhhh . . . (Into the phone) . . . No, operator. I was groaning to myself . . . (Taking off her coat) Hello, room service? . . . Listen, room service, this is Mrs. Sam Nash in Suite 719 . . . I would like a nice cold bottle of champagne . . . That sounds good, is it French? . . . Fine . . . with two glasses and a tray of assorted hors d'oeuvres . . . but listen, room service, I don't want any anchovies . . . They always give you anchovy patties with the hors d'oeuvres and my husband doesn't eat anchovies and I hate them, so don't give me any anchovies . . . Instead of the anchovies, give me some extra smoked salmon, or you can split them up . . . half smoked salmon and half caviars . . . That's right. Mrs. Nash. 719 . . . No anchovies . . . (She hangs up) They'll give me anchovies. (She puts the phone back on the night table) Look at that. No more Savoy-Plaza. (Starts to take off the galoshes again. The telephone rings. There is one in each room. She gets up and picks up

the one next to the bed) Hello . . . (The phone in the living room rings again. Hastily she hangs up the bedroom phone and rushes to answer it) Hello? . . . Oh, Sam. Where are you? . . . Good. Come up. I'm here . . . What room do you think? . . . 719 . . . Remember? 719? Suite 719 . . . That's right! (She hangs up) He doesn't remember . . . (She rushes to the Bendel box and takes out a sheer negligée. She crosses to the mirror on the closet door and looks at herself with the negligée in front of her. She is not completely enchanted. The telephone rings. She puts down the negligée and rushes to the living room to answer it) Hello . . . (The phone in the bedroom rings again. She hastily hangs up the living room phone and rushes to answer it) Hello? . . . Oh, hello, Miss McCormack. . . . No, he's not, dear. He's on his way up. Yes, I will . . . It's not important, is it? . . . Well, he seemed so tired lately, I was hoping he wouldn't have to think about work tonight. (Glancing down at her feet) . . . Oh, my God, I still have my galoshes on . . . All right, I'll tell him to call. Yes, when he comes in. Good-by. (She hangs up and quickly bends over in an effort to remove her galoshes. She is having difficulty. The doorbell rings) . . . Oh, damn it. (Calls out) Just a minute! (The doorbell rings again. She is having much trouble with the right galosh) . . . You had to wear galoshes today, right? (She pulls her right galosh off but her shoe remains in it. The doorbell rings impatiently) Oh, for God's sakes . . . (She tries to pull her shoe out of the galosh but it is imbedded in there) All right, all right, I'm coming (She throws down the galosh with the shoe still in one galosh and her stockinginged foot. She crosses into the living room) Look at this, my twenty-fourth anniversary. (She "limps" to the door and opens it. SAM NASH stands there. SAM has just turned fifty but has made every effort to conceal it. He is trim, impeccably neat. His clothes are well tailored, although a bit on the junior-executive side. He carries an attaché case, a fine leather Gucci product. Everything about SAM is measured, efficient, economic. She smiles warmly) Hello, Sam.

(SAM walks brusquely past her, surveying the room)

SAM An hour and fifteen minutes I was in the god-damned dentist's chair . . .

(*He puts down his attaché case on the chair downstage of the door to the bedroom, and takes off his coat*)

KAREN (*Closes the door, still warmly*) How do you feel, Sam?

SAM Between his lousy dirty jokes and WQXR-FM, I got some headache. (*He crosses to the mirror over the chest in the living room and looks at his teeth*) Did anyone call?

KAREN Sam, do you remember this room?

(*Moving to him*)

SAM (*Still examining his teeth*) Well, two more caps and I'm through. (*He turns, baring his teeth at her*) What do you think?

KAREN (*Put her hands in front of her eyes to shield the glare*) Ooh, dazzling!

SAM You don't think they're too white, do you? (*Turns and looks in the mirror again*) Do they look too white to you?

KAREN No, no. Perfect. Very nice with the blue shirt.

SAM (*Still looking*) These don't stain, you know. A hundred years from now when I'm dead and buried, they'll be the same color.

KAREN Oh, good. You'll look wonderful. You don't remember this room, do you?

SAM (*Looks at his watch*) Four thirty already? The meeting must be over . . . Didn't anyone call?

(*Takes his coat and attaché case into the bedroom, putting the coat on the chest and the case on the bed*)

KAREN Miss McCormack, from the office . . . She wants you to call back.

SAM (*Looks at her, annoyed*) Why didn't you tell me?

KAREN We were busy talking about your white teeth. Happy anniversary, Sam.

(*Picks up a vase and crosses to the bedroom*)

SAM (*Not hearing her, into the phone*) Judson 6-5900
... What did you say? (*Sees her limp into the bedroom*) What's the matter with your leg?

KAREN (*Limping into the bathroom*) One is shorter than the other. Didn't you ever notice that? I've had it for years.

503

PLAZA SUITE

SAM (*Into the phone*) Lorraine? Mr. Nash. Let me have Miss McCormack, please. (*sam looks at himself in the closet mirror*) ... Well, that kills my barber's appointment today. Oh, could I use five minutes under the sun lamp. (*Into the phone. karen begins to sing in the bathroom*) Miss McCormack? Did Henderson call? ... Did he send the contracts? (*Places his hand over his ear to shut out karen's singing*) ... What about Nizer? ... I see ... (*He quickly takes a note pad from the night table and places it on the attaché case on the bed in front of him. He can't find a pencil. He snaps his fingers at karen. Still into the phone*) What does it look like? ... Ah huh ... ah huh ... (*He snaps his fingers at karen again*) A pencil ... pencil ... (*karen, rushing in from the bathroom, searches through the night tables on both sides of the bed and dresser. sam is still on the phone*) Very good. All right, give me the figures. (*He nods into the phone. karen still can't find a pencil. She limps hurriedly over to her purse on the sofa table in the living room. sam, into the phone*) ... It sounds right, but I've got to go over the estimates ... Tomorrow morning? That doesn't give us much time ... Wait a minute, give me those figures again ... (*He puts his hand over the phone, and whispers angrily*) Karen, for God's sakes, a pencil! (*karen is frantically looking through her purse. sam, into the phone*) ... One seventy-five escalating up to three and a quarter ... (*karen takes a lipstick out of her purse and hobbles quickly to sam. She hands it to him*) Hold it. (*He writes on the pad*) One seventy-five up to three and a quarter ... (*He stops writing and looks at karen*) That's a lipstick.

KAREN (*Taking the empty Bendel box from the chair*)
I don't have a pencil.

SAM Then why do you give me a lipstick?

KAREN Because I don't have a pencil. It's shocking pink but it writes.

(*Puts the box into the wastebasket next to the dresser*)

SAM (*He glares at her. Into the phone*) All right, I'm going to go over my figures here. If Henderson calls or the contracts come in, bring them right over. What's that? (*He laughs*) Yes! Well, it's like we were saying the other night, it's the old badger game. (*He laughs again*). **KAREN** *mocks his private joke with MISS McCORMAC as she hobbles back into the bedroom*) . . . All right, I'll speak to you later. And thank you, Miss McCormack. (*He hangs up*) A hundred and seventy-five thousand dollar contract, you give me a lipstick.

(*Puts the lipstick down on the table next to the chair*)

KAREN (*Hobbles out of the bathroom with the vase*) I'd have given you blood but it isn't blue.

SAM All right, don't test me, because I've got enough of a headache. (*He rubs his eyes with his thumb and index finger, opens the case and takes out a bottle of aspirin. She limps into the living room and places the vase on the desk. He looks at her*) And for God's sakes, Karen, stop hobbling around. I don't feel like listening to thump, thump, thump!

KAREN (*She sighs*) And happy anniversary to you.

SAM What?

KAREN Forget it.

(*Sits at the desk and takes off her other galosh and shoe*)

SAM (*Moving to the bathroom with the aspirin*) What are you talking about? . . . It's not our anniversary.

KAREN Today is December fourteenth, isn't it?

SAM Yes.

KAREN So. We're married twenty-four years today.

SAM (*Looks at her incredulously*) Are you serious?

KAREN We're not married twenty-four years today?

SAM No.

(Comes out of the bathroom with a glass of water
and takes an aspirin)

KAREN We're not married twenty-four years?

SAM No.

505

KAREN . . . We're not married?

SAM Tomorrow is our anniversary and we're married
twenty-three years.

PLAZA SUITE

(Puts the glass down on the dresser and moves
into the living room)

KAREN (Looks at him) . . . Are you sure?

SAM What do you mean, am I sure? I know when our
anniversary is. December fifteenth, we're married
twenty-three years. How can you make a mistake like
that?

KAREN All right, don't get so excited, and it's not such
a big mistake because I didn't get you a present . . .
You're sure it's not the fourteenth?

SAM I go through this with you every year. When it
comes to money or dates or ages, you are absolutely
unbelievable. (Turns, exasperated, and goes to the bed-
room) We were married December fifteenth, nineteen
forty-five . . .

KAREN Then I'm right. Twenty-four years.

SAM Forty-five from sixty-eight is twenty-three!

KAREN Then I'm wrong. (Shrugs) Math isn't one of
my best subjects.

SAM (Hanging his jacket over the dresser chair) This
isn't math, this is people's lives! (Moves back to
KAREN) How old are you?

KAREN What?

SAM It's a simple question. How old are you?

KAREN (She's reluctant to answer and moves to the
window) I don't want to play.

SAM I can't believe it. You really don't know how old you are.

KAREN I know how old I am. But you get me nervous. Promise you won't leave me if I'm wrong . . . I'll be forty-nine in April. (*sam stares at her in the disbelief, crosses back into the bedroom and wearily leans against the closet door. karen follows him*) . . . Isn't that right?

SAM No, but you're close.

KAREN I'm not going to be forty-nine?

SAM Not *this* April. *This* April you're going to be forty-eight. How the hell can you make a mistake like that? Can't you add?

(*Taking several contracts out of the attaché case*)

KAREN All right, don't talk to me like I'm a child. I'm a forty-eight-year-old woman.

SAM But the thing that infuriates me is that you make the mistake the wrong way. Why don't you make yourself younger instead of older, the way other women do?

KAREN Okay, I'm forty-seven. (*Throws herself on the bed and poses sexily*) So how do I look to you now?

SAM I've got work to do. I've got a very important meeting at eight o'clock in the morning.

(*Crosses to the desk and sits*)

KAREN (*Sitting up in bed*) Oh, come on, Sam, where's your sense of humor? I think it's cute as hell that I don't know how old I am.

SAM (*Starts to look over the papers*) I can't even think straight. I've had five meetings this morning, four teeth capped, and I haven't even had my Metrecal. (*He crosses to the phone in the living room*) I'd better eat something.

(*Picks up the phone*)

KAREN I just ordered hors d'oeuvres.

SAM Not for me. You know I'm on nine hundred calories a day. (*Into the phone*) Room service, please. (*He turns and looks in the mirror*) . . . My God, who

the hell is that? Will you look at my eyes? I have no pupils left. (*He turns to KAREN*) Come here. Look at this. Do you see any pupils?

KAREN (*Crosses and looks into the mirror*) Yes, Sam. I see two gorgeous pupils . . .

SAM (*Still looking in the mirror*) Where? Where? I don't have a pupil in my head. Would you get my eye drops out of the case . . .

507

PLAZA SUITE

KAREN (*Crossing to the case on the bed*) I think you've been overworking, Sam. I haven't seen you two nights this month.

SAM (*Stretches his arms*) I really could use some sun. And about a month of sleep.

KAREN (*Searching through the case*) Hey, why don't we go down to Jamaica for a couple weeks? Just the two of us. We haven't done that in years.

SAM (*Into the phone, pacing*) Oh, hello, room service, where were you? . . . Listen, I'd like a plate of cold roast beef, medium rare, very lean. You know what very lean is? . . . No, it doesn't mean no fat . . . It means *absolutely* no fat . . . and I want a salad, *no dressing*, a half grapefruit and a pot of black coffee . . . And I'd appreciate it as soon as possible . . . Wait a second. (*To KAREN, who has entered the living room with eye drops*) Where are we again?

KAREN 719, Plaza Hotel, New York, twenty-three, New York.

SAM (*Into the phone*) 719 . . . As soon as you can. (*He hangs up, moves down to KAREN at the couch*) What's wrong with you today?

KAREN You wouldn't believe it, but fifteen minutes ago I was the happiest woman on earth . . . Sit down, I'll put your pupils back in.

SAM (*Hand extended*) I can do it myself.

KAREN I know you can, Sam, but I like to put your eye drops in. (*He lies down on the sofa with his head on the arm and she moves to look down at him from*

the side of the sofa) It's the only time lately you look at me.

(She poises the eye dropper)

SAM (Looks up at her) . . . I'm sorry.

KAREN You are?

SAM I haven't been nice to *anyone* the past couple of weeks.

KAREN You sounded swell to Miss McCormack.

SAM Put the eye drops in.

KAREN (Bending down over the arm of the sofa) First give an old lady a kiss.

(He gives her a soft, gentle kiss)

SAM I give you my permission to hate me.

KAREN (Straightens up) I'll save it for later. Open your gorgeous pupils.

(KAREN fills the dropper with fluid)

SAM Eight months I've been working on this deal and suddenly today my two top men in the office come down with the flu and I've got to do everything myself.

(She puts the drops in his eye. He jumps up) Aagh!

(He grabs his eye in pain)

KAREN What's the matter?

SAM (Sitting up) You drop them in, you don't push them in.

KAREN I'm sorry, you moved your head.

SAM I moved my head because you were stabbing my eyeball. (Gets up and peers in the mirror over the fireplace) Oh, damn it!

KAREN All right, don't panic, Sam, I'm sorry.

SAM Why do you think they call it a dropper? If they wanted you to stab people, they would call it a stabber. (Grabs it from her) Give it to me, I'll do it myself.

(Lies back down on the sofa and begins to put drops in both eyes)

KAREN You mean that's the end of being nice to each other?

SAM I don't know what we're doing in a hotel anyway.

KAREN What's the Plaza got to do with my stabbing your eyeball?

SAM Because it's insane being here, that's why. I've got work to do tonight, I don't know how I'm going to concentrate.

509

P I A Z A S U I T E

KAREN You've got to sleep *someplace* tonight. The painter says it's going to take two days for the house to dry.

SAM Yes, but why *now*? Do it in the spring. This is my busy time of the year.

(SAM puts the eye drops on the coffee table and crosses to the bedroom)

KAREN I know, but it's not the painter's busy time of the year. In the spring he doesn't want to know you.

SAM Why didn't you ask me first?

(KAREN follows him into the bedroom)

KAREN I never see you . . . I saw the painter.

SAM You could have checked with my secretary.

(He goes into the bathroom)

KAREN I did. She said go ahead and paint the house.

(She takes his coat from the bed and hangs it in the closet)

SAM'S VOICE Of all times of the year. Did you bring my things? Toothbrush? Pajamas?

KAREN I brought your toothbrush.

SAM'S VOICE You forgot my pajamas?

KAREN (Plops down on the bed) I didn't forget them, I just didn't bring them.

(SAM comes out of the bathroom wiping his eyes on the towel)

SAM Why not?

KAREN Because this is Suite 719 at the Plaza and I just didn't think you'd want your pajamas tonight.

SAM You know I can't sleep without pajamas.
(He returns to the bathroom)

KAREN *(Yelling after him)* I took that into consideration . . .

510

SAM What?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

KAREN Never mind. They've got shops in the lobby.
(Gets up and picks up the phone next to the bed)
Should I send for their catalog or will you take pot luck?

SAM Heh. You know what a pair of pajamas would cost at the Plaza? Forty, fifty dollars.

KAREN You want me to send a bellhop to Bloomingdale's?
(Hangs up the phone)

SAM *(Comes out of the bathroom)* I don't understand you. One lousy little bag is all you had to pack.

KAREN Forgive me. It's my busy time of the year.

SAM Karen, do me a favor. Don't get brittle. *(Crosses to the desk in the living room)* I'm very shaky right now and one good crack and I go right to the dry cleaner's . . . Boy, could I use a nice, big, cold double martini.

(He sits and begins to examine the contracts)

KAREN *(Follows him into the living and leans on the chest of drawers)* Don't get angry, but can I make a suggestion? Why don't you have a nice, big, cold double martini?

SAM Are you serious? You know how many calories are in a double martini?

KAREN *(Shrugs)* Four or five million?

SAM You know my metabolism. One double martini, and right in front of your eyes I get flabby.

KAREN You used to get sexy.

(She takes a sheet from a pile of stationery in the chest)

SAM *(Gets up with the papers to sit in more comfort on the sofa)* Well, now I get flabby. Unless I watch my-

self like a hawk . . . (*As he passes the fireplace mirror, he pauses, admiring his waistline*) which I think I manage to do.

(*Sits on the sofa*)

KAREN (*She starts to fold the piece of stationery*) I like you flabby.

SAM What does that mean?

511

KAREN (*Still folding the paper*) It means I like you flabby. I admit you look like one of the Pepsi generation, but it seems a little unnatural to me. A man of your age ought to have a couple of pounds of skin hanging over his belt.

PLAZA SUITE

SAM Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you.

KAREN I'm not disappointed, I'm uncomfortable. I watch you when you get undressed at night. Nothing moves. You're vacuum packed. When you open your belt I expect it to go like a can of coffee—Pzzzzz!

(*She continues folding*)

SAM Do you think it's easy with my metabolism to keep my weight down? Do you know what it's like to have a business luncheon at the Villa Capri and watch someone slop down a bowl of spaghetti and I'm munching on a hearts of lettuce salad?

KAREN My compliments to your restraint.

SAM I go through torture to maintain my weight.

KAREN I have nothing but admiration for your waistline.
(*She is through folding*)

SAM But you like me flabby.

KAREN We all have our little perversions.

SAM Can we drop the subject?

KAREN Like a baked potato.

SAM Thank you.

KAREN You're welcome.

(*She aims her finished paper airplane across the room and lets it fly*)

SAM (*Gets up and paces angrily*) . . . Why do you like me flabby?

KAREN Is the floor open again?

SAM No. Forget it.

KAREN It's forgotten.

SAM What was I just doing?

512

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

KAREN Watching yourself like a hawk.

(*She crosses to the bedroom and begins to fold her negligée at the dresser. SAM returns to the sofa. There is a silence. Finally*)

SAM Look, I just want to say one more thing and then the discussion is closed. (*KAREN puts down the negligée and crosses back to the sofa in the living room*) I'm at the athletic club three, four times a week watching men at least ten years younger than me huffing and puffing trying to sweat off a couple of ounces that goes right back on after the cocktail hour. Now maybe you don't consider it a monumental achievement, but my weight hasn't changed in six years. I'm still one seventy-seven on the scale.

KAREN So am I. (*Crosses to the bedroom and puts the negligée away in the chest*) Now you know why I like you flabby . . . The subject is closed.

(*She crosses to the chair and sits. SAM, upset, remains in the living room. They contemplate the floor a few seconds*)

SAM . . . Hey, Karen.

KAREN Yah, Sam . . .

SAM Let's not fight.

KAREN It's all right with me, Sam.

SAM . . . Let's be nice to each other.

KAREN Okay . . . Who goes first?

(*SAM gets up and starts for the bedroom. He stops at the door . . . trying to find words*)

SAM Karen . . .

KAREN (Looks up) Yes, Sam?

SAM (This doesn't seem to be the time to bring up what-

ever is on his mind) Nothing . . . I'm going to do a little work, okay?

(He goes back into the living room and sits on the sofa)

KAREN (Still sitting. Without malice) You don't even remember this room, you louse.

513

SAM What's that?

KAREN (Gets up and crosses into the living room) I may not know how old I am, but I sure as hell remember we spent our honeymoon night in Suite 719 at the Plaza Hotel and this is definitely 719 because I just tipped the bellhop an entire dollar.

PLAZA SUITE

SAM (Looks at the room for the first time) Was this the room?

KAREN Oh, Christ.

(She sits on the arm of the sofa)

SAM (Gets up and looks about) Wait a minute, I think you're right. (He looks into the bedroom) Sure, this looks like the suite. Only it was decorated differently. This room was blue.

KAREN (Going into the bedroom) That was you. You were in the Navy. The bedroom was green.

SAM I think you're mistaken. The bedroom was blue.

KAREN You're probably confusing it with some other honeymoon . . . (Sitting on the bed) Hey, Sam, remember we had dinner here in the bedroom?

SAM. No

KAREN Yes. We had dinner here in the bedroom. Do you remember what we had?

SAM For dinner? Twenty-three years ago?

KAREN I remember. You remember too. Take a guess.

SAM Karen, I don't remember.

KAREN Yes, you do. Think about it a second.

SAM I thought about it. I don't remember.

KAREN We had a bottle of champagne and a tray full of hors d'oeuvres. And we left all the anchovies in the drawer.

(*Indicates the night table*)

SAM Oh.

(*Crosses and looks out the living room window*)

KAREN See. It's coming back to you. (*Notices him looking out the window*) If you're looking for the Savoy- Plaza, it's not there.

(*She goes to the bedroom window and follows his gaze*)

SAM (*Looking out the window*) I'm looking at the Pierre.

KAREN There it is.

SAM . . . Karen.

KAREN What?

SAM (*Still looking out the window*) It was 819. (*KAREN Steps back from the window and looks at SAM. SAM turns and looks at her*) We were in 819, not 719.

KAREN (*She glares at him and grits her teeth with hostility*) You're wrong!

SAM I'm not wrong, I'm right. We were in 819. I'm right.

KAREN (*Angry*) Don't keep saying you're right like you're right. You're wrong. We were in 719.

SAM I'll prove it to you. Come here. (*KAREN joins him at the living-room window*) Remember, I had my binoculars, we were watching that couple getting undressed in the Pierre? They were on the eighth floor. I remember because we were looking for them the next night. We called them "The Couple on the Eighth Floor."

KAREN I don't know what you called them, I called them "The Couple on the Seventh Floor."

(*She walks away angrily into the bedroom*)

SAM Look, it's pointless to argue about it. It's not important.

KAREN (*From the bedroom*) If it's pointless, then why
are you pointing it out?

SAM Because you made an issue of it.

KAREN (*Crossing to the bedroom door*) Maybe I made
an issue of saying we were in 719, but *you* made an
issue of proving to me we *weren't* in 719.

515

SAM All right, Karen.

(*He walks away to the fireplace*)

PLAZA SUITE

KAREN Don't tell me, "All right, Karen." If I thought
it was 719, why didn't you have the decency to let me
just go on in my ignorance and think it was 719?

SAM Okay. Okay. I'm sorry. It was 719.

KAREN Aw, forget it. It was 819.

(*Moves back into the bedroom*)

SAM (*Rushing into the bedroom*) No, no. As a matter
of fact, you're right. I just remembered. It really was
719.

KAREN I don't want it 719. I want it 819 . . . Look,
why don't you go inside and lose some weight? (*That
was a nasty remark. SAM glares at KAREN, then goes into
the living room, reassures himself with a glance at his
waistline in the fireplace mirror, picks up his work
papers and sits. KAREN realizes what she's done. She
crosses to the living room and embraces him*) I'm
sorry, Sam. (*SAM nods his head and looks at his papers.*
KAREN moves around the sofa) . . . We're some lousy
couple, aren't we? . . . Aren't we?

SAM. (*Doesn't look up*) Mmm.

KAREN Mmm what?

(*Sitting on the arm of the sofa*)

SAM (*Looks up*) Mmm, yes, we're some lousy couple.

KAREN (*Without malice*) That's what I said. First
thing we agreed on today.

SAM Look, Karen, I really don't mean to be rude, but
I *must* work on these estimates tonight. You under-
stand.

KAREN Sure, I understand.

SAM I explained to you that Sid and Walter suddenly came down with the flu—

KAREN It's all right, Sam. You're excused . . . (She wanders aimlessly about the room. Catching sight of herself in the mirror over the chest, she examines her figure and then decides to do some exercises, which she quickly gives up. She sits on the arm of the sofa next to SAM) Do you have any good estimates for me to read?

AM Isn't there anything to read in the bedroom?

KAREN (Shrugs) "Check-out time is three o'clock." That's all I could find . . . Don't worry about me. I'll find something to do.

(SAM goes back to his papers. KAREN puts her arms around his shoulders and rocks him playfully from side to side, much to SAM's displeasure. Suddenly she releases him, goes to the front door, opens it and goes into the hall)

SAM What are you doing?

KAREN (Coming back into the room) Looking for the waiter.

SAM Call him up.

KAREN I thought I'd look in the hall first. Gives me something to do. (She goes back out into the hall) Nope, don't see him. (Comes back in and closes the door) In five minutes I'll call. See? I'll alternate them.

SAM Karen, please.

KAREN (Crosses to him and takes his arm) Oh, come on. Forget your crummy old papers and take me to a dirty movie. (Tries to pull him out of the sofa) Come on, Sam. Let's go.

SAM Stop it, Karen.

KAREN You know what's playing on Sixth Avenue? *Cat House Confidential* and *Ursula the Slut*. I passed it in the cab, I swear on my mother's life.

SAM Don't be ridiculous.

KAREN (*Kneeling by the sofa*) Are you afraid we'll be recognized? We'll buy beards in the five-and-ten.

SAM If you want to go, go yourself.

KAREN What happens if I get picked up?

SAM Call me and I won't wait up for you.

517

KAREN (*Hugging him*) Oh, good, you've got your sense of humor back. All right, just take a walk with me. A ten-minute walk and I'll leave you alone.

PLAZA SUITE

SAM Maybe later. We'll see.

KAREN (*Getting up and pacing*) No movies . . . no walk. (*She sits on top of the chest of drawers and picks up What to Do in New York magazine and skims through it. There is a silence. Finally*) Feel like going back to the house and watching the paint dry? (*SAM, at the end of his patience, gets up with the papers and moves into the bedroom*) . . . I'm just trying to think of something we can do together.

(*The doorbell rings*)

SAM (*Pacing in the bedroom*) Shall I get it, or is that something you'd like for us to do together?

KAREN Listen, I'll even take nastiness. It's not much, but it's a start.

(*KAREN crosses to the door and opens it. It's the WAITER with the food on a roller table. He is a middle-aged Puerto Rican*)

WAITER Good evening.

KAREN (*Smiles*) Hello.

(*The WAITER rolls the table in*)

WAITER Would you like the table near the window?

KAREN (*Moves toward the bedroom*) Sam, would you like the table near the window?

SAM (*Disinterested*) It doesn't make any difference.

KAREN (*Sweetly, to the WAITER*) It doesn't make any difference.

WAITER (*Leaving the table up near the window*) Shall I leave it here?

KAREN Sam, should he leave it there?

SAM (*Throwing the contract on the bed and moving to the doorway*) Here, there, anywhere, it doesn't make any difference.

518

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

KAREN (*Shrugs, smiles at the WAITER*) Here, there, anywhere. It doesn't make any difference.

WAITER (*Takes a chair from the desk and puts it to the right of the table*) Yes, Ma'am.

(*He gets the armchair from the right of the sofa and brings it to the table*)

SAM (*To the WAITER*) You don't have to set up the chairs.

KAREN (*To the WAITER*) You don't have to set up the chairs.

WAITER Yes, Ma'am.

(*He starts to put the armchair back*)

SAM All right, leave them, you've done it already.

KAREN Yes, why don't you just leave the chairs. They're all set up.

(*The WAITER puts the chair back at the table*)

SAM Can I have the bill, please?

WAITER Yes, sir.

(*Takes the bill and a pencil to SAM. KAREN looks at the tray of hors d'oeuvres on the table*)

KAREN (*Sweetly*) Oh, look at all the anchovies.

SAM (*Signing the bill*) Didn't you tell them you didn't want anchovies?

WAITER (*To KAREN*) You didn't want anchovies?

KAREN (*Doesn't want more trouble*) No, no. I asked for anchovies. I'm a very big fan of anchovies.

SAM (*Hands the bill to the WAITER*) That'll be all, thank you.

KAREN Yes, that'll be all, thank you.

WAITER And thank you.

(*Crosses to the door*)

KAREN (*Looks at the table*) Wait a minute. The champagne. Where's the champagne?

WAITER No champagne? (*Looks at the check*) You're right. They forgot the champagne.

KAREN But the anchovies they remembered.

SAM (*Returning to the bedroom*) I can't drink anything now, I've got work to do. What do you need a whole bottle of champagne for?

519

PLAZA SUITE

KAREN It's our anniversary. (*To the WAITER*) It's our anniversary.

WAITER Oh, congratulations.

KAREN (*Sitting on the arm of the chair at the table*) Thank you. We're married twenty-three or twenty-four years today or tomorrow.

WAITER Then you want the champagne?

KAREN With two grown children in college.

WAITER Oh? That's wonderful.

KAREN (*Shrugs*) You think so? He's flunking out and she's majoring in dirty clothes.

SAM (*Greatly irritated, moves back to the living room*) He's not flunking out. Why do you say he's flunking out? (*Controls himself*. *To the WAITER*) That'll be all, thank you.

WAITER If you don't want the champagne, I'll cross it out of the bill.

SAM She doesn't want the champagne. Cross it off the bill.

(*Crosses back to the bedroom*)

KAREN (*To the WAITER*) I want the champagne. Don't cross it off the bill. Bring me a bottle and one glass.

WAITER Yes, Ma'am.

SAM (*From the bedroom*) That'll be all, thank you.

KAREN Yes, that'll be all, thank you.

WAITER (*Opening the door*) When you want me to take the table, just ring.

KAREN (*Moving to the waiter*) Yes, I'll ring when I want you to take the table.

WAITER Thank you . . . And again, congratulations.
(*He exits. SAM crosses to the table and takes the cover off a dish*)

520

KAREN (*At the mantel*) . . . Did you hear that, Sam? We're being congratulated on being married to each other.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

SAM (*Disgusted, slams the cover back on the dish*) I asked for lean roast beef. That is not lean roast beef. (*Moves to the sofa and sits, taking a contract from the coffee table*)

KAREN (*Contemplatively*) You know how many people we know who are still married as long as us? One other couple. The Shelley's . . . The most boring people I ever met.

SAM (*Cannot contain himself any more*) Why do you talk to the waiter like that?

KAREN Like what?

(*Sits at the table and begins to serve herself*)

SAM Like you've known him for twenty years. You just met him. He walked in here two minutes ago with fatty roast beef. It's none of his business how our son is doing in school.

KAREN I was just having a conversation. I get lonely, I like to talk to people.

SAM He's a waiter. Talk to him about food.

KAREN I did something wrong again. I'm sorry, Sam. When he brings the champagne I'll hide behind the drapes.

SAM You don't have to hide. Just don't tell him our personal problems, that's all.

KAREN What should I do, lie?

SAM Certainly, lie. Everybody else does. Tell them you have a beautiful and devoted daughter. Tell them you have a brilliant son who's on the dean's list. Tell them you're only forty-two years old.

KAREN There's no point to it. In two years I'll be fifty.
Who's going to like me better if I'm only forty-two?

SAM You don't have to revel in it like it's some kind of
an accomplishment.

KAREN I'm not insane about getting older. It happens
to everyone. It's happened to you. You're fifty-one
years old.

SAM (*Nods his head in exasperation*) That's the difference
between us. I don't accept it. I don't have to
accept being fifty-one. (*Getting up and moving to her*)
I don't accept getting older.

KAREN Good luck to you. You'll be the youngest one
in the cemetery.

SAM We can't even have a normal discussion any more.
(*He stalks into the bedroom, closes the door and
stretches out on the bed*)

KAREN Accept being fifty-one and I'll have a normal
discussion. (*Stops as SAM closes the door*) . . . Aren't
you going to have your dinner? (*Gets up and examines the plate of meat. Holds up a piece to the bedroom door and calls to SAM*) Sam, I found some very
lean roast beef. (*She nibbles on a piece*) Come inside
and see how thin I'm getting. (*The doorbell rings*) . . .
Hey, come on. The champagne is here. (*She opens the door to the bedroom and calls in*) If you don't come
out, I'll tell the waiter you wear dentures. (*She crosses and opens the front door. JEAN MCCORMACK stands there. She is SAM's secretary. She is a trim, attractive woman about twenty-eight. She is neatly dressed, bright, cheerful and smilingly efficient*) . . . Oh! Hello,
Miss McCormack.

JEAN Hello, Mrs. Nash. I hope I'm not disturbing you.

KAREN No, no, not at all. Mr. Nash and I were just
sitting around, joking. Come in.
(*Still holding the roast beef in her hand*)

JEAN Thank you. (*She enters the room, closing the door behind her*) I hate to barge in this way, but I
have some papers that need Mr. Nash's signature im-
mediately.

KAREN Certainly. (*Calls out*) Sam. It's Miss McCormack. (*To JEAN*) It is Miss McCormack now, isn't it?

JEAN (*Taking several contracts out of her brief case*) It was Mrs. Colby last year. This year it's Miss McCormack again.

KAREN (*Sitting on the arm of the sofa*) Oh. You're lucky you can remember. I've been married so long, if I got divorced, I'd have to make up a maiden name . . . Have you had your dinner yet?
(*Indicates the roast beef in her hand*)

JEAN (*Laying out some contracts on the coffee table in front of the sofa*) I don't have dinner, thank you.

KAREN No dinner? Ever?

JEAN (*Getting her glasses and a pen from her purse on the console table behind the sofa*) I have a large breakfast, a moderate lunch and a snack before going to bed. On this job I've worked late so often, I had to readjust my eating routine. Now I'm used to it.

(SAM gets up from the bed and moves into the living room)

KAREN Oh. Well, I can understand that. I miss a lot of dinners with Mr. Nash too.

SAM Oh, hello. You got them, huh?

(Sits on the sofa and examines a contract)

JEAN Just came in. All ready for signature.

KAREN (*To JEAN*) How about some black coffee? Or would that fill you up?

JEAN Black coffee would be fine, thank you.

KAREN One black coffee coming up. Sam, would you like some black coffee?

SAM No.

KAREN That's no black coffee and one black coffee.

(KAREN crosses to the table; SAM is looking over the contracts. JEAN sits next to him. KAREN pours coffee)

SAM Why is there an adjustment on this figure?

JEAN (*Looks at it*) There was a clerical omission on the Cincinnati tabulations. It didn't show up on the 1400 but I rechecked it with my own files and made the correction. (*Points to respective pages of the contract*) So that item 17B should read three hundred and twenty-five thousand and disregard the figure on 17A.

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KAREN Cream and sugar?

PLAZA SUITE

JEAN No, thank you.

SAM But this should have been caught on the IBM.

JEAN It should have, but it wasn't. Obviously it wasn't fed properly.

KAREN No cream and no sugar or no cream and yes, sugar?

JEAN No cream and *no* sugar.

KAREN So it's yes, no cream and no sugar.

SAM Did you call this to Purcell's attention?

KAREN (*Handing a cup to JEAN*) Would you like some pastry or cookies? I could call down. They have beautiful pastry and cookies here.

JEAN This is fine thank you. (*To SAM*) Mr. Purcell says this happened once before this month. He can't pin it down until he rechecks the whole 66 file.

KAREN (*Leaning on the console table behind the sofa*) You're sure? A sandwich? A Welsh rarebit?

JEAN No, I'm really quite happy, thank you. (*Takes saccharine from her purse and puts it in the coffee*)

SAM Well, I'm just going to have to go over this whole thing tonight with Howard. If we give Henderson any room for doubt, we can blow our entire presentation.

JEAN (*Sips the coffee*) I told him there was a possibility of this, so he made plans to stay in town tonight.

SAM Damn! Of all nights to have this happen. (*Putting down the contract*) What time is it now?

JEAN (*Looks at her watch*) Ten past five.

KAREN (*Looking over JEAN's shoulder*) Ten past five.

SAM All right, you tell Howard I'll meet him in the office between six fifteen and six thirty. Tell him I want to see every one of last year's 1400 forms.

524

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

KAREN (*Moving around the sofa to SAM*) You're going to the office? Tonight?

SAM It can't be helped, Karen. (*JEAN puts her coffee cup down*) We're having that same damned trouble with the computer again.

KAREN I could go with you. Maybe all it needs is a little dusting.

SAM Something in that office sure as hell needs dusting. (*Getting up and moving to the bedroom. JEAN gathers up the contracts and moves to put them in the brief case at the console table*) All right, Miss McCormack, why don't you hop in a cab now and get started on these figures with Howard? I just want to clean up and I'll meet you in about twenty minutes.

JEAN Yes, sir.

SAM I hope I'm not ruining any plans you had for tonight.

JEAN When I saw the figures this morning, I expected it. (*Closes the case. SAM takes a bottle of pills from his attaché case and crosses to the bathroom*) Mrs. Nash, thank you very much for the coffee.

KAREN You really should eat something. You'll faint right over the IBM machine.

JEAN (*Opening the front door*) I'll be all right.

KAREN (*Moving to her above the sofa*) It's a pity you can't stay two more minutes. I just ordered champagne. Can I tell her why, Sam?

SAM (*Returns from the bathroom, having taken pills. Throws the pills back into his case*) What's that?

(*Drinks from a glass on the dresser. Takes his jacket from the back of the chair and puts in on*)

KAREN Well, I'm not supposed to go around blurting these things out, but it's our twenty-third anniversary . . .

JEAN Oh? I didn't know. Congratulations.

KAREN (*To JEAN, but for SAM's benefit*) Thank you . . . Yes, life has been very good to me. I have a beautiful and devoted daughter, a brilliant son who's on the dean's list, I'm forty-two years old, what more can I ask?

525

PLAZA SUITE

SAM (*Moving into the living room*) Karen, Miss McCormack has to get back to the office.

(SAM goes back into the bedroom, takes hair-brushes from an overnight bag and brushes his hair in front of the closet mirror)

KAREN Oh, I'm sorry. (*To JEAN*) Don't let him work you too late.

JEAN It's all right. I'm used to it now. Best wishes again, Mrs. Nash.

KAREN (*As JEAN starts out*) Thanks, dear. And see that he buys me a nice gift.

JEAN (*Smiles*) I definitely will.
(Closes the door)

KAREN (*To SAM*) What a sweet girl. That's a very sweet girl, Sam.

SAM Karen, listen, I'm very sorry about tonight. It just can't be helped.

(Puts the brushes back)

KAREN That's a sweet, young, skinny girl.

SAM (*Takes a cordless electric razor from his attaché case and crosses to the bathroom*) The thing is, if I leave now maybe I can still get back in time for us to have a late dinner.

KAREN (*Enters the bedroom and sits in the armchair*) Oh, don't worry about me, Sam. (*SAM begins to shave*) I understand. I just feel badly for you. You could have really relaxed tonight, and instead you'll be cooped up in that stuffy office until all hours working over some boring contracts with your smooth-shaven face.

SAM (*Still shaving, moves into the bedroom*) Well, I can't very well walk through the lobby of the Plaza Hotel with a stubbly chin.

(*Returns to the bathroom*)

KAREN They wouldn't let you into the elevator. Don't forget your Jade East.

526

SAM'S VOICE My what?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

KAREN Your sexy cologne. The doorman will never get you a cab if you don't smell nice.

SAM (*Enters the bedroom. Looks at KAREN for a moment and then shuts the razor off*) What are you doing, Karen?

KAREN Oh, I'm just joking. Can't you tell when I'm kidding around any more, Sam?

SAM No, I can't.

(*Crosses around the bed and puts the razor back in the case*)

KAREN (*Playfully pats his fanny, and then sits on the bed*) Well, of course I am. I'm just teasing you by intimating you're having an affair with your secretary.

SAM I see.

(*Takes his overcoat from the top of the bureau and puts it on*)

KAREN Are you, Sam? Is sweet, skinny Miss McCormack your mistress?

SAM For God's sakes, Karen, what kind of a thing is that to say?

KAREN If you're not, it's a lousy thing to say. If you are, it's a hell of a question.

SAM I'm not even going to dignify that with an answer.

KAREN (*On her knees, bouncing up and down like a child*) Oh, come on, Sam, dignify it. I'm dying to know. Just tell me if you're having an affair with her or not.

SAM And you'll believe me?

KAREN Of course.

SAM No, I'm not having an affair with her.

KAREN (*Giving a big smile*) Yes, you are.

SAM Curses, trapped again. (*Looks out the window*) It looks like snow. I hope I can get a cab.

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KAREN (*Starting to take off her hairpiece*) Even if you're not, Sam, it's all right if you do. I approve of Miss McCormack. She's a nice girl.

PLAZA SUITE

SAM (*Getting his attaché case from the bed*) Thank you. She'll be pleased to know. Look, I could call downstairs and get you a ticket for a show tonight. There's no reason for you to sit alone like this. Is there something you'd like to see?

KAREN (*Smiles*) Yeah. What you and Miss McCormack will be doing later.

SAM Really, Karen, I find this in very poor taste.

(*Moving to the living room, puts the attaché case down on the console table behind the sofa*)

KAREN (*Getting a brush from the overnight case*) Why? I'm just being honest again. I'm saying that if at this stage of your life you wanted to have a small, quiet affair with a young, skinny woman, I would understand.

(*Sits back on the bed and begins to brush out her hairpiece*)

SAM (*Stops abruptly in his gathering of the contracts from the coffee table and returns to the bedroom*) What do you mean, at this stage of my life?

KAREN (*Continues her brushing*) Well, you're blankety years old. I would say the number but I know you don't accept it. And I realize that when a man becomes blankety-one or blankety-two, he is feeling insecure, that he's losing his virility (*Smiles broadly at SAM*), and that a quiet fling may be the best thing for him. I know, I read the *New York Post*.

SAM I'm glad to know I have Rose Franzblau's permission.

KAREN And mine if you really want it.

SAM (*Yells*) Well, I don't want it and *I'm not having an affair!*

KAREN Then why are you yelling?

SAM (*Crosses to the living room*) Because this is an idiotic conversation.

KAREN (*Collapses on the bed*) Oh, Sam, I'm so glad.

SAM (*Takes the contracts from the coffee table and puts them in his case*) Now you're happy? You're happy because *now* you don't think I'm having an affair?

KAREN Well, of course I'm happy. You think I'm some kind of a domestic mental case? I don't want you having an affair. I'm just saying that if you *are* having one, I understand.

SAM (*Crosses to the bedroom and picks up a contract from the bed*) Karen, I have a hard night's work ahead of me. I'll be back about twelve.

(Starts to leave)

KAREN Sam, stay and talk to me for five minutes.

SAM They're waiting for me at the office. I've got work to do.

KAREN You've got help in the office. I've been with the firm longer than all of them . . . (*After a moment, SAM sits on the edge of the bureau*) Sam, I know we haven't been very happy lately. I know you've been busy, you may not have noticed it, but we have definitely not been very happy.

SAM Yes, Karen, I've noticed it.

KAREN (*Continues to brush her hairpiece*) What's wrong? We have a twelve-room house in the country, two sweet children, a maid who doesn't drink. Is there something we're missing?

SAM I—don't know.

KAREN Can you at least think about it? I need hints, Sam . . . (*Quoting*) "Is there something else you want?" (*SAM doesn't answer*) "Is there something I

can give you that I'm not giving you?" (*Again no answer*) . . . Could you please speak up, we're closing in ten minutes.

SAM It's me, Karen, not you.

(*Crosses to the living room, puts the contract in his case, closes it*)

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KAREN (*Puts her hair and brush on the dresser and follows him into the living room*) I'll buy that. What's wrong with you, Sam?

PLAZA SUITE

SAM (*There is a long pause*) I don't know . . . (*Moves to the mantel and then paces in front of the sofa*) I don't know if you can understand this . . . but when I came home after the war . . . I had my whole life in front of me. And all I dreamed about, all I wanted, was to get married, and to have children . . . and to make a success of my life . . . Well, I was very lucky . . . I got it all . . . Marriage, the children . . . more money than I ever dreamed of making . . .

KAREN (*Sitting on the sofa*) Then what is it you want?

SAM (*Stopping by the fireplace*) I just want to do it all over again . . . I would like to start the whole damned thing right from the beginning.

KAREN (*Long pause*) I see. Well, frankly, Sam, I don't think the Navy will take you again.

SAM (*Smiles ruefully*) Well, it won't be because I can't pass the physical. (*Takes his case and starts for the door again*) I told you it's stupid talking about it. It'll work itself out. If not, I'll dye my hair.

(*He opens the door*)

KAREN You know what I think? I think you want to get out and you don't know how to tell me.

SAM (*Stops in the door. Turns back to KAREN*) That's not true.

KAREN Which isn't? That you want to get out or that you don't know how to tell me?

SAM Why do you always start the most serious discussions in our life when I'm halfway out the door?

KAREN If that's what you want, just tell me straight out. Just say, "Karen, there's no point in going on." I'd rather hear it from you personally, than getting a message on our service.

SAM Look, we'll talk about it when I get back, okay?
(*He starts out again*)

KAREN (*Can no longer contain herself. There is none of that "playful, toying" attitude in her voice now. Jumping up*) No, goddamnit, we'll talk about it now! I'm not going to sit around a hotel room half the night waiting to hear how my life is going to come out . . . If you've got something to say, then have the decency to say it before you walk out that door.

(*There is a moment's silence while each tries to compose himself . . . SAM turns back into the room and closes the door*)

SAM . . . Is there any coffee left?

KAREN It's that bad, huh? . . . All right, sit down, I'll get you some coffee. (*She starts to cross to the table and stops, looking at her hands. SAM crosses to the sofa. He puts down his attaché case by the coffee table and sits*) Look at this. I'm shaking like a leaf. Pour it yourself. I have a feeling in a few minutes I'm not going to be too crazy about you.

(*KAREN crosses and sits on the ottoman next to the sofa, hands clasped together. SAM finds it difficult to look at her*)

SAM . . . No matter what, Karen, in twenty-three years my feelings for you have never changed. You're my wife, I still love you.

KAREN Oh, God, am I in trouble.

SAM It has nothing to do with you. It's something that just happened . . . It's true, I am having an affair with her . . . (*SAM waits for KAREN to react. She merely sits and looks at her hands*) . . . It's been going on for about six months now . . . I tried stopping it a few times, it didn't work . . . After a couple of days I'd start it again . . . And then—well, what's the point in going on with this? You wanted honesty, I'm giving it

to you. I'm having an affair with Jean, that's all there is to it.

KAREN (*Looks up*) Who's Jean?

SAM Jean! Miss McCormack.

KAREN Oh. For a minute I thought there were two of them.

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SAM I'm not very good at this. I don't know what I'm supposed to say now.

PLAZA SUITE

KAREN Don't worry about it. You're doing fine. (*She gets up and moves to the table*) You want that coffee now? I just stopped shaking.

SAM . . . What are we going to do?

KAREN (*Turns back to SAM*) Well, you're taken care of. You're having an affair. I'm the one who needs an activity.

SAM Karen, I'll do whatever you want.

KAREN Whatever *I* want?

SAM I'll leave. I'll get out tonight . . . Or I'll stop seeing her. I'll get rid of her in the office. I'll try it any way you want.

KAREN (*Moves to the sofa*) Oh. Okay. I choose "Stop Seeing Jean" . . . Gee, that was easy. (*Snaps her fingers*) Now we can go back to our old normal life and live happily ever after. (*Starts to pour coffee, but stops and puts the pot down*) It's not my day. Even the coffee's cold.

SAM Oh, come on, Karen, don't play "Aren't we civilized." Call me a bastard. Throw the coffee at me.

KAREN You're a bastard. You want cream and sugar?

SAM It's funny how our attitudes have suddenly changed. What happened to "I think a man of your age *should* have an affair"?

KAREN It looked good in the window but terrible when I got it home.

SAM If it's any solace to you, I never thought it would go this far. I don't even remember how it started . . .

KAREN Think, it'll come back to you.

SAM Do you know she worked for me for two years and I never batted an eye at her?

KAREN Good for you, Sam.

SAM (Angry) Oh, come on.

(Crosses to the bedroom and stretches out across the bed)

532

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

KAREN (She follows him into the bedroom) No, Sam, I want to hear about it. She worked for you for two years and you didn't know her first name was Jean. And then one night you were both working late, and suddenly you let down your hair and took off your glasses and she said, "Why, Mr. Nash, you're beautiful" . . .

SAM (Takes a pillow and places it over his head) That's it, word for word. You must have been hiding in the closet.

KAREN (Tears the pillow away and throws it back down on the bed) All right, you want to know when I think the exact date your crummy little affair started? I'll tell you. It was June nineteenth. It was your birthday, and you just turned fifty years old. Five-oh, count 'em, folks, and you were feeling good and sorry for yourself. Right?

SAM Oh, God, here comes Doctor Franzblau again.

KAREN And the only reason you picked on Miss McCormack was because she was probably the first one you saw that morning . . . If she was sick that day, this affair very well could have been with your elevator operator.

SAM Wrong. He's fifty-two and I don't go for older men.

KAREN (Breaks away and crosses to the living room) You were right before, Sam. Let's discuss this later tonight.

SAM (Sitting up on his side on the bed) No, no. We've opened this up, let's bring it all out. I've told you the truth, I'm involved with another woman. I'm not proud of it, Karen, but those are the facts. Now what am I supposed to do about it?

KAREN (*Moves back to the bedroom doorway*) Well, I would suggest committing suicide, but I'm afraid you might think I meant *me* . . . (*Goes back to the living room*) I have one other suggestion. Forget it.

SAM (*Sharply*) Forget it?

KAREN (*Pacing above the sofa*) I understand it, Sam. It's not your fault. But maybe I can live with it until it's over. What else can I do, Sam, I'm attached to you. So go out, have a good time tonight and when you come home, bring me the *Daily News*, I'm getting sick of the *Post*.

(*Sits on the sofa*)

SAM If I lived with you another twenty-three years, I don't think I'd ever understand you.

KAREN If that's a proposition, I accept.

SAM (*Gets up and moves to KAREN*) Damn it, Karen, stop accepting everything in life that's thrown at you. Fight back once in a while. Don't understand me. Hate me! I am *not* going through a middle-aged adjustment. I'm having an affair. A cheating, sneaking, sordid affair.

KAREN If it helps you to romanticize it, Sam, all right. I happen to know better.

SAM (*Crossing above the sofa to the fireplace*) You don't know better at all. You didn't even know I was having an affair.

KAREN I suspected it. You were working three nights a week and we weren't getting any richer.

SAM (*Leaning on the mantelpiece*) I see. And now that you know the truth I have your blessings.

KAREN No, just my permission. I'm your wife, not your mother.

SAM That's indecent. I never heard such a thing in my life. For crying out loud, Karen, I'm losing all respect for you.

KAREN What's the matter, Sam, am I robbing you of all those delicious guilt feelings? Will you feel better if I go to pieces and try to lash back at you?

SAM (*Crosses below the sofa*) At least I would understand it. It's normal. I don't know why you're not having hysterics and screaming for a lawyer.

KAREN (*Getting up to confront him*) All right, Sam, if it'll make you happier . . . I think you stink. You're a vain, self-pitying, deceiving, ten-pound box of rancid no-cal cottage cheese. How'm I doing?

SAM Swell. Now we're finally getting somewhere.

KAREN Oh, you like this, don't you? It makes everything nice and simple for you. Now you can leave here the martyred, misunderstood husband. Well, I won't give you the satisfaction. I take it back, Sam. (*Sits on the sofa. Pleasantly, with great control*) You're a pussycat. I'll have milk and cookies for you when you get home.

SAM (*Sits on the ottoman*) No, no. Finish what you were saying. Get it off your chest, Karen. It's been building up for twenty-three years. I want to hear everything. Vain, self-pitying, what else? Go on, what else?

KAREN You're adorable. Eat your heart out.

SAM (*Furious*) Karen, don't do this to me.

KAREN I'm sorry, I'm a forgiving woman. I can't help myself.

SAM (*Gets up, takes his case and crosses to the door*) You're driving me right out of here, you know that, don't you?

KAREN There'll always be room for you in my garage.

SAM If I walk out this door now, I don't come back.

KAREN I think you will.

SAM What makes you so sure?

KAREN You forgot to take your eye drops.

(*SAM storms to the coffee table, snatches up the drops and crosses back to the door. He stops*)

SAM Before I go I just want to say one thing. Whatever you think of me is probably true. No, not probably, definitely. I have been a bastard right from the beginning. I don't expect you to forgive me.

KAREN But I do.

SAM (*Whirling back to her*) Let me finish. I don't expect you to forgive me. But I ask you with all conscience, with all your understanding, not to blame Jean for any of this.

KAREN (*Collapses on the couch. Then pulling herself together*) I'll send her a nice gift.

SAM (*Puts down his case beside the sofa*) She's been torturing herself ever since this started. *I'm* the one who forced the issue.

PLAZA SUITE

KAREN (*Moving away from him on the sofa, mimics JEAN*) "It didn't show up on the 1400 but I rechecked it with my own files and made the correction on the 640" . . . You know as well as I do that's code for "I'll meet you at the Picadilly Hotel."

SAM (*Kneeling beside the sofa*) You won't believe me, will you? That she's a nice girl.

KAREN Nice for you and nice for me are two different things.

SAM If it's that Sunday supplement psychology you're using, Karen, it's backfiring, because you're just making it easier for me.

KAREN Well, you like things easy, don't you? You don't even have an affair the hard way.

SAM Meaning what?

KAREN (*Getting up*) Meaning you could have at least taken the trouble to look outside your office for a girl . . . (*Picks up an imaginary phone*) "Miss McCormack, would you please come inside and take an affair!" . . . Honestly, Sam.

(*Moves above the sofa*)

SAM Karen, don't force me to say nice things about her to you.

KAREN I can't help it. I'm just disappointed in you. It's so damned unoriginal.

SAM What did you want her to be, a fighter pilot with the Israeli air force?

KAREN Everyone cheats with their secretary. I expected more from my husband!

SAM (*Shaking his head*) I never saw you like this. You live with a person your whole life, you don't really know them.

536

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

KAREN (*Crossing below the sofa to the bedroom*) Go on, Sam, go have your affair. You're fifty-one years old. In an hour it may be too late.

(*Sits at the dresser and brushes her hair*)

SAM (*Getting up and crossing to her in the bedroom*) By God, you are something. You are really something special, Karen. Twenty-three years I'm married to you and I still can't make you out. You don't look much different than the ordinary woman, but I promise you there is nothing walking around on two legs that compares in any way, shape or form to the likes of you.

KAREN (*Drops the brush and turns to him. Laughing*) . . . So if I'm so special, what are you carrying on with secretaries for?

SAM I'll be goddamned if I know . . .

(*They look at each other. He turns and starts to the front door, taking his attaché case*)

KAREN (*Following him into the living room*) Sam! (SAM stops) Sam . . . do I still have my two choices? (He turns and looks at her) Because if I do . . . I choose "Get rid of Miss McCormack." (He looks away) I pick "Stay here and work it out with me, Sam." (KAREN turns her back to him and leans against the arm of the sofa) . . . Because the other way I think I'm going to lose. Don't go to the office tonight, Sam . . . Stay with me . . . Please.

SAM (*Leaning on the console table, he looks at her*) I swear, I wish we could go back the way it was before. A couple of years ago, before there were any problems.

KAREN Maybe we can, Sam. We'll do what you said before. We'll lie. We'll tell each other everything is all right . . . There is nothing wrong in the office

tonight, there is no Miss McCormack and I'm twenty-seven goddamned years old . . . What do you say, Sam?

SAM (*Moves about indecisively*) . . . Maybe tomorrow, Karen . . . I can't—tonight! I'll—I'll see you.

KAREN When? (*He exits, leaving the door open*) Never mind. I love surprises.

(As SAM leaves, the WAITER appears with a tray with an ice bucket filled with a bottle of champagne and two glasses)

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PLAZA SUITE

WAITER The champagne . . . I brought two glasses just in case. (*He closes the door and places the ice bucket and glasses on the desk. He glances back*) Is he coming back?

KAREN (*Remains leaning on the sofa*) . . . Funny you should ask that.

(He begins to open the bottle)

Curtain

VISITOR FROM HOLLYWOOD

Suite 719 at the Plaza. It is about three in the afternoon on a warm, sunny spring day.

The WAITER is just finishing setting up some fresh glasses and bottles of liquor on top of the bureau between the windows in the living room.

The telephone in the bedroom rings. JESSE KIPLINGER emerges from the bathroom. JESSE is about forty, a confident, self-assured man. He is applying after-shave lotion to his face. He is dressed in "Hollywood mod," with a tan turtleneck sweater and tight blue suede pants. His shoes are highly polished and buckled. He has the latest-style haircut, with bangs falling over his forehead. He crosses to the phone and picks it up.

JESSE Hello? . . . Oh, just a minute. (He drops the phone and crosses to the WAITER) I'll take that. (He indicates the check, which the WAITER hands him. He signs it and returns it to the WAITER, who nods and crosses to the door. JESSE picks up the phone and holds his hand over the phone until the WAITER is gone, closing the door behind him. Then into the phone) Put her on . . . (Waits, then in a much softer, romantically persuasive tone) Hello? . . . Muriel? Where are you? . . . Well, come on up . . . Yes, I'm positive it's all right . . . (More insistently) . . . Muriel, do you want me to come down and get you? . . . All right, then, take the elevator and come to Suite 719 . . . And stop being so silly, I'm dying to see you. (He hangs up, thinks a second, then picks up the phone again) Hello, operator? This is Mr. Kiplinger in Suite 719. Would you please hold all local calls for the next hour, I'm going to be in conference . . . (Checks an appointment book on the night table) Make that an hour and a half . . . Thank you. (He hangs up and begins to clear the bed of a collection of scripts, trade papers and galley proofs. Kneeling, he pushes them under the bed. Rising, he carefully smoothes the spread. He snatches up a section of colored comics from the

arm of the armchair and throws it into the wastebasket. Taking a blue button-down sweater from the back of a chair at the dresser, he puts it on with a great flair and carefully examines himself in the mirror on the closet door. Satisfied with his appearance, he crosses to the living room and checks the bar set-up on the bureau. The front doorbell rings. JESSE crosses to answer it, checking his hair in the mirror over the mantel as he does. He is finally ready. Taking a deep breath, he opens the door. MURIEL TATE stands there. MURIEL is in her late thirties and is extremely attractive. She wears a bright-yellow spring coat and a simple, demure, high-necked gray dress which shows off her svelte, still girlish figure. Her hair falls simply to her shoulders, held back by a wide white band. MURIEL is a warm, easy, smiling woman who seems as naïve and vulnerable as the day she graduated from Tenafly High School. When the door opens, the two of them greet each other with enormous smiles. JESSE throws out his arms) Muriel!

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P I A Z A S U I T E

MURIEL (Smiles, cocks her head) Jesse?

JESSE It's not.

MURIEL It is.

JESSE Muriel, I can't believe it. Is it really you?

MURIEL It's me, Muriel.

JESSE Well, come on in, for pete's sakes, come on in.

MURIEL (Enters with a rush and crosses to the far side of the sofa) I can only stay for a few minutes.

JESSE (Closes the door and follows her to below the near side of the sofa) My God, it's good to see you. (They stand and confront each other)

MURIEL I just dropped in to say hello. I really can't stay.

JESSE You sounded good on the phone, but you look even better.

MURIEL Because I've got to get back to New Jersey. I'm parked in a one-hour zone. Hello, Jesse, I think I'm very nervous.

JESSE Hey! Hello, Muriel.

MURIEL Same old Muriel, heh?

JESSE What do you mean, same old Muriel? You look fantastic (*Arms outstretched, he moves to her*) Come here, let me take a good look at you.

MURIEL (*Evading him, crosses below the coffee table*)

Oh, don't, Jesse. Don't look at me. I've been stuck in the Holland Tunnel for two hours. What time is it? Tell me when it's three o'clock. I can't stay.

(*Sits in the armchair*)

JESSE (*Moves toward her*) Muriel, I can't get over it. You look absolutely wonderful.

MURIEL Well, I *feel* absolutely wonderful.

JESSE (*Sitting on the arm of the sofa*) I really, sincerely mean that. You simply look incredibly fantastic.

MURIEL Well, I *feel* incredibly fantastic.

JESSE Well, you look it.

MURIEL Well, I *feel* it.

JESSE And how are you?

MURIEL (*Without enthusiasm*) I'm all right . . . I don't know why I'm so nervous, do you?

(*She shrugs her coat off her shoulders and arranges it over the back of the chair*)

JESSE No. I can't imagine why you should be so nervous.

MURIEL Neither can I. I just am . . . Should I be here?

JESSE Why not? Is there anything wrong in it?

MURIEL Oh, no. No, of course not. There's nothing wrong in it. My God, no. I don't see anything wrong. I just dropped by from New Jersey to say hello. What's wrong with that? . . . I just don't think I should be here. (*Getting up and moving toward the mantel*) Is it three o'clock yet?

JESSE (*Moving toward her*) Little Muriel Tate, all grown up and married. How many kids you got now?

MURIEL Three.

JESSE No kidding? Three kids . . . What are they?

MURIEL A boy and a girl.

JESSE A boy and a girl?

MURIEL (*Breaking away to the other side of the sofa*)

And another boy who's away in camp. I can't even think straight. Isn't this terrible?

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JESSE (*Moving to the sofa. Good-naturedly*) What's wrong?

PLAZA SUITE

MURIEL I don't know, I can't catch my breath. Well, it's *you*, that's the simple explanation. I'm nervous about meeting you.

JESSE Me? Me? Jesse Kiplinger, your high school boy friend from Tenafly, New Jersey. Ohh, Muriel.

MURIEL You know what I mean, Mr. "Famous Hollywood Producer" staying at the Plaza Hotel.

JESSE Mr. Famous Hollywood Producer. (*Sitting on the sofa*) Muriel, you know me better than that. I haven't changed. I made a couple of pictures, that's all.

MURIEL (*Moving to the sofa*) A couple of pictures? The Easter show at the Radio City Music Hall? I stood on line with my children for three hours in the rain.

JESSE What did you do that for? You could have called my office in New York. My girl would have gotten you right in. Any time you want to see one of my pictures . . .

MURIEL Oh, I couldn't do that.

JESSE Why not?

MURIEL I couldn't. I couldn't impose like that.

JESSE You're *not* imposing.

MURIEL I am.

JESSE I *want* you to.

MURIEL What's the number?

JESSE I'll give it to you before you go. (*Getting up*)

But first you're going to sit down and have a drink.
There's a million things I'm dying to ask you.

MURIEL Oh, no drinks for me.

JESSE One little drink.

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MURIEL No, no, no. You go ahead and have a drink.
I have a five-o'clock hairdresser's appointment.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

JESSE You don't drink?

MURIEL Oh, once in a great while. Anyway, I've got to get home. I shouldn't even be in the city. The kids will be home from school soon and I've got to make dinner for Larry and I haven't even done my shopping in Bonwit's. No, no, I just dropped by to say hello.

JESSE What'll you have?

MURIEL A vodka stinger.

JESSE Coming right up.

(*He crosses to the bar set-up*)

MURIEL (*Sitting on the sofa*) And then I've got to go . . . Whoooo, I finally took a breath. That felt good.

JESSE (*Pouring liquor into a shaker*) Will you relax?
Will you, Muriel? Come on now. I want you to stop being so silly and relax.

MURIEL (*Chiding*) Is that how you talk to your stars when they're nervous? Is that what you say to Elke Sommer?

JESSE I don't talk to the stars. I have directors for that . . . For God's sakes, Muriel, what are you so nervous about?

MURIEL Oooh, there's that famous Hollywood temper I read about . . . You want me to be frank?

JESSE Please.

MURIEL I feel funny sitting here drinking in a hotel room . . . I mean, I'm a married woman.

JESSE (*Having finished making and pouring drinks, he moves to her*) Would you feel better if we had our drinks down in the Palm Court?

MURIEL We're here, we might as well stay.

JESSE (*Handing her the drink*) Okay. Then will you sit back and relax?

(*Sits down next to her on the sofa*)

MURIEL Just for a few minutes. I've got a six-o'clock hairdresser's appointment.

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JESSE I thought it was at five?

MURIEL It's flexible . . . Is it warm in here?

PLAZA SUITE

(*Putting down her drink on the coffee table*)

JESSE Why don't you take off your gloves?

MURIEL (*Shaking a finger at him*) Oh, no! Let's not have any of that, Mr. Jesse Kiplinger of Hollywood, California . . . My gloves will stay where they belong, if you please.

JESSE (*Putting his drink down on the coffee table*)

Muriel, you are delightfully and incredibly unchanged. How long has it been now? Fifteen, sixteen years?

MURIEL Since our last date? It'll be seventeen years on August sixth.

JESSE You remembered that?

MURIEL I still have the swizzle sticks from Tavern on the Green.

JESSE (*Leaning toward her*) No, time hasn't changed you, Muriel. You're still so fresh and clean. (*Sniffs about her*) You even smell the same way.

MURIEL Ohhh?

JESSE (*Sniffs her ear*) Like cool peppermint . . . Clear, cool peppermint.

MURIEL (*Pushes his nose away with her finger*) Now, you and your nose just behave yourself . . . I did not come to the Plaza Hotel to be smelled.

JESSE And now you've blossomed and matured . . . only in reverse . . . You look younger and fresher and . . . well, you know what I mean. I just think you look absolutely fantastic.

MURIEL (*Pulls herself together. Clears her throat. Very businesslike*) You going to be in New York long, Jesse?

JESSE Possibly just till the weekend. I've got to sign a director for my new picture.

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MURIEL John Huston?

JESSE Yes. How did you know that?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

MURIEL Oh, we keep up on things in Tenafly . . . Mr. Famous Hollywood Producer, staying at the Plaza Hotel, signing up John Huston for his next picture.
(Playfully pushing his leg)

JESSE I might stay over another few days. It depends . . . on what develops.

(He looks down at his leg. She gets up nervously)

MURIEL I've never been in the Plaza before. It's beautiful. *(Stops near the door to the bedroom, which is opened)* What's in there?

JESSE The bedroom. You can go in.

MURIEL *(Shying away, moves back to the sofa)* It's all right, I take your word for it . . . Is this where you meet with John Huston? I mean, does he sit in here and the two of you talk and then he signs the contract? Is that how you do it?

JESSE *(Lolling back on the sofa)* In this very room . . . Will you stop with the celebrity routine. Aside from a couple of extra pounds, I'm still the same boy who ran anchor on the Tenafly track team.

MURIEL And is living in the old Humphrey Bogart house in Beverly Hills.

JESSE How did you know that?

MURIEL *(Moving to the ottoman)* Never mind, I know, I know . . . Maybe I haven't seen you in seventeen years, but I know an awful lot about you, Mr. Jesse Kiplinger . . . *(Sits)* Pootch!

JESSE Pootch?

MURIEL Isn't that what they call you in Hollywood? Your nickname? Pootch?

JESSE Gootch!

MURIEL I thought it was Pootch.

JESSE No. No, no, it's Gootch.

MURIEL I thought I read that you have all your shirts specially made by Pucci in Florence, so they call you Pootch.

JESSE No, no. I have all my shoes made by Gucci in Rome so they call me Gootch.

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MURIEL Oh.

JESSE (*Deprecatingly*) It's a silly thing. I don't know why they print stories like that.

MURIEL Because people like me like to read them. Are those Gucci shoes you're wearing now, Gootch?

JESSE These? (*To display his shoes, he puts one foot up on the coffee table, the other over the arm of the sofa*) No. These are the one pair I had made in England. You can't get this leather in Italy. No, I have a man in Bond Street makes them for me . . . MacCombs.

(MURIEL reacts to the sight of his widespread legs and turns away in embarrassment)

MURIEL (*Attempting to make a joke*) Well, they're beautiful shoes, MacCootch!

JESSE MacCootch! That's very good. (*He laughs*) Hey, can we stop talking about me for a while?

MURIEL (*Turns back to him*) Why? I think you're very interesting to talk about.

JESSE Well, I don't. I'm very bored with me. I'm much more interested in you . . . (*Sits up and hands her a drink*) But first let's have our drinks.

MURIEL And then I've got to go.
(Takes the glass)

JESSE Let's say, to renewing old acquaintances.

MURIEL You drink to that. (*Moves to the sofa*) I'll drink to your new picture winning the Academy Award.

JESSE Muriel, it's not going to win the Academy Award.

It's not even going to get nominated. (*Beginning to laugh*) As a matter of fact, it's a piece of crap . . . (*Catches himself*) Excuse me, Muriel.

MURIEL (*Sitting on the sofa*) Be that as it may, it's going to gross over nine million. Domestic.

JESSE That's beside the point . . . How did you know that?

MURIEL I know, I know, Mr. "Gootch" Kiplinger . . . I've been following your career very closely, if you please.

JESSE (*Moving closer*) Muriel, it is so exciting seeing you again. The minute you walked in that door, I got a—a tingle, all over, the way I used to . . . You know what I mean.

MURIEL (*Trying to remain matter-of-fact*) I'm sure I don't. I have three children and I'm very happy and I have a wonderful life and I have no business being in a hotel room in New York at three o'clock in the afternoon with a man I haven't seen since Tavern on the Green seventeen years ago. (*He kisses her on the lips. She looks at him*)—Any particular reason you did that?

JESSE (*Still leaning toward her*) I wanted to. Desperately.

MURIEL Do you always blithely go ahead and do whatever you want to?

JESSE If I can get away with it . . . As a matter of fact . . . if you don't object too strenuously, I'm going to kiss you again.

MURIEL ...And then I've got to go. (*JESSE kisses her again tenderly on the lips. She lets him kiss her for a moment. Then jumps up and moves away*) Woo...That'll be enough of that, Mr. Do-Whatever-You-Want-to Kiplinger. Wow, that vodka stinger has really gone to my head.

JESSE (*Noncommittally*) It's even better when you drink it.

MURIEL (*Takes her drink from the coffee table and*

crosses to the chair) Now, don't confuse me. I'm nervous enough as it is. Cheers. (*Drinks*) Was it good?

JESSE (*Taking his drink*) What? The drink?

MURIEL The kiss.

JESSE The kiss? Yes, the kiss was very good.

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MURIEL What did it feel like?

JESSE What do you mean, what did it feel like?

PLAZA SUITE

MURIEL (*Sitting in the chair*) Was it a good kiss or a medium kiss or a waste-of-time kiss? I'm interested in knowing your reaction.

JESSE Why? You never asked me that when I kissed you in Tenafly.

MURIEL You weren't a famous Hollywood producer living in Humphrey Bogart's house signing John Huston for your next picture in Tenafly. Can I please have your reaction to my kiss?

JESSE It was a superb kiss.

MURIEL (*Puts her drink down on the floor next to the chair. Takes a compact from her purse on the chair*) It wasn't superb. I don't kiss superbly. It was an average, inexperienced, everyday New Jersey kiss . . . I don't know why I let you kiss me anyway, "Mr. Famous Hollywood Kisser."

(*Powdering her face*)

JESSE (*Smiles warmly*) Is it possible that you are the last, sweet, simple, unchanged, unspoiled woman living in the world today?

MURIEL I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about. (*Looking in the compact mirror*) Oh, God, look at my lips. I'd never get past the house detective. What time is it?

JESSE (*Looks at his watch*) Twenty after.

MURIEL Three? Already? I've got to go.

(*Puts the compact back in her purse, gets up and begins to gather her purse and coat from the chair*)

JESSE Not yet.

MURIEL I must.

JESSE Ten more minutes?

MURIEL I can't . . .

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JESSE Please!

MURIEL I'll stay five.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

(Sits back down in the chair)

JESSE Good.

MURIEL Why did you call me yesterday?

JESSE (Smiles) I called you because, believe it or not,
I've been thinking about you.

MURIEL For seventeen years?

JESSE On and off.

MURIEL In Humphrey Bogart's old house? I don't believe you, "Mr. International Liar." And I don't trust you. (She gets up and again begins to gather her belongings) And I'm not staying.

JESSE (Quietly) Good-by.

MURIEL (Stops in surprise) Do you mean that?

JESSE I don't want to force you to stay here. You know what's best for you.

MURIEL (Looks at him) I'll just finish my drink.

(She puts her things back on the chair and picks up her drink)

JESSE Muriel, you must believe me when I tell you I have no ulterior motives in asking you here today. I just wanted to see you. I'm trying to impress you with the fact that you are the only, solitary, real, honest-to-goodness, unphoney woman that I have been with since the day I arrived in Hollywood seventeen years ago.

MURIEL What about your mother?

JESSE She's the worst one.

MURIEL (*Sitting next to him on the sofa*) Well, your mother must be very proud to have such a famous son.

JESSE (*Edges closer to her*) Do you know, in my own quiet way, I was crazy about you?

MURIEL (*Puts the drink down on the table*) As a matter of fact, everyone in Tenafly is proud of you. Even Larry, my husband, talks about you all the time. He always says, "Jesse Kiplinger, Jesse Kiplinger, that's all I ever hear around this house."

(*Stops and thinks about what she has just said*)

JESSE I remember exactly what you looked like the day I left for California. You were wearing a tan raincoat, a tweed skirt and a brown sweater. And a little locket that your grandmother had given you. (*Traces a locket on her chest*) Do you remember?

MURIEL I remember when your first picture came to Tenafly, that's what I remember. Everybody went. Do you know it was the only Jeff Chandler picture that ever played two weeks at the Hillside Drive-In?

JESSE Even then, you had a quality about you, Muriel, that was sort of—well, untouched. (*Puts his hand on the outside of her leg and caresses her*) You were the only girl that gave me pleasure in just holding her hand.

MURIEL (*Determinedly ignoring JESSE's actions*) You know a lot of the girls from school still kid me about you. I mean when they see your name in a column or something like that.

JESSE I didn't expect to see it any more, Muriel, that quality of honesty . . . and frankness . . . that ability to cut through deceit (*Moves his hand, and going underneath her skirt, puts it between her legs*) and phoniness with just one look through those big, unsuspecting, wide-open eyes. I really did not expect to see it again in my lifetime.

MURIEL They always kid me and say, oh, if I married you instead of Larry, I'd be living in Hollywood now, going to parties with James Garner and Otto Preminger, running around with the Rat Pack.

JESSE You don't know what you are. You really don't . . . Well, I'll tell you what you are. You're something very special. I know, Muriel.

MURIEL . . . I mean I wouldn't even know what to say to Otto Preminger.

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JESSE Don't change, Muriel. Don't ever change the sweet, simple way you are.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

(He kisses her neck, deeply. For a minute she is lost in the embrace and then, without changing her mood)

MURIEL Do you know Frank Sinatra?

JESSE (*Slowly comes out of her neck and looks at her*) Who?

MURIEL Frank Sinatra. Did you ever meet him?

JESSE (*Slightly shaken, pulls back, takes his hand away and sits back on the sofa*) Yes. Yes, I know Frank.

MURIEL What's he like?

JESSE Frank? . . . I . . . I don't really know him that well, we had dinner a few times.

MURIEL Where? In his house?

JESSE Once in a restaurant, once I think in his house. I don't remember.

MURIEL Was Mia there?

JESSE Uh . . . no. This was before he met Mia.

MURIEL So in other words, you never met Mia?

JESSE Yes, I did meet Mia, but she wasn't married to Frank then.

MURIEL I see. They say he's very generous. Is that true? Is he as generous as they say?

JESSE Yeah, I guess so. He served very large portions . . . I don't know. Christ, who cares about Frank Sinatra?

MURIEL (*Hurt*) I'm sorry—I was just curious. I didn't mean to pry into your personal life. Well, I've got to be going.

(She gets up and moves to the chair)

JESSE (*Apologetic*) Wait, Muriel . . .

MURIEL (*Getting her belongings from the chair*) No, I've got to leave before the traffic starts. If I get stuck in the Holland Tunnel again and I'm late for Larry's dinner, he'll want to know where I was, and I don't lie very well, and oh, God, I don't know why I came here in the first place . . . (*Drops her things back in the chair. Becoming more and more upset*) What have I done?

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PLAZA SUITE

JESSE You haven't done anything, Muriel.

MURIEL (*Pacing*) Haven't done anything? I'm sitting there letting you kiss me and smell me . . .

JESSE Muriel, if I've done anything to offend you, I'm sorry.

MURIEL (*Moving toward the windows*) I must have been out of my mind, coming to the Plaza Hotel in the middle of the week.

JESSE There is no reason to get yourself upset. I didn't do anything worse than give you a friendly kiss.

MURIEL (*Coming back to the sofa*) I happen to enjoy a wonderful reputation.

JESSE I'm glad you enjoy it . . . Now stop being so silly. Sit down and finish your drink.

MURIEL I suppose you'll go back to Hollywood and have a big laugh with Otto Preminger over this.

JESSE I wouldn't dream of it.

MURIEL Promise.

JESSE I promise.

MURIEL Say it. Say, "I will not have a big laugh with Otto Preminger over this."

JESSE I don't even talk to Otto Preminger. Why would I laugh at you? I have nothing but respect and the warmest of feelings for you.

MURIEL You do? God's truth?

JESSE God's truth. You're an angel.

MURIEL Really? (*She hesitates a moment, then sits on the arm of the sofa*) Would I fit in with your crowd?

JESSE No, you would not fit in with my crowd. You're too good for them. You're too sweet and honest for the whole slimy bunch.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

MURIEL . . . But which ones would I fit in with?

JESSE Muriel, I don't know what kind of distorted image you have of these people, but they're not what you think they are. *I'm not what you think I am.* All these things you read in the paper about me being witty, charming, the boy genius, that's only part of the story. Do you know what kind of a life I really lead in Hollywood?

MURIEL Are you going to tell me?

JESSE Yes, I'll tell you. Why did I call you yesterday? After seventeen years? Okay, let's start with, "Yes, I'm a Famous Hollywood Producer. Yes, I never made a picture that lost money. Yes, I got that magic touch, call it talent, whatever you want, I don't know" . . . The fact is, ever since I was old enough to sneak into the Ridgewood Theatre in Tenafly, I've been a movie nut. (*Getting up, stands by the sofa*) Not only have I seen every Humphrey Bogart movie he ever made at least eight times, I now own a print of all those pictures. Why do you think I was so crazy to buy his house? (*Moves slowly to the window*) . . . So I went to Hollywood and was very lucky and extremely smart and presto, I became a producer. (*Unobtrusively pulls down the shade*) I love making movies. Some are good, some are bad, most of them are fun. I hope I can continue doing it for the next fifty years. That's one half of my life. The other half is that in the last fourteen years I've been married three times—to three of the worst bitches you'd ever want to meet.

(*Gets a bottle of vodka and a glass from the bar*)

MURIEL Jesse, you don't have to tell me any of this if you don't want to.

JESSE Maybe you're right. (*Moves to the front door and locks it*) Maybe I shouldn't be telling you about my sordid Hollywood past.

(Leans on the mantel)

MURIEL (*Settling down on the sofa, she picks up her drink*) . . . So you married these three bitches, then what happened?

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JESSE (*Moves to Muriel*) What happened . . . I gave them love, I gave them a home, I gave them a beautiful way of life—and the three bitches took me for every cent I got. (*Refills her glass, then sits on the floor by the armchair*) But I don't even care about the money, screw it—excuse me, Muriel. What hurts is that they took the guts out of me. They were phony, unfaithful, all of them. Did you know I caught my first wife, Dolores, in bed with a jockey? A jockey! (*Indicates the man's size, holding his hand a foot off the floor*) Do you know what it does to a man's self-respect to find his wife in the sack with a four-foot-eight shrimp, weighs a hundred and twelve pounds? But as I said before, screw it. Tell me if I'm shocking you, Muriel.

(*Refills his own drink*)

PLAZA SUITE

MURIEL I'll let you know.

(*She drinks*)

JESSE All right . . . My second wife, Carlotta . . . She was keeping her Spanish guitar teacher . . . Keeping him! . . . I never caught her, but she didn't fool me. No one takes twenty-seven thousand dollars' worth of guitar lessons in one year . . .

MURIEL Is Carlotta the one you met at Kirk Douglas's house?

JESSE Yes, as a matter of fact. Was that in the paper too?

MURIEL Sheilah Graham's column. It was a big party for the Ukrainian Folk Dancers and the Los Angeles Rams.

JESSE (*Getting up, replenishes her drink*) Muriel, forget the Los Angeles Rams... (*Putting the bottle and*

his glass down on the console table, he crosses behind the sofa) Listen to what I'm saying to you. I am in a very bad way. I've been through three hellish, miserable marriages. I don't want to go that route again. I am losing my faith and belief that there is anything left that resembles an uncorrupt woman . . . (*Sighs*) So last week my mother, who still gets the Tenafly newspaper, shows me a picture of the PTA annual outing at Palisades this year, and who is there on the front page, coming in first in the Mother and Daughter Potato Race, (*Leans in to MURIEL over the side arm of the couch*) looking every bit as young and lovely and as sweet as she did seventeen years ago, was my last salvation . . . Muriel Tate. (*Gradually moving to the bedroom door*) That's why I had to see you, Muriel. Just to talk to you, to have a drink, to spend five minutes, to reaffirm my faith that there are decent women in this world . . . even if it's only one . . . even if you're the last of a dying species . . . if somebody like you exists, Muriel . . . then maybe there's still somebody for me . . . That's why I called you yesterday.

(*JESSE has finished his speech. He is somewhat spent, emotionally. He moves to the bed and sits*)

MURIEL (*Getting up and moving toward the bedroom door*) Well . . . well . . . well . . .

JESSE (*From the bedroom*) I hope whatever I said didn't embarrass you, Muriel . . . but hell, if you expect honesty from another person you can't be anything less than honest yourself.

MURIEL (*Still at the doorway*) I'm not embarrassed, I'm flattered. To think a famous person like you wants to confide in a plain person like me . . .

JESSE (*Gets up and moves to her in the living room*) Now you finish your vodka stinger and then I'm going to let you go.

MURIEL (*Pouring herself a drink at the bar*) Oh, I've got plenty of time. Larry's never home till seven. (*She holds up the drink*) Cheers. (*She drinks. JESSE crosses to MURIEL, touches her*)

JESSE How are you, Muriel? Are you happy?

MURIEL Happy? . . . Oh, yes. I think if I'm anything,
I'm happy.

(*Moves down to the sofa*)

JESSE I'm glad. You deserve happiness, Muriel.

MURIEL Yes, Larry and I are very happy . . . (*She drinks*) I would have to say that Larry and I have one of the happier marriages in Tenafly.

(*She drinks again*)

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P I A Z A S U I T E

JESSE That's wonderful.

MURIEL I mean, we've had our ups and downs like any married couple, but I think in the final analysis what's left is . . . that we're happy.

JESSE (*Moves down to her*) I couldn't be more pleased.
Well, listen, it's no surprise. Larry's a wonderful guy.

MURIEL Do you think so?

JESSE Don't you?

MURIEL Yes, I do. But no one else seems to care for him. (*Sits on the sofa*) Of course, they don't know him the way I do. I'm out of stinger again.

(*Holds her glass out to JESSE*)

JESSE (*Takes her glass*) Are you sure you're going to be all right? I mean, driving?

MURIEL (*Gradually feeling the effects of the drinks, she slowly exposes a whole, new, unexpected MURIEL*) If I had to worry about getting home every time I had three vodka stingers, I'd give up driving. (*JESSE crosses to the bar, looking back at her in puzzlement*) . . . Yes, I'd say that in spite of everything, Larry and I have worked out happiness . . . or some form of it.

JESSE Is he doing well in business?
(*Fills her glass once again*)

MURIEL Oh, in business you don't have to worry. In that department he's doing great. I mean, he's really got a wonderful business there . . . Of course, it was good when my father had it. (*JESSE hands her a drink*) Ooh, cheers.

JESSE (*Sitting on the arm of the sofa*) In what department isn't he doing well?

MURIEL He's doing well in *every* department.

JESSE Are you sure?

MURIEL I'm positive.

JESSE Then I'm glad.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

MURIEL Why, what do you hear?

JESSE I haven't heard a thing except what you're telling me.

MURIEL Well, I'm telling you that we have a happy marriage. Are you trying to infer we don't have a happy marriage?

JESSE No . . .

MURIEL Well, you're wrong. We have a happy marriage. A goddamned happy marriage. (*Tries to put the glass down on the table, misses and nearly slips off the sofa*) Oh, I'm sorry. I should have had lunch.

JESSE (*Steadies her and picks up the glass from the floor and puts it on the table*) Shall I order down for some food?

MURIEL No, I can't stay. Larry'll be home about five.

JESSE I thought he comes home at seven.

MURIEL If he comes home at all . . . Please forgive me, Jesse, I seem to be losing control of myself.

JESSE You drank those too quickly. Didn't you have anything to eat all day?

MURIEL Just an olive with the two stingers I had downstairs . . . I'll be all right.

JESSE Do you want to lie down for a while?

MURIEL What's the point? You're going back to Hollywood in a few days . . . Oh, I see what you mean . . . Oh, God, I'm sorry, Jesse, I seem to be running off at the mouth.

JESSE (*Sits down next to her*) What is it, Muriel? What's with you and Larry?

MURIEL Nothing. I told you, we're very happy. We have tiny, little differences like every normal couple, but basically we're enormously happy together. I couldn't ask for a better life . . . (And she throws her arms around JESSE and gives him a full, passionate kiss on the lips . . . then she pulls away) . . . Oh, you shouldn't have done that, Jesse. I'm very vulnerable right now and you mustn't take advantage . . . I'm going. I've got to go.

(Gets up and moves away)

JESSE (Taking her hand) Muriel, I didn't know.

MURIEL (Pulling away) No, Jesse, don't.

JESSE Why didn't you let me know?

MURIEL (Crying, crosses to the chair for her things)

Who knew you were interested? You were always at a party with the Los Angeles Rams.

JESSE I never suspected for a minute. Why didn't you write to me?

MURIEL (Crying) Where? I don't know where Humphrey Bogart lived. (Rushes to JESSE where he sits on the sofa and throws her arms about him) I've got to go. Let me go.

JESSE (With his arms about her waist) God, how I thought about you on the plane all the way to New York.

MURIEL Please, Jesse. I've got to buy something in Bonwit's and get dinner for Larry. (He munches on her neck) Don't bite my neck, it'll leave marks.

JESSE You're different, Muriel. I know you are. You're not like any of the others.

(Caressing her)

MURIEL I'm not different, Jesse. I'm a woman. A happily married woman with normal desires and passions. Please don't rub me.

(Pulls away from him)

JESSE (Reaching out for her) My life is empty, Muriel. Empty. But you can fill it for me. You can.

(Gets up and moves to her)

MURIEL (*Retreating behind the chair*) I can't fill your life for you, Jesse, I've got to get home. Larry'll kill me.

JESSE (*Catching her hands*) Stay! An hour. Just one hour, that's all.

MURIEL No, no. Tomorrow I'll be alone with my regrets and you'll be out there with Dino and Groucho . . .

558
*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

JESSE (*Pulling her above the sofa in the direction of the bedroom*) One hour, Muriel. Live my life with me for one hour.

MURIEL No, please, Jesse. I've got to pick up my lamb chops.

JESSE One hour, Muriel. The world can change for one hour.

MURIEL (*Stopping above the sofa*) Can it, Jesse? Can it really?

JESSE (*Moving behind her*) It can for me, Muriel. It can for you.

MURIEL I don't know, Jesse. I just don't know.

JESSE All right, we'll just talk. (*Reaches around her waist from behind her, and places his hand on her stomach. Soothingly*) No one ever got hurt just talking, did they?

MURIEL . . . I suppose not.

JESSE Of course they didn't.
(*Rubbing her stomach*)

MURIEL (*Under the spell of his soft voice*) What'll we talk about?

JESSE Whatever you say. Whatever you want.

MURIEL . . . Did you go to the Academy Awards dinner last year?

JESSE (*Resignedly*) Certainly. I go every year.

MURIEL Oh, God, really?

JESSE Really.

(For a moment, they rock gently back and forth, but slowly, almost as in a dance step, he leads her into the bedroom)

MURIEL Who did you sit next to?

JESSE (As if to a child) In the theatre, I sat next to Steve McQueen on one side and Liza Minelli on the other.

559

PLAZA SUITE

MURIEL She's adorable, isn't she?

(They move into the bedroom)

JESSE A real pixie.

MURIEL And who did you sit with at the dinner?

JESSE (Leading her to the bed) Well, let's see, at my table there was Charlton Heston and his wife, Joseph E. Levine, the producer, Eva Marie Saint, Marge and Gower Champion . . .

(Sits down on the side of the bed)

MURIEL Oh, they're cute . . . All at your table?

JESSE (Drawing her down on his knee) All at my table. And at the next table—there was Anthony Quinn and Virna Lisi, Paul Newman and Joanne . . .

(Searches for the name)

MURIEL Woodward . . .

JESSE Woodward . . . (He begins to unzip her dress) And there was Dean Jones and Yvette Mimieux . . .

MURIEL Together . . . ?

JESSE Yes, together . . . (He gently forces her back down on the bed, at the same time pulling the dress off her shoulders) Then behind us there was Troy Donahue and Stella Stevens, Sammy Davis, Jr., and Margot Fonteyn . . .

(They are both lying on the bed. The lights have faded out)

Curtain

VISITOR FROM FOREST HILLS

560

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

Suite 719 at the Plaza. It is three o'clock on a warm Saturday afternoon in spring.

The living room is bedecked with vases and baskets of flowers. In the bedroom one opened valise containing a young woman's street clothes rests on the floor. A very large box, which had held a wedding dress, rests on the luggage rack, and a man's suit lies on the bed. A fur wrap and gloves are thrown over the back of the sofa. Telegrams of congratulation and newspapers are strewn about. The suite today is being used more or less as a dressing room, since a wedding is about to occur downstairs in one of the reception rooms.

As the lights come up, NORMA HUBLEY is at the phone in the bedroom, impatiently tapping the receiver. She is dressed in a formal cocktail dress and a large hat, looking her very best, as any woman would want to on her daughter's wedding day. But she is extremely nervous and harassed, and with good cause—as we'll soon find out.

NORMA (*On the phone*) Hello? . . . Hello, operator? . . . Can I have the Blue Room, please . . . The Blue Room . . . Is there a Pink Room? . . . I want the Hubley-Eisler wedding . . . The Green Room, that's it. Thank you . . . Could you please hurry, operator, it's an emergency . . . (*She looks over at the bathroom nervously. She paces back and forth*) Hello? . . . Who's this? . . . Mr. Eisler . . . It's Norma Hubley . . . No, everything's fine . . . Yes, we're coming right down . . . (*She is smiling and trying to act as pleasant and as calm as possible*) Yes, you're right, it certainly is the big day . . . Mr. Eisler, is my husband there? . . . Would you, please? . . . Oh! Well, I'd like to wish you the very best of luck too . . . Borden's a wonderful boy . . . Well, they're both wonderful kids . . . No, no. She's as calm as a cucumber . . . That's the younger generation, I guess . . . Yes, everything seems

to be going along beautifully . . . Absolutely beautifully . . . Oh, thank you. (*Her husband has obviously just come on the other end, because the expression on her face changes violently and she screams a rasping whisper filled with doom.* Sitting on the bed) Roy? You'd better get up here right away, we're in big trouble . . . Don't ask questions, just get up here . . . I hope you're not drunk because I can't handle this alone . . . Don't say anything. Just smile and walk leisurely out the door . . . and then get the hell up here as fast as you can. (*She hangs up, putting the phone back on the night table. She crosses to the bathroom and then puts her head up against the door.* Aloud through the bathroom door) All right, Mimsey, your father's on his way up. Now, I want you to come out of that bathroom and get married. (*There is no answer*) Do you hear me? . . . I've had enough of this nonsense . . . Unlock that door! (*That's about the end of her authority. She wilts and almost pleads*) Mimsey, darling, please come downstairs and get married, you know your father's temper . . . I know what you're going through now, sweetheart, you're just nervous . . . Everyone goes through that on their wedding day . . . It's going to be all right, darling. You love Borden and he loves you. You're both going to have a wonderful future. So please come out of the bathroom! (*She listens; there is no answer*) Mimsey, if you don't care about your life, think about mine. Your father'll kill me. (*The front doorbell rings.* NORMA looks off nervously and moves to the other side of the bed) Oh, God, he's here! . . . Mimsey! Mimsey, please, spare me this . . . If you want, I'll have it annulled next week, but please come out and get married! (*There is no answer from the bathroom but the front doorbell rings impatiently*) All right, I'm letting your father in. And heaven help the three of us!

(*She crosses through the bedroom into the living room. She crosses to the door and opens it as ROY HUBLEY bursts into the room. ROY is dressed in striped trousers, black tail coat, the works. He looks elegant but he's not too happy in this attire. He is a volatile, explosive man equipped to handle*

*the rigors of the competitive business world, but
a nervous, frightened man when it comes to the
business of marrying off his only daughter)*

562

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ROY Why are you standing here? There are sixty-eight people down there drinking my liquor. If there's gonna be a wedding, let's have a wedding. Come on! (He starts back out the door but sees that NORMA is not going anywhere. She sits on the sofa. He comes back in) . . . Didn't you hear what I said? There's another couple waiting to use the Green Room. Come on, let's go!

(He makes a start out again)

NORMA (Very calm) Roy, could you sit down a minute? I want to talk to you about something.

ROY (She must be mad) You want to talk now? You had twenty-one years to talk while she was growing up. I'll talk to you when they're in Bermuda. Can we please have a wedding?

NORMA We can't have a wedding until you and I have a talk.

ROY Are you crazy? While you and I are talking here, there are four musicians playing downstairs for seventy dollars an hour. I'll talk to you later when we're dancing. Come on, get Mimsey and let's go.

(He starts out again)

NORMA That's what I want to talk to you about.

ROY (Comes back) Mimsey?

NORMA Sit down. You're not going to like this.

ROY Is she sick?

NORMA She's not sick . . . exactly.

ROY What do you mean, she's not sick exactly? Either she's sick or she's not sick. Is she sick?

NORMA She's not sick.

ROY Then let's have a wedding! (He crosses into the bedroom) Mimsey, there's two hundred dollars' worth

of cocktail frankfurters getting cold downstairs . . .
(He looks around the empty room) Mimsey? (He crosses back to the living room to the side of the sofa. He looks at NORMA) . . . Where's Mimsey?

NORMA Promise you're not going to blame me.

ROY Blame you for what? What did you do?

563

NORMA I didn't do anything. But I don't want to get blamed for it.

PLAZA SUITE

ROY What's going on here? Are you going to tell me where Mimsey is?

NORMA Are you going to take an oath you're not going to blame me?

ROY I take it! I take it! NOW WHERE THE HELL IS SHE?

NORMA . . . She's locked herself in the bathroom. She's not coming out and she's not getting married.

(ROY looks at NORMA incredulously. Then, because it must be an insane joke, he smiles at her. There is even the faint glint of a chuckle)

ROY (Softly) . . . No kidding, where is she?

NORMA (Turns away) He doesn't believe me. I'll kill myself.

(ROY turns and storms into the bedroom. He crosses to the bathroom and knocks on the door. Then he tries it. It's locked. He tries again. He bangs on the door with his fist)

ROY Mimsey? . . . Mimsey? . . . MIMSEY? (There is no reply. Girding himself, he crosses back through the bedroom into the living room to the sofa. He glares at NORMA) . . . All right, what did you say to her?

NORMA (Jumping up and moving away) I knew it! I knew you'd blame me. You took an oath. God'll punish you.

ROY I'm not blaming you. I just want to know what stupid thing you said to her that made her do this.

NORMA I didn't say a word. I was putting on my lipstick, she was in the bathroom, I heard the door go

click, it was locked, my whole life was over, what do you want from me?

ROY And you didn't say a word?

NORMA Nothing.

564

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ROY (*Ominously moving toward her as NORMA backs away*) I see. In other words, you're trying to tell me that a normal, healthy, intelligent twenty-one-year-old college graduate, who has driven me crazy the last eighteen months with wedding lists, floral arrangements and choices of assorted hors d'oeuvres, has suddenly decided to spend this, the most important day of her life, locked in the Plaza Hotel john?

NORMA (*Making her stand at the mantel*) Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!

ROY (*Vicious*) YOU MUSTA SAID SOMETHING!
(*He storms into the bedroom. NORMA goes after him*)

NORMA Roy . . . Roy . . . What are you going to do?

ROY (*Stopping below the bed*) First I'm getting the college graduate out of the bathroom! Then we're gonna have a wedding and then you and I are gonna have a big talk! (*He crosses to the bathroom door and pounds on it*) Mimsey! This is your father. I want you and your four-hundred-dollar wedding dress out of there in five seconds!

NORMA (*Standing at the side of the bed*) Don't threaten her. She'll never come out if you threaten her.

ROY (*To NORMA*) I got sixty-eight guests, nine waiters, four musicians and a boy with a wedding license waiting downstairs. This is no time to be diplomatic. (*Bangs on the door*) Mimsey! . . . Are you coming out or do we have the wedding in the bathroom?

NORMA Will you lower your voice! Everyone will hear us.

ROY (*To NORMA*) How long you think we can keep this a secret? As soon as that boy says "I do" and there's no one standing next to him, they're going to

suspect something. (*He bangs on the door*) You can't stay in there forever, Mimsey. We only have the room until six o'clock . . . You hear me?

(*There is still no reply from the bathroom*)

NORMA Roy, will you please try to control yourself.

ROY (*With great display of patience, moves to the foot of the bed and sits*) All right, I'll stay here and control myself. You go downstairs and marry the short, skinny kid. (*Exploding*) What's the matter with you? Don't you realize what's happening?

565

PLAZA SUITE

NORMA (*Moving to him*) Yes. I realize what's happening. Our daughter is nervous, frightened and scared to death.

ROY Of what? OF WHAT? She's been screaming for two years if he doesn't ask her to marry him, she'll throw herself off the Guggenheim Museum . . . What is she scared of?

NORMA I don't know. Maybe she's had second thoughts about the whole thing.

ROY (*Getting up and moving to the bathroom door*) Second thoughts? This is no time to be having *second thoughts*. It's costing me eight thousand dollars for the *first thoughts*. (*He bangs on the door*) Mimsey, open this door.

NORMA Is that all you care about? What it's costing you? Aren't you concerned about your daughter's happiness?

ROY (*Moving back to her below the bed*) Yes! Yes, I'm concerned about my daughter's happiness. I'm also concerned about that boy waiting downstairs. A decent, respectable, intelligent young man . . . who I hope one day is going to teach that daughter of mine to grow up.

NORMA You haven't the faintest idea of what's going through her mind right now.

ROY Do you?

NORMA It could be anything. I don't know, maybe she thinks she's not good enough for him.

ROY (*Looks at her incredulously*) . . . Why? What is he? Some kind of Greek god? He's a plain kid, nothing . . . That's ridiculous. (*Moves back to the door and bangs on it*) Mimsey! Mimsey, open this door. (*He turns to NORMA*) Maybe she's not in there.

NORMA She's in there. (*Clutches her chest and sits on the side of the bed*) Oh, God, I think I'm having a heart attack.

ROY (*Listening at the door*) I don't hear a peep out of her. Is there a window in there? Maybe she tried something crazy.

NORMA (*Turning to him*) That's right. Tell a woman who's having a heart attack that her daughter jumped out the window.

ROY Take a look through the keyhole. I want to make sure she's in there.

NORMA She's in there, I tell you. Look at this, my hand keeps bouncing off my chest.

(*It does*)

ROY Are you gonna look in there and see if she's all right or am I gonna call the house detective?

NORMA (*Getting up and moving below the bed*) Why don't *you* look?

ROY Maybe she's taking a bath.

NORMA Two minutes before her own wedding?

ROY (*Crossing to her*) What wedding? She just called it off.

NORMA Wouldn't I have heard the water running?

ROY (*Making a swipe at her hat*) With that hat you couldn't hear Niagara Falls! . . . Are you going to look to see what your daughter's doing in the bathroom or do I ask a stranger?

NORMA (*Crossing to the door*) I'll look! I'll look! I'll look! (*Reluctantly she gets down on one knee and looks through the keyhole with one eye*) Oh, my God!

ROY What's the matter?

NORMA (*To him*) I ripped my stockings.
(*Getting up and examining her stocking*)

ROY Is she in there?

NORMA She's in there! She's in there! (*Hobbling to the far side of the bed and sitting down on the edge*) Where am I going to get another pair of stockings now? How am I going to go to the wedding with torn stockings?

567

PLAZA SUITE

ROY (*Crossing to the bathroom*) If she doesn't show up, who's going to look at you? (*He kneels at the door and looks through the keyhole*) There she is. Sitting there and crying.

NORMA I told you she was in there . . . The only one in my family to have a daughter married in the Plaza and I have torn stockings.

ROY (*He is on his knees, his eye to the keyhole*) Mimsey, I can see you . . . Do you hear me? . . . Don't turn away from me when I'm talking to you.

NORMA Maybe I could run across to Bergdorf's. They have nice stockings.

(*Crosses to her purse on the bureau in the bedroom and looks through it*)

ROY (*Still through the keyhole*) Do you want me to break down the door, Mimsey, is that what you want? Because that's what I'm doing if you're not out of there in five seconds . . . Stop crying on your dress. Use the towel!

NORMA (*Crossing to ROY at the door*) I don't have any money. Give me four dollars, I'll be back in ten minutes.

ROY (*Gets up and moves below the bed*) In ten minutes she'll be a married woman, because I've had enough of this nonsnse. (Yells in) All right, Mimsey, stand in the shower because I'm breaking down the door.

NORMA (*Getting in front of the door*) Roy, don't get crazy.

ROY (*Preparing himself for a run at the door*) Get out
of my way.

NORMA Roy, she'll come out. Just talk nicely to her.

ROY (*Waving her away*) We already had nice talking.
Now we're gonna have door breaking. (*Through the
door*) All right, Mimsey, I'm coming in!

568

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

NORMA No, Roy, don't! Don't!

(*She gets out of the way as ROY hurls his body,
led by his shoulder, with full force against the
door. It doesn't budge. He stays against the door
silently a second; he doesn't react. Then he says
calmly and softly*)

ROY Get a doctor.

NORMA (*Standing below the door*) I knew it. I knew it.

ROY (*Drawing back from the door*) Don't tell me I
knew it, just get a doctor. (*Through the door*) I'm
not coming in, Mimsey, because my arm is broken.

NORMA Let me see it. Can you move your fingers?
(*Moves to him and examines his fingers*)

ROY (*Through the door*) Are you happy now? Your
mother has torn stockings and your father has a
broken arm. How much longer is this gonna go on?

NORMA (*Moving ROY's fingers*) It's not broken, you
can move your fingers. Give me four dollars with your
other hand, I have to get stockings.

(*She starts to go into his pockets. He slaps her
hands away*)

ROY Are you crazy moving a broken arm?

NORMA Two dollars, I'll get a cheap pair.

ROY (*As though she were a lunatic*) I'm not carrying
any cash today. Rented, everything is rented.

NORMA I can't rent stockings. Don't you even have a
charge-plate?

(*Starts to go through his pockets again*)

ROY (*Slaps her hands away. Then pointing dramatically*)

Wait in the Green Room! You're no use to me here,
go wait in the Green Room!

NORMA With torn stockings?

ROY Stand behind the rented potted plant. (*Takes her by the arm and leads her below the bed. Confidentially*) They're going to call from downstairs any second asking where the bride is. And I'm the one who's going to have to speak to them. Me! Me! Me! (*The phone rings. Pushing her toward the phone*) That's them. You speak to them!

569

PLAZA SUITE

NORMA What happened to me me me?
(*The phone rings again*)

ROY (*Moving to the bathroom door*) Answer it. Answer it.
(*The phone rings again*)

NORMA (*Moving to the phone*) What am I going to say to them?

ROY I don't know. Maybe something'll come to you as you're talking.

NORMA (*Picks the phone up*) Hello? . . . Oh, Mr. Eisler . . . Yes, it certainly is the big moment.
(*She forces a merry laugh*)

ROY Stall 'em. Stall 'em. Just keep stalling him. Whatever you do, stall 'em!
(*Turns to the door*)

NORMA (*On the phone*) Yes, we'll be down in two minutes.

(*Hangs up*)

ROY (*Turns back to her*) Are you crazy? What did you say that for? I told you to stall him.

NORMA I stalled him. You got two minutes. What do you want from me?

ROY (*Shakes his arm at her*) You always panic. The

minute there's a little crisis, you always go to pieces and panic.

NORMA (*Shaking her arm back at him*) Don't wave your broken arm at me. Why don't you use it to get your daughter out of the bathroom?

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ROY (*Very angry, kneeling to her on the bed*) I could say something to you now.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

NORMA (*Confronting him, kneels in turn on the bed*) Then why don't you say it?

ROY Because it would lead to a fight. And I don't want to spoil this day for you. (*He gets up and crosses back to the bathroom door*) Mimsey, this is your father speaking . . . I think you know I'm not a violent man. I can be stern and strict, but I have never once been violent. Except when I'm angry. And I am really angry now, Mimsey. You can ask your mother.

(*Moves away so NORMA can get to the door*)

NORMA (*Crossing to the bathroom door*) Mimsey, this is your mother speaking. It's true, darling, your father is very angry.

ROY (*Moving back to the door*) This is your father again, Mimsey. If you have a problem you want to discuss, unlock the door and we'll discuss it. I'm not going to ask you this again, Mimsey. I've reached the end of my patience. I'm gonna count to three . . . and by God, I'm warning you, young lady, by the time I've reached three . . . *this door better be open!*

(*Moving away to below the bed*) All right—One! . . . Two! . . . THREE! (*There is no reply or movement from behind the door. ROY helplessly sinks down on the foot of the bed*) . . . Where did we fail her?

NORMA (*Crosses to the far side of the bed, consoling him as she goes, and sits on the edge*) We didn't fail her.

ROY They're playing "Here Comes the Bride" downstairs and she's barricaded in a toilet—we must have failed her.

NORMA (*Sighs*) All right, if it makes you any happier, we failed her.

ROY You work and you dream and you hope and you save your whole life for this day, and in one click of a door, suddenly everything crumbles. Why? What's the answer?

NORMA It's not your fault, Roy. Stop blaming yourself.

ROY I'm not blaming myself. I know I've done my best.

571

NORMA (*Turns and looks at him*) What does that mean?

ROY It means we're not perfect. We make mistakes, we're only human. I've done my best and we failed her.

PLAZA SUITE

NORMA Meaning I didn't do my best?

ROY (*Turning to her*) I didn't say that. I don't know what your best is. Only *you* know what your best is. Did you do your best?

NORMA Yes, I did my best.

ROY And I did my best.

NORMA Then we *both* did our best.

ROY So it's not our fault.

NORMA That's what I said before.

(*They turn away from each other. Then*)

ROY (*Softly*) Unless one of us didn't do our best.

NORMA (*Jumping up and moving away*) I don't want to discuss it any more.

ROY All right, then what are we going to do?

NORMA I'm having a heart attack, *you* come up with something.

ROY How? All right, I'll go down and tell them.

(*Gets up and moves to the bedroom door*)

NORMA (*Moving to the door in front of him*) Tell them? Tell them what?

(*As they move into the living room, she stops him above the sofa*)

ROY I don't know. Those people down there deserve some kind of an explanation. They got all dressed up, didn't they?

NORMA What are you going to say? You're going to tell them that my daughter is not going to marry their son and that she's locked herself in the bathroom?

ROY What do you want me to do, start off with two good jokes? They're going to find out *some* time, aren't they?

NORMA (*With great determination*) I'll tell you what you're going to do. If she's not out of there in five minutes, we're going to go out the back door and move to Seattle, Washington! . . . You don't think I'll be able to show my face in this city again, do you? (**ROY** ponders this for a moment, then reassures her with a pat on the arm. Slowly he turns and moves into the bedroom. Suddenly, he loses control and lets his anger get the best of him. He grabs up the chair from the dresser, and brandishing it above his head, he dashes for the bathroom door, not even detouring around the bed but rather crossing right over it. **NORMA** screams and chases after him) **ROY!**

(At the bathroom door, **ROY** manages to stop himself in time from smashing the chair against the door, trembling with frustration and anger. Finally, exhausted, he puts the chair down below the door and straddles it, sitting leaning on the back. **NORMA** sinks into the bedroom armchair)

ROY . . . Would you believe it, last night I cried. Oh, yes. I turned my head into the pillow and lay there in the dark, crying, because today I was losing my little girl. Some stranger was coming and taking my little Mimsey away from me . . . so I turned my back to you—and cried . . . Wait'll you hear what goes on tonight!

NORMA (*Lost in her own misery*) I should have invited your cousin Lillie. (*Gestures to the heavens*) She wished this on me, I know it. (*Suddenly ROY begins to chuckle. NORMA looks at him. He chuckles louder, although there is clearly no joy in his laughter*) Do you find something funny about this?

ROY Yes, I find something funny about this. I find it

funny that I hired a photographer for three hundred dollars. I find it hysterical that the wedding pictures are going to be you and me in front of a locked bathroom! (*Gets up and puts the chair aside*) All right, I'm through sitting around waiting for that door to open.

(*He crosses to the bedroom window and tries to open it*)

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NORMA (*Following after him*) What are you doing?

PLAZA SUITE

ROY What do you think I'm doing?

(*Finding it impossible to open it, he crosses to the living room and opens a window there. The curtains begin to blow in the breeze*)

NORMA (*Crosses after him*) If you're jumping, I'm going with you. You're not leaving *me* here alone.

ROY (*Looking out the window*) I'm gonna crawl out along that ledge and get in through the bathroom window.

(*He starts to climb out the window*)

NORMA Are you crazy? It's seven stories up. You'll kill yourself.

(*She grabs hold of him*)

ROY It's four steps, that's all. It's no problem, I'm telling you. Now will you let go of me.

NORMA (*Struggling to keep him from getting out the window*) Roy, no! Don't do this. We'll leave her in the bathroom. Let the hotel worry about her. Don't go out on the ledge.

(*In desperation, she grabs hold of one of the tails of his coat*)

ROY (*Half out the window, trying to get out as she holds onto his coat*) You're gonna rip my coat. Let go or you're gonna rip my coat. (*As he tries to pull away from her, his coat rips completely up the back, right up to the collar. He stops and slowly comes back into the room. NORMA has frozen in misery by the bedroom door after letting go of the coat. ROY draws himself*)

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

up with great dignity and control. He slowly turns and moves into the bedroom, stopping by the bed. With great patience, he calls toward the bathroom) Hey, you in there . . . Are you happy now? Your mother's got torn stockings and your father's got a rented ripped coat. Some wedding it's gonna be. (*Exploding, he crosses back to the open window in the living room*) Get out of my way!

NORMA (*Puts hand to her head*) I'm getting dizzy. I think I'm going to pass out.

ROY (*Getting her out of the way*) . . . You can pass out after the wedding . . . (*He goes out the window and onto the ledge*) Call room service. I want a double Scotch the minute I get back.

(*And he disappears from view as he moves across the ledge. NORMA runs into the bedroom and catches a glimpse of him as he passes the bedroom window, but then he disappears once more*)

NORMA (*Bemoaning her fate*) . . . He'll kill himself. He'll fall and kill himself, that's the way my luck's been going all day. (*She staggers away from the window and leans on the bureau*) I'm not going to look. I'll just wait until I hear a scream. (*The telephone rings and NORMA screams in fright*) Aggghhh! . . . I thought it was him . . . (*She crosses to the phone by the bed. The telephone rings again*) Oh, God, what am I going to say? (*She picks it up*) Hello? . . . Oh, Mr. Eisler. Yes, we're coming . . . My husband's getting Mimsey now . . . We'll be right down. Have some more hors d'oeuvres . . . Oh, thank you. It certainly is the happiest day of my life. (*She hangs up*) No, I'm going to tell him I've got a husband dangling over Fifty-ninth Street. (*As she crosses back to the opened window, a sudden torrent of rain begins to fall. As she gets to the window and sees it*) I knew it! I knew it! It had to happen . . . (*She gets closer to the window and tries to look out*) Are you all right, Roy? . . . Roy? (*There's no answer*) He's not all right, he fell. (*She staggers into the bedroom*) He fell, he fell, he fell, he fell . . . He's dead, I know it. (*She collapses onto the armchair*) He's laying there in a

puddle in front of Trader Vic's . . . I'm passing out. This time I'm really passing out! (*And she passes out on the chair, legs and arms spread-eagled. The doorbell rings; she jumps right up*) I'm coming! I'm coming! Help me, whoever you are, help me! (*She rushes through the bedroom into the living room and to the front door*) Oh, please, somebody, help me, please!

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(*She opens the front door and ROY stands there dripping wet, fuming, exhausted and with clothes disheveled and his hair mussed*)

PLAZA SUITE

ROY (*Staggering into the room and weakly leaning on the mantelpiece. It takes a moment for him to catch his breath. NORMA, concerned, follows him*) She locked the window too. I had to climb in through a strange bedroom. There may be a lawsuit.

(*He weakly charges back into the bedroom, followed by NORMA, who grabs his coattails in an effort to stop him. The rain outside stops*)

NORMA (*Stopping him below the bed*) Don't yell at her. Don't get her more upset.

ROY (*Turning back to her*) Don't get her upset? I'm hanging seven stories from a gargoyle in a pouring rain and you want me to worry about her? . . . You know what she's doing in there? She's playing with her false eyelashes. (*Moves to the bathroom door*) I'm out there fighting for my life with pigeons and she's playing with eyelashes . . . (*Crossing back to NORMA*) . . . I already made up my mind. The minute I get my hands on her, I'm gonna kill her. (*Moves back to the door*) Once I show them the wedding bills, no jury on earth would convict me . . . And if by some miracle she survives, let there be no talk of weddings . . . She can go into a convent. (*Slowly moving back to NORMA below the bed*) . . . Let her become a librarian with thick glasses and a pencil in her hair, I'm not paying for any more canceled weddings . . . (*Working himself up into a frenzy, he rushes to the table by the armchair and grabs up some newspapers*) Now get her out of there or I start to burn these newspapers and smoke her out.

(NORMA stops him, soothes him, and manages to get him calmed down. She gently seats him on the foot of the bed)

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Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

NORMA (Really frightened) I'll get her out! I'll get her out! (She crosses to the door and knocks) Mimsey! Mimsey, please! (She knocks harder and harder) Mimsey, you want to destroy a family? You want a scandal? You want a story in the *Daily News*? . . . Is that what you want? Is it? . . . Open this door! Open it! (She bangs very hard, then stops and turns to ROY) . . . Promise you won't get hysterical.

ROY What did you do?
(Turns wearily to her)

NORMA I broke my diamond ring.

ROY (Letting the papers fall from his hand) Your good diamond ring?

NORMA How many do I have?

ROY (Yells through the door) Hey, you with the false eyelashes! (Getting up and moving to the door) . . . You want to see a broken diamond ring? You want to see eighteen hundred dollars' worth of crushed baguettes? . . . (He grabs NORMA's hand and holds it to the keyhole) Here! Here! This is a worthless family heirloom (Kicks the door)—and this is a diamond bathroom door! (Controlling himself. To NORMA) Do you know what I'm going to do now? Do you have any idea? (NORMA puts her hand to her mouth, afraid to hear. ROY moves away from the door to the far side of the bed) I'm going to wash my hands of the entire Eisler-Hubley wedding. You can take all the Eislers and all the hors d'oeuvres and go to Central Park and have an eight-thousand-dollar picnic . . . (Stops and turns back to NORMA) I'm going down to the Oak Room with my broken arm, with my drenched rented ripped suit—and I'm gonna get blind! . . . I don't mean drunk, I mean totally blind . . . (Erupting with great vehemence) because I don't want to see you or your crazy daughter again, if I live to be a thousand.

(He turns and rushes from the bedroom, through

the living room to the front door. As he tries to open it, NORMA catches up to him, grabs his tail coat and pulls him back into the room)

NORMA That's right. Run out on me. Run out on your daughter. Run out on everybody just when they need you.

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ROY You don't need me. You need a rhinoceros with a blowtorch—because no one else can get into that bathroom.

PLAZA SUITE

NORMA (*With rising emotion*) I'll tell you who can get into that bathroom. Someone with love and understanding. Someone who cares about that poor kid who's going through some terrible decision now and needs help. Help that only *you* can give her and that *I* can give her. *That's* who can get into that bathroom now.

(*ROY looks at her solemnly . . . Then he crosses past her, hesitates and looks back at her, and then goes into the bedroom and to the bathroom door. NORMA follows him back in. He turns and looks at NORMA again. Then he knocks gently on the door and speaks softly and with some tenderness*)

ROY Mimsey! . . . This is Daddy . . . Is something wrong, dear? . . . (*He looks back at NORMA, who nods encouragement, happy about his new turn in character. Then he turns back to the door*) . . . I want to help you, darling. Mother and I both do. But how can we help you if you won't talk to us? Mimsey can you hear me?

(*There is no answer. He looks back at NORMA*)

NORMA (*At the far side of the bed*) Maybe she's too choked up to talk.

ROY (*Through the door*) Mimsey, if you can hear me, knock twice for yes, once for no. (*There are two knocks on the door. They look at each other encouragingly*) Good. Good . . . Now, Mimsey, we want to ask you a very, very important question. Do you want to marry Borden or don't you?

(*They wait anxiously for the answer. We hear one knock, a pause, then another knock*)

NORMA (*Happily*) She said yes.

ROY (*Despondently*) She said no.

(*Moves away from the door to the foot of the bed*)

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

NORMA It was two knocks. Two knocks is yes. She wants to marry him.

ROY It wasn't a double knock "yes." It was two single "no" knocks. She doesn't want to marry him.

NORMA Don't tell me she doesn't want to marry him. I heard her distinctly knock "yes." She went (*Knocks twice on the foot of the bed*) "Yes, I want to marry him."

ROY It wasn't (*Knocks twice on the foot of the bed*) . . . It was (*Knocks once on the foot of the bed*) . . . and then another (*Knocks once more on the foot of the bed*) . . . That's "no," twice, she's not marrying him. (*Sinks down on the side of the bed*)

NORMA (*Crossing to the door*) Ask her again. (*Into the door*) Mimsey, what did you say? Yes or no? (*They listen. We hear two distinct loud knocks. NORMA turns to ROY*) . . . All right? There it is in plain English . . . You never could talk to your own daughter.

(*Moves away from the door*)

ROY (*Getting up wearily and moving to the door*) Mimsey, this is not a good way to have a conversation. You're gonna hurt your knuckles . . . Won't you come out and talk to us? . . . Mimsey?

NORMA (*Leads ROY gently to the foot of the bed*) Don't you understand, it's probably something she can't discuss with her father. There are times a daughter wants to be alone with her mother. (*Sits ROY down on the foot of the bed, and crosses back to the door*) Mimsey, do you want me to come in there and talk to you, just the two of us, sweetheart? Tell me, darling, is that what you want? (*There is no reply. A strip of toilet paper appears from under the bathroom door. ROY notices it, pushes NORMA aside, bends down, picks it up and reads it*) What? What does it say? (*ROY*

solemnly hands it to her. NORMA reads it aloud) "I would rather talk to Daddy."

(NORMA is crushed. He looks at her sympathetically. We hear the bathroom door unlock. ROY doesn't quite know what to say to NORMA. He gives her a quick hug)

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ROY I—I'll try not to be too long.

(He opens the door and goes in, closing it behind him, quietly. NORMA, still with the strip of paper in her hand, walks slowly and sadly to the foot of the bed and sits. She looks glumly down at the paper)

PLAZA SUITE

NORMA *(Aloud)* . . . "I would rather talk to Daddy" . . .

Did she have to write it on this kind of paper? *(She wads up the paper)* . . . Well—maybe I didn't do my best . . . I thought we had such a good relationship . . . Friends. Everyone thought we were friends, not mother and daughter . . . I tried to do everything right . . . I tried to teach her that there could be more than just love between a mother and daughter . . . There can be trust and respect and friendship and understanding . . . *(Getting angry, she turns and yells toward the closed door)* Just because I don't speak to my mother doesn't mean we can't be different!

(She wipes her eyes with the paper. The bathroom door opens. A solemn ROY steps out, and the door closes and locks behind him. He deliberately buttons his coat and crosses to the bedroom phone, wordlessly. NORMA has not taken her eyes off him. The pause seems interminable)

ROY *(Into the phone)* The Green Room, please . . .

Mr. Borden Eisler. Thank you.

(He waits)

NORMA *(Getting up from the bed)* . . . I'm gonna have to guess, is that it? . . . It's so bad you can't even tell me . . . Words can't form in your mouth, it's so horrible, right? . . . Come on, I'm a strong person, Roy. Tell me quickly, I'll get over it . . .

ROY *(Into the phone)* Borden? Mr. Hubley . . . Can you come up to 719? . . . Yes, now . . . *(He hangs up and*

gestures for NORMA to follow him. He crosses into the living room and down to the ottoman where he sits. NORMA follows and stands waiting behind him. Finally) She wanted to talk to me because she couldn't bear to say it to both of us at the same time . . . The reason she's locked herself in the bathroom . . . is she's afraid.

NORMA Afraid? What is she afraid of? That Borden doesn't love her?

ROY Not that Borden doesn't love her.

NORMA That she doesn't love Borden?

ROY Not that she doesn't love Borden.

NORMA Then what is she afraid of?

ROY . . . She's afraid of what they're going to become.

NORMA I don't understand.

ROY Think about it.

NORMA (*Crossing above the sofa*) What's there to think about? What are they going to become? They love each other, they'll get married, they'll have children, they'll grow older, they'll become like us (*Comes the dawn. Stops by the side of the sofa and turns back to ROY*) —I never thought about that.

ROY Makes you stop and think, doesn't it?

NORMA I don't think we're so bad, do you? . . . All right, so we yell and scream a little. So we fight and curse and aggravate each other. So you blame me for being a lousy mother and I accuse you of being a rotten husband. It doesn't mean we're not happy . . . does it? . . . (*Her voice rising*) Well? . . . Does it? . . .

ROY (*Looks at her*) . . . She wants something better. (*The doorbell rings. He crosses to open the door.* **NORMA** follows) Hello, Borden.

BORDEN (*Stepping into the room*) Hi.

NORMA Hello, darling.

ROY (*Gravely*) Borden, you're an intelligent young man,

I'm not going to beat around the bush. We have a serious problem on our hands.

BORDEN How so?

ROY Mimsey—is worried. Worried about your future together. About the whole institution of marriage. We've tried to allay her fears, but obviously we haven't been a very good example. It seems you're the only one who can communicate with her. She's locked herself in the bathroom and is not coming out . . . It's up to you now.

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PLAZA SUITE

(Without a word, BORDEN crosses below the sofa and up to the bedroom, through the bedroom below the bed and right up to the bathroom door. He knocks)

BORDEN Mimsey? . . . This is Borden . . . Cool it! (Then he turns and crosses back to the living room. Crossing above the sofa, he passes the Hubleys, and without looking at them, says) See you downstairs!

(He exits without showing any more emotion. The Hubleys stare after him as he closes the door. But then the bathroom door opens and NORMA and ROY slowly turn to it as MIMSEY, a beautiful bride, in a formal wedding gown, with veil, comes out)

MIMSEY I'm ready now!

(NORMA turns and moves into the bedroom toward her. ROY follows slowly, shaking his head in amazement)

ROY Now you're ready? Now you come out?

NORMA (Admiring MIMSEY) Roy, please . . .

ROY (Getting angry, leans toward her over the bed) I break every bone in my body and you come out for "Cool it"?

NORMA (Pushing MIMSEY toward ROY) You're beautiful, darling. Walk with your father, I want to look at both of you.

ROY (Fuming. As she takes his arm, to NORMA) That's how he communicates? That's the brilliant understanding between two people? "Cool it"?

NORMA (*Gathering up MIMSEY's train as they move toward the living room*) Roy, don't start in.

ROY What kind of a person is that to let your daughter marry?

(*They stop above the sofa. MIMSEY takes her bridal bouquet from the table behind the sofa, while NORMA puts on her wrap and takes her gloves from the back of the sofa*)

NORMA Roy, don't aggravate me. I'm warning you, don't spoil this day for me.

ROY Kids today don't care. Not like they did in my day.

NORMA Walk. Will you walk? In five minutes he'll marry one of the flower girls. Will you walk—

(*MIMSEY takes ROY by the arm and they move to the door, as NORMA follows*)

ROY (*Turning back to NORMA*) Crazy. I must be out of my mind, a boy like that. (*Opens the door*) She was better off in the bathroom. You hear me? Better off in the bathroom . . . (*They are out the door . . .*)

Curtain

Last of the RED HOT Lovers



SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

**The action takes place in an apartment in New York's
East Thirties.**

ACT I: A late afternoon in December.

ACT II: A late afternoon in August.

ACT III: A late afternoon in September.

Act One

The scene is a one-and-a-half-room apartment in the Turtle Bay section of Manhattan. It's a new building, not more than five or six years old. At first glance we can see the incongruity of the apartment and its furnishings. The room has a built-in air conditioner, modern parquet floors and the sleek, trim lines of modern-day apartments. The furniture, however, is another story. The pieces are all about thirty years old; good stuff, extremely well taken care of, but clearly from another generation. Pictures abound of family, children and grandchildren. An older person obviously lives here and, probably, judging from the size of the apartment, alone.

The room is empty. The doorbell is ringing as the curtain rises. There is a pause, then a key is heard in the lock, and the door opens. BARNEY CASHMAN sticks in his head and calls out.

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L A S T O F T H E
R E D H O T
L O V E R S

BARNEY Hello? . . . Mom? . . . (*There is no answer, so he quickly enters the apartment and closes the door. BARNEY CASHMAN is forty-seven years old, neatly dressed in blue suit, blue topcoat and gray felt hat. After removing the key from the lock, he places it on the shelf by the door. He carries an attaché case with him, which he puts down immediately on the floor. He takes the rubbers off his shoes, spreads out a newspaper he is carrying, puts it in a corner of the room and puts his rubbers on the newspaper. He removes his hat and coat and puts them neatly in the closet, which contains a fur coat and other feminine apparel. He crosses to a large window, trying to stay out of sight as much as possible, and reaches out and closes the Venetian blind. He then moves to the other two windows and closes the drapes. The room is plunged into darkness despite the fact that outside is a bright December afternoon. He then goes to the light switch by the front door and touches it to turn on all the lamps in the room. He*

picks up the attaché case and crosses to the dining table to open it. He takes out a bottle of J&B Scotch and places it on the table. He then takes out a Bloomingdale's bag, removes one tissue-wrapped glass, unwraps it and puts it on the table. Then he takes out a bottle of aftershave lotion, opens it, and administers it to his face lavishly. He rubs his fingers vigorously with lotion and smells them. He goes to the sofa, checks his watch, slides the coffee table to one side, throws the sofa cushions over the back and pulls out the convertible bed. He looks at his watch again, closes the bed, replaces the cushions, and slides the coffee table back into place. He returns to the dining table and pours himself a drink, which he carries to the telephone. He dials the phone, puts the receiver on the desk and takes a drink, wincing. He then quickly picks up the receiver, presumably just as the other party has come on. Into the phone, hardly above a whisper) Hello? . . . Harriet? . . . Mr. Cashman . . . Everything all right? . . . Did Pepito come in? . . . Pepito, the busboy . . . All right, Pietro—whatever his name is . . . Didn't come in, heh? . . . Did you try the agency again? . . . Well, listen, there's nothing I can do right now—(*Looks at his watch*)—I'll be in about five o'clock . . . I'm still in Bloomingdale's. It's just murder in here with all the Christmas shoppers . . . Did my wife call? And you told her Bloomingdale's? . . . Good. Good . . . Listen, I gotta run. I see an opening on the escalator . . . I'll be back at five-thirty the latest . . . Thank you, Harriet. (*He hangs up the phone; thinks for a second*) What the hell am I doing here? (*He quickly goes to the closet. The doorbell rings. He freezes, looking around for an exit.* There is, of course, none. *He rushes to the door and peers out the minuscule peephole. Satisfied, he opens the door.* ELAINE NAVAZIO enters. She is in her late thirties, somewhat attractive, and modestly dressed. There is an air of desperation about ELAINE. BARNEY looks at her nervously) Hello. (*ELAINE smiles and nods*) I was in the kitchen. I didn't hear the bell. (*ELAINE walks past him into the apartment*) Come on in.

(*He closes the door*)

ELAINE (*Turns; looks at him*) I'm in.

BARNEY How are you?

ELAINE Very nice.

BARNEY Well, you look very nice.

ELAINE You look surprised. Didn't you think I'd come?

BARNEY I wasn't sure . . . but I was hoping.

ELAINE I wasn't sure either . . . but I came.

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BARNEY I'm glad.

ELAINE (*Smiles*) Good.

L A S T O F T H E

R E D H O T
L O V E R S

BARNEY I'd have been disappointed if you didn't come . . . Would you?

ELAINE Be disappointed if I didn't come? No, I'd know I wasn't coming, so there'd be no disappointment.

BARNEY Anyway, hello . . . My God, I'm sorry. I forgot your name.

ELAINE (*With sincerity*) You're forgiven. Elaine Navazio.

BARNEY Really?

ELAINE Don't tell me I'm wrong?

BARNEY You just don't look like an Elaine Navazio to me.

ELAINE No? What then?

BARNEY I don't know. For some reason you looked like an Irene to me.

ELAINE Irene? You think I look like an Irene? (*She turns and looks at the wall mirror*) No, I look like an Elaine Navazio.

(*She continues examining the apartment*)

BARNEY Are you of Italian origin? Navazio?

ELAINE No, I'm of Polish persuasion. Mr. Navazio is of Italian origin. What extraction are you of?

BARNEY Actually I'm part Russian and part Lithuanian. My real name isn't Cashman. It's Czernivekoski. When my grandfather came to this country someone told him if he has any trouble with

the immigration office at Ellis Island he should give the *man* some *cash*. So when they asked my grandfather his name and they couldn't understand him, he gave the *man* some *cash*. So that's the name they gave him. Cashman.

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ELAINE (*Looks at him*) That's an extremely interesting story.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BARNEY I'm sorry. I was just making conversation. (*She passes the kitchen*) That's the kitchen.

ELAINE (*Nods*) No bedroom?

BARNEY No. Well, the sofa opens into a bed. It's a convertible.

ELAINE (*Not much enthusiasm*) Yippee! (*She turns and stares at BARNEY. He doesn't quite know what to do, so he looks around awkwardly. Then, after a few moments*) You like it quiet like this? I mean, no talking?

BARNEY I'm sorry. I guess I just ran out of conversation for a minute.

ELAINE Are you nervous?

BARNEY The truth? . . . Yes. Are you?

ELAINE (*Smiles*) The truth? . . . No.

(*She turns and examines the room again*)

BARNEY Good. No sense in *both* of us being nervous. You mentioned *Mr.* Navazio. So I assume you're married.

ELAINE *Mr.* Navazio assumes I'm married. I assume what I want.

BARNEY I didn't see a marriage ring so I was wond—
(*ELAINE interrupts by turning her head away and coughing. It's a small cough at first. She tries to suppress it to no avail. All at once she is having a coughing spasm, coughing violently and uncontrollably. She holds on to the desk chair for support as the fit finally subsides. She sits there gasping for air. Then, to BARNEY*)

ELAINE Can I have a cigarette?

BARNEY A cigarette? Wouldn't you rather have some water?

ELAINE I can't smoke water.
(She pants heavily)

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BARNEY You're not sick, are you?

ELAINE In what way?

LAST OF THE

BARNEY In a sick way. I mean, that's a terrible cough.

RED HOT
LOVERS

ELAINE If it bothers you, I won't do it again.

BARNEY It doesn't bother *me*. I thought it would bother you.

ELAINE If it bothered me, I wouldn't do it, would I?
... You're not going to give me that cigarette, are you?

(BARNEY feels pointlessly in his pockets, as though to prove he doesn't carry them)

BARNEY I don't smoke.

ELAINE Then what are you feeling your pockets for?

BARNEY I don't know. It was just a reflex action.

ELAINE You mean you always feel your pockets when you don't offer someone a cigarette?

BARNEY No. I don't know why I did it.

ELAINE You don't keep any in the apartment?

BARNEY It's not my apartment.

ELAINE I see. *(She takes a deep breath and regains her composure)* You just borrow it once in a while.

BARNEY No, nothing like that. As a matter of fact, it's my mother's apartment.

ELAINE You're not actively serious?

BARNEY I am. I'm very serious. It's my mother's apartment. This is where my mother lives.

ELAINE Is she gonna join us?

BARNEY She works two days a week for Mount Sinai Hospital. She doesn't get home until five.

ELAINE Well, that'll make things interesting.

BARNEY My mother is always doing charity work. She likes to help out needy people.

ELAINE Like us.

BARNEY (*Sbrugs*) I didn't know where else to come.

ELAINE Listen, I always say, Keep it in the family.

BARNEY Er . . . Would you like a drink?

ELAINE Desperately.

BARNEY (*He crosses to his attaché case*) I'm sorry. I should have offered you one right away. I have J&B Scotch. Is that all right?

ELAINE (*Opens her coat*) What else have you got?

BARNEY That's it. Just J&B Scotch.

ELAINE I'll have a J&B Scotch.

BARNEY I never noticed you drink at the restaurant, so I figured a plain Scotch . . .

(*He takes a glass out of the paper bag*)

ELAINE You brought glasses too?

BARNEY I picked them up in Bloomingdale's. I was thinking of getting them for the restaurant.

ELAINE You were afraid if you dirtied your mother's glasses she'd know someone was here.

BARNEY (*Caught, he smiles*) Well, she's a very meticulous woman. And if anything looked different when she came home I'd have to explain to her and it would get very complicated.

ELAINE I think you did the smart thing. How many ice cubes did you bring?

BARNEY (*Smiles*) Well, I didn't go quite that far. Why, would you like some ice? I'll get some ice for you.

ELAINE Forget it. We'd spend the rest of the afternoon wiping fingerprints off the tray.

(BARNEY pours the Scotch into ELAINE's glass.
ELAINE watches him)

BARNEY (*Pouring*) My mother's very typical, you know. She remembers exactly how high the pillows were puffed when she left.

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ELAINE Is that why you put your rubbers on the newspaper? So it wouldn't leave telltale slush?

LAST OF THE

BARNEY I'm beginning to feel very foolish about all this.

RED HOT

ELAINE Forget it. Meeting on the sly is not without its drawbacks.

LOVERS

BARNEY (*Hands her the drink*) Well, here you are.

ELAINE (*Takes it*) I would like to ask you one question though.

BARNEY Yes?

ELAINE Are you going to talk soft like that all afternoon?

BARNEY Was I talking soft?

ELAINE I know that's not your natural voice because I hear you yelling a lot in the restaurant—"The lady wants boiled halibut not baked halibut!" Are you talking soft because you think that's sexier? Because I don't find it sexy. I find it hard to hear.

BARNEY I'm sorry. It's just that these new buildings have paper-thin walls and, you know, I was afraid—I mean my mother has this high squeaky voice and there's this old lady next door who's home all day, and if she were to hear deep voices she'd start to wonder—

ELAINE So what's the plan? You whisper and I clean the house in a high squeaky voice?

BARNEY No, no. There's no plan. We'll both talk natural.

ELAINE You got a pencil and paper? We could pass notes.

BARNEY I didn't mean to inhibit you. (*Talks louder*) Look. Look. I'm talking loud and clear in my natural voice. Is that better? Does that make you feel more comfortable?

ELAINE (*Smiles, nods*) Much.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BARNEY I really feel like an idiot. I want you to relax and say anything and do anything you want. (*He smiles*) Okay?

ELAINE Do you know you have a nice smile?

BARNEY (*Slightly embarrassed*) Me? No!

ELAINE That's not your smile? It looked like your smile.

BARNEY Well, thank you.

ELAINE Don't thank me. It's your smile.

BARNEY I never know when you're kidding me.

ELAINE (*With sincerity*) I was just kidding you. Don't pay attention to me.

BARNEY Anyway, you're not supposed to say nice things to me, I'm supposed to say nice things to you.

ELAINE All right. Say nice things to me.

BARNEY (*Looks at her*) You're an attractive woman.

ELAINE That's it? You came off better than I did. Cheers.

BARNEY Cheers!

(*They both drink. She, a healthy slug; he, just a sip and he winces*)

ELAINE Is that your wife I see once in a while in the restaurant? The tall blond woman with the mink coat and the space shoes?

BARNEY That's right. How did you know?

ELAINE I figured the only person who'd come in and take money out of the cash register and leave without saying a word is either a mute crook or a wife.

BARNEY She does that once a week. She goes to the bank on Fridays.

ELAINE (*Nods*) How long are you and the depositor married?

BARNEY (*Shrugs*) A long time.

ELAINE How long? Five years? Ten years? What?

BARNEY Twenty-three years.

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LAST OF THE
RED HOT
LOVERS

ELAINE (*Nods*) Oh. Professionals . . . So here it is Friday, and your wife's at the bank with her space shoes, and your mother's rolling bandages at Mount Sinai . . . and you are all alone with an attractive woman with an empty glass.

BARNEY (*Takes it*) Oh, I'm sorry. (*He goes back to the bottle. He surreptitiously smells his fingers and then starts to pour Scotch into her glass*) You sure you don't want ice?

ELAINE Positive. You just did it again.

BARNEY Did what?

ELAINE Smelled your fingers. That's the third time you smelled your fingers since I'm here.

BARNEY Did I do that? I wasn't even conscious of it.

ELAINE Is that an occupational hazard? Owning a fish restaurant and always worrying how your fingers smell?

BARNEY Well, it's opening those clams and oysters. I enjoy doing it. I do about eight dozen every morning. That's for the last twenty years. I use soap, perfume, aftershave lotion, turpentine . . . They're all right for a few hours, then about four in the afternoon—it comes back in just like the tide.

ELAINE I wouldn't worry about it if I were you.

BARNEY Well, it's not the suavest thing in the world. I mean sitting here in a nice blue suit with an attractive woman, smelling my fingers.

ELAINE The smelly fingers don't bother me as much as the blue suit. You never wear anything else, do you?

BARNEY Not in the restaurant. My father always taught me, a business man should always wear a dignified blue suit. I wear them in the summer, too, only in a cooler fabric.

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ELAINE Good. I was concerned.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BARNEY What do they call a person like me? A creature of habit?

ELAINE Yes, I think that's what they call a person like you. Didn't you ever have a wild, crazy desire for a brown sports jacket?

BARNEY I have sports jackets in my closet at home. I have a brown sports jacket and a gray checked sports jacket . . .

ELAINE Is that where you wear them? In your closet at home?

BARNEY I wear them all the time. I'm not as staid as you think.

ELAINE Yes, you are. Staid is a very staid word. You own a car?

BARNEY Yes.

ELAINE A Buick, right?

BARNEY My God, how did you know?

ELAINE (*Sbrugs*) It goes with blue suits.

BARNEY You're a very unusual woman, Elaine. Like the way you came to my restaurant. I've never seen you there before and suddenly you come back for lunch eight days in a row. What is it, a special high-protein diet?

ELAINE I get cravings.

BARNEY You mean to eat?

ELAINE To eat, to touch, to smell, to see, to do . . . A

sensual, physical pleasure that can only be satisfied at
that particular moment.

BARNEY You mean like after an hour of handball, a cold
Pepsi?

ELAINE (*She looks at him*) I'm going to have trouble
with you, right? . . . I have a craving for another
Scotch.

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BARNEY Coming right up.

LAST OF THE
RED HOT
LOVERS

(*He takes her glass and starts to go over to the
bottle, when his hand passes in front of his face*)

ELAINE (*Chidingly*) Eh, eh. Caught you again.

BARNEY I wasn't smelling my fingers. I was looking at
my watch.

ELAINE Oh. Is it time to smell your fingers yet?

BARNEY I was just thinking about my mother. We have
plenty of time.

ELAINE What time is it?

BARNEY Ten after three.

ELAINE And Mount Sinai lets out at five. We've got an
hour and fifty minutes. Okay, you want to make the
first move?

BARNEY Boy, you're very *open* about things, aren't
you?

ELAINE In other words, you're not going to make the
first move.

BARNEY Sure I am. Certainly. I just thought we'd finish
our drink.

ELAINE (*Sbrugs*) It's your schedule. Listen, you think
there's a chance the little old lady next door smokes?
All I need is one cigarette.

BARNEY I wouldn't think so.

ELAINE I could ring her bell. I could say I'm collecting
for the Red Cross.

BARNEY I'm sorry I didn't bring any. You don't think you could wait until five o'clock?

ELAINE I could wait until August if you were a hypnotist. Forget it, I'll take shorter breaths.

BARNEY Can I say something? . . . This isn't going very well, is it?

ELAINE It's had its ups and downs.

BARNEY You know, Mrs. Navazio, you really are . . .

ELAINE If you're going to keep calling me Mrs. Navazio, you'd better get out a deck of cards.

BARNEY I'm sorry . . . Irene.

ELAINE Try Elaine. You'll get a better response.

BARNEY Elaine. Why do I think you're Irene?

ELAINE Is your wife Irene?

BARNEY No, my wife is Thelma.

ELAINE Well, let *her* worry about Irene.

BARNEY The thing is, Elaine—

ELAINE Yes, Barney?

BARNEY Barney. That's right. Please call me Barney.

ELAINE What else have I got to do?

BARNEY The thing is, Elaine —

ELAINE Yes, Barney?

BARNEY The thing is—I find you an extremely attractive woman.

ELAINE I heard. Thank you.

BARNEY I know, I said it before. And I said it in the restaurant, didn't I? Wasn't it the first thing I said to you?

ELAINE No. The first thing you said to me was "Try the scallops."

BARNEY I mean after I got to know you. Once we got to talking. On a personal basis.

ELAINE The first *personal* thing you said to me was "I have never seen such beautiful fingers in my finger bowls."

BARNEY Well, listen, I'm not George Bernard Shaw. For me, I thought it was clever . . . It was corny, right?

ELAINE I'm not in George Bernard Shaw's mother's apartment, am I?

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BARNEY Not that I don't dabble a little in writing myself.

LAST OF THE
RED HOT
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ELAINE Oh? You dabble?

BARNEY Nothing serious, but I get a kick out of it. You read some of my stuff.

ELAINE I did? Where?

BARNEY In the menu. "Sweet savory swordfish steak swimming in salivary succulence." That's mine.

ELAINE Very catchy. It has a nice beat.

BARNEY That's the idea. It's what they call alliteration.

ELAINE Do they? You take that in college?

BARNEY I didn't go to college. I went from the army right into the "Queen of the Sea." My father started the restaurant in 1931. We used to be in Sheepshead Bay. That's where I grew up. I was always hoping to be a radio writer. Orson Welles and the Mercury Theater, that was my dream. But then came the war, and then my father died and left me the restaurant, and then television killed radio. And I never thought my kind of writing would go on television. I don't write visual. I write for the ear. "Sweet succulent savory swordfish steak" . . . Anyway, I still get a kick out of doing the menus. Did you see the one I did on Flaming Florentine Flounder?

ELAINE I browsed through it . . . What time is it now?

BARNEY (*Looks at his watch*) Twenty after three.

ELAINE That's another ten minutes shot. So what's it going to be?

BARNEY My God, you really come right to the point, don't you?

ELAINE Look, did you ask me to come up here with the intentions of having an affair or not?

BARNEY Well, in a manner of speaking—

ELAINE Yes or no?

BARNEY (*A pause*) Yes.

ELAINE And that we've got to be out by five?

BARNEY I don't think I put it that bluntly.

ELAINE What time do we have to be out?

BARNEY (*Shrugs*) Five.

ELAINE (*Has made her point*) All right?

BARNEY Look, I don't deny my intentions were of a romantic nature—

ELAINE *Romantic?* In your mother's clean apartment with two glasses from Bloomingdale's and your rubbers dripping on the newspaper?

BARNEY It was my belief that romance is inspired by the participants and not the accouterments.

ELAINE That's beautifully worded. You ought to use it on the Cherrystone Clams. What's the matter, is "having an affair" a dirty expression?

BARNEY Certainly not. "Having an affair." What's wrong with that?

ELAINE I mean people talk that way today, you know. Maybe not Buick drivers, but a lot of people I know.

BARNEY I admitted I was a creature of habit, not a prude.

ELAINE The hell you're not. I bet I could say three words right now that would turn your blue suit into a glen plaid.

BARNEY Look, Elaine, this is really silly . . .

ELAINE I'm gonna say it. I'm going to say a word now. You want to put your hands over your ears?

BARNEY Hey, come on, Elaine, I don't think this is funny . . .

ELAINE I'm saying it . . . Screw!

BARNEY (*Looks at her*) Asshole! I can do it too. I don't understand the point of this.

ELAINE The point is we've got a time problem and you're reading me fish poetry.

BARNEY I realize we have a time problem but there's also the business of human communication. Of talking to someone, getting to know someone . . . I'm sorry, maybe my whole approach to you is a little too old-fashioned.

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L A S T O F T H E
R E D H O T

L O V E R S

ELAINE (*Throws up her hands*) Okay. All right. I'm flexible. I'll try things your way . . . What did you want to see me about, Mr. Cashman?

BARNEY Ohh, Elaine, don't be like that.

ELAINE Well, maybe I just don't understand you. I've got a two-hundred-and-ten-pound husband who'd break my arms and legs if he caught me up here and you're telling me about your sweet succulent childhood in Sheepshead Bay.

BARNEY I just thought you might be interested in knowing a little bit more about me. I mean until you walked in here ten minutes ago—

ELAINE Twenty minutes ago—

BARNEY Twenty minutes ago, I was just a restaurant owner who admired your fingers and you were an attractive woman who has a craving for fish.

ELAINE Look, *you* were the one who wrote down an address and apartment number on the back of a dollar-eighty check. Then I come here and find out we've got an hour and fifty minutes before your social-working mother with the high squeaky voice comes home to examine the puffed pillows. Now, if we had two weeks in Nassau I'd gladly look at color pictures of your tonsils—

BARNEY I explained that. I thought a motel was a little sordid . . . And I would gladly have picked up your check but my cashier's very nosey and if she saw me paying for some woman—

ELAINE Forget it. You got a lot of courage. I was surprised you took a chance giving me an extra shrimp in the shrimp cocktail.

(She finishes her drink)

BARNEY I don't know how we got started on this—

600

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ELAINE It's cigarette nerves, pay no attention. (*Indicating the Scotch*) Is that bottle just going to sit up there or are you going to turn it into a lamp?

BARNEY You finished the other one already?

ELAINE I didn't finish it, it evaporated.

BARNEY Elaine . . . Can I ask you a very honest question?

ELAINE Yes, I've done this before.

BARNEY (*Looks at her*) That wasn't what I was going to ask.

ELAINE All right, you got one for free. What were you going to ask?

BARNEY I'm still not over that answer. You mean you have—on other occasions—?

ELAINE I have on other occasions—in other places—with other men—done the unthinkable. If it'll help your vanity any, you are the first owner of a fish restaurant I've ever been with. In that respect, I'm still a virgin.

BARNEY I gather then you're not very happy with Mr. Navazio?

ELAINE What the hell kind of a question is that, am I happy with Mr. Navazio?

BARNEY I'm sorry. It's none of my business.

ELAINE I didn't come up here to get reformed. It's bad enough you got me to quit smoking; leave my sex life alone.

BARNEY I drop the subject.

ELAINE What was your question?

BARNEY What question? Oh, before . . . Well, I was just wondering, I mean, I told you I thought you were attractive . . . I know why *I* asked you to come here. Did you come because . . . er . . . Isn't it funny? I find it hard to just come out and say it.

ELAINE Would you like me to wait in the kitchen?

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BARNEY Am I appealing to you?

ELAINE Yes.

L A S T O F T H E

BARNEY I am?

R E D H O T

ELAINE Now you appeal to me.

L O V E R S

BARNEY What do you mean, now? Do you mean possibly not tomorrow?

ELAINE I mean possibly not in fifteen minutes. I have a short span of concentration.

BARNEY You mean with you it can change from day to day?

ELAINE By tonight I may hate filet of sole.

BARNEY I'm not talking about sea food. I'm talking about people.

ELAINE Yes, with me it can change from day to day.

BARNEY Oh. Well, I find that disturbing.

ELAINE (*An edge of sarcasm*) Do you really?

BARNEY Yes, I do. I find it disturbing, and a little sad, that your attitude towards people is so detached.

ELAINE You'll get over it. Can I ask you a question?

BARNEY Yes?

ELAINE Are you writing some kind of research book? Is that really why you got me up here? *Sexual Secrets of Seafood Sufferers*? You got a little tape recorder going on in the candy dish?

(*She leans over and lifts the top of the candy dish*)

BARNEY I'm sorry, it's very hard keeping up with you. One minute we're having a nice conversation, and the next minute you turn on me.

ELAINE Listen, it's really been terrific, Mr. Cashman. I don't know when I've had a better time. You certainly pour a beautiful glass of Scotch and my compliments to your mother's housekeeping.

BARNEY Where are you going?

602

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ELAINE Outside to look for cigarette butts. And then home. Don't worry, no one will notice me leaving the building. I'll walk out backwards.

BARNEY What did I say? Why are you so upset?

ELAINE *I disturb you? I make you sad? I have been called a lot of things by a lot of people in a lot of places but I have never been called a depressant.*

(She starts for the door)

BARNEY I didn't say that. I didn't even mean that.

ELAINE You got some nerve getting me up here in a 1938 furnished apartment in your shiny blue suit and your thimbleful of Scotch, sitting there smelling your fingers and telling me *I give you the blues.*

BARNEY When did I say that? I'm not depressed. I'm not blue. I'm very happy.

ELAINE No kidding? How about two fast choruses of "Let a Smile Be Your Umbrella"? . . . Look, let me have a dollar-fifty. I'll be goddamned if I'm going to pay for the lunch *and* the taxi.

BARNEY Elaine . . . Elaine, please . . . please sit down. Let me just say something.

ELAINE *Say something? You've already talked away half our allotted time. Now you'll have to use the other half to wipe my lip prints off the glass, puff the pillows, and get the hell out of here.*

BARNEY *(Softly)* Elaine, if you could just lower your voice a little—

ELAINE *(Screams)* LOWER MY VOICE?

BARNEY Shhh . . .

ELAINE *(Crosses to the wall and yells at it)* Mr. Cashman is using his mother's apartment to bring broads!

BARNEY What's the sense in that?

ELAINE Don't tell me I depress you! "Flaming Florentine Flounder"—Holy Christ!

BARNEY Elaine, you're getting yourself unduly upset.

ELAINE Unduly upset? I'm risking a bullet between the eyes and I can't even get a lousy cigarette . . .

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(This starts her coughing. It gradually worsens into the same violent coughing fit as before. As she coughs, he rushes into the bathroom for a glass of water. Her fit gradually subsides and then turns into just heavy, deep breathing. He returns to her side with the water)

L A S T O F T H E
R E D H O T
L O V E R S

BARNEY Your chest sounds all congested. Have you ever tried sleeping with a vaporizer?

ELAINE No, but don't worry, I'll get around to everyone.

BARNEY I don't want to seem gloomy, but that's a very bad cough. Have you gone to a doctor?

ELAINE There is nothing wrong with my lungs or my chest. I cough because I have nothing better to do in the afternoons.

BARNEY (*Still with the glass in his hand*) Don't you want the water?

ELAINE Keep it as a memento of this wonderful afternoon.

BARNEY Boy, oh boy, I sure bungled this whole thing, didn't I?

ELAINE You want it straight?
(She makes a circle sign with three fingers)

BARNEY I'm sorry. I really am sorry.

ELAINE All right, forget it.

BARNEY No, I am. I really am. I'm sorry I wasted your time. I'm sure you could have found something more interesting to do than sitting here talking to me.

ELAINE If I rush I can still make the second show at the Hayden Planetarium. Don't get wistful, will you, please? I can't stand wistful forty-five-year-old men.

BARNEY Is that how old I look to you? Forty-five?

604

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ELAINE (*She looks at him*) Cut right down to the marrow, heh? No, actually you look like a college kid, twenty-one, twenty-two . . .

BARNEY Aw, come on.

ELAINE It's your black socks with the clocks on them that threw me off.

BARNEY Anyway, I'm flattered, because I'm forty-seven. Does that surprise you?

ELAINE It's a good thing I was sitting when you told me.

BARNEY You're still upset, aren't you? About what I said before.

ELAINE Forget it.

BARNEY No, you're still upset, I can tell.

ELAINE I'm not upset, I'm not angry, I'm not mad. If you want the plain, heartbreaking truth, I'm a little bored. But there was no harm done, no one got hurt. The worst that'll happen is that from now on I'll get the same five shrimps as everyone else. (*She gets up*) It's been a glorious and memorable thirty minutes. Good-bye, Mr. Cashman.

BARNEY Don't go.

ELAINE It happens to the best of us.
(*She crosses to the door*)

BARNEY Elaine . . . Do you know what I wish?

ELAINE (*Warding him off with her hand*) Don't tell me, it won't come true.

(*She opens the door*)

BARNEY I wish that you would go out, close the door, then ring the bell and come back in again. I wish we could start this whole thing over, from the beginning.

ELAINE (*Turns at the door; looks at him*) Yeah . . . Well . . . That's life . . . Good-bye, Barney. (*She goes and closes the door.* BARNEY shrugs, then goes over to the table and picks up the two glasses. Then he crosses back to his attaché case with the glasses and puts one of them away. The doorbell rings. He looks up, dabs some more after-shave lotion on his fingers and crosses back to the door. He opens it. ELAINE walks into the room, surveys it as if for the first time, then turns and smiles at BARNEY. Sweetly, almost girlish) I just happened to be in the neighborhood and I thought I'd drop by . . . (BARNEY looks at her, then wordlessly he moves toward her. ELAINE looks at him expectantly, seeing a new BARNEY, one that she hoped to find in the first place. He is beside her. He pulls her firmly to him and then kisses her—solidly and passionately. Then, still with his lips on her, he tries to maneuver her back toward the couch. ELAINE trips and falls backwards onto the sofa. BARNEY falls on top of her)
Oh, Christ!

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LAST OF THE
RED HOT
LOVERS

BARNEY Are you all right?

ELAINE My goddamn lip is bleeding.

BARNEY I'm sorry, Elaine.

ELAINE If you wanted me on the sofa, why didn't you just point to it?

BARNEY I didn't want you on the sofa. I'm very sorry.
Let me see your lip.

ELAINE It's a bleeding lip, you've seen them before.

BARNEY Let me put some cold water on it.

ELAINE It's all right, it'll heal. It's only royal families that have to worry. Give me a handkerchief.
(*He gives her a handkerchief. She dabs*)

BARNEY Damned stupid idiot. I don't know why I kissed you so hard.

ELAINE It was a terrific kiss. A little pointy maybe, but very nice. Help me up.

(*He pulls her up*)

BARNEY Can I put a little ice on it?

ELAINE Just your worrying about it is enough for me.
It stopped. (*Hands him the banky*) Here. You'd better
burn this.

(*He takes it*)

BARNEY How about a little more Scotch?

606

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ELAINE How about a lot more? (*He nods, goes back to the attaché case and takes out the glass. She looks at him*) You packed the glasses already? You didn't wax the floors too, did you?

BARNEY (*Pours another drink*) Some klutz, heh? That's me. World's Olympic Champion klutz.

ELAINE Listen, it was the best two minutes we had. I'm not one to knock a little physical contact.

BARNEY Yeah, but I mean it was right out of high school. If we missed the sofa, I could have fallen on top of you and broken your back.

(*He hands her drink*)

ELAINE (*Smiles*) That's an interesting picture. You want to take another shot at it?

BARNEY (*Smiles back*) You mean I'm forgiven? You really are something, Elaine. I never saw anyone who can change moods as quickly as you.

ELAINE It's a talent. It's not as good as tap dancing, but what the hell.

BARNEY I don't think you're as tough as you like to sound.

ELAINE I'll bet you're going to hold my hand next.

BARNEY Yes, I am. How do you like that? (*Holds her hand*) Don't you like having a man hold your hand in his?

ELAINE Well, it depends what he's doing with the other hand.

BARNEY I wish I could figure you out. I wish I knew what was going on in that brain of yours right now.

ELAINE We're not going to get on a *talking* thing again, are we? Without cigarettes?

BARNEY Elaine, what were you like when you were a girl?

ELAINE Fat and pimply. Don't you even smoke a pipe? A couple of drags is all I really need.

607

BARNEY My God, is that all you can think of? Is that the most important thing in your life right now? Is there nothing else on your mind but a lousy god-damned mentholated filtered cigarette?

L A S T O F T H E
R E D H O T
L O V E R S

ELAINE Well, what are you offering that's more enjoyable?

BARNEY I'm trying to talk to you, to know what you're like as a human being. Is there anything wrong with that?

ELAINE Not if we didn't have to be out by five. If you wanted information I could have filled out a form in the restaurant.

BARNEY Tell me the truth—the honest truth. Would you be a lot happier if I started ripping off your clothes and jumping all over you? No hello, no nothing. Just the pure, physical animal act. Is that what you would prefer?

ELAINE Well, it *would* be a way of breaking the ice.

BARNEY Because if that's what you want I certainly could accommodate you. I mean there's no problem in that area, is there?

ELAINE If you say so.

BARNEY I say so. There is *no* problem in that area.

ELAINE Then what *is* the problem?

BARNEY There's *no* problem . . . yes, there is. I'm sorry, I just happen to think that's crude. Look, I admit I don't know you very well, but I was hoping to start off this relationship with at least mutual *respect* for each other . . .

ELAINE If you don't know me how can you respect me?

BARNEY Because you're a human being, a woman. And I respect that.

ELAINE Hey, listen, no offense, but I'm getting a bad headache. How much do you get for a couple of aspirin?

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BARNEY I suppose I did that. As you said, I'm boring you to death, right?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ELAINE Barney, you're simply too overconfident for me. I'm just putty in your hands. Can I pour it myself? I promise I won't go past the pencil mark.
(She pours a drink)

BARNEY (*Watches her*) Elaine . . . Is it possible you really are as cold as you sound?

ELAINE I need gloves to take off my underwear.

BARNEY Flippant, wise, cold . . . You won't permit yourself to be sincere and honest for a minute, will you?

ELAINE (*She drinks*) Barney, I'm going to give you one free hint so the afternoon isn't a total write-off. If you want undying love and romance, take a guitar and go to Spain. (*She puts down her glass*) I am leaving for good now. My peak has ebbed.

BARNEY Cold, callous and unemotional.

ELAINE (*Starting for the door*) Those are my attorneys. You know where to get in touch with me.

BARNEY Forgive me for saying so, but it's a pretty frightening way to go through life.

ELAINE (*At the door*) You're forgiven.

BARNEY . . . frightening, sad and pitiful.

(ELAINE is just about to step out when she stops at this last remark. She stands there for a moment. Then she takes a step back and turns to BARNEY, in a rage)

ELAINE You hypocrite! You soul-searching, finger-smelling, hypocritical son of a bitch! Who are you to

tell anybody how to go through life? What would you have done if I came in here all fluttery and blushing and "Ooh, Mr. Cashman, don't put your hand there, I'm a married woman"? Were you going to tell me how much you respect me, admire me and, at the moment of truth, even love me? You know damn well tomorrow you'd be back behind that counter opening clams and praying to Christ I'd never come back in your restaurant. And you know something? That's the way it should be. Forgive me for the terrible, sinful thing I'm about to say but I happen to like the pure physical act of making love. It warms me, it stimulates me and it makes me feel like a woman—but that's another ugly story. That's what I came up here for and that's what you were expecting. But don't give me, "When I was nine years old my mother ran off with the butcher and I've been looking for someone to love me ever since." I don't know your problems and I don't care. Keep your savory swordfish succotash stories to yourself. No one really cares about anything or anyone in this world except himself, and there's only one way to get through with your sanity. If you can't taste it, touch it or smell it, forget it! If you want a copy of that speech, send fifty cents and self-addressed envelope—

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LAST OF THE
RED HOT
LOVERS

BARNEY Please don't go yet.

ELAINE It's getting late . . . and I have to feed the lion at six.

BARNEY But I don't want you to leave like this. I want you to hear me out. Stay five more minutes. You can do that, can't you?

ELAINE Don't waste your time. We're incompatible. You need Joan Fontaine and I need a box of lozenges.
(She opens the door)

BARNEY *(He goes to the door and closes it)* All right, if I have to lock you in, I'll lock you in. *(He bolts the door)* You saw me opening the clams, you know I'm stronger than you.

ELAINE (*Looks at him; smiles*) Wouldn't you know it?
We've only got forty minutes left and finally you
show me some brute force.

BARNEY Will you please sit down? I'm asking nicely.

610

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

ELAINE You want to really get me crazy? Push me!
*(He suddenly grabs her arm, pulls her and shoves
her onto a chair. She falls into it, stunned, and
looks up at him with great surprise. He is shaking
with anger, and points a threatening finger at
her)*

BARNEY Just sit there! Don't talk, don't cough, don't even breathe. Just sit there and shut up until I tell you you can go. If I get nothing else from you this afternoon it's going to be your undivided goddamned attention! Excuse me! *(He crosses to the bottle, pours himself a drink, and gulps it down. She looks at him incredulously but silently. He does not look at her)* I'm sure it will come as no great shock to you, but you are the first "attempted" extramarital affair for me in twenty-three years of marriage. I've never even kissed another woman. In twenty-three years. I got married to my high-school sweetheart—and when have you heard that expression last—at the age of twenty-four, having gone steady with her since I was sixteen. And how many experiences with other women do you think I've had prior to getting married? . . . One! I had one shot at it. When I was eighteen my brother took me to an apartment in Newark, New Jersey, where I consort with a forty-four-year-old woman who greeted me lying naked on a brass bed reading a newspaper. It cost me seven dollars and I threw up all night. I don't smoke, I don't gamble, and you've had more to drink this afternoon than I've had in my whole life. I've never had a car accident, never had a fistfight, never had a broken bone, never had a temperature over a hundred and two . . . Life has not only been very kind to me, it goes out of its way to ignore me . . . I've got three kids I'm very proud of, a house I've worked very hard for and a wife who is not extraordinary, not what you would call an exciting, vivacious woman, but one who is kind, considerate,

devoted and that I happen to love. So why after twenty-three years do I write my mother's address on the back of a check, buy a bottle of Scotch with two glasses and pray to God I never get caught? Why? I'll tell you why . . . I don't know. I've never had the urge before . . . Not true. I started getting the urge about five years ago. Two years ago seriously. About a year ago I decided to give in to it, and the last six months conscientiously. I'm forty-seven years old and for the first time in my life I think about dying. The thought of death has now become a part of my life. I read the obituaries every day just for the satisfaction of not seeing my name there. I constantly think about how it's going to come and how I'm going to bear up to it. Do you know I even practice dying? I lie in bed at night trying to feel myself slipping away . . . and then I let my head drop off to the side . . . and then I let out my last gasp of air . . . then I go in and take two sleeping pills because I'm up the rest of the night scared out of my wits. But it's inevitable, it's going to happen someday, maybe sooner than I think. And I ask myself, "Have you enjoyed it, Barney? Was it a really terrific forty-seven years?" And you know what my answer is? "Well, I wouldn't say terrific. It was nice." . . . The sum total of my existence is nice. I will go to my grave having led a nice life. And I will have a nice funeral and they will bury me in my nice blue suit. And my wife will weep for me and mourn for me and in six months she will marry another nice fellow . . . maybe even give him my brown sports jacket. And I wouldn't condemn her for it. It's the natural order of things. Life must go on . . . But while it's going on, shouldn't it be better than just "nice"? Shouldn't there be something else besides opening the restaurant eleven o'clock every morning? Shouldn't there be something better than those three weeks every August in Saratoga Springs where I stand in a pool with fifty fat middle-aged people, wishing I were home opening the restaurant at eleven o'clock in the morning? Couldn't I just once give in to my fantasies, my secret dreams, experiencing things, emotions, stimulants I've never experienced before . . . I wanted to know what it was like with another woman. Would I be successful, would she like

me, would I like the touch of her? A thousand questions that I'd never know the answer to if suddenly my name were in that obituary column tomorrow morning. So I decided to indulge myself, just once. I don't pretend I'm being fair to my wife. If she indulged herself the same way I'd never forgive her. So I started looking around . . . and, I promise you, with all intentions of having one affair, one day of pleasure and that's all. But if it was just going to be one day I wanted it to be memorable—an experience so rewarding and fulfilling that it would last me the rest of my life . . . not cheap, not sordid. And then I'd go back to opening the restaurant at eleven o'clock in the morning—but knowing that for one brief afternoon I had changed the pattern of my life, and for once I didn't just exist—I lived!

(There is a long silence)

ELAINE And that's why you wanted to get laid?

BARNEY I said I'd let you know when you can go. Now is a good time.

ELAINE I was going to cry in the middle, but I didn't want to wet your mother's carpeting.

BARNEY I had hoped you'd understand, but I didn't expect it.

ELAINE No, listen, it was terrifically entertaining. I really enjoyed it. There's one or two reasons, though, why I couldn't feel too sympathetic for the hero . . . In the first place, there is a very good possibility that that forty-four-year-old woman in Newark, New Jersey, was my mother. That'll give you some idea of my background. In the second place, any man who expects to have a beautiful, memorable and enchanting day of honest love with a woman he picks up in a fish restaurant is either sexually retarded or a latent idiot! And in the third place, no one gives a good crap about you dying because a lot of people discovered it ahead of you. We're all dying, Mr. Cashman. As a matter of fact, I myself passed away about six months ago. I'm just hanging around to clean up some business affairs

... Together, Barney, we blew one of the very few free afternoons we have allotted to us in this life. But I'm not putting the blame on you. It serves me right. If I had a craving for corned beef and cabbage I'd be in some big Irishman's apartment right now having the time of my life . . . *C'est la vie!* (*At the door*) Good luck, Barney, in your quest for the Impossible Dream. (*Opens the door*) Oh, please God, let there be a machine in the lobby . . .

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(*And she is gone.* BARNEY stands there a moment, still shaken from his experience. Then he crosses slowly and opens the drapes. He looks at his watch, then goes to the phone, picks it up and dials. Then, into the phone)

L A S T O F T H E
R E D H O T
L O V E R S

BARNEY . . . Hello, Harriet? . . . Mr. Cashman . . . The busboy show up? . . . Well, call the agency again . . . I'll be there in about twenty minutes. I'm leaving Bloomingdale's now . . . No, I didn't get anything . . . I looked, I shopped around, but I didn't get anything . . . Well, that's the way it goes . . . I'll see you, Harriet . . . (*He hangs up. He looks around the room, then sits. He buries his head in his hands and is silent a moment*) I'll never do that again! . . . Never never never never never . . . never . . . never . . .

Curtain

Act Two

614

The scene is the mother's apartment. It is the following August, about three in the afternoon. A key fits in the latch; the door opens, and BARNEY sticks his head in.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BARNEY Mom? (*He waits; there is no answer. He enters the apartment, puts the key on the shelf, and closes the door. He puts his straw hat on the railing post. He carries the attaché case, wears the summer version of his blue suit, in a lighter fabric, of course. He crosses to the dining table and puts down the attaché case. He goes to the large window and lowers the Venetian blind, crosses to the smaller windows, turns down the air conditioner and closes the blinds. He opens the attaché case and this time he has two bottles, Scotch and vodka. He takes them out, places them on the table. Then from the case he takes three packs of cigarettes and puts them on the coffee table. He goes over to the phone and dials, puts the receiver on the desk, takes a small mouth spray from his pocket and sprays mouth and fingers. He picks up the receiver, and into the phone, in a soft voice*) . . . Hello, Harriet? . . . Mr. Cashman . . . (*The doorbell rings*) I can't talk now, I'm at the dentist. (*He hangs up. BARNEY turns quickly and moves to the door. He looks out the peephole, then opens the door. BOBBI MICHELE stands there, a pretty girl of about twenty-seven. Despite the oppressive heat outside, BOBBI looks cool and fresh. She carries a large leather portfolio and a make-up bag. BARNEY smiles*) Well, hello.

BOBBI Oh, thank God, air conditioning. Do you know it's a hundred and forty degrees outside? I swear. I mean it gets hot in California but nothing like this. Hi. Bobbi Michele?

BARNEY Yes, yes. Come in, I'll close the door. It's cooler.

(She comes in: he closes the door)

BOBBI I was wandering up and down the hall. All these

apartments look alike. (*Looks quickly*) Oh, this is nice. I like this. I'm not disturbing you now, am I? I mean you're not busy or anything?

BARNEY No, no, I was expecting you. Remember I said—

BOBBI I wasn't sure I'd be here on time. I just got through with my audition.

BARNEY No, you're fine. Remember I said three o'clock—

BOBBI It's got to be a hundred and ten, right? (*Crosses to the air conditioner*) I mean forget about breathing, it's over. (*Stands with her back to the air conditioner*) You sure I'm not disturbing you? I could come back later.

BARNEY No, I'm positive. I'm clear till five. (*He smells his fingers*) Can I get you a cool drink?

BOBBI I love this neighborhood. I knew this street looked familiar. I once had a girl friend who lived on this block. Forty-seventh between First and York.

BARNEY This is Thirty-seventh.

BOBBI Thirty-seventh. Of course. Then she couldn't have lived on this block. Ohh, that's better. The Shubert Theatre was a sauna bath. Oh, listen, my accompanist *did* show up, which I have you to thank for because you were so sweet in the park yesterday and I want you to know I have not forgotten it, but here I am talking and talking and I really haven't said hello yet. Hello.

BARNEY Hello.

BOBBI Hello. Here I am.

BARNEY So I see.

BOBBI Oh, God, I talk a lot when I get nervous. Have you noticed that? I'll try and stop it if I can. You'll have to forgive me.

BARNEY Are you nervous?

BOBBI Well, I'm not nervous now. I was nervous

before. I just had a terrible experience with a cab driver. Well, I don't want to go into it. Ohh, God, I just wilt in the heat. If I pass out on the floor, I'm just going to have to trust you.

BARNEY (*Smiles*) You don't have to worry.

616

BOBBI Well, you're not a cab driver. You wouldn't try something like that.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BARNEY Like what?

BOBBI He wanted to make it with me under the Manhattan Bridge during his lunch hour. Listen, can we forget about it, it's over now. I must look awful.

BARNEY Not at all. You look lovely.

BOBBI Oh, poof, I don't.

BARNEY You do. You do.

BOBBI Give me three minutes, I'll dazzle you. Did you get shorter?

BARNEY Shorter? Since yesterday?

BOBBI Why do you look shorter?

BARNEY I can't imagine why I should look shorter.
(He sits next to her)

BOBBI Oh, flats.

BARNEY Flats?

BOBBI I was wearing flats yesterday. I put on heels for the audition today. I got taller. Actually, you're not really short. Well, you know that.

BARNEY Yes, well, sometimes when a person has large bones—

BOBBI You know, I couldn't make out your handwriting. I thought I had the wrong address. 432 East Thirty-seventh?

BARNEY No, that's the right address.

BOBBI Well, I should hope so. Otherwise where am I and who are you? *(She laughs; he tries to)* Oh, that's silly. If I'm goofy today, it's the heat.

BARNEY You're not goofy at all.

BOBBI I am. I'm goofy, let's face it.

BARNEY I think you're charming.

BOBBI Oh, I know I'm charming but I'm also goofy which I think is part of my charm. That's a terrible thing to say, isn't it?

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BARNEY Not at all. Sometimes frankness can be—

L A S T O F T H E
R E D H O T
L O V E R S

BOBBI It's terrible, I can't help it. I'm so open about things. That's why I'm always getting myself into trouble, you know what I mean?

BARNEY What kind of trouble do you get—

BOBBI My God, I didn't even notice it. You shaved your moustache.

BARNEY What moustache?

BOBBI Didn't you have a moustache yesterday?

BARNEY Me? No.

BOBBI You *never* had a moustache?

BARNEY Never. I don't look good in a moustache. It doesn't grow in thick on the left side.

BOBBI Who am I thinking of? Who did I meet yesterday with a moustache?

BARNEY That I couldn't tell you.

BOBBI Well, I can't think straight. I'm still a nervous wreck over that cab incident. I've been back in New York three days and look what happens. I just want to forget about it.

BARNEY Certainly. How about a drink? I have J&B Scotch, Wolfschmidt vodka . . .

BOBBI I wrote the cabbie's name down. Max Schoenstein. I was going to report him to the police but he started to cry. Tears pouring down his face, I thought his cigar would go out. Then he pleaded with me he's married twenty-seven years with one son in Vietnam and another son in medical school and that he didn't mean any harm and I felt sorry for him and I said all

right, I wouldn't report him, so he thanked me and asked me to reconsider going under the Manhattan Bridge. (*Brushes her hair and poses*) How do I look? Better?

BARNEY Marvelous. Gee, that's terrible.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BOBBI Oh, it happens to me all the time. Coming in on the plane from California. The man sitting next to me kept feeling me up all during the movie. Well, I don't want to go into that. (*Looks around*) This is the kind of place I'm looking for. Does it have a terrace?

BARNEY No, no terrace. He was *feeling* you?

BOBBI Well, he said he was looking for the dial to turn up the volume but he didn't even have the headset plugged in his ears . . . Nice view.

BARNEY Why didn't you say something to him?

BOBBI Well, he was Chinese, I didn't want to seem bigoted. Then he has the nerve to call me, in the middle of the night. Some strange Chinaman.

BARNEY How'd he get your number?

BOBBI I don't know. I must have given it to him or something. What's the difference? Look, it's over, let's forget it. Am I talking too much? I haven't given you a chance to say anything.

BARNEY I'm fascinated. Those are incredible stories.

BOBBI How do you mean incredible? You don't believe them?

BARNEY I do. I do believe them.

BOBBI Because they're true.

BARNEY That's the fascinating part.

BOBBI Maybe to you. They were terrifying to me.

BARNEY To me too.

BOBBI Could I have a drink?

BARNEY What a good idea. J&B? Vodka?

BOBBI I don't provoke these things. They just happen.

BARNEY I'm not surprised. You're such a pretty girl.

BOBBI I don't know why they single me out. I'm always getting these obscene telephone calls.

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BARNEY Well, there's an awful lot of that going on.

BOBBI I get them wherever I go. Once I wasn't home, he left an obscene message.

L A S T O F T H E
R E D H O T
L O V E R S

BARNEY My goodness.

BOBBI (*Looking at the photos on the table*) And the language. I never heard such filth. I once got a call where this psycho actually described vile and indecent acts for over fifteen minutes.

BARNEY FIFTEEN MINUTES!

BOBBI Listen, if you don't shut me up I'll never stop talking. What time is it?

BARNEY A quarter after three.

BOBBI Oh, God, I've got to make a call. May I? I don't have one on me.

BARNEY Yes, certainly.

BOBBI Is this where you write those sea stories you were telling me about?

BARNEY Yes, I work here during the day. Actually it's my mother's apartment.

BOBBI I knew this writer in California. A registered weirdo. He used to write these underground movies you see on Eighth Avenue. You know, *Sex Family Robinson, Tom Swift and His Incredible Thing* . . . I thought I was in love with him until I found out he was deranged. I mean the things he wanted me to do.

BARNEY Like what?

BOBBI Oh, God, I couldn't repeat them.

BARNEY That's all right. You can repeat them.

BOBBI (*Dials the phone and listens*) She hears the phone.
She's just a lazy bitch.

BARNEY But like what? What kind of things did he want you to do?

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BOBBI I couldn't tell you. I told my analyst, he went into cardiac arrest . . . Can you believe this? I could wait here twenty minutes.

BARNEY You mean things together or alone? What kind of things?

BOBBI If I tell you this man had his teeth sharpened, can you fill in the rest?

(*She inspects the photos on the table*)

BARNEY His teeth? My God!

BOBBI The man was psychotically inclined. (*Smiles at a photo*) This is adorable. Your mother?

BARNEY (*Shakes his head*) No, it's me. But did you ever do any of them? These things he wanted?

BOBBI Me? No! Never! Of course not . . . Some. I had to do some otherwise I was afraid he would kill me. Is this you and your father?

BARNEY Yes . . . He actually forced you to do these things?

BOBBI You don't play it cool with a man who had his teeth sharpened. (*Indicating a picture*) Were you both in the Navy?

BARNEY No, if you look close it says "Queen of the Sea" on the sailor caps. I can't imagine what kind of things he made you do.

BOBBI Please forgive me for what I'm about to say, but the man was a shit. Am I forgiven?

BARNEY Certainly. How'd you get hooked up with a guy like that?

BOBBI By sheer chance. He was living with my roommate and she moved out. Hey, did I tell you about my audition?

BARNEY No, you didn't.
(He looks at his watch)

BOBBI Do you have to go somewhere?

BARNEY Me? No. I'm here till five. What happened at the audition?

BOBBI I was fabulous. David Merrick thought I was the end.

BARNEY No kidding? David Merrick?

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L A S T O F T H E
R E D H O T
L O V E R S

BOBBI Well, it was dark, but it was someone with a moustache. Anyway, they went absolutely ape over me. They really loved me. I would have gotten the part except they wanted a Negro girl. That's how it is in the theater today. If you're not black, you're nowhere. Anyway, it was my best audition thanks to this groovy accompanist I was telling you about—which brings us to why I'm here, doesn't it? I owe you twenty dollars.

BARNEY There's no hurry.

BOBBI What do you mean? You were nice enough to lend me twenty dollars for an accompanist—a stranger you met in the park. I told you I would pay you back today, didn't I? I insist.

BARNEY Well, all right.

BOBBI The thing is, I don't have the money. I'm good for it, though. If I don't get a show in New York I may go do a series of one-night concerts in New Zealand . . . *(Takes out some photos)* I just wanted to show you some stills from this movie I was in so you'll believe I'm really an actress. That's me on location in Malibu. And those are the stars, Frankie Avalon, Annette Funicello and the Beach Boys.

BARNEY Oh, yes.

BOBBI It was a cute picture. They used the basic story of *Wuthering Heights* and worked in surfriders.

BARNEY What a good idea.

BOBBI And that's me with Fabian—

BARNEY Fabian?

622

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BOBBI —who, and I say this with deep sincerity, is one of the great human beings I've ever met. He was unbelievably kind to me when I had my accident.

BARNEY What kind of accident?

BOBBI I was beaten up by some Mexican in a motel.
(She puts pictures back) How I got there or who the Mexican was I'll never know. And the police'll never give you any information.

BARNEY My God, the things that happen to you.

BOBBI *(Zipping up her portfolio)* Well, I certainly don't look for it. Goodness, you must think I'm some sort of bizarre *femme fatale*. *(Picks up the phone and listens)* Can you believe this?

BARNEY Who are you calling?

BOBBI My answering service! At least she promised she'd take messages for me. I have the worst damn luck with roommates.

BARNEY You live with someone now?

BOBBI Heinrich Himmler. I can't afford my own place yet so in the meantime I'm living with this Nazi vocal teacher. She's not just German, she's actually Nazi. Wears black shirts, boots, the whole thing.

BARNEY My God.

BOBBI Great vocal coach, though—if you don't mind getting whipped.

BARNEY You're not serious?

BOBBI Oh, Wilhelmina Weirdo. She paid four hundred dollars to have a three-inch scar put on her face. My suspicion is she's sexually—er—what's the word?

BARNEY Aberrated?

BOBBI No, worse than that.

BARNEY Worse than aberrated?

BOBBI She's got this queen-size bed in her room with a *leather* bedspread. Does that seem funny to you?

BARNEY Well, you live with her, you'd know better.

BOBBI Goodness, how would I know? I'm no lesbian.
I'm only staying there because she's a damned good
vocal teacher and she's not taking any rent.

BARNEY How come?

BOBBI Because she thinks I'm going to make it very big
in this business and she wants to get in on the ground
floor! . . . Oh! Finally! (*Into the phone*) Hello, Hilda?
Vas nicht gessen? Auf lichter shein bister? . . . (*To*
BARNEY, smiling) I make up German, she gets hysterical . . . (*Back into the phone*) . . . Nowhere . . . With
a friend . . . Did the Merv Griffin Show call? . . . Well,
how would you know? Where were you for twenty
minutes, downstairs in the bunker? . . . (*Smiles at*
BARNEY. Into phone) I already told you, just a friend
. . . It's *not* another girl . . . No, I don't think I'll be
home for dinner . . . I *won't* be home for dinner . . .
Just a minute . . . (*To BARNEY*) Are we going to have
dinner?

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L A S T O F T H E
R E D H O T
L O V E R S

BARNEY I don't think I can tonight.

BOBBI (*Into the phone*) Yes, I'll be home for dinner
. . . About six . . . I promise . . . I said I promise, didn't
I? . . . Then *auf Wiedersehen*. (*She hangs up*) Do you
know, if they'd won the war she'd be choral director
at Radio City Music Hall?

BARNEY If you're so uncomfortable, why do you stay
with her?

BOBBI You know, you're the second person who's ac-
cused me of being homosexual.

BARNEY I never said you were hom—

BOBBI My goodness, the thought of it makes my skin
crawl. That's the one thing in life I find revolting. I
mean I sleep so far away from her in that bed she'd
have to take a taxi to get near me. People can be so
vicious sometimes . . .

BARNEY I never for a minute suggested—

BOBBI Are you married?

BARNEY Yes. Yes. I'm married.

BOBBI The other person who suggested it was this kinky writer who would stoop to anything because I wouldn't do these "terrible things" I told you about before . . . I mean not *all* of them.

(*She opens the make-up box and takes out a brush*)

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BARNEY Listen, you sure you wouldn't want a drink?

BOBBI (*Brushing her hair again*) I didn't mean *you* when I said people can be vicious sometimes.

BARNEY That's all right.

BOBBI You're not vicious. You're married. Married men are rarely vicious. They're too guilty.

BARNEY Do you find that?

BOBBI Without exception. Except for this one married man I knew. Was he ever vicious. (*She stops brushing, and puts the brush back*) Goodness, I'm letting you in on everything. Whatever happened to the Woman of Mystery? Do you mind terribly if I smoke?

BARNEY No, no. Please smoke (*Rushes to the cigarettes on the table*) I have plenty of cigarettes. Filters, mentholated, super king, whatever you want.

BOBBI (*Takes out a small case from her make-up box*) I have my own, thanks. (*She opens the box*) Promise me you won't ask me about this married man because it's one episode in my life I'd rather not discuss.

(*She takes out a thin cigarette and holds it out.*
BARNEY opens a box of cocktail matches he just bought for the occasion)

BARNEY Certainly. I understand that.

BOBBI If I tell you, it'll go no further than this room?

BARNEY You don't have to discuss it if it's painful.
(*He lights her cigarette. She takes a long drag*)

BOBBI For obvious reasons, I can't reveal his identity. Let's just call him Mr. H. That's all I'll divulge about him. Mr. H.

BARNEY (*Puts out the match*) I understand.

BOBBI (*Takes another drag*) Arnold H. He lives in Palm

Springs, California, and is in the hotel business. (*She takes a long breath*) You've heard of him, I'm sure. He had a big spread in *Time* magazine.

BARNEY When was that?

BOBBI I'm sorry, I can't betray any confidences. I don't think we should talk about it. Would you like one of these?

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BARNEY I don't really smoke.

L A S T O F T H E
R E D H O T
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BOBBI I don't either. I mean, not cigarettes. Anyway, I met Mr. H. about two years ago in Arizona. I was a house guest of this very short movie producer and one ni—

BARNEY Excuse me. I don't want to interrupt. Is that—

(*He mouths the word "marijuana"*)

BOBBI (*Looks at him, puzzled*) I didn't catch the last word.

BARNEY (*Looks around nervously*) I didn't want to say it too loud. There's an old lady next door who listens to everything. Is that . . . (*He leans in and whispers*) marijuana?

BOBBI (*Nods*) Mmm.

BARNEY Pot?

BOBBI Yes. Change your mind?

BARNEY No.

BOBBI You sure?

BARNEY I'm trying to cut down.

BOBBI Actually it's a blend. Half Turkish tobacco, half grass. It's prescribed by my doctor in Beverly Hills. I take it instead of a tranquilizer because I have this inability to swallow pills. (*Holds out the box*) You sure? They're not strong. They're a twenty-minute freak-out at the most.

BARNEY Maybe later.

BOBBI I take it for medicinal purposes, but you can get high if you like. By the way, you have a nice smile.

BARNEY Other people have told me that.

BOBBI You're a very basic person, no crap. Am I right?

BARNEY Well . . .

BOBBI Sincere . . . sweet . . . You meet so damn few in my business . . . Well, anywhere for that matter . . .

BARNEY Well, most people that I've run across . . .

BOBBI (*She sits back, and suddenly begins to sing*)

What the world needs now is love, sweet love
That's the only thing that there's just too
little of . . .*

That's what I'm going to do if I get the Merv Griffin show. If the Beast of Berlin ever takes my messages. (*Looks around*) I like the color of these walls. I am so sick of white walls . . . Is the door locked?

BARNEY The door? Yes. Is it all right?

BOBBI I just wanted to make sure. I thought I saw somebody following me outside. Probably not . . . Is this a rent-controlled building?

BARNEY (*Nervously*) What do you mean? Who would follow you?

BOBBI Who indeed? That's a good question. I'm just being silly. (*Takes another drag*) Why don't you just check the lock?

BARNEY (*Starts toward the door*) It's locked, I checked . . . You mean it's possible someone knows you're here with me? Now?

BOBBI (*Smiles*) Oh, that's sweet. You're worried some jealous nut is going to rush in here and blow our brains out. Wouldn't that be a kick, a regular blood bath . . .

BARNEY Oh, jeez—

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BOBBI Well, it's *one* way of getting your name in the papers. (*Reassuring him*) No, I think we're okay . . .
(*She takes another drag*)

BARNEY (*Nods without listening*) Look, er, Bobbi. You understand, of course, that my intention in asking you here today was merely one of convenience. I mean you wanted to pay me back the twenty dollars and I thought this was as good a place as any—

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BOBBI My goodness, that was understood. I certainly didn't think I was coming here to be seduced. (*She puts the "stick" out in the ashtray*) All gone. Finished my pot like a good little girl. (*Points to the ashtray*) Don't forget to get rid of this. Tear the paper, scatter the ashes and flush the toilet twice. You can't imagine the number of people who are serving time today because they only flushed once.

L A S T O F T H E
R E D H O T
L O V E R S

BARNEY Flush twice . . . That's a good thing to remember. (*He takes the ashtray and walks toward the bathroom. Waves the air with his hand*) It leaves a slight odor, doesn't it?

(*He enters the bathroom*)

BOBBI You want me to open the window?

BARNEY (*Offstage*) You understand, of course, when I spoke to you in the park (*Toilet flushes*) it was only because I thought you were in trouble. I mean I never do things like that, it's very rare for me. The thing is you looked so all alone (*Toilet flushes*) and you had this sad look on your face—so troubled, so distraught . . .

(*He comes out of the bathroom*)

BOBBI (*Peering through the blinds*) Did you ever see that man before?

BARNEY What man?

(*BOBBI beckons him with her finger. BARNEY moves quickly to the window and peers out*)

BOBBI The one across the street. In front of that building. Have you ever seen him standing there?

BARNEY All the time. He's the doorman.

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

BOBBI I was just wondering. (*Looks at BARNEY*) Do you think I'm being silly?

BARNEY No . . . Well, I'm not sure. You certainly seem worried about something . . . Even when you were sitting in the park.

628

BOBBI Can I trust you? I mean absolutely trust you?

BARNEY I'd—like to be your friend.

BOBBI (*She pours Scotch into a glass*) I'm not crazy or anything, so what I tell you you must accept as the gospel truth. Do you know he had my dog kidnapped?

BARNEY Who?

BOBBI Mr. H. . . . of Palm Springs, California . . . He had my thirteen-month-old Lhasa Apso kidnapped. You promised I could trust you.

BARNEY I wouldn't tell that to anyone. Why would he kidnap your dog?

BOBBI Do you think I'm making that up?

BARNEY No. You tell me a man kidnapped your dog, I accept it.

BOBBI I mean the dog is gone. He loves me and he knows his way home, so he's obviously being held against his will.

(*She pours the Scotch back into the bottle*)

BARNEY Your Lhasa Apso? Did you call the police?

BOBBI What's the point? They're in on it too.

BARNEY The police are in on the kidnap of your Lhasa Apso?

BOBBI Mr. H. is also one of the biggest political bigwigs in California. Who would you say the police are more likely to cooperate with? (*Takes off her shoes*) Listen, the things I could tell about men I've met. Some day I'm going to write a book naming names, dates and places. I wouldn't leave a *single* man out.

BARNEY (*Nervously*) Well, I'm sure once in a while you must have met some *nice* men.

BOBBI Oh, you wouldn't be in the book. You have sensitive hands. (*She takes his hand*) That's how I knew you were nice in the park. I can tell everything about a person by just looking at his hands. You have such long, delicate fingers . . .

629

BARNEY I knew a girl in school who was able to determine a person's character by—

LAST OF THE

BOBBI (*Singing*)

RED HOT

What's it all about, Alfie? Is it just for the moment we live?

LOVERS

What's it all about, when you sort it out—*

I smell oysters.

BARNEY What?

BOBBI What could that be?

BARNEY (*Moves his hand away*) I can't imagine. Look, Bobbi, the reason I asked you up here today . . .

BOBBI God, how I miss my dog. He kidnapped him because he was jealous of anyone or anything I cared about. He didn't want me to have a dog or a car or a career. Especially a career. He knows I'm enormously talented and he's afraid of losing me. Well, that's his problem because nothing's going to stop me. I'm going to make good no matter how many opportunities he tries to block. I've got it, I know that. Ask anyone on the Coast. The talent's there, it's just a question of time. Do you know he had me fired from the Cocoanut Grove? Did you hear about that?

BARNEY Er, no, I didn't.

BOBBI On opening night. After the first show. And I was fabulous. You could ask my agent, he'll give you an unbiased rave . . . Did you ever stop to wonder why I was never on the *Hollywood Palace*?

BARNEY I . . . er . . . really can't say that I did.

*From "Alfie," by Burt Bacharach and Hal David. Copyright © 1966 by Famous Music Corporation.

BOBBI I had a two-week contract at the Cocoanut Grove. They had to pay me off. But I wasn't allowed to sing the second show. Who would you say was responsible for that?

BARNEY Sure sounds like Mr. H. to me.

630

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BOBBI Because he knew the producers of the *Hollywood Palace* were coming for the second show. And let me ask you another question. I had the best orchestrations for any night club singer on the West Coast, right?

BARNEY Right.

BOBBI Then who stole the trumpet parts five minutes before show time?

BARNEY Could it have been the same ones who were in on the Lhasa Apso job?

BOBBI (*Stares at him*) Are you trying to put me on?

BARNEY I'm not. I swear I'm not. I think I'll have a drink.

BOBBI That's why I had to leave the Coast. He blocked every move I made. (*BOBBI laughs*) You know he once tried to have me committed to a hospital?

BARNEY No. Why?

BOBBI Obviously to keep tabs on me. Actually it was my own fault. I was faking a nervous breakdown so he'd leave me alone. I made believe I went crazy in a department store one day and the police came with an ambulance. He must have had me followed because the ambulance was there in five minutes. Who else could have sent them?

BARNEY (*Nods*) What did they do?

BOBBI Oh, they just held me for observation.

BARNEY And sent you home?

BOBBI In twelve weeks. He must have paid them off. Otherwise why would they keep me there? It wasn't too bad, I wasn't working anyway. I ask you, is that some experience?

BARNEY (*Nods*) Some experience.

BOBBI Hey, have you ever heard of Babylon Revisited?

BARNEY Who?

BOBBI Babylon Revisited. It's a rock group. They want me to record with them. But once you do the Janis Joplin scene your voice is gone in two years. Don't you think I'm better off taking the David Merrick show?

631

BARNEY I thought they turned you down?

LAST OF THE

BOBBI Where did you hear that?

RED HOT

BARNEY You told me before.

LOVERS

BOBBI I didn't say they turned me down. I said they took the black girl.

BARNEY But you didn't get the part.

BOBBI What are you trying to say?

BARNEY I'm not trying to say anything. Hey, listen, don't get angry with me.

BOBBI (*Tensely*) I'm not angry with anyone.

BARNEY Well, you seem upset.

BOBBI I am not upset. I am not angry. I am not uptight. I am not anything . . . I'm turning on again.

BARNEY (*Nervously*) Listen, I'm not sure that's a good idea. Anyway, the thing is . . . it's getting kind of late, you know?

BOBBI And you want me to leave.

BARNEY No, I don't *want* you to leave—

BOBBI But you'd be happier if I left.

BARNEY Happier? No, not happier—

BOBBI Don't worry. I'm not going to try anything.

BARNEY Try what? Like what? What would you try?

BOBBI Nothing. I thought you were looking at the scars on my wrist. You're wrong about them.

BARNEY I wasn't even looking at them. I didn't even

know you had them. Listen, your scars are your business.

BOBBI I was watering plants and the window fell on my wrists.

BARNEY That happens so often. I know people who have the same scars.

BOBBI Please forgive me. I'm suspicious of everyone. I really have to run.

BARNEY Oh, that's too bad. Just when we were getting acquainted. *But—if you have to rush off.*

BOBBI (*Opens the box*) I just have to have a few drags before I face the world again.

BARNEY Now? Now? Wouldn't you be better off facing the world first and then relaxing when you get home?

BOBBI Doctor's orders.

BARNEY Well, I wouldn't want you to go without your medicine but (*She takes out two sticks*) as I said before, I'm way behind in this story— (*She holds one out to him*) What's that?

BOBBI You said you'd have one with me later.

BARNEY I said "maybe" later. *Maybe . . .*

BOBBI You said "later."

BARNEY No, no. I said "maybe later." I remember saying the maybe just before the later. We were talking about that incident with the Mexican in the motel.

BOBBI I think it's very impolite of you. I'm not going unless you have one with me . . . if I have to stay all night.

BARNEY Two puffs. Two quick puffs and then I really have to get back to work.

(*He puts it in his mouth and takes the matches*)

BOBBI I like the way you hold it in your mouth. You

can tell a lot about a man by the way he holds pot in his mouth.

BARNEY Here we go.

(*He lights both*)

BOBBI Good?

633

BARNEY Oh, yeah. Mm, man, that's pot.

BOBBI It's better when you close your eyes.

L A S T O F T H E
R E D H O T
L O V E R S

BARNEY Oh, listen, don't I know. But I really don't have time to close my eyes. I'm just taking one more puff and then I've got to get to work. (*He takes another quick drag*) Okay. Finished. Really terrific. My best pot this week.

(*He starts to put it out in the ashtray*)

BOBBI Let me see you get it in your lungs and hold it there.

BARNEY You don't want to see that. There's nothing to see. A man with pot in his lungs. You must have seen it a hundred times.

BOBBI Why won't you inhale it?

BARNEY I will. I will. Watch. I promise.

(*He takes another drag*)

BOBBI Swallow it.

BARNEY Hmm?

BOBBI Swallow it! (*BARNEY swallows*) Okay, now exhale.

(*BARNEY exhales; nothing comes out*)

BARNEY Oh, my God, it didn't come out. It's still in there.

BOBBI In a few minutes your mouth will feel numb and your toes will start to tingle.

BARNEY Good, good. I can't wait.

BOBBI What do you feel now?

BARNEY Outside of sharp pain, nothing very much.

BOBBI Is your mouth getting dry?

BARNEY A little. (*Tests his mouth*) It's drying now. (*Tests it again*) There it goes, it's all dried up.

634

BOBBI This is quality grass. You can tell, can't you? It's from South America.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BARNEY Well, you know what they say: "You can take pot out of the country, but you can't take the—"

BOBBI Toes tingling yet?

BARNEY (*Nods*) Toes tingling.

BOBBI Relaxed?

BARNEY Relaxed . . . Oh, my God, my tongue is paralyzed. I just lost the use of my tongue. I'll never talk again.

BOBBI You're high, baby, just sit back and enjoy it.

BARNEY I'll try, I'll try . . . Everything is slowing down. Do you feel everything slowing down?

BOBBI Mm-hmmm.

BARNEY (*Puts his hand on his chest*) Oh, God, I don't feel my heart. What the hell happened to my heart?

BOBBI Relax . . . Don't fight it, honey.

BARNEY I'm not. I'm not fighting it. I'm letting it do whatever it wants.

BOBBI Hang it out for the world to see, honey.

BARNEY I'm hanging it out. Here I go. I don't know where I'm going, but I'm going . . .

BOBBI Just let yourself go.

BARNEY Oh, boy, what's that? What is that?

BOBBI What?

BARNEY I hear my eyes blinking—thump, thump—There it goes again, thump!

BOBBI If you got it, baby, flaunt it.

BARNEY I'm flaunting it, I'm flaunting it. (*A big, enormous smile spreads across his face*) Wheeeee!

BOBBI God, the things that have happened to me.

BARNEY I heard, I heard. I can't wait to read the book.

635

BOBBI Did I tell you about this man in California?

BARNEY The dognapper or the teeth-sharpener?

L A S T O F T H E
R E D H O T
L O V E R S

BOBBI Well, I was in love with him. You know about love, I can tell . . . You must have suffered plenty, didn't you?

BARNEY Many years ago I was involved with an older woman in Newark, New Jersey.

BOBBI Oh, yeah, I know that scene. How long did it last?

BARNEY About fifteen minutes.

BOBBI You got to make it alone in this world. All I need is one show. The talent's there, it's just a question of time.

BARNEY That's all it is, Bob.

BOBBI People don't want to see you make good . . . they're all jealous . . . they're all rotten . . . they're all vicious.

BARNEY So many things I wanted to do . . . but I'll never do 'em. So many places I wanted to see . . . I'll never see 'em. Trapped . . . we're all trapped . . . Help! Help!

BOBBI (*After a moment's quiet she begins to sing*)

What the world needs now, is love, sweet love

(BARNEY joins her, bumming along)
That's the only thing that there's just too little of . . .

Curtain

Act Three

636

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

It is the following September; the usual hour again, about three in the afternoon. The key in the lock; the door opens. BARNEY's head peers in. He enters.

No dark blue business suit for BARNEY this time. He wears a gay glen-plaid sports jacket, tan slacks, a blue shirt and a joyful tie. The attaché case, however, is standard equipment. He puts the key on the shelf, closes the door, places the attaché case on the dining table and opens it. BARNEY is a bit more inspired this time. He takes out a bottle of champagne and walks to the kitchen, humming as he goes, and pausing to hit the light switch on his way past. We hear the refrigerator door open and close, and BARNEY returns with a glass of water which he leaves on the sideboard as he goes to the attaché case. He takes out two champagne glasses, and as he is attempting to remove the label from one of them the doorbell rings. He straightens his hair, adjusts his tie and goes to the door. He again peers out the peephole, then opens the door. JEANETTE FISHER stands there. She is about thirty-nine years old, a woman of no discernible physical attributes. There is only one distinguishable quality about JEANETTE FISHER. She is probably the singularly most depressed woman on the face of the Western Hemisphere. She wakes up to gloom and goes to bed with gloom. She fills the in-between hours with despair. She wears a beige dress and matching stole.

She looks at BARNEY, and then nervously glances around the room.

BARNEY (*With some sincerity*) Hello, Jeanette! (*He extends his hand and leads her into the room, closing the door behind him*) Any trouble finding the place? (*She shakes her head "no"*) It's not raining yet, is it? (*She shakes head "no" again*) Good. Good. (*He starts to walk around to her front but she turns away, her back to him, not looking at anything in particular*) Jeanette, there's nothing wrong, is there? (*Another wordless shake of her head. He goes over and takes her hand*) Well, then, come here and sit down . . . Hey, come on, Jeanette, look at me. (*She finally picks her head up and looks at him*)

You okay? (*She finally manages a small smile and nods "yes"*) Come here. (*He leads her to the sofa; they both sit*) Listen, there's no sense in denying this is a little awkward. But that's why I respect you, Jeanette. If you weren't nervous, if you just barged in here, cold and callous like some women could, or if you were some—some *nut* I met in the park, that would be one thing. But you're not, Jeanette. You are the only one in our circle, the *only* one of Thelma's friends that I have ever had any respect or feeling for. That's why I was so happy the other night when we were having dinner at your place, when you indicated to me—
(Suddenly JEANETTE begins to sob quietly) Oh, Jeanette, don't. It's all right. (*She grabs a handkerchief out of her pocketbook and cries quietly into it*) Hey, come on, Jeanette. None of that now . . . (*She is sobbing. He starts to put his arm around her shoulder to comfort her*) Listen, it's all right. It's just me. Barney. (*She pushes him away. He looks around, not knowing what to do*) Jeanette, you're not going to sit here crying until five o'clock, are you? . . . Are you? (*JEANETTE suddenly jumps up and rushes into the bathroom, still sobbing.* BARNEY gets up) Jeanette! . . . Jeanette? (*But she's in the bathroom. He goes over and listens to her through the door. Then he walks away and throws his arms up in dismay*) Oh, Christ! (*He talks to himself*) Boy, can you pick 'em. Can you pick 'em!

(The door suddenly opens and JEANETTE stands there. She has stopped crying. BARNEY looks at her in anticipation. She smiles at him)

JEANETTE Why am I here, Barney?

BARNEY What was that?

JEANETTE Why am I here? I've known you and Thelma for twelve years. She's been a good friend to me. I wouldn't hurt her for the world. You and Mel are closer than brothers. So why am I here?

BARNEY Why? Because I *asked* you here, that's why. I'm very fond of you. Look, why don't you put your pocketbook down, Jeanette, and relax, and I'll go inside and get us a drink, okay?

(He starts for the kitchen)

JEANETTE I don't find you physically attractive. You knew that, didn't you?

(*That stops him*)

BARNEY No! No, I didn't know that . . . It doesn't surprise me . . . I mean it's not mandatory . . .

638

JEANETTE I think you're sweet . . . I think you're basically a good person. I do not think you're physically attractive.

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BARNEY (*Cheerfully*) Listen, you can't win 'em all.

JEANETTE I can be honest with you, Barney, can't I? I think we've known each other long enough for that, haven't we?

BARNEY (*The good sport*) Hell, yes.

JEANETTE So I can just come out and say it, can't I? I do not find you physically attractive.

BARNEY (*Smiling*) Fine, fine. Listen, I think we've covered that ground pretty good, Jeanette. So why don't I go get the drinks and you put down your pocket-book and relax and then—

JEANETTE Don't misunderstand me. It's not the weight. The weight thing doesn't bother me. I have never been repelled by obesity.

BARNEY I'm glad to hear that, Jeanette. Actually I was a skinny kid. I blew up in the army. I was a mess sergeant in Fort Totten for about two years and I would constantly—

JEANETTE I am attracted to you emotionally, intellectually—

BARNEY Isn't that funny? I always felt that you and I had a certain rapport—

JEANETTE But not physically.

BARNEY (*Nods*) Not physically. We established that a number of times. Would you excuse me one second, Jeanette. I want to get the champagne.

(*He starts again*)

JEANETTE Barney, do you know I haven't slept with Mel in eight months?

BARNEY (*That stops him again*) No, I didn't. Eight months, my God. I knew Mel had a bad back but I had no idea—

JEANETTE *Have not* slept with him in eight months.

639

BARNEY Well, listen, Jeanette, that's none of my business, really. That's between you and Mel . . .

LAST OF THE

JEANETTE He's slept with me. I haven't slept with him.

RED HOT

BARNEY (*Looks at her, puzzled*) How does that work out?

LOVERS

JEANETTE I don't particularly enjoy sex, Barney.

BARNEY Is that right? Ever?

JEANETTE It was important to me once. Nothing is very important to me any more.

BARNEY You're just tense, Jeanette. You're going through a dry period right now. Eight months, my God, no wonder . . .

JEANETTE Has Mel indicated in any way there was any trouble between us?

BARNEY None. Mel is not a talker.

JEANETTE I know you see him all the time.

BARNEY I play handball with him on Saturday mornings. We never discuss personal problems. He serves, I hit it back.

JEANETTE He didn't seem upset?

BARNEY No. Can I take your pocketbook, Jeanette?

JEANETTE *You* wouldn't talk, would you, Barney?

BARNEY Me, Jeanette? I'm surprised that you would even think—

JEANETTE Then I don't have to worry about my name ever coming up in a cocktail party—

BARNEY May God strike me dead! May I never live to

see my oldest girl married, if I ever mentioned even casually—

JEANETTE Swear!

BARNEY I just swore. May I become totally paralyzed from the hips down—

640

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

JEANETTE It was not easy for me to come here today.

BARNEY May my hands get crippled with arthritis. I'm surprised that you would even think . . .

JEANETTE I'm not very good at this sort of thing, Barney.

BARNEY Who *is*, Jeanette?

JEANETTE I don't even know what I'm supposed to do.

BARNEY I'd put my pocketbook down first if I were you . . .

JEANETTE (*She gets up*) My only concern is that whatever happens between us will never go beyond these four walls.

(*She crosses to the window*)

BARNEY May my restaurant be destroyed by fire, Jeanette. You'll never have to worry as long as you live. I told you that the other night.

JEANETTE Did Mel ever mention being involved with another woman?

BARNEY No.

JEANETTE Would you tell me if he did?

BARNEY Yes. Yes, I would tell you.

JEANETTE You would?

BARNEY Yes.

JEANETTE Why would you tell me?

BARNEY I don't know why. You asked me if I would; I'm trying to be polite, that's all.

JEANETTE I see.

BARNEY Can I take your pocketbook, Jeanette?

JEANETTE What do you think about all this, Barney?

BARNEY About all what?

JEANETTE About all this that's going on.

BARNEY *Nothing's* going on, Jeanette. I can't even get your pocketbook.

641

JEANETTE You're not appalled by the times we live in, by all the promiscuity you find everywhere?

LAST OF THE

BARNEY I don't find it anywhere. I *bear* a lot about it, I haven't found any. You want to sit down a few minutes? You're here, you might as well sit.

RED HOT
LOVERS

JEANETTE Let me ask you a question, Barney. Do you have any guilt about asking me here today?

BARNEY Do I have any guilt?

JEANETTE Don't repeat the question, just answer it.

BARNEY What? Do I have any guilt? . . . No, I do not.

JEANETTE In other words, you don't care who you hurt?

BARNEY I'm not hurting anyone.

JEANETTE Really? You want to think about that answer?

BARNEY Not necessarily . . . Why probe deeply into everything?

JEANETTE Exactly. That's the attitude we live with today. Don't think about it. Well, I'm not going to think about it, Barney. I'm going to become like everyone else in the world. That's why I'm here today.

(*She opens her purse, takes out a pillbox and puts a pill in her mouth*)

BARNEY Somehow I think we've gotten off on a tangent, Jeanette . . . What are you doing? What's that?

JEANETTE Digilene. It's for depression.

BARNEY Don't you want any water?

JEANETTE I couldn't wait.

BARNEY Until I brought the water? You're *that* depressed?

JEANETTE Isn't that how we cope with our problems today, Barney? With pills, drugs . . . Do you know how many people in this country take pills because they cannot cope with emotional problems? Do you know the number in this country? It was in *Look* magazine.

642

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

BARNEY I didn't get a haircut this week, I missed the new *Look*.

JEANETTE Sixty million.

BARNEY That many?

JEANETTE Do you know the alternative to taking pills?

BARNEY Was this in the same issue?

JEANETTE Melancholia. Do you know what that is? Melancholia?

BARNEY Brooding, isn't it? Heavy brooding?

JEANETTE I'll tell you what melancholia is, Barney, because I've had it for the last eight months. It's total and complete despair. It's waking up each morning of your life not wanting anything, not hoping, not caring, not needing. You don't pray for happiness because you don't believe it exists, and you don't wish for death because if you don't exist, then death is meaningless. All that's left is a quiet, endless, bottomless, relentless, eternal, infinite gloom. That's melancholia.

(*There is a long, awkward pause as BARNEY thinks about how to retrieve the afternoon*)

BARNEY Hey, how about a nice, cool drink? I bet that would pick you up?

JEANETTE What do you want with me anyway, Barney, a good time? You're not going to have a good time with me.

BARNEY I think we could have an interesting afternoon if we got off the gloom and the brooding, I really do,

Jeanette. Why don't I get the champagne while you put down your pocketbook and relax—

JEANETTE You mean Mel never mentioned another woman to you?

BARNEY As God is my judge. You seem so different from the other night, Jeanette, so tense. I don't know, you had such a zest and spirit about you.

643

JEANETTE It was not easy for me to come here today.

L A S T O F T H E

BARNEY I understand that.

R E D H O T

JEANETTE If anyone knew or even suspected—

L O V E R S

BARNEY May I become deformed in all my vital organs —stop it already, Jeanette, no one's going to know. I'm going to get the wine and I want you to sit back and relax. (*He starts out, and stops at the table*) You see this table?

JEANETTE Yes.

BARNEY (*Taps it*) Good spot for your pocketbook.
(*He starts off*)

JEANETTE Barney, do you know I can't taste food?

BARNEY Oh, now wait a minute, Jeanette. I can't believe that. I can well understand your being in a state of depression most of the time but you can certainly taste food.

JEANETTE I can *not* taste food.

BARNEY It may not taste *good* to you, but you can taste it.

JEANETTE Can *not* taste food.

BARNEY What are you saying, Jeanette? You had two pieces of pot roast the other night, I saw you.

JEANETTE I eat what's in front of me. It doesn't make too much difference.

BARNEY It wasn't in front of you, you got up and took a second piece. Well, what's the difference. It's how you feel that's important.

JEANETTE And how do *you* feel, Barney? About being here with Mel's wife?

BARNEY Why do you put it that way? You're Jeanette, I'm Barney. Why do you complicate everything?

644

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

JEANETTE (*Gets up, goes to the phone and picks up the receiver*) What do you think Mel's reaction would be if I called him now and told him what was going on here?

BARNEY (*Gets up and crosses to her*) Big! I think his reaction would be big! (*He takes the phone away from her*) With a lot of killing and murder. (*He moves across the room with the phone*) Don't test him, Jeanette. It's not good for a marriage to test it too much.

(*He pushes the phone behind the lamp*)

JEANETTE Do you think death is so terrible, Barney?

BARNEY Death? I do. I think death is terrible. I think *violent* death is the worst . . . Jeanette, I think we're getting a little morbid here . . .

JEANETTE You don't think there are worse things than death?

BARNEY Like suffering and pain? They're bad, but they're second and third after death. Death is first . . . Jeanette, I really think you should have some champagne.

JEANETTE You mean you enjoy your life? You like living?

BARNEY I *love* living. I have some problems with my *life*, but living is the best thing they've come up with so far . . . Look, Jeanette, I know you're going through analysis right now, but I don't think this is a good time to talk shop. (*He reaches for her pocketbook*) Why don't you let me take your pocketbook and—

JEANETTE (*Pulls it aside away from him*) Tell me what you like about living, Barney.

BARNEY What I like? I like all of it.

JEANETTE All of it?

BARNEY A lot of it. A lot of it is very nice.

JEANETTE For example.

BARNEY For example? You mean like what are my favorite things? Is that what you mean? Your pocketbook is really getting me crazy. Put it on the floor, nothing'll happen to it.

645

JEANETTE (*She doesn't, of course*) What makes life worth getting up for? Name emotions for me, feelings . . .

L A S T O F T H E

R E D H O T

L O V E R S

BARNEY Well, that takes in such a wide area, Jeanette. I don't think I could cover it in one statement. Do you mean single items like love or sex or family? (*He has been staring at her pocketbook, and finally leaps at her*) Let me have that goddamned pocketbook! (*He grabs it from her*) Nothing'll happen to it, I'll leave it right here! (*He puts it on the desk and sinks into a chair*) I'm sorry, Jeanette, I couldn't stand it any more. Oh, I feel so much better.

JEANETTE How much of life do you actually enjoy, Barney?

BARNEY You're still on that, Jeanette?

JEANETTE Give me a number, a percentage.

BARNEY A percentage? How much of a percentage of life do I enjoy? I couldn't answer that, Jeanette. It would be meaningless . . . Half! About half. Fifty-one, fifty-two percent, something like that. I'm just giving you a figure off the top of my head.

JEANETTE Do you know what *my* percentage is? Do you know what Doctor Margolies estimated *my* percentage of happiness is?

BARNEY (*Thinks*) Low. I would imagine it was low.

JEANETTE Eight point two percent.

BARNEY I estimated something like that.

JEANETTE I'm thirty-nine years old, Barney. I've enjoyed eight point two percent of my life.

BARNEY You actually sat down with a pencil and paper and figured that out? No wonder you're so depressed.

I mean I depressed myself with the fifty-one percent. I can understand how you feel with an eight point two.

JEANETTE Do you think that people are basically good?

646

BARNEY Another question?

*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

JEANETTE Do you think the world is populated with decent, loving, gentle human beings?

BARNEY (*He'd better think about that*) . . . Not all of them. There's no question about that, Jeanette. Certainly not all of them.

JEANETTE In other words, you think there are *some*. *Some* people are decent—

BARNEY Right.

JEANETTE —loving—

BARNEY Right.

JEANETTE —gentle—human beings.

BARNEY Right.

JEANETTE Name some.

BARNEY I knew that was your next question. I would have bet my life on it.

JEANETTE Name ten, Barney.

BARNEY Name ten. There's a point to all this. I don't see it yet but I know there's a point.

JEANETTE Name *five*. Five people you think are decent, gentle and loving. Name *three*.

BARNEY Three? Three people out of the whole world? That's ridiculous. I can name three hundred, three thousand . . .

JEANETTE Just three.

BARNEY Living or dead?

JEANETTE Three people, Barney, three fellow human beings—who are gentle, loving and decent.

BARNEY You think I can't do it. No one can be that cynical, Jeanette. No one could be *that* contemptuous of the world. Okay. I'll play. Here we go. At the top of my list, I pick, in the number-one spot . . . this one's going to surprise you . . . Are you ready?

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JEANETTE I'm ready.

LAST OF THE

BARNEY Thelma. My wife Thelma.

RED HOT

JEANETTE That's one.

LOVERS

BARNEY You agree with Thelma? I mean relatives are not prohibited?

JEANETTE Thelma is certainly a gentle and loving woman.

BARNEY Oh, good. You agree. Thank you. So I need two more and I'm in.

JEANETTE So far you have Thelma.

BARNEY I've *said* that already. I'm thinking, I want to be selective . . . For second I would pick—I don't know, is John F. Kennedy acceptable to you?

JEANETTE If he's acceptable to you.

BARNEY Certainly he's acceptable to me. He's acceptable to *everyone*. I'll tell you the truth, Jeanette, when you told me in the kitchen the other night that you were willing, even *anxious* to meet me here today, I had no idea it was to play this game.

BARNEY One second. Let me finish my list first. (*Enumerates on his fingers*) Thelma, my wife, John F. Kennedy . . . and, I don't know, Christ—oh, yes. Him. Christ! All right? Three?

JEANETTE I'm trying to prove to you why I'm here. All right, let's forget it, we'll have the champagne.

JEANETTE Three. You did it, Barney. You actually

found three people who you consider gentle, loving and decent. I congratulate you.

BARNEY You don't have to congratulate me, it wasn't so hard. I just picked the Big Three—Kennedy, Christ and Thelma. For God's sakes, Jeanette, if anyone heard this conversation . . .

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

JEANETTE I couldn't do it, Barney. I couldn't pick three people. Not in this world.

BARNEY In thirty-nine years, you have never met—

JEANETTE Never!

BARNEY During your eight point two percent of happiness, surely there were three people—

JEANETTE There weren't.

BARNEY Not even a close friend or a girl you went to school with?

JEANETTE Who?

BARNEY I don't know who you went to school with! All right, what about Christ? Are you going to tell me Jesus Christ was not a decent, gentle, loving man? or John F. Kennedy?

JEANETTE Mention people I know.

BARNEY All right, Thelma. Will you agree with Thelma?

JEANETTE I told you before. I consider Thelma a gentle and loving woman.

BARNEY Wait a minute. Hold it a second. What about decent? That's the second time you left out decent. The first time I thought it was an oversight, this time I'd like to discuss it. Why did you leave out decent?

JEANETTE Do you consider her decent?

BARNEY Thelma? My wife Thelma? What's the matter with you? She's the most decent human being on earth. Ask anyone. Thelma is the epitome of decency. My God, Thelma Cashman is synonymous with the word "decent."

JEANETTE That's wonderful.

BARNEY Why, have you heard something?

JEANETTE Of course not.

BARNEY Then why did you leave out decent?

JEANETTE She's on *your* list. It's not important if she's on mine.

BARNEY What are you trying to do, Jeanette? Are you making inferences concerning the decency of my wife Thelma?

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RED HOT
LOVERS

JEANETTE I'm not making inferences, Barney. *You're* indicating some doubt.

BARNEY *Doubt? Doubt?* About Thelma? (*Laughs*) Good God, what the hell is there to doubt about Thelma?

JEANETTE How would I know, Barney?

BARNEY Well, I'll tell you. NOTHING! THERE IS NOTHING TO DOUBT ABOUT THELMA!

JEANETTE As long as you're sure.

BARNEY (*Shouting*) Don't tell me "as long as I'm sure" because I'm sure. I have lived with the woman my whole life. I grew up with her. I know every nerve fiber in her body, every thought that's ever been in her head. The woman is without malice, without jealousy. Thelma Cashman is *beyond* reproach. She is as totally incapable of an act of deception as *you* would be or *I* would be or—oh, my God!

(*He slumps in his seat. She stares at him*)

JEANETTE (*A long pause*) So you have Kennedy and Christ! You have one more pick.

BARNEY It's not true! Not Thelma, it's not true. She's not like other people. She's gentle and loving and decent.

JEANETTE In other words, you agree that other people are *not* gentle and loving and decent?

BARNEY For God's sakes, Jeanette, why are you doing this? Is there something about Thelma you know that I don't? Is there something about her I should know that you're not telling me? I'll find out sooner or later,

so you might as well tell me now. (*He points a threatening finger at her*) You hear me, Jeanette? I demand to know about Thelma!

JEANETTE (*Stares at BARNEY a few seconds*) Thelma is the only gentle, loving and decent woman I've ever met. She is unreproachable and incapable of deception. She is the epitome of decency. And the fact that you could doubt her is an act of indecency on your part. You are not a decent human being. Neither am I because I'm here with you, knowing what Thelma is. Neither is Mel, because he drove me to it. We are not decent people, Barney. Only Thelma is. But she thinks you're the most decent one of us all, so that makes her an idiot in my eyes. There are only indecent people or idiots in this world because that's all I ever see. And that's how I spend most of my day, thinking about things like that. Is it any wonder I take Digilene?

BARNEY (*Falls back in his chair, exhausted. He shakes his head*) I swear, I have never been so depressed in all my life.

JEANETTE I think my analyst has an opening Thursday afternoon.

BARNEY Is it true, Jeanette? Am I really so terrible? Are we *all* so terrible?

JEANETTE Do you know what the rate of literacy is in the United States? Eighty-six percent. Do you know how many married people have committed adultery? Eighty-seven percent. This is the only country in the world that has more cheaters than readers.

BARNEY I never thought of myself like this. I never thought of anybody like this.

JEANETTE You should see what it's like *without* Digilene.

BARNEY No. No, listen, Jeanette. I don't buy it. We're not indecent, we're not unloving. We're human. That's what we are, Jeanette. *human!*

JEANETTE If I were to tell you stories about people you know, people you respect, you would get sick to your stomach right here on this carpet.

BARNEY I'm not interested in other people. It's no concern of mine.

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JEANETTE You don't see what's going on around you? The lies, the deceit. The stinking, sordid affairs that are going on in motels, in offices, in little German cars.

LAST OF THE

RED HOT

LOVERS

BARNEY Jeanette, you can't go on like this. You've got to look at the brighter side.

JEANETTE (*Fighting back tears*) Do you know Charlotte Korman, big, red-headed, buxom woman, her husband is the Mercedes-Benz dealer in Wantagh? (BARNEY nods) Mel doesn't like her. He doesn't want me to see her. He doesn't want her to be my friend, doesn't want her to come to our house; he can't stand Charlotte Korman.

BARNEY So?

JEANETTE He's been having an affair with her for eight months! I had to stop seeing her three times a week so *he* could see her four times a week. These are the times we live in, Barney.

BARNEY Listen, Jeanette, maybe you're wrong. Maybe it's just your imagination. Your whole outlook's a little distorted lately. You must admit you're even having trouble tasting food.

JEANETTE You know what my proof is? He told me. Two o'clock in the morning, he leans over, taps me on the shoulder and says, "I've had an affair with Charlotte Korman." Who asked him? When he tapped me on the shoulder in the middle of the night I thought he wanted *me!* You know what it is to wake up from a sound sleep with no eyelashes and a dry mouth and hear that your husband is getting it from a woman you're not allowed to see for lunch? And you know why he told me, Barney? He explained it to me. We're living in a new guiltless society. You can

do anything you want as long as you're honest about it. Aren't we lucky to be living in such a civilized age? In the old days I would have gone to my grave *ignorant* of the wonderful and beautiful knowledge that my husband was spending his afternoons humping Charlotte Korman! . . . When he told me, I didn't say a word. I went down to the kitchen and made myself a cream cheese and jelly sandwich on date-nut bread. And that was the last time in eight months that I tasted food . . . I estimate, going four times a week, I should be through with Doctor Margolies in another year. And then, when we both think I'm ready, I'm going to get in my car and drive off the Verrazano Bridge. In the meantime, I'm very depressed. Excuse me, Barney. Nothing personal, but I don't think we're going to have our affair.

BARNEY Where are you going?

JEANETTE Where's anyone going?

BARNEY Please, not yet.

JEANETTE (*Walks over to the desk and gets her pocketbook*) Some good time you had, heh, Barney? A barrel of laughs, right? I think my eight point two is down to a three or a four.

BARNEY I'm not indecent, Jeanette.

JEANETTE Don't start again, Barney. I only got one Digilene left.

(*She's at the door*)

BARNEY Foolish, stupid, maybe, but I'm not indecent.

JEANETTE (*Hand on the door*) Have it your way.

BARNEY *Don't leave!* Don't leave until you say I am not indecent. It's important to me, Jeanette.

JEANETTE You want me to lie? You're not indecent. We're a terrific bunch of people.

BARNEY (*Begins to fume*) All right! All right, we're all no good. We're all indecent, unfeeling, unloving, rot-

ten human beings. Sick, monstrous, disgusting people, all of us. You don't know the half of it. You haven't the slightest idea how filthy and ugly I really am deep inside. You think you're the first woman I ever had up here? Ha! You want to hear about Elaine, a woman of Polish persuasion I picked up in my own restaurant? A drinking, smoking, coughing, married woman who practically begged me to rip her clothes off . . . And you know what happened? *Nothing*, Jeanette. Nothing happened. Because I was looking for something beautiful, something decent. You want to hear about Bobbi, a psycho unemployed night club singer who had her dog kidnapped by the Beverly Hills police and sleeps with a Nazi vocal coach? I sat there with her smoking marijuana and singing popular songs of the day . . . And you know what happened? *Nothing*, Jeanette. Nothing happened. Because I was looking for something beautiful, something decent . . . And then I invited you. A woman who grabbed me in her kitchen last Thursday night and physically pinned me down on the table. I had mayonnaise stains on my back when I got home. And when you get here, what do you do? You sit there taking pills and holding on to your goddamned pocketbook all day. And again, *nothing* happened, Jeanette. Nothing. Because I was looking for something beautiful, something decent. Well, I'm through, dammit. I'm through looking for something beautiful and decent because *it doesn't exist*. You're right, Jeanette, we're no damned good, all of us. There are no decent, gentle, loving people left in the world. (*He advances toward her*) We're depraved, lustful, disgusting monsters, all of us. (*He pushes a chair out of his way*) But if we're guilty, Jeanette, then let's at least commit the crime. If we're depraved, let's see a little depravity. (*He is moving toward her; she backs away*) If we're indecent, then let's see a couple of terrific indecencies! *COME HERE, JEANETTE!*

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LAST OF THE
RED HOT
LOVERS

JEANETTE Barney, get out of my way.

BARNEY Who do you think you're fooling around with here, Jeanette? Some kid? Some scared amateur? I'm a pro, baby, I know the ropes.

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*Collected Plays
of Neil Simon*

JEANETTE Barney, stop it, I don't think this is funny.

BARNEY (*Stalking her*) I could tell you stories that happened in a motel with a Mexican that would make your teeth curl.

JEANETTE Get away from me, Barney, I'm not kidding.

BARNEY You want to hear language? You want to hear words? SCREW! ASSHOLE! Come on, Jeanette, let's hear a few!

JEANETTE Barney, stop it. Get away from me, I want to go, Barney. I'm not kidding.

BARNEY Kidding? Who the hell is kidding? I'm *dead serious*, Jeanette! Who do you think you are, coming on like that in the kitchen the other night and then coming up here to tell me your troubles. I'm not interested in your troubles. I want your flesh, not your heartbreakin stories.

JEANETTE Oh, my God, you must be out of your head. What's the matter with you, Barney?

BARNEY Nothing's the matter with *me*, sweetheart. I'm with it! I'm *now!* I'm here where it's happening, Jeanette, where the hell are you? Now, are you going to take off that dress or do I rip it off with my fingers?

JEANETTE Barney, stop it, I'm scared to death. You're not like this, Barney, I know you're not like this.

BARNEY No? Then tell me. Tell me what I'm really like.

JEANETTE You're quiet. You're intelligent.

BARNEY Really? And what else? Let me hear it, Jeanette, what else?

JEANETTE (*Backing away as BARNEY tosses furniture aside*) You're not mean. I've never seen you do a mean thing in your life. (*She begins to whimper*) Barney, you're scaring me.

BARNEY Quiet, intelligent . . . More, more. I wanna hear more.

JEANETTE You're kind. You're the kindest man I know.
Please let me go, Barney.
(*She is crying*)

BARNEY It's not enough, dammit. You'll stay in this room until your pocketbook rots. I want to hear the rest, Jeanette.

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JEANETTE You're kind and good and intelligent . . .

LAST OF THE
RED HOT
LOVERS

BARNEY (*A real Gestapo officer*) You *said* intelligent. I already *heard* intelligent. No repeats allowed, Jeanette. I want to hear a *new* word. One you haven't said yet. Come on, Jeanette, you can say it! What else am I?

JEANETTE Decent! You're decent! You *are*, Barney!

BARNEY Aha! Decent. That's the one I wanted. Decent and what else?

JEANETTE . . . and gentle.

BARNEY And gentle. And what else?

JEANETTE . . . and loving . . .

BARNEY *Loving!* Decent and gentle and loving? But how can I be, Jeanette? You said no one is.

JEANETTE You are, Barney. Just you.

BARNEY And Thelma?

JEANNETTE And Thelma.

BARNEY That's two. So if there's two there could be more, wouldn't you say that, Jeanette?

JEANETTE I don't know. I don't know.

BARNEY Think, Jeanette. Think. There's gotta be one more. Can't you think of one more?

JEANETTE No. No, I can't. There are no more. (*She is sobbing*) Mel! Mel! I want Mel . . .

BARNEY Why? Why do you want Mel?

JEANETTE I want him, I need him . . .

BARNEY Because you love him, Jeanette?

JEANETTE Yes! . . . Yes!

BARNEY How can you love anyone who isn't decent
and gentle and loving?

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Collected Plays

of Neil Simon

JEANETTE He is. He is. I don't care what he's done. He
is! Mel! Mel!

BARNEY (*With sincerity*) That's three. I knew you could
come up with it, Jeanette.

(*She sits there awhile, quietly sobbing. BARNEY
puts his arm around her*)

JEANETTE What's happened to us, Barney? What's hap-
pened to the world? . . . I can't keep up with it.

BARNEY (*Sbrugs*) There's no sense denying it, Jeanette.
It's changing.

JEANETTE (*Looks at him*) In London, I've read about it.
In New York, I've seen it. I never expected it in Great
Neck.

BARNEY You okay? (*She nods. He helps her up*) You want
to compose yourself again?

JEANETTE It'll take me the rest of my life. Barney,
swear to me that you'll never breathe a word to a
living soul—

BARNEY May I have a coronary occlusion in my doc-
tor's office. Stop worrying, Jeanette. You want me to
get you a taxi?

JEANETTE (*Shakes her head "no"*) Someone'll see us to-
gether—probably Charlotte Korman.

BARNEY I feel like such a louse. Do you hate me for
what I've done, Jeanette?

JEANETTE (*Looks at him*) Hate you . . . No, Barney.

BARNEY See you Thursday night for dinner?

JEANNETTE You really believe it, don't you, Barney?
That we're not all sick and rotten. You actually be-
lieve that some of us are decent, gentle and loving.

BARNEY I do. And deep down, so do you.

JEANETTE Maybe . . . but at two o'clock in the morning
I think I'm going to tap Mel on the shoulder and tell
him I've had an affair . . . Let *him* be depressed for a
while.

(*She leaves. BARNEY closes the door. He turns back
into the room and surveys the wreckage of strewn
furniture. He begins to replace the chairs and
things in their proper places, when he stops and
looks at his watch. An idea strikes him. He crosses
to the phone and puts his hand on the receiver. He
thinks a moment, decides to go through with it,
and picks up the receiver and dials. He waits,
then*)

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L A S T O F T H E
R E D H O T
L O V E R S

BARNEY (*Into the phone*) . . . Hello, Thelma? . . . What
are you doing? . . . You busy? . . . Listen, honey, I was
thinking, why don't you meet me this afternoon, we
could do something . . . Sure, now, it takes you ten
minutes to get here . . . No, not in the restaurant
. . . In my mother's apartment . . . No, she didn't invite
us to dinner, I just want you to meet me here . . .
Thelma, don't be so stubborn, can't you meet me in
my mother's apartment . . . ?

(*The curtain begins to fall*)

Curtain

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