

Id like to know? Of all the blessings ever bestowed on the brow of suffering mankind, Room Service has been the greatest . . . when outside the wind is howling and the snow is flying, who can you rely on to bring up your dinner? Room Service! When you have a temperature of 103 and your bones ache with the virus, who is there to succor you in your hour of need? Room Service! Don't talk that way to me—you can attack my taste, my judgment, even my poor little talent—but don't ever attack *Room Service!*

NELL. Very touching—but we're staying out here just the same. I know why you want to move back to New York—so you can split your time between Lindy's, Sardi's, Old Vienna, and the Pavillon—

ELLIOTT. Stop, my darling, you don't know what you're saying—

NELL. (*Goes to him tenderly.*) It's for you, Elliott, you know that. You admit yourself you waste your time eating and talking when you should be working—and I don't like to mention this delicate subject . . . (*She pats his middle gently.*) but we both know . . .

ELLIOTT. (*Sighs.*) Yes, yes—like Oscar Wilde, temptation is the only thing I can't resist.

NELL. How's the script coming? How many pages today?

ELLIOTT. Half a page.

NELL. Half a page.

ELLIOTT. I can't concentrate.

NELL. Elliott, you've got a deadline! You come sit over here and concentrate. Don't let anything distract you. (*She goes into den. Elliott grimaces as he stares at typewriter, takes a deep breath, and bends over typewriter, fingers ready. Changes his mind, gets up, and spins chair around to make it higher. Sits down again, and like a piano virtuoso at the keyboard before playing, rubs his hands, his fingers—blows on them a little—and finally hits one key. Right after this, Mrs. Chandler enters.*)

MRS. CHANDLER. (*Coming through French windows.*) Hello there!

ELLIOTT. Come in, Mrs. Chandler. (*Quickly closes den door.*)

MRS. CHANDLER. I have some wonderful news for you.

ELLIOTT. Somebody wants to buy the house?

MRS. CHANDLER. Yes. The *MacGruders!*

ELLIOTT. Who?

MRS. CHANDLER. You don't know Jonathan MacGruder?!!

ELLIOTT. I'm ashamed . . . but I don't.

MRS. CHANDLER. He's just one of the biggest gas station magnates in Nassau County. Owns dozens and dozens of them. . . .

ELLIOTT. Oh . . . those MacGruders. . . .

MRS. CHANDLER. Charming man. . . . His wife drinks (poor dear), and they're looking for a little house like this where her nurse can take care of her . . . unobtrusively . . .

ELLIOTT. Yes—well—I'm afraid we can't do anything about it now, Mrs. Chandler. My wife is more determined than ever not to sell—so Mrs. MacGruder will have to find another place to do her drinking.

MRS. CHANDLER. You can't pass up a chance like this—! MacGruder's got all the money on Long Island! He'll go for fifty—fifty-five thousand without batting an eye.

ELLIOTT. Fifty-five.

MRS. CHANDLER. Certainly! And where do you think we'll get another sucker like him so fast?

ELLIOTT. That's so true—where will we?

MRS. CHANDLER. Did you do what I told you to do?

ELLIOTT. Yes, yes—I feel like a criminal. The water heater has broken down three times, there's a leak in the attic, and the garbage disposal hasn't worked in a week—I've dropped whole oranges into the plumbing, I've sabotaged the living heart out of this house, and she refuses to be discouraged—! Just calls up the plumber to fix it—I can't keep it up—I feel like a criminal, Mrs. Chandler—a criminal, I tell you!

MRS. CHANDLER. Nonsense, Mr. Nash—you're just a normal husband, fighting for his virility against a typical emasculating American woman—

ELLIOTT. (*Breaks in.*) I am not! I love my wife! She's the finest, dearest, sweetest, most thoughtful— (*Nell has come into the room from the passage D. L., wearing a bathrobe, shower cap, and slippers—and listens to this, startled.*)

NELL. Elliott, darling! In front of Mrs. Chandler—really!

ELLIOTT. (*Whirls guiltily.*) Darling, I tell everybody how much I love you—it's—it's a phobia!

NELL. (*Laughs.*) A mania, not a phobia, darling.—Hello, Mrs. Chandler. And what can be on the agenda for today, I wonder?

MRS. CHANDLER. (*Easily.*) Oh, nothing . . . nothing at all—I just dropped by to see how you two were enjoying the house —
NELLY. (*Firmly.*) We're adoring it, aren't we, Elliott? (*She looks at him, almost accusingly.*)

ELLIOTT. Adoring it —

NELLY. (*To Mrs. Chandler.*) And, I thought you said everything had been completely renovated a year before we bought it?

MRS. CHANDLER. That's right—I showed you the bills.

NELLY. Well, everything's gone to hell on wheels fast. The roof leaks, the water heater broke down, and now the plumbing has gone out. (*Elliott smiles regretfully at her and shakes his head sadly.*) I was taking a shower when suddenly everything gurgled to a halt and the throne practically erupted like Vesuvius!

ELLIOTT. Really? Now what do you suppose could have possibly caused such a thing? (*Nelly looks from one to the other suspiciously—intuitively, she suspects.*)

NELLY. I don't know, but there are too damn many things going on here—call the plumber, will you, Elliott?—Excuse me, Mrs. Chandler. (*Nelly exits D. L. Elliott looks at Mrs. Chandler guiltily.*)

ELLIOTT. She suspects! She may even know! Don't come here again, Mrs. Chandler. I'll come to your office.

MRS. CHANDLER. My God, Mr. Nash. She's really got you bulldozed, hasn't she? Well, I'll try to keep MacGruder hot—you keep on hacking away at this house—get to work on the fuses—try to louse up the electricity or something. (*She goes out French window.*)

ELLIOTT. I'll call you. (*Elliott goes to typewriter and starts pecking at keys at random. Matilda comes in from front door, carrying a bag of groceries.*) What's in the bag?

MATILDA. Your dinner—celery, carrots, lamb chops, rye crisp, and a lovely grapefruit. (*At every word, Elliott droops a little lower. Matilda exits to kitchen, he reaches for phone and dials.*)

ELLIOTT. Hello? Is this Fishers? This is Elliott Nash. I'd like to order a very large tureen of pate de foie gras with truffles—imported—from Strasbourg—and one bottle of Chateau 1947 vintage. Send it over to Mr. Harlow Edison and tell him to hold it for me. Right away, it's an emergency. Thank you. (*He hangs up, and takes a letter opener from the desk. Crosses to the bar and pulls back the lower picture, revealing a safe. Opens the safe and reaches inside and brings out a salami wrapped in aluminum.*)

loil. Cuts a slice, gets two biscuits from box also in safe, replaces salami, closes safe, and replaces picture. Makes a sandwich but as he's about to take a bite, the doorbell rings. He hurries back to his desk, putting his sandwich in the drawer. At the second doorbell ring, Nelly enters from the den.)

NELLY. (*Calling.*) Matilda? . . . Isn't anyone going to answer the door?

ELLIOTT. You told me to concentrate. (*Nelly comes back, very excitedly, with telegram in hand.*)

NELLY. Elliott! This is it! I've got it! I've got it!

ELLIOTT. You got what, darling? (*Nelly goes to hall and comes back with package she brought in and left there before.*)

NELLY. Wait! I'll show you! (*She runs off as Elliott stares after her, then looks back at phone anxiously. Nelly returns with the package and sets it down on the table proudly.*) Wait'll you see it—just wait! (*She unwraps the model of the Gazebo.*) Isn't it beautiful?!

ELLIOTT. Yes—what is it?

NELLY. A Gazebo!

ELLIOTT. A what?

NELLY. A Gazebo.

ELLIOTT. Oh, a Gazebo.

NELLY. This is just the model—the real thing I bought is about 18 feet high and fourteen feet around —

ELLIOTT. Oh, what does it do?

NELLY. Nothing. It's a sun house. I put in a bid last week and the auction was held today, and my bid won. Imagine —!

ELLIOTT. Wait a minute—wait a minute—what are you talking about? Start from the beginning.

NELLY. Sarah Wilson knew this woman—a charming old lady with a passion for the 18th century—who collected, and when she died they were selling off her estate and nobody wanted the Gazebo —

ELLIOTT. (*Murmurs.*) Nobody but my wife —

NELLY. (*Ignores this.*) So I stole it for five hundred dollars and it's coming from Connecticut tomorrow on a van —

ELLIOTT. You stole it for what —? Well, you go right back and give them another five hundred dollars before the news gets around and we're disgraced.