

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.

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 filets . . . ? Tiny kumquats . . . ? Who's coming for dinner, a couple of midgets?

NORMAN I had a yen for some delicacies.
(*He goes left, below the table, to the desk*)

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*)

Collected Plays
of Neil Simon

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)

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THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

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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?

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.

ANDY I'm not going to discuss red ribbons with you at this
time.

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!

3 2 1

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

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!

3 2 2

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

(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. Mackinnee, how are you . . . ? The beach this weekend? Gee, I don't know. I've developed this awful cough . . . Yes, I'm disappointed too.

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)

3 2 3

THE STAR-
SPANGLED
GIRL

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)

