# Chapter Two

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

By Neil Simon



Samuel French, Inc.

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CHAPTER TWO was first presented on December 4, 1977, by Emanuel Azenberg at the Imperial Theatre, New York City, with the following cast:

GEORGE SCHNEIDER LEO SCHNEIDER JENNIE MALONE FAYE MEDWICK Judd Hirsch Cliff Gorman Anita Gillette Ann Wedgeworth

Directed by Herbert Ross Scenery by William Ritman Lighting by Tharon Musser Costumes by Noel Taylor

### THE SCENE

The action of Chapter Two takes place in Jennifer Malone's upper East Side apartment and George Schneider's lower Central Park West apartment. The play begins on a late February afternoon and continues through to midspring.



#### SCENE I

The set consists of two separate apartments on opposite sides of Manhattan—george schneider lives in one; jennie malone, in the other.

His apartment, stage left, is located in the mid-seventies on Central Park West. It is one of New York's older buildings, and the ceilings and rooms are higher and larger than the smaller, flatter, uninteresting boxes they build today.

Hers is one of the smaller, flatter, uninteresting boxes they build today. It is in the upper eighties off Third Avenue.

His is decorated in a traditional, comfortable style—large inviting armchairs and sofa, bookcases from floor to ceiling, lots of personal photographs of him and his wife.

Hers is modern, bright, attractive and cheerful. That's because she is.

We see the living rooms of both apartments plus the entrance doors. His apartment has a kitchen and an archway that leads into four other rooms. Hers has a small kitchen and single bedroom.

It's about 10:30 P.M. in bis apartment. The door opens and GEORGE SCHNEIDER enters. He wears a coat and scarf and carries a large fully packed leather suitcase and an attaché case. He turns on the lights. GEORGE is forty-two years old, an attractive, intelligent man who at this moment seems tired and drawn. He puts down his bags, looks around the room, and goes over to a table where his mail has been placed. A large number of letters have piled up. He goes through them, throwing every second and third piece into the wastebasket;

the rest he takes with him to a chair, where he sits and starts to look through them.

LEO SCHNEIDER appears, carrying GEORGE's other matching suitcase. LEO is about forty. He is wearing a suede sheep-skin coat, scarf and gloves.

LEO (Coming through the door) George, you're not going to believe this! I found a place to park right in front of the building. First time in four years ... I think I'll buy an apartment here—I don't want to give up that space. (Puts the suitcase down) Christ Almighty, it's four degrees in here. Whooo! Whyn't you rent it out for the winter Olympics, pay your expenses. Where do you turn your heat on? (GEORGE is reading bis mail) I smell gas. Do you smell gas, George?

GEORGE (Looks up) What?

LEO Gas, for Chrissakes! (He runs into the kitchen, to the stove. GEORGE continues to read his mail. LEO comes out)

It was on. Didn't you check it before you left?
Thank God I didn't have a cigar on me. One match, we'd both be back in Italy. (Turns on the desk lamp)
Where do you turn the heat on? . . . George?

GEORGE What?

LEO Where is the heater?

GEORGE The heater? It's, uh . . .

LEO Take your time. Accuracy is important.

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GEORGE I'm sorry . . . The thermostat's on the wall as you come in the bedroom.

LEO (Looks at him) Are you all right?

GEORGE No. Am I supposed to be?

LEO You lost weight, didn't you?

GEORGE I don't know. A couple of pounds.

LEO Sure. Who could eat that lousy food in Paris and Rome?

GEORGE Do you smell gas?

LEO What?

GEORGE I smell gas.

LEO I think your nose is having jet lag, George.
(He goes into the bedroom)

GEORGE I was going to stay another week in Rome. Then I said, "No, I have to get back. I'm really anxious to be home." (He looks around) I wonder why I thought that.

LEO (Reentering) Come on. You walk into Ice Station Zebra with gas leaking in the kitchen and no fresh air in here for four and a half weeks. I mean, this is February and we're standing here breathing January . . . Why don't you make some popcorn, see what's on TV.

(He takes the suitcases into the bedroom. GEORGE shakes his head)

#### GEORGE God!

LEO (Enters) You've got to see the bathroom. You left the shower dripping with the little window wide open. There are icicles hanging everywhere. It's beautiful. It looks like the john in Doctor Zhivago . . . What are you reading?

GEORGE My mail.

LEO Anything interesting?

GEORGE Not unless you like letters of condolence. I thought I answered my last one when I left . . . Do we have an Aunt Henry?

LEO (Offstage) Aunt Henry? We have an Uncle Henry. In Kingston, New York.

GEORGE This is signed "Aunt Henry."

LEO (Offstage) Uncle Henry's about sixty-three—maybe he's going through a change of life.

GEORGE (Reading) "'Sorry to hear about your loss. With deepest sincerity, Aunt Henry.'"

LEO (Comes out of the kitchen; holding up the food) You want to see sour milk? You want to see white bread that's turned into pumpernickel all by itself? You want to see a dish of grapes that have dried into raisins?

GEORGE (Looking at another letter) You want to listen to something, Leo?

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LEO (Trying to avoid the past) George, you just got home. You're tired. Why don't you defrost the bathroom, take a bath?

GEORGE Just one letter: "Dear Mr. Schneider, My name is Mary Ann Patterson. We've never met, but I did know your late wife, Barbara, casually. I work at Sabrina's, where she used to come to have her hair cut. She was so beautiful and one of the warmest people I've ever met. It seems I always used to tell her my troubles, and she always found some terrific thing to say to cheer me up. I will miss her smiling face and the way she used to come bouncing into the shop like a little girl. I feel lucky to have known her. I just wanted to return a little of her good cheer. God bless you and keep you. Mary Ann Patterson." (He puts down the letter. Leo looks at him, knowing not to intrude on this moment) What the hell did I read that for?

LEO It's very nice. It's a sweet letter, George.

GEORGE Barbara knew a whole world of people I never knew... She knew that Ricco, the mailman, was a birdwatcher in Central Park, and that Vince, the butcher in Gristede's, painted miniature portraits of cats every weekend in his basement on Staten Island... She talked to people all year long that I said hello to on Christmas.

LEO (Looks at him) I think you could have used another month in Europe.

GEORGE You mean, I was supposed to come home and forget I had a wife for twelve years? It doesn't work that way, Leo. It was, perhaps, the dumbest trip I ever took in my whole life. London was bankrupt, Italy was on strike, France hated me, Spain was still mourning for Franco . . . Why do Americans go to grief-stricken Europe when they're trying to get over being stricken with grief?

LEO Beats me. I always thought you could have just as rotten a time here in America.

GEORGE What am I going to do about this apartment, Leo?

LEO My advice? Move. Find a new place for yourself.

GEORGE It was very spooky in London . . . I kept walking around the streets looking for Barbara—Harrod's, King's Road, Portobello . . . Sales clerks would say, "See what you want, sir?" and I'd say, "No, she's not here." I know it's crazy, Leo, but I really thought to myself, It's a joke. She's not dead. She's in London waiting for me. She's just playing out this romantic fantasy: The whole world thinks she's gone, but we meet clandestinely in London, move into a flat, disappear from everyone and live out our lives in secret! . . . She would have thought of something like that, you know.

LEO But she didn't. You did.

GEORGE In Rome I got sore at her—I mean really mad. How dare she do a thing like this to me? I

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would never do a thing like that to her. Never! Like a nut, walking up the Via Veneto one night, cursing my dead wife.

LEO In Italy, they probably didn't pay attention.

Okay, Leo, my sweet baby brother, I'm back... Chapter Two in the life of George Schneider. Where the hell do I begin?

LEO I don't know. You want to go to a dance?

GEORGE You know, you're cute. Does Marilyn think you're cute?

LEO Yeah. It's not enough. I want all the women to think so.

GEORGE Everything okay at home?

LEO Couldn't be better.

GEORGE You sure?

LEO Never ask a question like that twice. I gotta go. (He buttons his coat) How about poker on Thursday?

GEORGE I'll let you know.

LEO Want me to get tickets for the Knicks game Saturday?

GEORGE We'll talk about it.

LEO How about dinner on Sunday? Monday? Maybe Tuesday will be my good news day? (Imitates a trom-

- bone playing "The Man I Love." GEORGE doesn't respond)
  Hey! Hey, Georgie . . .
- GEORGE I'm okay, Leo. I promise. Just give me a little time, okay?
- LEO I don't know what to do for you . . . I feel so goddamn helpless.
- GEORGE Well... Maybe you can come by tomorrow and show me how to open up tuna fish.
- LEO (Looks at GEORGE) Now I'm mad. I think it stinks, too. I'm not going to forgive her for a long time, George. (LEO goes over and embraces GEORGE. Tears well up in LEO's eyes. He pulls away and heads for the door) I'm coming back next week and the two of us are getting bombed, you understand? I mean, I want you disgusting! Then we'll drive up to Kingston and check out this Aunt Henry. If he's got money, he might be a nice catch for you.

(He turns and goes quickly. GEORGE turns and looks at the apartment, then picks up his attaché case)

GEORGE (He takes in a deep breath) Okay, let's take it one night at a time, folks.

(He heads for the bedroom. The lights come down slowly)

#### Scene 2

Her apartment. It is mid-February, about four-thirty on a bitter-cold afternoon. The light of a winter's day is fading fast.

The door opens and JENNIE MALONE enters and switches on the lights. She is an attractive woman, about thirty-two. She wears a camel's-hair coat, leather boots and a woolen hat. She puts down a valise and carries a heavily loaded shoulder bag. She looks around and exhales a deep sigh.

Right behind her is faye Medwick, about thirty-five. Faye dresses a bit more suburban—not chic, but right for the weather. She carries in Jennie's make-up case.

is it twenty-six dollars from Kennedy Airport to Eighty-fourth Street. (She closes the door) It's one thing to pay for his gas, it's another to put his daughter through college. (JENNIE takes off her coat) Remember that cabbie last year? Picked up this sweet Mexican family at the airport, drove them into the city and charged them a hundred and sixty dollars? He told them in America the cab fare starts from the time you get on the plane. I could kill sometimes . . . It's nice and warm in here. You left the heat on for two weeks?

JENNIE I told the doorman I was coming back today. He probably turned it on this morning.

FAYE Organized. You're so damn organized. I'd give anything to be like you. I'm hungry. We should have stopped off at the grocery.

(She enters the kitchen)

- JENNIE I dropped an order off with them before I left.

  They may have delivered it this morning.
- You fly two thousand miles to get a divorce and you remember to leave a grocery order?
- JENNIE (Dials the phone) It's that Catholic upbringing. I majored in Discipline.
- FAYE Milk, cheese, butter, eggs, bread . . . Listen, would you like a job in my house? Your own room with color TV?
- JENNIE A perfect person. The nuns loved it, but it was murder on a marriage. (Into the phone) Four-sixtwo, please.
- FAYE Your plants look nice too. Had them watered, right?
- JENNIE Three times a week. (Into the phone) Yes?
- FAYE You have the nerve to tell that to a woman with a dead lawn and two fallen trees?
- JENNIE (Into the phone) Thank you. (Hangs up) I'm going to change my answering service. I get such boring messages.
- FAYE Is there anything you forgot?