

--from *Barefoot in the Park* by Neil Simon

Here's the climactic scene, Act 2, scene 2, of the comedy *Barefoot in the Park* by Neil Simon. As the scene opens, a young couple--Corie and Paul--have just returned from a late evening with Corie's widowed mother and their next-door neighbor. The neighbor is a gourmet, and he has taken Paul, Corie, and her mother to an unusual restaurant on Staten Island. Now is politely taking Corie's mother home to New Jersey. Corie has had a wonderful evening; Paul has not had a good time at all.

{Both getting ready for bed after a night out. Corie, getting in her pj's, in the bedroom; and Paul, in his dress shirt and pants, brushing his teeth/gargling}

Paul: I just can't understand how you can be so unconcerned about all this. I really can't.

Corie: Unconcerned?

Paul: I really...

Corie: Do you think I'll get one wink of sleep until that phone rings tomorrow? I'm scared to death for my mother. And I'm grateful there's finally something to be scared about. What I'm really concerned about is you.

Paul: (Walking out of the bathroom, speaking with Corie face to face) Me? Me?

Corie: Yeah. I'm beginning to wonder if you're capable of having a good time!

Paul: Why? Because I like to wear my gloves in winter?

Corie: No. Because there isn't the least bit of adventure in you. You know what you are, Paul? You're a watcher. You're a watcher. There watchers in this world, and there are doers. And the watchers sit around watching the doers do. Well, tonight you watched and I did.

Paul: It was a little bit harder to watch what you did than it was for you to do what I was watching.

Corie: You can't even relax for one evening. I don't know, Paul, sometimes you act like a--

Paul: What? Hmm? A stuffed shirt? Is that it?

Corie: I didn't say that.

Paul: That's what you were implying.

Corie: That's what you're anticipating. I didn't say stuffed shirt.

Paul: Mm-hmm.

Corie: But you're extremely proper and dignified.

Paul: Proper and dignified? When was I proper and dignified?

Corie: The other night at Delfino's, you were drunk, right?

Paul: Right. I was stoned.

Corie: Exactly. I didn't even know it until you told me in the morning. Uhh... I mean, you're a funny kind of drunk, Paul. You just sat around looking unhappy, watching your coat.

Paul: I was watching my coat because I saw someone else watching my coat. If you want, I'll get drunk for you some time, make your hair stand on end.

Corie: [brushing her teeth in the bathroom] It isn't necessary.

Paul: You know in Harry's Bar last New Year's Eve, I punched an old woman. Don't tell me about drunk. When else? When else was I proper and dignified?

Corie: All the time. You're always dressed right. You always look right. You always say the right thing. You're very nearly perfect.

Paul: That's a rotten thing to say.

Corie: Before we were married, I thought you slept with a tie.

Paul: No. Just for very formal sleeps.

Corie: You have absolutely no sense of ridiculous. Like last Thursday night, you wouldn't walk barefoot with me in Washington Square Park. Why not?

Paul: Simple answer. It was 17 degrees. [undoing the cuffs of his shirt]

Corie: [walking into the livingroom] Exactly. It's very logical, very sensible, and it's no fun.

Paul: [following Corie, continuing to unbutton his shirt] Maybe you're right. Maybe I am a little too proper and dignified for you. Maybe you would have been happier with somebody a little more colorful and flamboyant... like the geek.

Corie: It'd be a lot more laughs than a stuffed shirt.

Paul: I thought you said I wasn't.

Corie: Well, you are now.

Paul: I'm not gonna listen to this. I'm not gonna listen to this. I have a case in court in the morning. [heading for the bedroom]

Corie: Where are you going?

Paul: To sleep.

Corie: Now? How can you go to sleep now?

Paul: I'm going to close my eyes and count knichis. Good night dear.

Corie: You cannot go to sleep now, Paul. We're having a fight.

Paul: You have the fight. When you're through, would you turn off these lights. Please.

Corie: That gets me absolutely insane! You can even control your emotions!

Paul: [coming back] No, no. I'm just as upset as you are. But when I get hungry, I eat. When I get tired, I sleep. You eat and sleep too, don't deny it, I've seen you.

Corie: Not in the middle of a crisis.

Paul: What crisis? We're just yelling.

Corie: You don't consider this a crisis! Our whole marriage is hanging in the balance.

Paul: It is? When did this happen?

Corie: Just now. It has suddenly become very clear to me that you and I have absolutely nothing in common.

Paul: Because I won't go walking barefoot in the park? You don't have a case, Corie. Adultery, yes, but cold feet, no.

Corie: Don't you over simplify this. I am angry, Paul. Can't you see that?

Paul: It's 2:15. If I can get to sleep in a half an hour, I can get about 5 hours sleep. I'll call you

from court tomorrow, and we'll fight over the phone. [trying once again to go to bed]

Corie: You will not go to sleep, Paul! You will stay here and fight to save our marriage!

Paul: If our marriage hinges on those fishbowls and pelmechki, it is not worth saving. Now dear, I'm crawling into our tiny little single bed, if you care to join me. We are sleeping from left to right tonight.

Corie: You won't discuss it! You're afraid to discuss it! I married a—a coward!

Paul: [popping his head out of the bedroom] Would you bring in a pail? The closet's dripping.

Corie: Oh, I hate you! I really, really hate you!

Paul: Listen! [coming out again] Now wait a minute, Corie. There's one thing I've learned in court. Be careful when you're tired and angry. You may say something you will soon regret. I am now tired and angry.

Corie: And a coward!

Paul: [follow Corie around the living room] Maybe you're right. Maybe we don't have anything in common. Two people should have more than just a blood test first. Maybe they should be checked first for a little common sense, understanding, and emotional maturity!

Corie: All right! Why don't you get it passed by the Supreme Court? Only those couples bearing a certificate from their psychiatrist proving that they're emotionally mature can be married.

Paul: Oh, listen—[trying to hold her]

Corie: Don't touch me! Don't lay a finger on me! I can't stand to have you near me! I don't want to be in the same room with you!

### **Multiple Choice**

1. Corie is mad at Paul because he--
  - a. insulted her mother
  - b. didn't like the restaurant
  - c. has a court case in the morning
  - d. doesn't know how to have fun
  
2. Paul describes Corie's character as--
  - a. impossible
  - b. charming

- c. mature
- d. serious

3. Because the play is a comedy, you can predict that by the end of the play

- a. Paul and Corrie will resolve their differences.
- b. Paul and Corrie will get divorced.
- c. there will be a funny scene with the neighbor.
- d. Corie's mother will move in with them.

4. If the play were a tragedy instead of a comedy, it might end with--

- a. Corie's mother getting married.
- b. the death of Corie and Paul.
- c. Paul and Corie moving to another apartment.
- d. Paul's winning his case in court.

5. This excerpt of the play consists of--

- a. monologues
- b. narration
- c. dialogue
- d. asides

6. Which of the following stage directions tells you something about the scene design?

- a. *hurt to the quick*
- b. *crossing onto the bedroom landing*
- c. *he controls himself*
- d. *reaches out his hand to her*

7. If this scene were followed by a soliloquy, it might be delivered by--

- a. Paul, telling Corie how he really feels about her.
- b. Paul and Corie, apologizing to each other for getting so angry.
- c. Corie alone, talking about how much she loves Paul.
- d. Corie's mother, telling Paul and Corie what a good time she had.

### **Constructed Response**

Although the playwright presents a comical argument in this excerpt, what serious topic does he also want the audience to think about? Use at least two examples from the script to support your opinion.