

《英语学习》读物丛书

# PRISONER OF SECOND AVENUE

二号大街的囚徒

外语教学与研究出版社

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Neil Simon 著

杨光慈 注释

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# ACT ONE

## Scene One

*The scene is a fourteenth-floor apartment in one of those prosaic new apartment houses that grow like mushrooms all over New York's overpriced East Side.<sup>1</sup> This one is on Second Avenue in the upper eighties.<sup>2</sup> The management calls this a five-and-a-half-room apartment.<sup>3</sup> What is visible to us is the living room-dining room combination,<sup>4</sup> a small, airless and windowless kitchen off the dining room, a French door that leads to a tiny balcony or terrace off the living room, and a small hallway that leads to two bedrooms and bathrooms. This particular dwelling has been the home of MEL and EDNA EDISON for the past six years. What they thought they were getting was all the luxuries and comforts of the smart, chic East Side.<sup>5</sup> What they got is paper-thin walls and a view of five taller buildings from their terrace.<sup>6</sup> The stage is dark. It is two thirty in the morning and a hot midsummer's day has just begun. It is silent ... In pajamas, robe and slippers, MEL EDISON sits alone on the tiny sofa, smoking a cigarette. He rubs his face anxiously, then coughs;...*

---

MEL. Ohhh, Christ Almighty.<sup>7</sup>

(A light goes on in the bedroom. EDNA, his wife, appears in her nightgown.)

EDNA. What's wrong?

MEL. Nothing's wrong.

EDNA. Huh?

MEL. Nothing's wrong. Go back to bed.

EDNA. Are you sure?

MEL. I'm sure. Go back to bed. (EDNA turns and goes back into the bedroom.) Oh, God, God, God.

(EDNA returns, putting on her robe. She flips the switch on the wall,<sup>8</sup> lighting the room.)

EDNA. What is it? Can't you sleep?

MEL. If I could sleep, would I be sitting here calling God<sup>9</sup> at two thirty in the morning?

EDNA. What's the matter?

MEL. Do you know it's twelve degrees in there?<sup>10</sup> July twenty-third, the middle of a heat wave, it's twelve degrees in there.

EDNA. I told you, turn the air-conditioner off.

MEL. And how do we breathe? (Points to the window) It's eighty-nine degrees outside, twelve degrees inside. Either way they're going to get me.<sup>11</sup>

EDNA. We could leave the air-conditioner on and open the window.<sup>12</sup> (She goes into the kitchen.)

MEL. They don't work that way.<sup>13</sup> Once the hot

air sees an open window, it goes in.

EDNA. We could leave the air-conditioner off for an hour. Then when it starts to get hot, we can turn it back on. (*She comes out, eating from a jar of apple-sauce.*)

MEL. Every hour? Seven times a night? That's a good idea. I can get eight minutes' sleep in between working the air-conditioner.<sup>14</sup>

EDNA. *I'll do it. I'll get up.*

MEL. I asked you a million times to call that office. That air-conditioner hasn't worked properly in two years.

EDNA. I called them. A man came. He couldn't find anything wrong.

MEL. What do you mean, nothing wrong? I got it on Low, it's twelve goddamned degrees.<sup>15</sup>

EDNA (*sits down, sighing*). It's not twelve degrees, Mel. It's cold, but it's not twelve degrees.

MEL. All right, seventeen degrees. Twenty-nine degrees. Thirty-six degrees. It's not sixty-eight, sixty-nine. A temperature for a normal person.

EDNA. (*sits on the sofa*). I'll call them again tomorrow.

MEL. Why do they bother printing on it High, Medium, and Low?<sup>16</sup> It's all High. Low is High. Medium is High. Some night I'm gonna put it on High, they'll have to get a flamethrower to get us out in the morning.<sup>17</sup>

EDNA. What do you want me to do, Mel? You want me to turn it off? You want me to leave it on? Just tell me what to do.

MEL. Go back to sleep.

EDNA. I can't sleep when you're tense like this.

MEL. I'm not tense. I'm frozen stiff. July twenty-third. *(He sits down on the sofa.)*

EDNA. You're tense. You were tense when you walked in the house tonight. You've been tense for a week. Would you rather sleep in here? I could make up the cot.

MEL. You can't even sit in here. *(Picks up the small puff pillows from behind him)* Why do you keep these ugly pillows on here? You spend eight hundred dollars for chairs and then you can't sit on it because you got ugly little pillows shoved up your back. *(He throws one of the pillows on the floor.)*

EDNA. I'll take the pillows off.

MEL. Edna, please go inside. I'll be in later.

EDNA. It's not the air-conditioner. It's not the pillows. It's something else. Something's bothering you. I've seen you when you get like this.<sup>18</sup> What is it, Mel?

MEL. *(rubs his face with his hands)*. It's nothing. I'm tired. *(He gets up and goes over to the terrace door.)*

EDNA. I'm up, Mel, you might as well tell me.<sup>19</sup>

MEL. It's nothing. I'm telling you... I don't know.

It's everything. It's this apartment, it's this building, it's this city. Listen. Listen to this. (*He opens the terrace door. We hear the sounds of traffic, horns, motors, etc.*) Two thirty in the morning, there's one car driving around in Jackson Heights<sup>20</sup> and we can hear it . . . Fourteen stories up, I thought it would be quiet. I hear the subway up here better than I hear it in the subway.<sup>21</sup> . . . We're like some kind of goddamned antenna. All the sound goes up through this apartment and then out to the city.

EDNA. We've lived here six years, it never bothered you before.

MEL. It's worse now, I don't know why. I'm getting older, more sensitive to sounds, to noise. Everything. (*He closes the door, then looks at himself.*) You see this? I had that door opened ten seconds, you gotta wash these pajamas now.<sup>22</sup>

EDNA. (*anything to please*). Give them to me. I'll get you clean pajamas.

MEL. (*pacing*). Two thirty in the morning, can you believe that's still going on next door? (*He points to the wall.*)

EDNA. What's going on?

MEL. What are you, trying to be funny?<sup>23</sup> You mean to tell me you don't hear that?

EDNA (*puzzled*). Hear what?

MEL (*closer to the wall, still pointing*). That! That!



What are you, deaf? You don't hear that?

EDNA. Maybe I'm deaf. I don't hear anything.

MEL. *Listen, for God's sakes... You don't hear "Raindrops Falling on His head"?<sup>24</sup> (He sings.)* Da dum de dum da dum de da... "too big for his feet"... You don't hear that?

EDNA. Not when you're singing, I don't hear it.

MEL *(stares at the wall)*. It's those two goddamned German airline hostesses.<sup>25</sup> Every night they got someone else in there. Two basketball players, two hockey players, whatever team is in town, win or lose, they wind up in there.<sup>26</sup>... Every goddamned night!... Somewhere there's a 747 flying around with people serving themselves because those two broads never leave that apartment.<sup>27</sup> *(He grabs EDNA, pulls her over to the wall.)* Come here. You mean to tell me you don't hear that?

EDNA *(puts her ear against the wall)*. Yes, now I hear it.

MEL. You see! Is it any wonder I don't sleep at night?

EDNA *(moving away from the wall)*. Don't sleep with your head next to the wall.<sup>28</sup> Sleep in the bedroom.

MEL. Hey, knock it off<sup>29</sup> in there. It's two damn thirty in the lousy morning. *(He bangs on the wall, then stops and looks at it. He points to the wall.)* Look at that, I cracked the wall, I barely touched it,<sup>30</sup> the