

Wonderful Town

CHICK + EILEEN

EILEEN. It was awfully sweet of you to get Ruth a chance. (~~EILEEN unwraps sandwich.~~)

CHICK. A pleasure! (CHICK pats EILEEN'S hand and puts an arm around her. She puts a sandwich in his hand which has been groping around her back. He puts the sandwich on the bench, his arms around her again.)
And the next thing, we're gonna get your career straightened out.

EILEEN. (*struggling, rises*) Please! You'll have to excuse me, Mr. Clark!

CHICK. Excuse ya! After all the trouble I went to get rid of that eagle-eyed sister of yours?!

EILEEN. (*staring*) What? That call Ruth got was from the editor, wasn't it?

CHICK. What are you worrying about? I'm handling it . . .

EILEEN. It was you! You sent Ruth on a wild goose chase!

CHICK. (*shrugs*) I'll give her a coupla bucks for her trouble.

EILEEN. She was so excited. How am I ever going to tell her? You get out of here!

CHICK. Now that's a lousy attitude to take! (~~the phone rings~~) Let it ring!

EILEEN. (*answering the phone*) Hello? Oh, Mr. Baker—hello, Bob!

CHICK. (*yelling into the phone*) Call back later!

EILEEN. (*to CHICK*) How dare you!

CHICK. That's the worst double-cross I ever got! A fine little sneak you turned out to be!

FRANK. (*settling back in his chair with a hollow, unconvincing laugh, he speaks*)

Ha ha. Funny thing happened at the counter today. Man comes in, sort of tall like. Nice looking refined type. Red bow tie—and all. Well, sir, he orders a banana split. That's our jumbo special. Twenty-eight cents—three scoops—chocolate, strawberry, vanilla—choice of cherry or caramel sauce—chopped nuts—whipped cream. Well, sir, he eats the whole thing! I look at his plate and I'll be hornswaggled if he doesn't leave the whole banana! Doesn't touch it—not a bite. (*pause*) Don't you see? If he doesn't like bananas, what does he order a banana split for? He coulda had a sundae—nineteen cents—three scoops—chocolate, strawberry, . . . vanilla . . .

WONDERFUL TOWN

FRANK + EILEEN

EILEEN comes on and sees FRANK peering in their window.

EILEEN. Oh, hello, Frank!

FRANK. Hello, Eileen! I just came down during my lunch hour.
I've been thinking about you all morning.

EILEEN. You have?

FRANK. I brought you some chocolate-covered cherries we're running.
We're featuring them all this week during our annual one-cent sale.

EILEEN. *(taking candy from FRANK)* You're sweet.

FRANK. Well, I've got to get back to the drugstore. It's pandemonium down there.

EILEEN. Don't forget—we expect you for dinner tonight.
I want you to meet my sister—she's in your neighborhood a lot.

FRANK. Oh—I'll be here all right.

EILEEN. Thanks for the chocolate-covered cherries.

FRANK. 'Bye, Eileen—

EILEEN. 'Bye, Frank!

BAKER. (*puts glass down and picks up manuscript*) While we have a minute, before anything else happens, I'd like to talk to you about your stories . . .

RUTH. Oh, do, please! You mean you actually read them yourself?

BAKER. I certainly did. You have a lot of talent, Miss Sherwood . . .

RUTH. Do you really think so?

BAKER. Yes, I do. (*RUTH turns away, tearfully.*) What's the matter?

RUTH. Nothing.

BAKER. You're crying.

RUTH. (*turning back to him*) It's just an allergy I have to good news.

BAKER. You really should have more faith in yourself . . .

RUTH. Thanks, I'm beginning to . . .

BAKER. . . and once you get on the right track, you're going to do some good work.

RUTH. Right track?

BAKER. Look, Ruth. Have you ever gone on a safari in the African veldt?

RUTH. No.

BAKER. And have you ever lived in a cold-water tenement?

RUTH. No.

BAKER. Then why do you write that stuff? Write about something you know—something you've actually experienced.

BAKER hands RUTH the manuscript back.

RUTH. I write the things I feel! I put myself in every one of those characters!

BAKER. Then you must be hopelessly repressed.

RUTH. That's a terrible thing to say! I'm the most normal person you'll ever meet!

BAKER. That's a sure sign. All inhibited people think they're normal.

RUTH. Oh! So now I'm inhibited!

BAKER. I'm afraid so—if you claim you're really those frustrated heroines.

RUTH. Repressed! Inhibited! Frustrated! What else am I?

BAKER. Don't take it personally . . .

RUTH. How else can I take it?

BAKER. I'm just trying to help you.

RUTH. What are you, an editor or a psychoanalyst?

BAKER. I should've known better. You can't take it.
You'll never get anywhere till you learn humility.

RUTH. When did you learn yours?

BAKER. Ruth!

Scene: Robert Baker's office at The Manhatter.

BAKER is seated behind desk. RUTH is seated in a chair opposite, talking fast.

RUTH. . . . so you see, Mr. Baker, I worked on the Columbus Globe a couple of years—society page, sports, everything—and did a lot of writing on the side—but I'm afraid my stuff was a little too sophisticated for Columbus—so I took the big plunge and came to New York . . .

BAKER. (*breaks in*) Yes, I know—I did it myself but this is a mighty tough town. Maybe you should have come here gradually—by way of Cleveland first.

RUTH. Yes. They're awfully short of writers in Cleveland.

BAKER. Well, at least a few people in Ohio know you.

RUTH. That's why I left.

BAKER. (*laughs*) Look, Miss Sherwood, I'd like to help you, but I'm so swamped now.—If you just leave your stories here, somebody will read them.

RUTH. (*puts envelope down*) Are you sure? I get them back so fast that unless I take the subway, they beat me home!

BAKER. We read them, all right. (*takes eyeglasses from his breast pocket*) I had 20-20 vision when I left Duluth.

RUTH. Duluth? Maybe you should've come here gradually—and stopped at St. Paul.

BAKER. (*grimly*) Huh?

RUTH. (*under her breath*)—95 ways to go—

BAKER. What?

RUTH. Oh, dear—Mr. Baker, please—would you mind if I went out that door and came back in and started all over again?

BAKER. Forget it!

RUTH. And I was so anxious to make a good impression!

BAKER. Well, you made a strong one.

TWO ASSOCIATE EDITORS enter with a pile of manuscripts.
They put them on BAKER's desk.

FIRST EDITOR. Light summer reading, Bob!

BAKER. Oh no, not any more! (*to RUTH*) See what I mean? Every one of those authors is convinced he's an undiscovered genius!

RUTH. (*looks at pile of manuscripts, then up to BAKER*) Well, what do you advise me to do?

RUTH. ~~She~~ I'm taking these stories down to the Manhatter, (RUTH holds up an envelope containing a manuscript) and I'm going to camp beside the water cooler till that editor talks to me. (She starts off.) See you later.

EILEEN. I won't be here later. I've got a date.

RUTH. (suddenly halted) With whom?

EILEEN. Frank Lippencott.

RUTH. Who's Frank Lippencott?

EILEEN. Didn't I tell you about the boy who manages the Walgreen drugstore on 44th Street?

RUTH. No.

EILEEN. He hasn't let me pay a single lunch check since I've been going there. Today I had a pimento sandwich, a tomato surprise, and a giant double malt—with marble cake.

RUTH. That's right, dear—keep your strength up. You're eating for two now.

EILEEN. I want you to meet him, so when you're in the neighborhood, you can have your lunches there too.

RUTH. Gee, since I've been in New York, I only met one man, and he said, "Why the hell don't you look where you're going?" (shrugs) Maybe it's just as well. Every time I meet one I gum it up. I'm the world's leading expert on discouraging men. I ought to write a book about it. "Girls, are you constantly bothered by the cloying attentions of the male sex? Well, here's the solution for you. Get Ruth Sherwood's new best-seller: One Hundred Easy Ways to Lose a Man."

EILEEN. Oh, did Chick Clark call?

RUTH. Yes. Who's he?

EILEEN. He's a newspaperman. I met him in an elevator. We got to talking and I told him about you. He seemed very interested in you.

RUTH. So interested in me, I'll bet he can't wait to get you alone.

EILEEN. What've we got for dinner, Ruth?

RUTH. What do you think? Spaghetti and meat balls.

EILEEN. Haven't we polished that off yet? We've had it all week!

RUTH. *(flatly)* It closes tonight.

EILEEN. Well, we simply can't give that to Bob.

RUTH. Bob? I can't keep up with you. Who's Bob?

EILEEN. You know, Bob Baker, from the Manhatter. Don't play dumb!

RUTH. Mr. Baker! No! *(turns EILEEN around.)* Where did you meet him?

EILEEN. He dropped by to see you, and naturally I asked him to dinner.

RUTH. Naturally! *(grabs EILEEN and kisses her)* Oh, darling!
You are terrific! I'd never have the nerve!

EILEEN. Well, for goodness sake, why not? He's just a boy—

RUTH. How can we fix this dump up a little? *(closing kitchen door)*

EILEEN. Oh, dear—I just remembered. I asked Frank over tonight.

RUTH. Who?

EILEEN. You know—Walgreen's . . .

RUTH. Oh, no! How can you mix a soda jerk with an editor?

EILEEN. He's not a jerk! He's the manager!

RUTH. Okay, okay. Gee, if a man like Mr. Baker comes to see me personally, he must really be interested!

EILEEN. Of course he's interested.

RUTH. And we can't even offer him a cocktail.

EILEEN. We could tell him it's too hot to drink.

RUTH. But cold enough for spaghetti.

Wonderful TOWN

WRECK

with Eileen

WRECK. What's the trouble, girls?

EILEEN. This man walked in and he won't go 'way!

WRECK. (to FLETCHER, who rises) What's the idea of crashing in on these girls? Now get movin'!

FLETCHER. Now don't get yourself excited. It was just a mistake.

EILEEN. (hastily) Oh, thank you—Mr.—

WRECK. (turns) Loomis—but call me The Wreck.

EILEEN. The Wreck?

WRECK. That's what they called me at Trenton Tech. I would have made all-American, only I turned professional. Well, girls, if anyone busts in on you again, just holler. (starts to exit, singing) "I'm a ramblin' Wreck from Trenton Tech—and a helluva engineer—" (and he's gone).

Scene: The studio apartment.

The studio apartment is a basement horror with two daybeds, an imitation fireplace and one barred window that looks out on the street above. It's a cross between a cell in solitary confinement and an iron lung.

APPOPOLOUS. Isn't it just what you've been dreaming about?

RUTH. It's very nice, only . . .

APPOPOLOUS. Note the imitation fireplace, *(steps to bed, pats it)* the big, comfortable daybeds, *(RUTH goes to bed, starts to pat it; APPOPOLOUS takes her hand away, points to the window and pushes her toward it.)* Look! Life passes up and down in front of you like a regular parade! *(Some PEOPLE pass by—only their legs are visible.)*

RUTH. Well, really . . .

APPOPOLOUS. Let me point out a few salient features. In here you have a model kitchenette, complete in every detail. *(RUTH goes to door, but APPOPOLOUS closes it quickly. He goes to bathroom door. RUTH follows.)* And over here is a luxurious bathroom. *(RUTH starts to look, but again APPOPOLOUS closes the door quickly.)*

RUTH. They're awfully small.

(An exhausted EILEEN sits on a daybed.)

APPOPOLOUS. In those two rooms you won't entertain. *(indicating a hideous painting on the wall.)* You see that landscape? That's from my blue-green period.

RUTH. You mean you painted that?

APPOPOLOUS. Yes, of course. This studio is merely a hobby—a sanctuary for struggling young artists—and since you are both in the arts, I'm gonna let you have this studio for the giveaway price of sixty-five dollars a month.

RUTH. Sixty-five dollars for this?

Wonderful Town

MRS. WADE & HELEN

MRS. WADE. (*offstage*) Helen, are you in there?

HELEN. Yes, Mother. Won't you come in, ?

MRS. WADE. (*entering*) Most certainly not. Helen, I want you to come out of there immediately!

HELEN. Please, Mother . . .

MRS. WADE. Not another word. You come right along with me. Don't you dare talk to my Helen again. You're not fit to associate with decent people! (*pushes HELEN out.*)